

## Community Council Formations Within a Municipality (Submitted by the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce)

### Issue:

A portion of Bill 130, recently adopted into Law January 1, 2007 permits the formation of Community Councils within a Municipality of Ontario. Under this Bill (also known as "Municipal Statute Law Amendment Act, 2007"), Municipalities will now be able to impart greater powers of decision to formed Community Councils.

Community councils allow businesses to provide input on issues that directly affect their neighbourhoods and provide a forum for local input into City Council decision-making.

### Background:

Prior to the passing of Bill 130, Municipalities wishing to create a Community Council required acceptance of Provincial Legislation, and subsequent addendums to the Municipal Act, 2001. As per the Constitution Act, 1867 Municipal Governments are not a recognized level of political government (Provincial and Federal only). The Provincial Government introduced Bill 130 as a means to bring Municipal Government more decision making powers. Bill 130 also is intentionally ambiguous in its' contents within the Law, which allows for Municipalities to choose their manner in which they deem viable in the creation of Community Councils. While the Law as written contains powers not seen in previous Municipal Acts, there is purposeful omission of guidance on how to create Community Councils.

Now that there is a four-year-term for Municipal Councils, Community Councils can serve two purposes; i.e. they can provide:

1. A mechanism for Councillors to be accountable to the electorate between elections; and
2. Councillors with the benefit of local input from stakeholders in communities, including businesses, in an organized way.

By way of a guideline, the formation of Community Councils should impart assistance to those Municipalities through the following points:

Communities wishing to investigate the feasibility and desirability of community councils in their municipality are encouraged under Bill 130 to establish ad hoc Community Council Coordinating Committees (CCCC's) that reports to City Councils or its designate.

(Bill 130 allows for the creation of CCCC's; but does not provide any specificity to the constitution and makeup thereof.)

To ensure maximum effectiveness of the intent of the CCCC's, it is suggested that the Province add an Appendix to Bill 130 that would:

- a) Provide CCCC's the responsibility for bringing forward recommendations to the City Council for determining the feasibility and desirability of implementing the Community Council concept;
- b) Consider using co-chairs for the coordinating committee, an honorary chair and a working chair;
- c) Ensure that CCCC's should have representation from all wards as well as the City Council;

- d) Ensure that CCCC members must be strong leaders and “broad thinkers” with experience and expertise related to the development of community councils and / or other related organizations;
- e) Provide CCCC’s the responsibility of recommending terms of reference, membership guidelines, and implementation strategies for Community Councils (and for a permanent CCCC - if it is required). Include in these responsibilities the preparation of a list of the characteristics that Community Council and CCCC members should possess. Other organizations within a municipality may use the name “community councils”;
- f) CCCC’s should be encouraged to bring forward recommendations to the City Council for a process of identifying “natural communities” and associated community councils. “Natural Communities” could infer business, recreation, cultural, geographical, or existing community group that should be represented on a Community Council.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Support initiatives by local municipalities to establish Community Councils using the referenced suggestions outlined in the following guidelines:
  - a) Empower CCCC’s to recommend to the City Council whether implementing the Community Council concept is feasible and desirable;
  - b) Use co-chairs for the coordinating committee, an honorary chair and a working chair;
  - c) Ensure that CCCC’s have representation from all wards as well as the City Council;
  - d) Ensure that CCCC members have a broad range of expertise and experience related to the development of community councils and/or other related organizations;
  - e) Empower CCCC’s to:
    - Recommending terms of reference;
    - Membership guidelines;
    - Implementation strategies for Community Councils (and for a permanent CCCC - if it is required); and
    - The preparation of a list of the characteristics that Community Council and CCCC members should possess. Other organizations within a municipality may use the name “community councils”;
  - f) Empower CCCC’s to develop a process for identifying “natural communities” and associated community councils for the City Council. “Natural Communities” could infer business, recreation, cultural, geographical, or existing community group that should be represented on a Community Council.
2. Always have representation from local businesses on Community Councils (i.e. through local Chambers of Commerce and Business Improvement Associates)