

Toronto Women's Call to Action

"Where Do Women Figure In Your City?"

October 11, 2007: TWCA Candidate Questions

Priority One: Affordable Housing

1. All commentary on housing points out the need for all three levels of government to co-operate to ensure citizens have the human right to shelter. The federal and provincial policies of the last decade have shifted an unreasonable load on municipalities. However the city does have the power to develop zoning regulations and planning to support affordable housing. *Will you as mayor/councillor require developers of condominiums, when replacing existing housing with high-end condominiums, to set aside ten percent (10%) of the units for affordable housing that will be managed by the city? Will you ensure that poor women and children and those escaping abusive households will be a priority?*

I have a different strategy for this development, but I would support this on a philosophical level. I think that there are better ways to both plan, fund, and operate affordable housing – without government involvement – other than providing the funding base. The City has proved incompetent in this area as have other areas of government. The program I have in mind includes growing food, community development and interaction, and education.

2. Task forces and reports in the past decade have recommended targets on affordable and supportive housing. In November 2003, Mayor Miller promised targets of 1,000 new units in both affordable and supportive housing. None of the targets have been met and at the same time the number of women and children using food banks is increasing, largely because their housing costs exceed 50% of their income. *Will you as mayor/councillor make a commitment to set targets for affordable and supportive housing to be developed each year? What will you do to ensure these targets include women and children?*

I have difficulty with targets – I think we have to make wholesale changes in our thinking. A target of 1000 is paltry. Why not have a five year plan for 40,000? For those that are familiar with the financing obstacles – they are structured ignorance. I have been told that if a plan was in place the banking institutions would pick up the paper of up to half a billion dollars – within one hour. All it requires is a federal financing guarantee / political will – not even cash!!!

Priority Two: Governance Structure

3. Results from a survey of Canadian municipalities shows that only 1% of elected women are from racialized groups, less than 1% are women with disabilities, and less than 1% are immigrant women. *What will you do to integrate diverse women's equal participation in decision-making in municipal government?*

The process of the Roundtables is currently not an appropriate process – there ought to be support for participants with income challenges in order that they may participate. Councillors discretionary budgets should be supportive of the roundtables to the tune of 20% of their budgets, and they themselves ought to be more responsible to a new process of accountability.

People should be selected by the quality of their thought and the integrity of their processes. If this were true in political circles we would not have people like Mr Miller pretending to develop

multicultural programs. Token people do not solve the problem. Process equitably applied solves problems.

4. For real and meaningful integration of diversity and gender in the City of Toronto, Toronto Women's Call to Action would like to see a Women's Equalities Office established at the City, that would among other things, create tools for sex-disaggregated data collection and reporting. *Do you support this initiative? If so, what will you do to ensure it is established?*

PO. This needs to be expanded and integrated with First Nations initiatives. Inequalities that exist will not be eliminated through an Equalities office – we need to promote thinking that confirms this in our daily activities.

I have supported the establishing of a new Peace and Justice Roundtable , and I believe these two ideas are not separate. The major problem with the roundtables is to have the Mayor and Council listen to them. Equity is not going to come through legislation – rather education.

Priority Three: Violence Against Women

5. "2-6 children in every classroom have witnessed an instance of domestic violence" (1990 Statistic - National Clearinghouse on Family Violence). Domestic violence is frequently seen as a private issue, although there are very public implications (such as increased costs to healthcare, reliance on welfare/childcare subsidies). *Can you tell me about your knowledge on the issue violence against women (VAW)? How will you take a holistic approach to addressing VAW and children in the home/private sectors of society?*

Through education in the meaning of holism. I am somewhat surprised at the question as few understand the term as I do. As for violence against women, my knowledge is limited. I come from a community that honors the woman - being Jewish, and my current activity in the First Nations Community recognizes the power of the women – but not the abuse that has come from integrating within the Canadian society. Influence of drugs and alcohol and poverty consciousness has led to a level of abuse of women that is staggering and numbing to the psyche. VAW is clearly a problem that arises from poverty and circumstances fueled by a dysfunctional media that promotes violence. Media is culpable and needs to be taken to task for its blind acceptance as violence as a norm of behaviour.

6. *Are you aware of the Domestic Violence Action Plan set out by the Ontario Women's Directorate? If yes: How are you going to ensure the strategies are implemented? How will you ensure that funding is secured for these programs? If no, please set out strategies for addressing violence against women in Ontario.*

I am not aware of the specific Plan, but I am quite certain my knowledge as a Peace educator and an in depth understanding of building peaceful communities would go a long way to implement your plan. Two immediate thoughts come to mind. 1) the Thanksgiving Address of the Iroquois people teaches respect for all people and living things – and the Great mind program teaches holistic thinking models – these two programs along with the messages that I carry from the elders would likely be totally congruent with the plan that you are proposing – in particular – the message I carry from Angaangaq the Eskimo Elder – "we need to melt the ice in the heart of man".

