



April 18, 2011

Executive Committee  
c/o Office of the Clerk  
10th floor, West Tower, City Hall  
100 Queen Street West  
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

**RE: EX 5.3 - Council Advisory Bodies and Working Committees**

People Plan Toronto<sup>1</sup> is writing in opposition to Recommendations 3 and 4 of the staff report on Council Advisory Bodies and Working Committees that will be considered by the Executive Committee at its meeting on Wednesday, April 20, 2011.

The report classifies the advisory committees that were created under the previous administration into three types: bodies listed in Table 1 to be established; those listed in Table 2 which are “not recommended for establishment and referral to staff for future requirements”; and those in Table 3 which are eliminated.

Our comments concern the 11 bodies listed in Table 2 which include:

- the Pedestrian Committee
- the Toronto Cycling Committee
- the Advisory Committee on Homes and Services for Seniors

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<sup>1</sup> People Plan Toronto (PPT) is a group of active, engaged citizens committed to reforming urban planning in Toronto. PPT convenes grassroots forums and round tables to discuss planning issues, advocates for better urban planning and promotes a strong community voice in the planning process. For more information about PPT, please go to <http://peopleplantoronto.org>.

- the Task Force to Bring Back the Don

The committees in Table 2 are composed of volunteer citizens who have been asked to provide advice about services provided and/or about needs of clients or the community, in some cases for people who cannot speak for themselves, like the Advisory Committee on Homes and Services for Seniors. These committees are responsible for many singular achievements, for example:

- The Pedestrian Committee was responsible for championing the development of the Pedestrian Charter, which establishes the importance of providing for pedestrians as most egalitarian, and the most vulnerable of all mobility users;
- The Toronto Cycling Committee, which has provided a forum to discuss innovative ideas like complete streets, sharrows, bike boxes, and a downtown grid of protected bike lanes;
- The Advisory Committee on Homes and Services for Seniors which advises on nursing homes owned by the City, supportive housing, nursing services, etc., all places owned and services delivered by the City, and
- The Task Force to Bring Back the Don which has a 20 year history of significant, citizen-led planning and restoration of the lower Don River and its valley corridor.

The members of these committees provide advice and work to benefit both the residents affected and the population as a whole. They do not have a particular or personal “axe to grind”, nor do they benefit directly from the matters before the committee. Committee members have a track record of knowledge in their field, and are selected by Council itself through a competitive process. They receive no remuneration, no benefits, and they pay their own transportation. They do this as an act of citizenship – of commitment to what the City is doing in this area – and are proud of it. The cost to the city for the expert advice of these Committees is the cost of a meeting room and the time of the staff.

We submit that the City’s examination of advisory committees needs to be turned on its head. We need to ask the question: what advisory committees do we require to assist the city to become the great city that we all want? Put another way, how can the Mayor and council give Torontonians the opportunity to become more active, educated and constructive participants in their city? We are convinced that if this examination was fairly conducted the issue would become not one of too many advisory committees, but rather of too few.

Before the October 2010 municipal election, People Plan Toronto was asked by Toronto Debates 2010<sup>2</sup> to provide a paper addressing the question: how can urban planning in

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<sup>2</sup> Comprising the Toronto Board of Trade, United Way Toronto, Toronto Community Foundation and Toronto City Summit Alliance. <http://www.votetoronto2010.com/toronto-debates/>

Toronto benefit from the creative input of its citizens? In "Towards a Stronger Citizen Voice in Urban Planning" we wrote:

"Many residents yearn to have a meaningful voice in how their neighbourhoods grow and evolve, but feel disempowered by the planning process and cynical about the city's efforts at consultation... . Toronto needs a new model for public education and engagement; one that leads to a more inclusive, creative, and productive process with stakeholders."

We submit that the city needs more citizen involvement, not less. We should not eliminate the mechanisms for involvement that we still have.

In summary, we request that, contrary to the staff report, the executive committee **approve** the continuance of the bodies in Table 2.

Thank you for the opportunity to input to this matter.

The Steering Committee of People Plan Toronto

c.c. Mayor Ford  
Councillors