

The **TORONTO PARTY**

LEADING THE WAY

**TTP UPDATE
SEPTEMBER 2008**

This is the official newsletter of The Toronto Party.

EXECUTIVE POSITIONS AND MEMBERSHIP

The Toronto Party has scheduled its Executive election meeting for Saturday, November 29, 2008. Time and location for the meeting will soon be announced.

To run for the Executive and to vote in the election, you must be a member of the party. So now is the time to renew your membership and sign up new members.

In every part of Toronto we hear people saying that Mayor Miller must not be re-elected in 2010. We agree. But if we want to build an alternative and build a better Toronto, then we need your support.

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PARTY SLAMS STRONG MAYOR SYSTEM

Strong Mayor system represents a one-dimensional approach to solving the City's ineffective government

Recently, *The Toronto Star* published an opinion article written by Blake Hutcheson in support of the strong Mayor system. It is a recommendation found in the *Blueprint for Fiscal Stability and Economic Prosperity*.

While we commend Mr. Hutcheson and the other volunteers for their dedication and efforts in working on the Blueprint, we do not believe that the recommendation for a strong Mayor system should be adopted.

In his article, Mr. Hutcheson contended that a strong Mayor system will offer efficiency and accountability at City Hall. However from our experience, we understand that many Torontonians see that our Mayor already rules from a bully pulpit without increasing either.

If a City Councillor wants influence at City Hall, he or she, as witnessed by Councillor Ashton's removal from the Executive Committee last year, must toe the Mayor's line.

Mr. Hutcheson also suggested that the strong Mayor system will foster debate on city issues. However this ignores the reality that there is already no debate at City Hall.

The Mayor's Executive controls the current agenda and any dissent from those outside his inner circle is swiftly quashed. The promised review of Toronto's governing legislation for 2008/09 is already being deferred and we will get 'Strong Mayor' or nothing.

Another argument used to support the idea of a strong Mayor is that it will streamline the reporting process for civil servants. Although one might agree that civil servants reporting to 45 members of Council might be a challenge, it can be argued that the size of council is too large and that 22 might be more appropriate considering that there are generally two councillors for each provincial and federal riding.

Civic parties for a change...

Lastly, supporters of a strong Mayor system point to the way the provincial and federal governments are run as examples of how effective a strong Mayor system could be. But this argument ignores the fact that provincial and federal politics feature political parties. There is cabinet solidarity at these levels because the members chosen to sit in the cabinet are all from the same party. In contrast, the Mayor's Executive is chosen from independently elected councillors, none of whom run on a slate or on the Mayor's platform.

There is a better way of ensuring efficiency and accountability at City Hall rather than just through the creation of a strong Mayor system, and for Premier Dalton McGuinty to impose such a system on Toronto when its residents are strongly opposed to it will be political suicide for his government in the next election.

In our view, Toronto needs its confidence and verve back; the solutions on the table now will not restore vitality to our city.

Why has no one within the political inner circles examined and advocated for the creation of civic parties? For over 50 years, civic parties have been a mainstay in both Quebec and British Columbia. In other major cities around the world, civic parties are common. When one speaks about efficiency and accountability, social studies show that strong civic electoral organizations have the ability of reducing wasteful expenditures and creating better economic growth. Isn't this what the people demand of their governments? To look after our tax dollars and ensure that there is economic prosperity for each of us and our future generations?

To concentrate power in one elected official without an underlying system of checks and balances is wrong. The strong Mayor system is short-sighted, prevents change and leads to a politicization of a civil service that ought to be independent from its elected masters.

But these issues are not discussed in the Blueprint, and therefore before any councillor or provincial MPP adopts the recommendation of a strong Mayor system there needs to be more reflection and more fulsome debate on the current systems and options that are available.

Some people complain that amalgamation was forced on Torontonians. Similarly, we do not need to have a strong Mayor system shoved down our throats by Mayor Miller and his supporters.

THE NEXT "DOES TORONTO NEED A STRONG MAYOR SYSTEM?" MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

SEPTEMBER 23, 2008

YORK CIVIC CENTRE

COMMENCING AT 7:00 P.M.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT COUNCILLOR PALACIO: 416-392-7011