Priority Four: Policing

7. Although violent crime is down in our city, sexual assault continues to rise, affecting one in four women at some time in their lives. Eight years ago, city council instructed the Auditor General to conduct an audit or inquiry into police investigation of the sexual assault of adult women. It is known as the "Jane Doe Audit". Eight years later, the 57 recommendations remain unimplemented and Toronto women continue not to report their rapes citing fear of sexist and racist responses by police and the legal system. City council and the Police Service Board currently have carriage of this issue and while there has been some movement, community women report no substantial change. *If elected,*

how will you actively support the implementation of the recommendations? And how will you work to reduce racial profiling of women and men by police?

I believe my previous answer addresses this. Education and training.

8. Currently 45 per cent (45%) of our property tax dollars are spent just to maintain the police service. The additional police officers being hired mean more costs. *How should these extra costs be paid -- by raising property taxes or by cutting other municipal services? If so, which ones?*

I have not been able to analyze the Police Services budget. They do not make it available. But I think there are some major problems with regards to the way the UNION works. There does not seem to be a co-operative approach – overtime is a big issue for me – how many officers are making over \$120K per year? How much of that is “featherbedding overtime?”

While I recognize the police have a difficult job as our society appears to be breaking down ,the police must be more integrated into the other aspects of our education, and emergency services systems. Also there is a program for retired officers that is not being used as effectively a as it could be. This is unfortunately due to a Union mentality that pervades all of our social services.

The Gardian Angels program for instance could take pressure off the police if it were allowed to be in Toronto (or other citizen led programs –preferably funded)

When I learned that 50% of those working in Canada are unhappy with their job – this indicates that we have a stress driven system that needs to look deeper at how we educate and train people. And the Mayors office requires a “new thinking” paradigm. The First Nations peoples have brought forth a Document called the Fourth way (accessible from our site www.homeplanet.org that outlines 16 principles for moving forward to a sustainable community.

Policing has to look at this as does the school boards, and the health care systems.

Priority Five: Childcare

9. According to the “Vital Signs 2006 Report”, the number of children waiting to access subsidized child care in Toronto almost doubled from 4,162 in 2004 to 8,209 children in 2006. Given current funding levels, it is estimated that 72% of the city's low-income children (aged 0-9 years) do not have access to subsidized child care, restricting their parents' ability to work or attend school. *How are you as the mayor/councillor going to make childcare affordable and accessible for poor women and men?*

Childcare ought to be seen as part of the education program of the province. The development of Childcare ought to thought of as an integrated approach working with Seniors and other aspects of our society - too often we look at problems separately – and not holistically within our systems. I believe we have the resources – we just are not using them well. In Toronto we have a deficit in thinking (political) – the grass roots knows that we can do better and they expend so much energy trying to wake up people in the system to the potential.

Priority Six: Environment

10. Many citizens are unaware of the hundreds of toxic and hazardous chemicals used and released daily in the City of Toronto. Access to information about these uses and releases is critical to understanding and preventing potential risks to young mothers and children in particular. *Will you support the implementation of a Community Right-to-Know bylaw during the upcoming term of council that focuses on toxic chemicals that contribute to occupational and environmental cancer and poor air quality, and on chemicals that*

damage mothers and children's health?

Yes. But this is insufficient. I think has to be part of the "garbage" program. As we develop the diversion program of garbage from apartment buildings it could be easily integrated into the teaching aspect.

11. The Ontario Medical Association reports that smog is a major cause of premature deaths among those over 65 and increased hospitalization among children. It is usually women who have to care for both by taking time off from their jobs or sometimes giving up their careers altogether to care for family members suffering from smog-related illnesses. Will you support the drafting of a new comprehensive plan that will reduce smog-causing pollution within the City of Toronto from current levels by at least 20% by 2012?

Yes.

Our programs www.homeplanet.org includes processes for social change.

Why I should be mayor is that I understand the need for holistic thinking models and none of the other candidates have any real sense of what holistic thinking is, what global education is, what common core curriculum is, what transformative learning is, what values education is, what integrative thinking is.

These aspects alone – should be reason enough to have me be Mayor – GO for Gold

I will up level the process- integrate trainings – challenge staff to learn more, do better or get out! Too often there is a meanness that pervades city staff, or "just doing my job" this is not enough – in fact it is not what we as citizens want or deserve – from the immigrant person seeking to learn English, or the First Nations Person trying to be a human being according to his own traditions – Toronto is here to be a beacon for the Free world – and we are not doing a very good job of it.

Peace, Om, Shanti, Om

*Mitch Gold
Peacemaker
www.homeplanet.org*

What this questionnaire has left our is the notion of restricting crime. Honouring the mothers, and how to get guns off the streets.

Mothers have a great role to play in these areas as do grandmothers and Seniors. Honouring the grandmothers is a key element in shifting the patterns of our society and by not including the Senior women in the model – nothing will work effectively.

IMHO there should be rewards programs for participation in the process and these could be easily funded through programs designed effectively to reward those that participate – through TTC passes, other kinds of rewards / benefit programs. Gun collecting etc. Too often we give certificates for participation and not enough in the way it is needed. Economic rewards and benefits. (this need be done within the context of larger societal changes based upon the 1% Solution Program (TOPS))