A New Agenda for Local Democracy: Building Just, Inclusive, and Participatory Cities

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COVID-19 exposed a crisis of growing inequality in Canadian cities. In light of this, governance models must change to allow for greater participation and to expand the role of marginalized communities in decision-making processes. This paper explores how cities can introduce a more inclusive model of governance to improve representation of equity-deserving groups.

Recommendations for better public participation:

- Introduce high standards for public engagement with inclusivity benchmarks and accountability measures.
- Have methods for the public to set the agenda other than through councillors, such as neighbourhood governance structures.
- Design consultation for dialogue. Go beyond merely informing the community. Strategize to defuse conflict and encourage listening.
- Go where people are through “pop-up” consultations at public markets, libraries, coffee shops, and midnight basketball games.
- Ensure accessibility to allow for meaningful inclusion by holding evening meetings with meals and childcare, and providing stipends to stakeholders who are otherwise unrepresented.

Read the full report: UofT.me/LocalDemocracy