

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE SEPTEMBER 5, 2006

GO VOTE VAUGHAN

Recommendation

The City Clerk and Returning Officer recommends:

- 1) That "Go Vote Vaughan" be endorsed;
- 2) That the City Clerk act as the liaison for Go Vote Vaughan;
- 3) That space on community centre bulletin boards, to accommodate up to an 18" x 24" poster, be made available;
- 4) That space be made available on community centre outdoor marquees provided there is no conflict with previous commitments, for the period November 4 to November 13, being the advance vote period.
- 5) That rooms be made available, subject to availability, at the CSO rate for all candidates meetings;
- 6) That Council direction be provided respecting the use of the Council Chambers for the launching of Go Vote Vaughan; and
- 7) That no direct funding be provided.

Economic Impact

Provided there is no direct funding, the economic impact would be minimal.

Purpose

To respond to a Council directive for a staff report on the Go Vote Vaughan initiative.

Background - Analysis and Options

Mr. Steven Del Duca appeared in deputation before Committee of the Whole on May 19, 2006 seeking support for an initiative "Go Vote Vaughan", a proposed program to increase voter participation in the November 13th municipal election (Attachment #1 – Go Vote Vaughan Backgrounder). Mr. Del Duca requested that his initiative be endorsed and specifically requested the following:

- Permission to use Council Chambers for Go Vote Vaughan's official launch
- The selection of a city staff person to act as a liaison for Go Vote Vaughan
- The waiving of administrative or room rental fees at city-owned buildings for hosting Go Vote Vaughan all-candidates' debates
- The use of notice boards at city-owned buildings for the posting of non-partisan messages encouraging residents to vote in the final days of the campaign.

In addition he submitted a pledge for consideration which he intends to ask all candidates for office in the upcoming election to sign. Subsequently he revised the pledge and Council at its meeting of June 26th endorsed the following pledge:

1. I PLEDGE to conduct my campaign in a manner that respects the democratic process and focuses on the issues

2. I PLEDGE to not engage in negative, derogatory or attack-style campaigning and I will treat the voters and my opponents with respect at all times
3. I PLEDGE to support efforts being made to increase civic engagement and voter turnout in Vaughan and will participate in all-candidates' meetings sponsored by Go Vote Vaughan

Subsequent to his Committee of the Whole deputation, Mr. Del Duca submitted an additional request to those noted above for \$15,000. from the election reserve to assist in financing his efforts to increase voter participation in Vaughan (Attachment #2).

To date few municipalities have actively engaged in efforts to increase voter turnout. Few would argue that it is not a laudable objective. Some measures have been taken. In York Region, Markham introduced internet voting in 2003 in part to attempt to increase voting. The Town of Newmarket has a Kids Vote Program and has recently begun to publish election notices in various languages to promote participation by new Canadians. Vaughan Council has also taken steps to reach out to recent immigrants by directing that election notices be made available in various languages (Russian, Chinese, Punjabi and Filipino). In addition, Council has directed that the number of advance poll days be increased at the upcoming election. There is no precedent in Vaughan for the funding of any initiative to promote voter participation.

Mr. Del Duca has made a number of other requests as previously noted. He requests the use of the Council Chambers in September for the official launching of Go Vote Vaughan. Also, he is seeking to use facilities to conduct all candidates meetings with all fees being waived. In the past, the Council Chambers have not been rented out to individuals. Consequently a Council directive is requested. Traditionally all candidates meetings have been hosted by various ratepayers associations and rental fees based on the CSO rate have been charged. It may be appropriate to have the same rate apply for Mr. Del Duca.

It is being requested that a City staff person be designated as the liaison for Go Vote Vaughan. The City Clerk may be the appropriate person. In addition, space on notice boards at City-owned buildings is requested to assist in promoting voter participation. Recreation staff advise that space could be made available on bulletin boards at the community centres as well as on the outdoor marquee signs which had also been requested by Mr. Del Duca.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2007

This report recommends a change from the priorities previously set by Council and the necessary resources have not been allocated.

Conclusion

To date few municipalities have undertaken initiatives to provide voter participation. That said as mentioned above, internet voting has been introduced in one municipality and a number of municipalities are producing election notices in various languages in an effort to reach out to new Canadians. As well, the "Kids Vote" program is an effort to get kids and parents out to the polls. Council may wish to endorse Go Vote Vaughan and certain recommendations have been made to this end.

Attachments

- Attachment #1 – Go Vote Vaughan – Background – (Additional Information Deputation 7.c – Committee of the Whole June 19, 2006)
- Attachment #2 – Letter from Steven Del Duca, dated June 23, 2006

Report prepared by:

John D. Leach, City Clerk and Returning Officer

Respectfully submitted,

John D. Leach,
City Clerk

Janice Atwood-Petkovski,
Commissioner of Legal and Administrative Services

GO VOTE VAUGHAN - BACKGROUNDER

ATTACHMENT #1

Overview

Historically, voter turnout for municipal elections in Ontario is low. The City of Vaughan is not unlike other municipalities in this regard, with approximately 32% of eligible voters turning out for the 2003 election. Clearly, we can do better.

Go Vote Vaughan is a non-partisan, grassroots initiative that has a simple goal: to establish Vaughan as a lighthouse municipality with respect to civic engagement, democratic participation and voter turnout. Using a variety of creative methods, we want Vaughan to emerge as the 905 municipality with the highest turnout on Monday, November 13.

Our Plan

Since the beginning of April, positive articles have appeared regarding Go Vote Vaughan in the Vaughan Weekly, Vaughan Citizen, Lo Specchio, Corriere Canadese and the Toronto Star. The Vaughan Chamber of Commerce has agreed to officially support the initiative and each of Vaughan's ratepayers' associations has been contacted as well.

