

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Room 281
Legislative Building, Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario.
M7A 1A1

(via email)

September 27, 2020

PLEBISCITE REQUEST - 2026 COMMONWEALTH GAMES PROPOSAL

Premier Ford:

As an Ontario taxpayer and resident of Hamilton I am concerned with the lack of effort being put forward by our local municipal government officials who have made no effort to engage or otherwise solicit feedback from the residents of our community with regards to their support of a 2026 Commonwealth Games hosting proposal. With confidence, I am a firm believer that making an informed decision should include some form of community engagement and consultation when deciding on such an important issue.

Recently, two informal online polls seemed to indicate that Hamilton residents significantly oppose hosting the 2026 Commonwealth Games with 82.9% and 77.2% being in opposition. To date, there has been no formal verification of the alleged benefits of hosting the Games other than Hamilton City Staff declining to endorse hosting the initial 2030 proposal (due to a lack of verifiable information) suggesting that the actual cost of hosting the 2030 version was perhaps as much as \$200 million more than was being presented.

A previous Hamilton Spectator article stated that Bruce Kidd (a professor of sport and public policy at the University of Toronto, winner of the Lou Marsh Trophy in 1961, Gold medalist at the 1962 British Empire and Commonwealth Games, Canadian Olympic Hall of Fame inductee in 1966, Canadian Sports Hall of Fame inductee in 1968 and in 2004 awarded the Order of Canada) hit the nail on the head with his comments that ***“no games should go ahead without broad public support”*** and ***“in fact, a plebiscite should be held to decide the matter”***. His opinion is echoed by Jules Boykoff, Pacific University and an expert in economics who states that ***“any proposal to host international sporting events should be put to a community vote”***.

In November 2018 the Province of Alberta initiated a plebiscite through Elections Calgary which resulted in a 56.4% “NO” vote by Calgary residents towards hosting the 2026 Winter Olympic Games. The majority of Calgaryians had spoken and made it abundantly clear that there was no appetite for hosting another Winter Olympic Games that were largely being supported by taxpayer dollars. Perhaps the Province of Ontario should consider the same stipulation as a condition of provincial funding support which will be a critical element of the 2026 hosting plan.

I'm writing to request your support of ensuring the proper management of provincial taxpayer dollars by requesting that you consider a similar stipulation (as seen in the Calgary Plebiscite) as a condition of any provincial funding commitment to the 2026 Commonwealth Games which is estimated to be as much as \$40 million provincial dollars in addition to being responsible for the projected cost overruns which could total millions of dollars. I would further propose that any costs associated with hosting a plebiscite should be the responsibility of the 2026 Hamilton Hosting Group prior to moving forward with any further discussions.

Now is not the time to gamble on the economic recovery strategy which is already being effectively delivered by both our provincial and federal governments, these funds could be better spent elsewhere for the greater good of every resident in the Province of Ontario.

Sincerely,

Kevin Gonci, CD
Hamilton, Ontario

Distribution

Member of Provincial Parliament Donna Skelly
Hamilton City Council