

JOHN TORY, Candidate for Mayor of Toronto
Remarks To The Canadian Club
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Two weeks from today Toronto residents will go to the polls. After many months -- eight in my case -- the candidates will fall silent and the voters will speak.

I know from past campaigns that the last two weeks will be a daily flurry of polls and headlines. So I look on this forum today as a golden opportunity to bring together all that I have been saying -- and hearing -- in my eight months of campaigning across the city.

I want to tie it all together and in so doing, leave you with no doubt about the kind of mayor I will be and the ideals Toronto will strive for under my leadership.

I've run a campaign based on new leadership, responsible change and the ability to get things done. I've outlined where I think Toronto faces tough choices -- and I've clearly outlined to voters how we can meet and overcome those challenges.

Tomorrow I will be unveiling my contract with Toronto. This contract is my signed pledge to follow through on a number of commitments I will be making over the course of the next week.

I will either meet those commitments by the end of the first term, or not stand for re-election.

I believe in being completely accountable. It's that simple. I'm not a career politician running for a job. I'm a concerned citizen running to get the job done.

I entered this race eight months ago holding one fundamental belief. It was that the city had to be managed in a more businesslike way.

I believed the status quo was hurting the city on two fronts. The first is the obvious lack of sound financial management, the lack of a real commitment to cutting waste and doing things more efficiently and effectively at city hall.

Reversing this state of affairs is a pre-condition of Toronto getting a new financial deal from the other levels of government. No-one is going to throw money into a burning house.

The other reason for better financial management can't be found on a balance sheet, but it's even more important to the future of this city. And it goes like this:

Every dollar we waste, every program we run that isn't needed, every effort that is duplicated elsewhere in the bureaucracy, all of these are precious resources that can't be devoted to the human side of the city's balance sheet.

These are items like investing in youth, restoring hope and opportunity, rooting out poverty and despair and repairing our wonderful, but increasingly frayed multicultural quilt.

The benefits of fiscal discipline go beyond a sterling bottom line.

Sometimes the return is found in:

- young people daring to dream again;
- new immigrants quickly finding skilled and challenging work that reflects the education and talent they bring to this country;
- communities on the rebound from many years of crime and decay; and
- neighborhoods that have full use of, and access to, community programs and facilities to raise their young people to be engaged and productive citizens.

This is what I meant when I said last week at the CITY-TV debate: "I'll get results. Things will improve. You'll be able to see – and feel the difference."

But there's a lot of work to do first. The only way to reap these dividends is to move quickly and re-assert sound financial management at city hall. It won't be easy or glamorous. It's painstaking enough for families to sit down at the dining room table, go through the bills, ask some tough questions and set new priorities. Imagine doing it on a city-wide scale with a budget of \$6.5 billion. Yet there is no choice – it simply must be done.

Under my "protecting the taxpayer," plan, I will cut waste so we can improve services and bring in a responsible tax freeze in the second and third year of my administration.

I am the only candidate who believes there is major waste and duplication to be found at City Hall. I am also the only contending candidate promising such a responsible tax freeze. That's not exactly a coincidence. Rooting out that waste will help pay for my tax freeze.

I've already identified lots of waste and I'll find more. I'm going to undertake the most complete review of programs, policies and processes in the history of city hall. We'll go through the budget line by line. We'll go through the departments program by program until we find the savings we need.

The question I will be asking Torontonians over the next 14 days is this: who is really committed to taking action on the serious financial issues facing the city at this critical time – and who really knows how to do it?

Are career politicians who are compromised by their past record and current views the best choice? Or do we need someone who has led similar successful top to bottom overhauls in both the non-profit and private sector?

That's the ballot question that is emerging—who really represents change, the new stronger leadership, the skill set our city needs to get through its current crisis so we can have the energy and the resources to renew and rebuild.

That's the real payoff of managing better. It will allow us to take stock of Toronto's human and social needs and take action on issues that have been lingering and festering for years. That's my real focus.

What I am hearing on the campaign trail, and what I believe in my heart, is that far too many citizens no longer dare to dream. Far too many citizens feel disconnected from the communities around them. We must never accept that. Toronto should be all about hope and opportunity and inclusion.

In the last fifteen years or so, we have allowed well over a dozen pockets of despair and disadvantage to develop in the city. They are home to thousands of people who are our fellow citizens.

These neighborhoods are not consistent with my idea of Canadian citizenship. They are not what Toronto is, or should be, about. We've got to come to terms with the challenges posed by these particular areas of the city.

We've got to do a better job of directing services that matter to these neighborhoods – community centres, sports, culture, child care centres, job training, and health and social services.

A cardinal rule of my administration will be that you receive the same high level of city services whether you live in the annex, the Kingsway or one of these pockets of despair -- Rexdale, Jane-Finch, St. Jamestown, Malvern, Lawrence Heights, the motel strip on Kingston Road and many others too numerous to mention here. In some cases they need more than others.

It doesn't take a PhD in sociology to realize that Toronto's social future is being incubated in these neighborhoods.

Hundreds of thousands of new Canadians are coming to Toronto every year, yet anecdotal and statistical evidence suggests their social and economic integration is proceeding very slowly.

Many of these newcomers are highly talented individuals and professionals hoping to earn a living in their line of work, hoping to live the Canadian dream, only to find one obstacle after another standing in their way.

