



## SEPTEMBER 2012 NEWSLETTER

This is the official newsletter of the  
TORONTO PARTY FOR A BETTER CITY

### PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN

#### Did You Know

The Toronto Party is grateful for the following information provided by [Winning Kids Inc.](#):

- Since 2000, many insurance companies have refused to insure child and youth serving organizations, programs, clubs, associations and churches, against abuse because these organizations do not have adequate abuse protection/prevention policies in place and have therefore been deemed vulnerable to abuse.
- From hands-on experience and qualitative and quantitative research, [Winning Kids Inc.](#) estimates that 70-85% of existing organizations are at medium to high risk of incidents or allegations (substantiated for false) occurring.
- 2008 statistics show that 1 in every 4 girls, and 1 in every 7 boys, are abused before they reach their 16th birthday.

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This summer Toronto has witnessed two high-profile shootings which left 4 people dead and dozens of others injured.

The first shooting took place at the Eaton's Centre, while the second took place at a community party.

In response to those shootings, politicians haggled over the issues of gun crime and gang violence and the best way to end the cycle of gun violence which plagues certain parts of Toronto.

However, lost in this debate was the issue of protecting our children in youth programs offered by the City of Toronto.

Following the Eaton's Centre shooting, it was learned that one of the victims worked with youth through a City program despite being under house arrest and being involved in drug activities. A criminal background check which would have discovered this victim's history had not been done.

While the City immediately announced upon this discovery that its practices would change, we are not convinced that the City goes far enough in protecting our children from exposure to individuals who may have a tainted criminal past.

As an example, the City apparently does not have a policy which requires sports organizations who use city owned properties to make it mandatory that all coaches obtain a criminal background check before being allowed to coach. This is unacceptable and is arguably not in keeping with the best standards of risk practice management. Furthermore, the criminal record check is not enough.

In researching this issue, our organization discovered [Winning Kids Inc.](#), a Child and

Youth Abuse Prevention Consulting organization. Its President and CEO, Melodie Bissell, had the following to say:

"In Canada and in the Province of Ontario, there is no consistent standard for Child and Youth Abuse Prevention. So, in the absence of a consistent standard, Child and Youth serving organizations are creating their own, which has proven to be very dangerous for our kids. Society has bought into the fact that Child and Youth protection is a "Vulnerable Sector" or "Police/Criminal Record" check. While a Criminal Record Check is an important 'component', in the incident within the City of Toronto, they didn't have this component and still allowed their worker to be in a position of trust prior to securing them. A strong screening process includes interviews, reference checks, orientation and ongoing annual abuse prevention training, be put in place. So, why does it take a case like the incident within the City of Toronto to see the gap in the screening processes not being adhered to? It's not enough to do a "Criminal Record Check". Organizations, clubs, schools, camps, sport associations, studios, City programs, must embrace a standard of protection and strive to maintain that standard. Parents should be asking for the standard that [Winning Kids Inc. Plan to Protect®](#) provides as they register their children for fall programs, including registration for school. We strongly encourage all Child and Youth serving organizations to contact [Winning Kids Inc.](#) to talk about how we can work together to protect our future...our kids!"

We agree.

We hope that this issue is given more serious consideration by our politicians and that there is substantial change to the city's practices.

## NOTHING IS BEING DONE IN OUR CITY!

### WE NEED FORMAL MUNICIPAL POLITICAL PARTIES NOW!

The mandate of the Toronto Party is to bring formal municipal political parties to Toronto because we believe that the only way to build our city is through a single vision that is guaranteed the support of a majority of members of City Council.

Our current *de facto* municipal party system does not permit this as witnessed in the destructive debate that recently took place over public transit.

In our view, Toronto is currently rudderless. City Council lacks any vision on major city-building issues. Indeed, the ability for the city to move collectively in one direction is non-existent and some would argue that the city has become stagnant.

Although Mayor Ford has been able to accomplish some things as Mayor, Toronto has still seen very little movement in the area of subway expansion and waterfront development.

The Gardiner Expressway continues to crumble without any vision being supported for its future redevelopment.

While we have advocated for the creation of formal municipal political parties for almost six years now, there has been little appetite among academics or politicians to make our goal a reality...until now!

In a recent article published by [OpenFile](#), a strong argument is made that one of the solutions for fixing city government is to formally recognize municipal political parties. Municipal political parties, it is argued "help politicians better deliver campaign promises and control the agenda once in power."

While we have made this argument, City of Toronto politicians and, more importantly, provincial politicians have turned a deaf ear to the idea.

They have done so, perhaps, because those within political circles or academia have never spoken publicly about the reason why municipal parties are needed.

Jane Armstrong's article, "[Should Toronto Adopt Municipal Political Like Vancouver's?](#)" finally provides this.

She quotes Professor Kennedy Stewart, an NDP Member of Parliament for Burnaby-Douglas, as follows: "Frankly, without parties, your city will begin to stagnate. You really can't get anything done."

Further, Stewart says: "With parties, you give a group a mandate to do something. Otherwise, it's just squabbling and promises that never get fulfilled."

This sounds very much like what is currently happening at City Hall. Nothing is getting done! And frankly, nothing has gotten done for a long time.

Ms. Armstrong quotes University of Toronto Professor Nelson Wiseman as follows:

"Just think about what's going on with transit in this city. It's crazy. As soon as you formulate a plan, somebody comes in and says: 'I've an idea for a better plan. So Toronto's a joke.'"

Professor Wiseman adds: "We've been hearing there's going to be a rail line to Pearson...Well, I'm going to be dead by the time it's built because I think I was a little kid when I first heard about it."

While others debate the idea of improving City Council through the adoption of a ranked-ballot system, the better route to improving our city is through the adoption of formal political parties.