



25 October 2019

Dear Mayor Tory:

You played music to our ears when you spoke on TVO on Oct 24 about empowering Toronto through the adoption of a strong City Charter, which you spoke of as a sort of beefed-up City of Toronto Act.

You were eloquent about Toronto's need for more latitude and greater independence and about the "silly" provincial barriers Toronto faces: long waits for permission to hire traffic wardens; bureaucratic duplication around photo radar and so forth. You mentioned the attacks on the city by our current provincial government, from Bill 5 to all those "unilateral, thoughtless cuts".

We fully agree.

But you also said that you did not see any possibility of a constitutional amendment to protect such a City Charter, or cities generally. "Nobody's got an appetite for that."

Here we disagree.

We implore you to take a second look. Section 43 of the Canadian constitution allows for a single-province amendment that could give Ontario cities exactly the protection we both seek.

It only takes a vote in the provincial and federal parliaments to make it so, not the impossible combination of 7 provinces with 50 per cent of the population needed for other amendments.

The current federal government has said it is willing to make it happen if there is a city government and a provincial government that asks.

It may be that Premier Ford has no interest, but he won't be there forever. If we start working on this now, we could be ready to take such a step when a more city-friendly provincial government comes along.

The movement for a strong City Charter is growing, and a crucial element is constitutional protection.

A new City of Toronto Act that doesn't have constitutional protection merely gives the city a new chair at the kiddies' table. Just ask your colleagues in Calgary and Edmonton, who on the same day as your TV appearance had funding that was guaranteed in their unprotected City Charters snatched away by their own new Premier.

We'd love it if you could ask your staff to do some research into this and give you the full picture of what can be done with an easy-to-get constitutional amendment.

All the best,

Doug Earl
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