



Dundas Works Roundtable #6: DEMOCRACY IN DUNDAS

Thursday, May 24th, 2018 Dundas Museum 7-9pm Minutes Rev.1 - July 12th, 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Bob James & Michelle Chin welcomed the group, introduced the basic principles of a democracy, described the municipal government structure, group questions and groundrules for the evening. We had approximately 40 people in attendance. We broke into four discussion groups, then a representative from each group gave a very brief summary of key points to wrap up the evening.

A series of democratic “**tensions**” were identified: local vs city wide issues, municipal vs provincial mandates, urban vs rural needs, participatory vs representative democracy.

Is there a Democratic Deficit? What are the Gaps?

- **Civic Engagement** is low. Life is busy. Many people feel their daily voices and votes do not make a difference anyway, that their “representatives” have a personal or private agenda without consultation. Disenfranchisement is felt at all levels of government - municipal, provincial and federal. Active engagement matters and is the foundation of democracy.
- **Accountability** is limited to once every four years at voting time. Democracy could be improved through a continuous **accountability and recourse** process, e.g. a municipal ombudsman office and by-elections when required. Communication must be a two way street and not top down. The Dundas Community Council could be a powerful tool, if democratically chosen, transparent and communicative with regularly scheduled meetings that allow for citizen input. Town halls and consultation should be open to the entire ward which the councillor represents, beyond the 400 ft rule.
- **Amalgamation** has led to a decrease in what can be done locally. It began with regionalization in the 80s, amalgamation of Hamilton in 2000, and today means 16 representatives for 537,000 people. While this has led to some benefits, it has also removed decision-making from local to distant; we have one councillor for 26K (soon to be 35K) citizens in Ward 13, versus 9 councillors for 23K in the past. City Councillors are subjected to information overload, they are expected to deeply understand and champion issues in their own ward and also address issues in 14 other wards. There may be a critical mass of population and geographical area that one person can effectively represent.

How can we make our voices more effective?

- A **job description** for every mayor and councillor, written by the people to be represented, updated every 4 years prior to a municipal election. This would inform candidates and clearly outline the needs and priorities of the people.
- **Councillors at large** to eliminate territorial decision making
- A **ranked ballot system** to affect a majority win.
- Impartial objective **Citizen Education** starting with youth and available to all citizens would help people make informed decisions. Education on important government issues cannot just be left to the press which could have inherent bias and opinion in its coverage.
- A **form of mandatory voting** could be considered. Voter Education is critical to make this meaningful. **Technology** can facilitate education, polling, referendums and voting to increase citizen participation.
- **Grassroots groups** can help to gather public input and can assist representatives in understanding the pulse of the community.

Further discussion on **non-partisan vs civic parties** in municipal government is required.

Bob: Welcome to the sixth Roundtable, hosted by Dundas Works. The topic tonight, as you know, is: Democracy in Dundas—How can we Make our Voices Heard? We hope, and have every expectation, that this one will be as engaging and insightful as our previous ones have been. As usual, we have the minutes of previous roundtables on our website (DundasWorks.com). And we will be taking notes from tonight, and placing them also on our website.

For those who may not be familiar with us, Dundas Works began a few years ago as a group of citizens working to maintain two high schools in Dundas. We didn't quite succeed there, but our experience led us to work for the better involvement of the people of Dundas in their own town's life. As I said, this is the sixth roundtable, over the past year or so.

Dundas Works is made up of: myself (Bob James); Margot Carnahan; Michelle Chin; Tim Leslie; and Jim Sweetman. As well, we have a Dundas Works Cycling Working Group led by Art Heidebrecht and Bill Oates.

I am now going to ask Michelle Chin to give us a brief introduction to the (quite immense) topic of "democracy", to get us started.

Michelle: Thanks Bob. My job tonight is to introduce the concepts of democracy. I found this to be much harder than I expected because there are as many opinions and variations on democracy as there are people and countries. I've lived in Canada my whole life, I never had to give it much thought, and taken it for granted. I am glad to have taken the time to look into it a bit.

I will focus in on some key principles and values of democracy relevant to our conversations tonight. As I am not an expert on the subject, my thanks go out to wiki and google for providing a basic understanding and notable-quotes.com for the zingers.

The term Democracy was first documented by the Greek in 5th century BC: *dēmos* (meaning "people") and *kratos* (meaning power, strength). Literally, power by the people.

