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Watch: Most Torontonians want recall legislation – but will it ever make it through Queen’s Park? Alan Carter reports.

TORONTO –After years of gridlock, transit delays and scandals, a large majority of Torontonians want recall legislation, according to a new Ipsos Reid poll done exclusively for Global News.

Eighty-seven per cent of the 1,252 polled by Ipsos Reid agreed Torontonians should be able to remove politicians from office if they don't have confidence in their leadership.

[Story continues below](#)

Stephen D'Agostino, a lawyer specializing in municipal affairs, said he is “not at all” surprised people want more power over their representatives because right now they only get to vote once every four years.

“When you look at the mechanisms that are available for the public and voters to interact with politicians, they are very few and far between,” D'Agostino said. “Essentially you elect them at the beginning of their term and you have nothing else to do with them until the end when they come back.”

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British Columbia has had recall legislation since 1990 and California famously ousted Governor Gray Davis and replaced him with Arnold Schwarzenegger in a 2003 recall.

In Canada, provinces have the power to pass recall legislation for the municipalities and D'Agostino said

it's unlikely the legislation could be reasonably passed for one level of government and not the other.

Recall legislation is meant to give the electorate a tool to oust politicians who've lost the moral authority to lead.

Global News asked the candidates: do they support recall legislation?

- Olivia Chow does not support it
- Doug Ford didn't respond but has said before he doesn't support it
- John Tory didn't respond

Darryl Bricker, founder of Ipsos Public Affairs, said Mayor Rob Ford's history of drug use and alcohol abuse might have motivated Toronto voters to force a recall legislation if the tool was available.

"People are quite dissatisfied in many circumstances with the outcomes they see that come out of city hall. Some of the leadership they see, some of the issues we've been dealing with the last four years, do leave the public to a certain extent, despondent," he said.

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And both city councillors and provincial politicians have been faced with recall legislation this term. Toronto city council [looked at the issue in April](#), and Progressive-Conservative MPPs [tabled a similar motion in October](#) 2013 at the height of the mayor's crack scandal.

The legislation would require a certain percentage of the electorate to sign a petition calling for the vote. The threshold can be quite high (50 per cent of electorate in the city hall motion and 25 per cent in the provincial bill) but there's a reason behind that: it stops the legislation from being used as a political tool.

"There's going to be somebody trying to opportunistically try to take advantage of it for their own selfish ends," D'Agostino said. "But without recall legislation, voters have nothing at all. There's no tool available to them."

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And Torontonians are dismayed by how often politics can derail progress in the city: 87 per cent of the people polled by Ipsos Reid agreed that "politics get in the way of things getting done."

But Scarborough Councillor Glenn De Baeremaeker said recall legislation would only further derail progress.

"People think things don't get done now, but what's going to happen when every single month of every single year people from different political parties, the Conservatives will attack the Liberals, the Liberals will attack the Conservatives, the NDP will attack both of them, you just have people always campaigning for every month of the year," he said.

He went on to say councillors and mayors are given a four-year contract that can be extended or ripped up during the next election.

But right now, D'Agostino said, the only tool voters have is the Conflict of Interest Act, which almost led to the mayor being ousted two years ago.

However D'Agostino said the act doesn't gauge moral outrage but instead, "It's simply a technical breach of a technical act."

Moreover, it requires people to hire a lawyer and ready for a lengthy legal battle.

So what can be done? D'Agostino suggested creating an oversight body whose role is to investigate and persecute any untoward actions at city hall.

“There is no commissioner at Queen’s Park who is charged with looking at whether or not there are councillors in a conflict of interest, whether there is foul play going on in the council chambers,” he said.

Ipsos surveyed 1,252 Torontonians on Global News’s behalf via an online panel between September 22 and 25. The survey is reliable within +/- 3.2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

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