

# Towards a Greater Toronto Charter

## **A DECLARATION FOR THE GREATER TORONTO REGION,** *signed in support of greater local autonomy to ensure the Region's continued prosperity and effective governance.*

### **DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES**

*In a democratic society, the people create governments to secure a peaceful and ordered future, and to provide opportunities for citizens to flourish and prosper so they may raise families, nurture children, nourish mind and body, and grow old in conditions of dignity, tolerance, and harmony.*

Two fundamental principles of democracy ensure that governments remain effective and responsive. The first principle is subsidiarity. This means that to the greatest extent possible, all governmental activity (such as policy development, program and service management, and delivery) should be exercised by the administration that is closest to the people. The second principle is fiscal accountability. This means that the government that spends taxpayers' money on goods and services is the same government that sets the policies and then raises the requisite money, as directly as possible. Subsidiarity and fiscal accountability enable citizens to hold their elected representatives accountable. Governments must be able to manage both sides of the ledger in areas for which they are charged with primary responsibility: revenue and expenditure. In cases in which it is essential to ensure a minimum standard across a province or across the country, the principles of subsidiarity or fiscal accountability may be set aside in favour of policies, delivery responsibilities, and fiscal resources that have been cooperatively developed.

### **THE GREATER TORONTO REGION**

The Greater Toronto Region exists as an interdependent, integrated complex of communities each with its own social, economic, cultural, and civic traditions. Begun as a settlement of the first people of the continent, successive waves of immigrants have resulted in the Greater Toronto Region becoming a dynamic urban region of sustaining diversity.

**Across the Greater Toronto Region there is a richness of economic activity, race and ethnicity, cultural vitality, civic engagement, and generosity of spirit: there is more that unites citizens than divides them. From the great escarpment of Niagara and along the ancient arc of the Oak Ridges Moraine, to the northern shore of Lake Ontario's deep waters, the citizens of the Greater Toronto Region are engaged in a vibrant struggle to build a great community.**

The Greater Toronto Region accounts for over twenty percent of Canada's Gross Domestic Product and an even higher proportion of its economic growth. At the beginning of the twenty-first century the Region has grown so large and complex that its present form of government, which was devised when the scale, intricacy, and economic importance of Canadian urban regions of today were unimaginable, needs to be empowered to provide the leadership, planning, and service delivery the Region requires.

## URBAN METROPOLITAN REGIONS IN CANADA

Canada's urban regions, particularly the metropolitan areas, are of critical importance to its continued prosperity and vitality and, as such, are obliged to continue to share their wealth, innovation, and other assets, with the rest of Canada. These regions need governance arrangements that allow them to continue to share their prosperity and vitality with the rest of the country, as well as compete with other urban areas around the world, for the benefit of all Canadians.

## WHAT THE GREATER TORONTO REGION NEEDS

The Greater Toronto Region must meet the needs of a diverse, expanding population. Elsewhere around the world, urban vitality has been preserved and enhanced because urban regions have the degree of self-government needed to ensure that they flourish within their countries. Self-government helps ensure that local priorities are respected within strategies that unleash the collective assets of a region.

**Local administrations within the Greater Toronto Region must be empowered to act in the interests of the welfare of the Region as a whole and deal with the economic and social needs of this diverse and expanding population. The Greater Toronto Region needs:**

- a) economic development strategies that support and enhance the combined strengths of the Region;
- b) a public education system that is sufficiently equipped to educate and train Canada's most diverse urban centre;
- c) a transportation infrastructure that is able to move a population spread throughout the Region to and from work and social and cultural pursuits;
- d) environmental policies and practices that deal with the complexities of urban industrial development and use, protect those natural features of significance to the Region (such as the Oak Ridges Moraine), and reflect global imperatives;
- e) a health system (including hospitals) that is able to cope with and respond to the demands placed upon it;
- f) the capacity to meet the social needs of its population.

## THE GREATER TORONTO CHARTER

The Greater Toronto Charter has been in development since early 1999, and has had input from citizens including academics, journalists, urban planners and thinkers, business people and professionals, community workers, labour unions, former municipal staff and politicians.

The early considerations of an initial working group were reported in a series of articles in the popular press in June and July of 1999, and more formally collected in the book *Toronto: Considering Self-Government* (Ginger Press, 2000), which is available from local bookstores across the Greater Toronto Region, on-line from <http://www.gingerpress.com>, or by calling **1-800-463-9937**.