Democracy in ancient Rome evolved only after a succession of less palatable government forms run by a few elite aristocrats, dictators and tyrants. Its beginnings were far from perfect. As Winston Churchill said so well back in 1947, "Democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time." Back in Rome, only adult males could vote. Women, foreigners and slaves who made up 80% of the total population had no say. Fortunately, the practice of democracy keeps evolving, in all of its many forms around the world.

At the heart of a democratic society is the ability of the people to peacefully choose their representatives through free and fair elections, rather than have to resort to a civil war to oust their government. Peaceful transitions give a society stability so you can see why it was a desirable objective, regular elections are a means for people to hold their leaders accountable for their conduct.

Equality is a foundation of democracy. Every person in a society is important to the health of a democracy. Every person has a vote, and every vote has equal weight. Majority rules.

Key to elections and a representative structure is the active participation of the people in both politics and civic life; As Ralph Nader puts it, "There can be no daily democracy without daily citizenship." Political sociologist and scholar Larry Diamond states that "for democratic structures to endure – and be worthy of endurance – they must listen to their citizens' voices, engage their participation, tolerate their protests, protect their freedoms, and respond to their needs." Democracy can be messy and uncomfortable, listening to the

views of others with whom you may or may not agree, as everyone has the right to be heard. But it is worth it.

Protection of human rights and freedoms and laws that apply equally to all citizens is a foundation of democracy.

To summarize, Democracy is brought to you by the letter P: Power is held by the People, through Peaceful Means of Choosing Politicians, requiring Proactive Citizen Participation and Political Accountability, holding Protection of Human Rights, Freedoms and Equality Paramount.

Canada's democracy is known as a parliamentary system within the context of a constitutional monarchy. Bob will now describe our local government structure.

Bob: I wanted to give a bit of history. Many of you have lived in this town for years, so remember the process of amalgamation in 2000.

Prior to amalgamation, Dundas had its own Town Council. We had nine councillors and a mayor, all elected at large across the entire town. They would meet, obviously, at the Town Hall. The regional Municipality handled matter of police, fire and ambulance, but we had our own Hydro Utility, Public Works Department, and so on. The School Board in Dundas was the Wentworth County Board. Elections were held, I believe, every four years.

With amalgamation, we were allotted a single councillor for the town, and the council meeting obviously shifted to City Hall in Hamilton. All services were taken over by the City of Hamilton. We now elect Councillors by Ward (we are Ward 13, with 1 Councillor), and elect the mayor at large across the City. Elections are held every four years.

This coming election has a few changes. The most impactful one is that Ward 13 (Dundas) has been expanded to include much of Flamborough, so the population represented by our single Councillor has grown significantly.

The other is that the City has (had?) the option of using a ranked ballot system of voting. They would have needed to pass a by-law before May of 2017 for this to occur, and have not done this. So we will be voting under the usual first-past-the-post system once more.

There is no provision in the current legislation for preferential ballots.

Michelle: I would now like to define Democratic Deficit, as any situation in which there is believed to be a lack of democratic accountability and control over the decision-making process by "the people."

So now, we would like to break into groups and the questions we will discuss are

1. Is there a Democratic Deficit in Dundas? What are the gaps?
2. How can we make our voices heard and more effective in decisions that affect us?

Consider some of the factors that may create gaps, such as the detailed structure of the government at federal, provincial and municipal levels and how they affect one another.

Here are some groundrules to keep in mind for the evening.

Please take a few minutes to go around the table and introduce yourselves to your group. Conversation must be respectful of others and limited to a couple of minutes. Stay positive. Focus on the ideas of democracy, and not specific situations or people. Focus on solutions to any problems that may be presented. If you talk about a problem, try to suggest a solution.

In this roundtable format, each person will get a couple of minutes to speak before we move to the next person and we will go around as many times as possible. So even when someone inspires you, please avoid cross talk, Be patient, and wait until the conversation gets back around to you, and it will come round again. In a roundtable everyone ends up doing more listening than talking.

We will share highlights from each table at about 8:40 with the whole group. Enjoy the evening.

TABLE PAPERS TO HELP INFORM DISCUSSIONS

Foundations and Principles of Democracy

1. Power is held by the People
2. Free and fair elections, a means for people to hold their leaders accountable for their conduct. Every person has a vote, and every vote has equal weight. Majority rules.
3. Active participation of the people in both politics and civic life.
4. Protection of human rights and freedoms and laws that apply equally to all citizens

Democratic Deficit:

Any situation in which there is believed to be a lack of democratic accountability and control over the decision-making process by "the people."

