

### **32 to 11 – municipal election math**

There are 32 people who have come forward and offered themselves for election to City Council. Thirty-two who are brave enough to put their name on signs, to go to potentially hostile doors, to answer questions that the Board of Trade and others ask, and then publicly have their performance evaluated by thousands of voters.

Why would anyone do such a thing to themselves? Well, I'd like to think that each of them has a sense of community service, has an understanding of what they can offer to the electorate, and has the drive and determination to make this a better city. This is an ideal we can all get behind. We have different ideas of what a better city is, but we can agree that constant improvement is a necessary goal.

The percentage of people running for Council – and the percentage who will actually get elected – is mind-boggling compared to the city's population of over 100,000. If it was any other statistic, no one would even talk about it. But a large part of our city's future depends on those 32 people, and the group of 11 that will be deemed by the collective electorate to be our representatives and decision-makers.

Just put yourself in their shoes for a minute. They are going to hundreds, if not thousands, of doors to solicit your vote. They are putting in time by excusing themselves from the dinner tables they share with their families, or telling their employer that they need some time off to campaign. They are seeing unfriendly dogs and unfriendly people. They are talking to campaign managers and volunteers and citizen groups.

When a candidate comes to your door, think about what they are doing for a minute. In four years, they may be asking for 2 minutes of your time, on your doorstep. Don't just shut the door. Listen to what they have to say. If you like it, great. If you don't, ask a question or make a suggestion on what they should be thinking about. Be polite, but be firm if you want an answer about something.

Candidates are there to sell themselves; be sure you know what you are buying. Kicking the tires means asking a question. What do they think the priorities for the city are? What is the city doing well? What does it need to improve upon? What have they got in their minds for the next four years? What have they got in their minds for the next 20?

Let me leave you with a list of things we need to do, as residents of a city that we love:

First, get aware of the issues. Issues are different for everyone. I have things as a small business owner, as a father and grandfather, as a community volunteer, that aren't of concern to other people. But they are my issues and I want them addressed. Make yourself aware of your own issues and where candidates stand on them.

Second, in the coming days, read the voters guide that the Board will put forward to the public and the media. Tell your friends and neighbours about it so they can make their voting decisions based on the things they want to see in the next four years.

Third, if you aren't satisfied with the information you are getting from candidates, or you want more discussion on a topic, or you have a suggestion on how to improve your city, call a radio show or write letters to the paper. Be involved. Make a public pronouncement that your issue is important and has to be addressed.

Finally, I mentioned election math earlier. Consider this, if everyone who voted in the last general election in 2005 had voted for one person, that person would still not have a majority. Forty-nine per cent is too low of a voter participation rate. My biggest piece of advice is this – and if you take absolutely nothing else away from these words – just take this away. Go VOTE.