In the development of the Greater Toronto Charter, various changes to the current governance structure have been considered to enhance the Region's autonomy. The option of a Charter was selected for its ease of implementation (it would require some changes to provincial legislation), its symbolic value as an identifier of the uniqueness metropolitan cities bring to a nation state, and its proven effectiveness around the world in enhancing local capacities to govern.

**The intent of these discussions is to provide currently elected officials and municipal staffs with citizen-generated input concerning the governance needs of the Region.** In response to feedback we've received since its initial release in early 2000, the Greater Toronto Charter has been amended to improve its clarity and to reflect more accurately the autonomy needs of the Region. For the most current version, and for updates on activity concerning the Charter, please fill out the enclosed tear-off form and return it to the address provided. Also, we suggest you regularly check our website, <http://www.ideasthatmatter.com>.

**Immediate action, in the form of The Greater Toronto Charter, is necessary to ensure the viability of the Greater Toronto Region.**

## URBANIZATION

*A*t the time of Confederation in 1867 (Constitution Act, 1867), the population of Canada was just under four million. The Constitution Act allocates to the provinces the right to determine the structure and powers of municipal institutions. In the world of the mid-nineteenth century, when cities were small and relatively uncomplicated, this made sense. In the twenty-first century, local administrations within the Greater Toronto Region, as indeed across the country, continue to be bound by constitutional rules that were designed for a primarily agrarian society.

**The history of the twentieth century was one of urbanization, when cities became the economic, social, and cultural engines of society. Canada is one of the most urbanized countries in the world.** The Greater Toronto Region is North America's fifth largest metropolitan region (after Mexico City, New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago), with a population approaching five million, surpassing the population of the entire country at the time of Confederation. The Greater Toronto Region is a major cultural, commercial, financial, educational, and intellectual centre of the western world.

## DEVOLUTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES, POWERS AND AUTHORITY

*I*n recent years across Canada there has been a considerable devolution of power from the national to the provincial levels of government. Some provincial governments, in keeping with the principle of subsidiarity, have devolved to municipalities complete responsibilities for certain services, including the provision and maintenance of infrastructure. While certain responsibilities for implementation and service delivery were devolved, the setting of policy was not. In fact, there has been an actual decrease in the share of spending allotted to municipalities. **This devolution of responsibility, without the requisite authority to set policy and secure resources to fund, runs in opposition to the principles of subsidiarity and fiscal accountability. Canada's largest urban region is unable to exercise its full governance responsibilities.**

As in the private sector, where decentralizing many powers and responsibilities to smaller units has become a useful structural approach to maximizing productivity, efficiency, and service quality, the public sector must consider the opportunities that "right-sizing" presents.

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## HISTORY OF CHANGE

The history of Canada is one of constitutional and jurisdictional change. Through various imperial iterations by French and British governments, the British North America Act, the Statute of Westminster, and the Patriation of the Constitution, the allocation of government responsibilities has been frequently redesigned. Changes have occurred in response to a changing technological environment, the needs and pressures of Canada's regions, its two primary linguistic communities, its First Nations, and the desire for greater autonomy by provincial governments, especially Quebec. As a result, Canada is one of the most decentralized federations in the world. The readiness of Canadians to accept change is a feature of governance in Canada.

## CALL TO ACTION

In jurisdictions around the world, constitutional, administrative, and financing arrangements increasingly reflect the recognition of the central role and capacity of metropolitan regions that, having achieved a requisite level of resources and experience, can now manage their own destinies. Senior governments in Canada must devolve to urban regions a much broader ability to tax or access additional revenue sources, so these regions can effectively exercise their responsibility to identify needs, supply services, pay the bills, and provide accessible, democratic government. Such devolution will enable and encourage Canada's economic, social, and cultural engines to keep pace with those other urban jurisdictions that are their main competitors in the urbanized world of the twenty-first century.

For more information about The Greater Toronto Charter and  
*Toronto: Considering Self-government*, contact:

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## *Towards a Greater Toronto Charter*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Affiliation (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please keep me up to date on the Greater Toronto Charter*

*Yes, I would like to sign the Greater Toronto Charter:* (signature) \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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