We plan to officially launch Go Vote Vaughan in early September with a pledge-signing ceremony (see below for more details regarding the pledge) and the release of a website. The website will include details regarding the initiative and will also provide the participating candidates with a page on which to post biographical information and campaign contact information. Those candidates who participate will be entitled to use Go Vote Vaughan's official logo on their communications materials.

Following the launch, we will organize five all-candidates' meetings (one per city ward) that will showcase candidates running for each position (Local Council, Regional Council and Mayor). At this time, it is expected that the format will allow for one hour dedicated to each position - so it could be as follows:

- 6:00pm-7:00pm -- Candidates for Local Council (specific to each ward)
- 7:00pm-8:00pm -- Candidates for Regional Council
- 8:00pm-9:00pm -- Candidates for Mayor

It is also possible that the mayoral portion of these meetings will focus on different issues and themes. Format and details will be finalized prior to Go Vote Vaughan's official launch.

In the final two weeks before November 13, it is hoped that Go Vote Vaughan will be in a position to embark on a sign campaign designed to increase awareness and encourage residents to vote.

Go Vote Vaughan also plans to work with Youth Councillor Frisoli and the Youth Cabinet to assist with efforts to create interest among Vaughan's student population.

Go Vote Vaughan's Candidate Pledge

All registered candidates will be invited to participate in Go Vote Vaughan and will be asked to demonstrate their support by signing a pledge at our official launch.

That pledge will contain the following:

1. **I PLEDGE** to conduct my campaign in a manner that respects the democratic process and focuses on issues; I will not engage in negative, derogatory or attack-style campaigning; and I will treat the voters and my opponents with respect at all times*
2. **I PLEDGE** to disclose the names of my campaign donors (and the amounts that they have donated to my campaign) to Go Vote Vaughan for public release prior to election day**
3. **I PLEDGE** to support efforts being made to increase voter turnout in Vaughan and will participate in all-candidates' meetings sponsored by Go Vote Vaughan

*Please note that compliance with the pledge is based on the honour system. Go Vote Vaughan does not plan to act as a "watch-dog", judging which behaviour is acceptable and which is not. We have a great deal of faith in those who have registered as candidates and we are confident that the scrutiny of both the media and the voting public will be sufficient to ensure that registered candidates follow the spirit of the pledge.

**Go Vote Vaughan intends to post the respective donors' lists on its website. Please note that disclosure will only occur if all registered candidates running for a particular position (who are participating in Go Vote Vaughan) submit their list.

Steven Del Duca - Biographical Information

GOVV was conceived by Steven Del Duca in March 2006. Steven has been a resident of Vaughan for almost 20 years and has been active in politics and government for over 15 years. He served as Executive Assistant to MPP Greg Sorbara and Senior Advisor to former federal Immigration Minister Joseph Volpe. He is a member of the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce and served on the Mayor's Health Care Facility Task Force. Steven is currently attending Osgoode Hall Law School and he and his wife Utilia Amaral live in Vaughan's Ward 2.

Contact Information

For more information regarding Go Vote Vaughan, please contact Steven Del Duca at 905-264-3823 or via e-mail at steven_del_duca@hotmail.com

ADDITIONAL INFORMATIONITEM NO. 111Report No. 37 Council June 26/06

June 23, 2006

Mr. John Leach
Clerk, City of Vaughan
2141 Major Mackenzie Drive
Vaughan ON L6A 1T1

Dear Mr. Leach:

I am writing to you with respect to the deputation that I presented to Committee of the Whole on Monday, June 19th regarding Go Vote Vaughan.

Since appearing before Council, I have had the opportunity to reflect on the feedback that I received from Councillors Meffe, Ferri, Shefman and Frustaglio. I have come to the conclusion that my proposal would be strengthened by revising the Candidate Pledge so as to focus on the goals of increasing civic engagement and voter turnout.

Specifically, the *revised* Candidate Pledge would read as follows:

1. **I PLEDGE** to conduct my campaign in a manner that respects the democratic process and focuses on the issues
2. **I PLEDGE** to not engage in negative, derogatory or attack-style campaigning and I will treat the voters and my opponents with respect at all times
3. **I PLEDGE** to support efforts being made to increase civic engagement and voter turnout in Vaughan and will participate in all-candidates' meetings sponsored by Go Vote Vaughan

You will note that I have removed the pre-election day donor disclosure portion of the pledge. I have done so because of concerns raised about Go Vote Vaughan's ability to ensure the accuracy of the information submitted for disclosure. I have decided that publicly releasing potentially inaccurate information during an election campaign would be unfairly disruptive to the process and to the registered candidates participating in good faith.

That said, I remain convinced that municipalities such as Vaughan are uniquely positioned to play a leadership role with respect to election finance reform in the interests of restoring faith in our electoral system. I welcome the opportunity to work with those elected on November 13th to provide concrete examples the Government of Ontario as to how the Municipal Elections Act can be reformed so as to encourage democratic participation and create a more transparent and equitable election process.

Please also note that I would like to amend my submission with respect to seeking the City of Vaughan's official support. While most of our plan can be implemented at virtually no cost, there are some elements that will require funding. While I am hopeful that we will be able to raise some money from our corporate community, it would be helpful if the City was willing to provide some funding for our initiative from its election reserve. At this time, I estimate that the total cost of Go Vote Vaughan will be no more than \$15,000 (for items such as website production and hosting; the purchase of approximately 500 32"x 48" coroplast signs and approximately 1000 wood stakes; the design and printing of one pamphlet etc.). I would be happy to provide a more specific budget estimate if required.

If you require additional information regarding any of the above, please contact me directly. I can be reached at either 905-264-3823 or 416-802-8041, or via e-mail at steven_del_duca@hotmail.com.

Sincerely,

Steven Del Duca