Group Questions:

1. Is there a Democratic Deficit in Dundas? What are the gaps?
2. How can we make our voices heard and more effective in decisions that affect us?

GROUP DISCUSSIONS

TABLE 1: Present at table: Tony, Nick L., Dave C., Martin S. (scribe), Hugh, Riley C., Liam C., Wiliam O. Mary M., Michelle C. (moderator)

Question 1: Is there a Democratic Deficit in Dundas? What are the gaps?

- Dundas has little say in its planning, development or boundaries
- we are a small community in a large city and have reduced say in decisions
- with only one rep on city council, our voice is diluted, the decisions for Dundas are made outside of Dundas by people who do not live here
- do not feel represented, councillors have too many decisions to make for all of Hamilton - too few reps doing too much work. Councillors are overworked with information overload
- provincial versus municipal governments don't seem to work together. Example, provincial initiatives to minimize greenspace and farmland development do not seem to be implemented municipally. Another example would be the provincial mandates set on an amalgamated municipal school board that resulted in the closure of one of our local high schools. Nothing the community or the local councillor could do or say to stop it. In that case the property should automatically revert back to city, should not have to be bought back.
- there is a gap between grassroot working groups and formal representation

- in a ward system, councillors are pitted against one another to get as much for their ward as possible in part so that they can get re-elected.
- it seems that special interest groups such as developers have the ear of council
- a balancing act between local and provincial needs
- gap between Dundas and City Hall
- people are disenfranchised, all over the city but it is also a more global phenomena. Citizens that may have once been engaged stop because they don't feel that their voice or vote matters
- lack of information and communication from councillor
- community council could be an excellent means for communication but currently is not effective for that.
- There are two forms of democracies: participatory and representative.

Question 2: How can we make our voices heard and more effective in decisions that affect us?

- In Australia it is compulsory to vote, could some form of this work in Canada? Note that many in our group disagreed.
- implement referenda about important decisions
- councillors could be voted at large rather than reps for a specific ward
- rounds of voting similar to a leadership race would ensure a majority vote and voters would not have to vote strategically.
- online technology could help with better voter engagement and systems
- there needs to be a clear division of labour/ responsibility between provincial and municipal governments -
- decisions should be made at as local a level as possible, as is feasible.
- regular town halls, good communication between citizens and councillor
- neighbourhood associations (example Beasley) seem to be able to work with the city and can be influential.
- communities have expertise in their area, they need to take ownership and keep trying to participate in decision making rather than just blame.
- need proportional representation
- perhaps there is an optimal size of populations that can be represented by a single person
- local decisions should be made by the people who have to live with the consequences
- public spaces are of concern to all residents, not just those living within a 400 ft radius of the property. All citizens need to be consulted and allowed to participate.

TABLE 2 Present: Scott M., Jean N., Brenda S., Sue C., Tania S., James J., Peter H., Margot C. (minutes), Robert (Bob) J. (moderator)

Question #1: Is there a democratic deficit in Dundas? What are the gaps?

- Scott: -despite Ward 13 having best voter turnout, voter turnout generally is low, there is voter apathy
 -participation by voting is important
 -no substitute for contacting elected reps at all levels, letters, e-mails, yet twitter may have less impact
- Jean: -gap is lack of participation, people don't feel their vote counts, Dundas is not unique in this
- Brenda: -shared story of losing Superintendent at Dundas Valley Housing when absorbed by Hamilton Housing, she felt betrayed, voice was lost
- Sue: -at City of Hamilton, all councillors voting on all issues, councilors should have a stronger voice on local matters -important for everyone to vote
- Tania: -democracy diluted with amalgamation
 -local issues s/b decided at local level
 -lack of info for councillors on local issues
 -voter cynicism due to politicians having "personal agendas"
 -educate youth in school about voting and issues

James: -only one councillor at the City of Hamilton table

-town meetings needed, need "grass roots organization" to talk to councillor

-elected officials need to communicate with electorate in an ongoing basis

-prevent "interest groups" from taking control

Peter: -lack of involvement is the deficit

-amalgamation essentially occurred in 1972 with regionalization, powers of the old Dundas Town Council were shifted to the Region.

