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MEDIA RELEASE**

Farkas moves to limit City Council's closed-door meetings

October 4, 2018, Calgary, AB – Today, Ward 11 Councillor Jeromy Farkas is submitting a notice of motion aimed at tackling Calgary City Council's excessive use of closed-door meetings.

"This is about opening the doors at City Hall – both figuratively and literally. Calgary City Council spends more time making decisions behind closed doors than any other Canadian city, by a long shot. It's time this changed," Farkas said.

Farkas is proposing new restrictions on Council, as well as new tools for citizens to challenge increased use of closed-door meetings at City Hall. Further, he is asking Council to allow a public tour of the special "closed-door" meeting room dubbed by local media and City Hall followers as the "*Chamber of Secrets*."

"What happens at City Hall belongs to Calgarians, not the politicians. The law is very clear – Council must conduct its business in public, with just a few exceptions made for personnel issues, legal matters, and certain business items," Farkas continued.

Farkas is proposing the following the specific reforms:

- Requiring closed meetings to begin only with a recorded vote so that each City Councillor is put for or against with a clear legal reason;
- Requiring a paper trail for every confidential agenda item;
- Requiring confidentiality at Council to be lifted after a certain period of time (instead of forever);
- Allowing Councillors to bring in outside assistance to closed-door meetings; and
- Allowing the public to challenge whether a closed-door meeting was appropriate.

Background:

In 2017, a new dedicated boardroom was constructed to facilitate Council's closed-door sessions as part of \$2.65 million renovation but, to date, no public access has been granted.

Later that year, the Manning Foundation released a report indicating that between 2013 and 2017, council spent 23.7 per cent of its time in closed-door sessions, amounting to more than 700 private meetings. The same study compared Calgary to jurisdictions in Ontario, including Hamilton, which held 13 private meetings between 2014 and 2016. Toronto held 18 meetings behind closed doors, and Ottawa conducted just one closed-door session during the three-year period.

For more information on Ontario's practice of reviewing municipal closed-door meetings, please visit: <https://www.ombudsman.on.ca/have-a-complaint/who-we-oversee/municipalities/municipal-closed-meetings>

Attachment: Notice of Motion: Reforming Council's Closed-Door Meetings (2 pages)