

## **The Beginning of the End of Local Democracy / Local Democracy Is Disappearing**

When I walk through St. Paul's these days, many people stop me on the street – the number one thing on their mind is whether a stronger mayor with more power is what Toronto needs to solve its myriad woes. For me, with my experience serving on City Council with many different mayors, I do not see the office of the mayor needing any more power. In my opinion, more power leads to more opportunities for corruption – and that's the last thing Toronto needs.

The Mayor's latest attempt to grab more power is upon us; the last time came in 2005. The debate for more power has been instigated both this year and in 2005 by reports produced by a "blue ribbon" panel hand-picked by the Mayor himself (please see reports at [www.MichaelWalker.ca](http://www.MichaelWalker.ca)). The reports' basis for recommending more power for the mayor is that City Council is mired in long debates over relatively inconsequential issues – this is untrue. Presently, with the Mayor's new Executive Committee and delegated powers to the Community Councils for matters such as front yard parking or traffic restrictions, City Council meetings are the shortest I have experienced in my 26 years on City Council. The contempt the authors of the reports show against resident input and transparent democracy is obvious and in my opinion, their view is anti-democratic.

In 2006, the Mayor took some power but not all that was recommended and available under the City of Toronto Act. Now, he's going for the whole thing. We will soon be debating (if we have a chance to) whether the Mayor should have the power to:

- hire and fire the City Managers and other senior bureaucrats
- hold Executive Committee meetings in private and make binding decisions
- pay members of the Executive Committee an extra \$30,000
- have sole control over 30% of the City's operating budget

Any powers not permitted by the City of Toronto Act will need the approval of the Premier of Ontario so we must be aware of who is allowing this to occur – the Premier of Ontario. Whatever their motive, more power in the hands of one means less power in the hands of many. It's the wrong way to go when Toronto's future depends so much on the integrity of our collective decision-making. We need to be more inclusive of resident input, not less.

Please email the Mayor ([mayor\\_miller@toronto.ca](mailto:mayor_miller@toronto.ca)), the Premier, Dalton McGuinty, (<http://www.premier.gov.on.ca/feedback/>), the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Jim Watson, ([jwatson.mpp@liberal.ola.org](mailto:jwatson.mpp@liberal.ola.org)) and your local MPP, Michael Bryant ([michael.bryant@ontario.ca](mailto:michael.bryant@ontario.ca)) to tell them how you feel. My office can be contacted via [councillor\\_walker@toronto.ca](mailto:councillor_walker@toronto.ca) or 416-392-7906.