-local deficit is we, as citizens don't hold local councillors to account

-politicians make decisions on their own to accomplish certain outcomes

-Community Council in Dundas is an "echo chamber" of appointed members

-"professionalization" of politicians - unable to send power to citizens

Margot: -lack of engagement by both politicians and citizens

-Dundas only has one councillor at City of Ham, so our voice is lost

-four years between elections, politicians and citizens need to be engaged between elections

-youth not engaged enough in civic policy and events

-developers/big business seem to have power over citizens

-400 ft rule does not allow for adequate input on municipal issues

Bob: -next election, 1 politician represents 35,000 citizens (Ward 13 now Dundas and Flamborough)

-pre-amalgamation: 9 politicians represented 20,000 citizens, better representation

-Dundas Community Council meets infrequently and does not announce when meetings will occur

-local groups are now left to fend for themselves

-no local representation effectively is the way it feels since councillor pulled into city affairs

Scott: "feel ignored" on issues, i.e. 71 Main St.

-we need to be consulted even if we are not experts on specific issues

Jean: -onus on citizen to find out what is going on, burden on individual to learn about issues/be involved

-Dundas Star is source of info on local events

-Dundas Community Council - not enough meetings

Sue: -previously Dundas Community Council was effective, involving citizens

-CATCH is an excellent news site

Tania: -centralization of power/control is problem, not listening to individual voices, top down, we talk you listen

James: -politicians respond to pressure, there are many organizations in Dundas and these groups could send message to councillor

Peter: -be aware that community groups may "have councillor's ear"

-need for broad base of involvement, even amongst groups

-individuals need to be informed about issues

-councillors have huge amounts of info to filter, therefore groups/individuals need to facilitate the "information overload" to aid councillors

-400 metre (feet?) rule is in legislation, planning act dictates how info gathered/shared

Question #2: How can we make our voices more effective?

Scott: -write letters

-for municipal election, could we draft some questions coherently in advance?

Jean: -responsibility of citizens to get involved and make voices heard, find out what is going on, connect with others and make voices heard

Sue: -all candidates mtg for provincial election is May 31 - everyone should participate

Tania: -all candidates mtgs can be too rigid

-term limits, referendums

-flexibility in policy i.e. alleyways

- recourse, recall politicians? petitions, byelections
- who makes official plan?
- good book: Effective Citizen by Graham Steele
- connecting with other citizen groups, form alliances
- newspaper maps of issues need to be larger and easier to read
- James: -we don't pay politicians directly so we don't "hold the purse"
- Peter: -official plan is written by planners at City of Hamilton, not by local citizens/planners
- all candidates mtgs may be "orchestrated", though some are not
- Margot: -regular civic meetings like Dundas Community Council needed
- scrap the 400 ft rule
- involve youth in civic discussion/debate/events, educate them about democratic participation in school
- attend all-candidates meetings and speak up
- Bob: -Dundas Community Council needs to occur regularly and be directed by citizens to give input to councillor
- Scott: -learn from other communities i.e. Montreal party system
- attend all-candidates meeting
- youth involvement
- user-friendly language would be helpful
- Jean: -at all candidates mtg: if question not answered, then that is your answer!
- Brenda: -agrees
- Sue: -all candidates should have to answer the same questions
- Tania: -information needs to be more readily available
- James: -action and information important
- Peter: -new technologies are the way of the future, i.e. digital/on-line, and cannot be ignored, newspapers on decline

Table 2 Summary

Question # 1: Is there a deficit? What are the gaps?

1. Citizens do not feel that their vote counts. There is low voter turnout, lack of civic participation, and citizens do not hold councillors to account. Citizens need to be more informed about issues.
2. A democratic deficit was created by amalgamation, resulting in far less representation with 1 councillor/35,000 citizens, previously 9 councillors/20,000 citizens. Councillors are subjected to information overload. They are expected to understand and champion issues in their own ward and also address issues in 14 other wards.
3. Dundas Community Council meets infrequently and does not announce meeting dates.
4. 400 ft rule does not allow for adequate input on municipal issues.

Question #2: How can we make our voices more effective?

1. The onus is on citizens to learn about issues, get involved, contact elected officials, write letters and e-mails, hold them accountable, attend all candidates meetings, and vote.
2. Citizen groups and/or alliances can work together with their councillor to share information and inform on issues. Communication through community meetings, newspapers and other media can be used to facilitate a broad base of involvement amongst groups.
3. Dundas Community Council meetings need to occur regularly, directed by citizens to give input to our councillor.