As part of my "citizens in" program, I will revamp recruitment and procurement at city hall so that everyone has a fair opportunity to do city work and to bid on city work. Over time, this reaching out will ensure city government better reflects the make-up of the community. So that will be a start.

I'm running for Mayor, not Prime Minister. Yet I think a Mayor of Toronto sees, more than any Prime Minister could, the pluses and minuses, the highs and the lows of new Canadians trying to make it in this city.

Our multicultural quilt, while still a thing of beauty, is increasingly frayed at the edges. The next mayor of Toronto has to go beyond the tourism brochures and put the full social and economic integration of new Torontonians on the front burner.

That means mobilizing business, labour, non-profit groups and average citizens to actively address the tensions existing in our own community.

Another area we need to invest in is our young people.

No matter how dire the circumstances, there are always things we can do to keep hope alive in any human situation. We need role models, mentors, great after school programs, more art, music and dance. All of these will engage and occupy young people, and keep them off the slippery slope.

Let me talk about a program in Regent Park for a moment called "Pathways to Education" – or P2E. Regent Park is an area in our city that has faced formidable challenges. At times, the dropout rate between grades nine and ten has approached 60 per cent.

In today's world of lifelong learning, this is a dropout rate that virtually consigns these kids to a life of poverty and dead-end jobs.

Kids in Regent Park are just as smart as their counterparts across the city -- I'm sure their parents would say even smarter!

But the dropout rate is higher because kids there face obstacles in going to school, getting to school and staying with it that kids in other parts of Toronto don't face.

P2E is a program that provides academic, financial, social and staff support to get kids over the dropout hump and on to post-secondary programs.

At Regent Park, P2E has worked wonders. Its most recent figures show that it has taken 99 per cent of its kids through the grade 9-10 transition. Just think of the all-round better futures those kids will enjoy as a result.

Up to now, this program has been fully funded by the private sector. I'll be looking closely at supporting it financially and helping it expand to other lower income neighborhoods. This is clearly an area where the city has a huge stake.

My own financial plan – fully costed out -- devotes nearly 20 million dollars in year one in additional funding for new programs, services and facilities for young people in the city's most disadvantaged neighborhoods.

I also intend to put 400 new police officers on the street. We need these officers to help fight the drugs, gangs and guns that have become entrenched in so many communities.

It also frees up resources in the police service so it can do a much better job of connecting with the community, working with troubled youth, maintaining a higher visible presence and above all, preventing crime.

There's lots more an active Mayor of Toronto can do. I've been quite vocal about making sure we utilize our community assets to the fullest. And the number one underused resource in any Toronto neighborhood is the local school.

Beyond being a strong advocate for public education, I will be asking some important questions on behalf of Toronto families and taxpayers.

Why are these buildings locked much of the time when not in use? Why is the school board charging user fees for youth, community groups and adolescents to use the schools after hours?

Why are these facilities, with their auditoriums, libraries and gyms not viewed as total neighborhood resources?

We can also do a lot more with books. Both the Toronto public library and the public school board say they don't have enough money to buy new books or promote reading and literacy.

What if they got together and talked about how they could better use the resources they have in each neighborhood to the benefit of all?

In some neighborhoods, it might mean opening or relocating a public library right into the school with a much broader funding base to do the job properly.

I guess my point is that we have erected several civic silos over the years. These vertical silos determine the roll out of services in each neighborhood.

Amalgamation did not do away with these silos – but imagination can.

The answers to many of the problems in our neighborhoods can be found right there – in the neighborhood. We just need a mayor who will look at things a little differently.

Another way we can improve quality of life in the city is by protecting neighborhoods from inappropriate development.

Many communities north of Bloor Danforth are dealing with proposals that will bring skyscrapers right to their doorstep -- what I call the “Manhattanization” of Toronto. Too often the city caves in rather than negotiating improvements to these proposals.

If we were on firmer financial footing, we would have more leverage in negotiations with developers. We’d be able to pass up short term cash infusions and hold out for development that really benefits our neighborhoods in the long term.

As a former CEO and manager of large corporate organizations, I can make a good case that the leadership skills I have honed in these positions will serve me well at city hall.

But people who are aware of my long background in charity and volunteer work often ask me how those experiences will shape my views as mayor.

It’s a good question. I got into charitable work because I wanted to give something back, but I stayed with it because I learned that one person, getting up early, taking on a project, contributing his or her talents, really can make a difference in people’s lives.

I’m running for mayor because I believe one person, with the right vision and the right team, really can make a difference in the direction and life of a city.

And as mayor, I will be asking citizens, one at a time, regardless of race, colour, nationality, religion, sexuality or anything else to come and help me fix the city we love and make sure we can be truly proud of it in the years to come.

I **haven’t** talked about everything in my platform today. I haven’t talked about solving our solid waste crisis, cleaning up the streets and parks, housing the homeless and developing an economic plan for the city. Each is a very important item on its own, and taken together, also represent the sort of collective investment in our future I have been talking about today.

What I **have** concentrated on instead today is the need for real take charge leadership that drives us toward being a better managed city. Leadership that gets things done, moves the yardsticks and frees us to concentrate on the pressing human and social needs in our midst.

If you live within the city limits, and like what you've heard today, I need your vote and that of 100 of your friends and neighbors.

I can talk non-stop from now until November 10th -- and believe me I will -- but the only thing that's going to count on that second Monday in November are the votes.

I am determined to show strength, conviction and leadership.

I **will** make us proud again. Thank you