



Substance over Style required in the next mayoral election

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Toronto Mayor David Miller made things even more interesting than usual when he announced he would not seek a third term. A simmering speculation about who might run against him was transformed into a stampede of potential candidates from all quarters, ranging from press favourites John Tory and George Smitherman, to councillors Stintz, Thompson, and Giambrone, and interesting outsiders like Rocco Rossi.

Much less was written or said about what platform the next mayor should run on. At this point, “who” seems more important than either “what” or “why”. What should the next mayor do, and why does that person want to be mayor?

These are not just questions to be asked in Toronto. Every community in Ontario and across the rest of Canada should ask candidates these questions. The pursuit of public office for its own sake is not good enough, and Canada suffers frequently from politicians who merely want to hold high office for the sake of being there, not from a desire to achieve something.

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“What” is an important question, and articulating it during an election campaign is important to our democracy. Former Prime Minister Kim Campbell might have been practical when she observed that a campaign was no time to talk about the issues, but she was wrong. Without articulating a platform, candidates are asking voters to buy a pig in a poke.

At Maytree, we want candidates to focus on city building issues, particularly those issues of importance to low income and immigrant citizens because these issues matter to all residents of the city. Here are some issues:

HOUSING: the federal and provincial governments, uniquely among governments in the developed world, have lacked adequate housing policy and programs for over two decades, and the market has abandoned the lower end. (There used to be two families chasing each unit of low income housing, and now there are seven.) It is in the cities that this lack is felt most strongly, but cities lack the fiscal resources to rectify the situation. Candidates for mayor should have a commitment to finding practical solutions to the provision of low income housing, either by acquiring new revenue tools or by removing many of the non-construction costs that comprise about half of new unit construction. They should also embrace a plan for the provision of mortgage or mortgage guarantees for immigrant families to help them buy homes, the second most important factor in successful immigrant integration (after finding the right job for which the immigrant has training and experience).

TRANSIT: a comprehensive public transit system is not just an infrastructure matter, but it is a critical economic factor. It is through effective public transit that people connect to their work, school, shopping, leisure, and other economic goods. It is a critical social good as well, as it permits people to connect to their place of worship, playing field, concert or gallery, building social cohesion and community engagement. Toronto, with limited funding, has good plans in Transit City, and the next mayor should embrace and expand on this vision.

IMMIGRANT SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION: immigration is important to Toronto. Much of our current strength as a city region comes from the contributions of immigrants. The City can play an important role as an employer and in appointments to its agencies, boards and commissions (ABC's). The next mayor needs to make a strong commitment to continuing and enhancing Toronto's diversifying of its workforce, and in accelerating the appointment of diverse candidates to its ABC's.

ALL TORONTONIANS VOTE: the municipal vote should be extended to all residents, whether they are Canadian citizens or not. Giving people a say over who governs the policy and programs they consume is not just the right thing to do, it is an obligation of civil liberties and rights. Candidates for mayor should be very clear on their position on this important issue.

CITY BRANDING: positioning Toronto to the world is a vital job of the mayor and the city government. Toronto's current motto *Diversity Is Our Strength* could become *Toronto: For The World*, a bold statement that looks outward in invitation to the people of the planet, and inwards as a vision of equity to every citizen of the city. As Toronto raises its face to the world through Invest Toronto and other development initiatives, a new mayor should articulate a vision of welcome and inclusion.

What is good for immigrants and low income people is good for all Torontonians. We need a mayor and councillors who not only accept that notion of equity, but who have ideas and plans to make it happen. The only way we'll know if they do is if they tell us so during an election campaign. David Miller, in our view, has been a good mayor for Toronto in good part because he had ideas which he talked about, and which he implemented on most of the matters listed above. The next mayor should build and expand the platform David Miller has built, and should tell us about it as soon as his or her candidacy is declared.