=====

TABLE 3 - moderated by Tim Leslie

- **Democratic Deficits**

Amalgamation never completed

- Deficit of citizen engagement...busyness , stress, not enough time
- Geographical problems....Representatives are responsible for too large an area.....communities are too diverse.....solutions are not satisfying to anyone....
- Need more local voices
- Larger jurisdictions and systems are worse than smaller ones
- The most important decision making is made behind closed doors....we have no influence on the outcomes....there should be a system that is mandatorily open....there are certain things that are non negotiable
- Many councillors don't want an engaged citizenry
- We need to build strong community groups to engage the councillors
- The secondary plan could be an effective tool if the community has significant involvement
- We need to engage in democratic debate even though the democratic process is messy and imperfect
- We need to find those moderate voices that work toward principles that unify us and build consensus.
- Should be forced to vote like in Australia?or should we be better educated before we can vote?
- Our system is far too weighted to the "Representative Democracy" model.....we need to have more opportunities for "Direct Democracy"
- Lack of education about the true facts around issues (Ie Auditor Generals Report).....results in people making their mind up first and then looking for information to support their ideas
- The press is not working effectivelywhat used to be found in the editorial section is now touted as "news"news should be a recording of the facts but too often is infected with opinion....
- Bias of a media outlet that is not revealed prevents the accurate story to be delivered
- The message of Community Groups is not reported on....only the establishment position
- People do not vote because there is no sense that our voices are heard.
- Many politicians work to divide and conquer us....by championing special interest groups and not attempting to build consensus

- **Ideas for Improving our Democracy- Making our Voices Heard**

Face to face discussions versus electronic communication

- We should pressure candidates at both municipal and provincial levels to commit to "local input first". (within the constraints of broader accepted policy)
- We need to build community groups (such as Dundas Works) into effective voices for the community.....a place where people will know that their voices are heard and where they can share ideas and build consensus with other concerned citizens.
- We need an online community forum that can mobilize and inform people quickly about issues that need to be addressed
- Choosing a representative should not be the only way we can voice our opinion....there should be ongoing meaningful community interactions through community forums...the representative should then be bringing these ideas forward rather than their own ideas.
- Example.....Regarding Development Policy Implementation....Since planning policy comes from the province, but approval and implementation are municipal, how can we pressure provincial politicians to mandate and enforce all three major pillars of their "Places to Grow" guidelines (1. Intensification with control, 2. Community building , 3.Environmental sustainability) Currently developers hold all the cards and community input is not listened to !

TABLE 4: eight people including Jim (moderator)

SUMMARY POINTS

1. Community Council should be democratically chosen and much more transparent. An effective Community Council would help citizens give input to decisions.
2. The electronic voting technology capability available now lends itself to us holding a pilot project to improve citizen participation.
3. An overall vision for Dundas is very important. It would inform a job description for the candidates for Councillor and help ensure that the agenda followed is not just that of the Councillor.
4. We need to make much better use of the Dundas Star News and other communications channels to make our voices heard.

Question # 1: Is there a democratic deficit? What are the gaps?

Juliette – Yes – there is a democratic deficit in Dundas. Dundas is a unique community and one Councillor at City Hall is not enough to represent us properly

Leo – He does not really agree with our sense of a democratic deficit in Dundas as described by the introduction by Michelle. But he agrees that there is a democratic deficit in Dundas. He has dealt with the current Councillor and been “brushed off”. He sees autocratic decision-making in Dundas. Only one person on City Council to represent us is difficult.

Jim – Yes – there is a democratic deficit in Dundas. Decisions about our public spaces – Parkside, library, arena – are made without proper input from citizens. The mechanisms to enable us to input our voices and opinions – public meetings, Community Council – are ineffective.

Phyllis – Yes – there is a democratic deficit in Dundas. Agrees that only one Councillor is not sufficient.

Tom – lived here for about 13 months. Amalgamation in principle makes sense with respect to services such as police, fire, water, waste collection etc. But how can Dundas learn to successfully have one Councillor to represent us? The Councillor for Dundas is all powerful in Dundas but not at City Council.

Peter – lived here for 50 years. He does not agree with anything that has been said by the others so far. He feels he does not receive a fair return on his taxes. How much power does our lone representative really have at City Council? His issue with our democracy – we hire politicians for a job but don’t give them a job description. What do we expect our Councillor to do for us? We hire them by electing them but then they decide to do what they want.

Noor – he feels the question is not complete as he does not understand what we mean by democratic deficit. We trade our votes to our elected officials and expect in return that they will represent us. But we do not give them a list of our priorities. The lack of proper public transport is a serious issue in Dundas that should be addressed by our Councillor.

Harriet – she has lived her for about 5 years. She feels we should be talking about the process of democracy in Dundas and not just specific incidents. She too does not feel that amalgamation was all bad. But a large gap we have is our Community Council. It does not meet regularly, meetings are poorly attended and members are not selected democratically.

Juliette – pass

Leo – We need more transparency around decisions and less decision-making done behind closed doors.

Jim – he supported the points made by Harriet about the Community Council. The Community Council – even if it was non-binding – could act like the structure that Dundas lost with amalgamation. It is a real opportunity for citizen voices and input.

Phyllis – pass

Tom – he was not aware until this discussion that Dundas had a Community Council. He too agrees that we need to determine how to make the Community Council relevant and interesting to the citizens.

Peter – he really likes the idea of creating a vision for Dundas as a foundation for priorities and ideas and decisions. He too did not know about the Community Council. If our Councillor is not effective, perhaps we

need some civil disobedience.

Noor – we must talk about the “office of our representative”. Every year there is a budget set at City Council. He feels that it should be distributed proportionally to each Councillor based on how much their ward pays in taxes. How much does Dundas pay in taxes to the City of Hamilton?

Harriet – Communication and the press – the Dundas Star News – are issues. Craig Campbell covers all the Community Council meetings but we have not seen any recent articles in the paper. The Councillor uses her column in the paper although the content is seldom about meaningful issues and topics.

Peter – Neighbourhoods cycle so that more schools will be needed again. Short- term decisions have been made to close schools and sell the properties. This situation has been made worse by amalgamation.

Tom – does not agree that the tax money raised in a ward should stay in the ward. We – Dundas – are part of a city. There is a limit to staying a small town when one considers services like police, water, sewage etc.

Noor – How efficient is our Councillor? She seems to work to her agenda as we are unaware of what she is trying to do for Dundas. Our voices are never considered.

Question #2: How can we make our voices more effective?

Juliette – the municipal level of government is very close to home. We need much more transparency. Local government should not be affiliated with political parties. We need more regular meetings for citizens. We should have input to the budget. Why is there no polling of citizen opinions in Dundas? The Dundas Works roundtables are an example of an excellent forum for citizens to share their ideas.

Leo – the non-democratic selection process invalidates the Community Council. The selection by the Councillor looks like cronyism. How transparent is the Community Council? He has heard many great ideas in the Dundas Works roundtables yet the Councillor never attends. Why? So how does the Councillor ever know what the citizens think? Technology exists that can easily capture the opinions of the citizens. He is a professor and uses a tool in class that each student uses to register their “vote” on a topic and he can quickly summarize the opinions in the class. He feels non-binding referendums should be used much, much more in our democracy.

Jim – building on the comments about the Community Council and technology, we in Dundas need to create our own “system” to capture what we lost with amalgamation and make our democracy much more relevant to the citizens.

Phyllis – she agrees that we should use the technology to engage more people.

Tom – Communication, transparency and trust are all critical to our democracy. How do we build trust again in our democracy? There is such a general apathy at all levels of government. Only 41% of people voted in the last election. The Councillor’s article in the paper seems to only echo the advertisements elsewhere in the paper about events happening. There is no substance to the Councillor’s column. We get more information from the letters to the editor.

Peter – he too supports the technology idea to get the pulse of the constituents. We need something to measure the effectiveness of our Councillor. Without a job description and vision, it is difficult to hold the Councillor accountable.

Noor – only 41% of people use their voice. The Councillor uses her meetings for her voice, not the citizens. He would like to see a “people’s commission” which is a series of hearings for a few months to gauge the opinions of the citizens. He would like to start a lobby group for a new Councillor.

Harriet – we are talking about making our voices heard and sharing our input. We have a chance now with the upcoming municipal election. So we need to increase the ward voting participation. We must find good candidates to run. Please – everyone – think hard about how could run! What if a group like Dundas Works put four questions to the candidates to respond in writing and published the answers in the paper to promote voting? Also – there is an area planning process – i.e. the Secondary Plan – underway. Who is involved in this? Was the focus group chosen?

Juliette – we need a Councillor who is much more responsive to the citizens of Dundas. We need a Councillor who is a representative for everyone in Dundas.