

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – SEPTEMBER 29, 2009

TASK FORCE ON DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION & RENEWAL: FINAL REPORT

Recommendation

Councillor Tony Carella and Steven Del Duca, Co-chairs, Task Force on Democratic Participation & Renewal, recommends:

- 1) That the following report be received;
- 2) That the recommendations contained in the attached 'Final Report' be approved by Council and the City Clerk, as appropriate; and
- 3) That the Clerk report to the Council meeting of December 14, 2009, the outcome of each of the recommendations in this document, including any action plan in respect of recommendations adopted by the Clerk or Council.

Economic Impact

Nil

Contribution to Sustainability

At a conceptual level, democracy---defined by Abraham Lincoln as "...government of the people, by the people, and for the people"---can only be sustained by the participation of the people in the most fundamental feature of representative democracy---the exercise of their right to elect their representatives. As well, at a practical level, this report recommends a number of initiatives which, if implemented, will reduce the need to expend finite resources such as paper ballots, newspaper advertising space, etc.

Communications Plan

Once received and adopted by Council, Corporate Communications shall issue a media release, indicating that the Final Report of the Task Force on Democratic Participation and Renewal has been adopted and will shortly be viewable at the City's website. In addition, a limited number of hard copies will be available upon request.

Purpose

To present the Task Force's final report, following on a series of interim reports on the work of the Task Force dated March 31, 2008, September 30, 2008, and March 31, 2009.

Background – Analysis and Options

The Task Force was appointed in 2007, with a mandate to make recommendations for increasing voter turnout from 38% to 50% across the City of Vaughan in the next municipal election (November 2010). Over the past two years, the Task Force has examined the challenges and opportunities for the City of Vaughan to reach this goal by focusing on three key areas:

- (1) why people do not vote,
- (2) ways to increase voting, and
- (3) strategies to increase awareness about the importance of voting.

To that end, three subcommittees of the Task Force met to discuss and collect research

in each of these areas, in order to further discussion and identify recommendations for inclusion in the Task Force's final report to Council. Some of the issues addressed by the Task Force have included: patterns of voter participation in other municipalities and jurisdictions, both domestically and internationally; investigating the factors that result in lower voter turnout, and discussing remedial strategies. Members of the Task Force on Democratic Participation and Renewal have met monthly since its inception, to advance the initial research presented in the first and second reports detailing activities, and to identify its final recommendations based in part on its third report on March 31, 2009.

Regional Implications

Nil

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council and the necessary resources have been allocated and approved.

Attachment:

Final Report of the Task Force on Democratic Participation and Renewal

Conclusion:

The Task Force has completed its mandate and herewith submits its final report.

Report prepared by:

Councillor Tony Carella, Steven Del Duca, Elliott Silverstein

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor Tony Carella, FRSA
Co-Chair
Task Force on Democratic Participation and Renewal



Final
Report

Task Force on Democratic Participation and Renewal

Members of the
Task Force on Democratic Participation and Renewal

Councillor Tony Carella, FRSA, *Co-chair*
Steven Del Duca, *Co-chair*

Stephen Adler
David Bingham
Elizabeth Bottos
Gail Copeland
Tony Genco
Joseph Grando
Alan Lee Hoy
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Tapas Pain
Loreta Pavese
Al Ruggero
Muhammad Saleem
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David Sieger
Elliott Silverstein

Rose Magnifico, *Assistant City Clerk*

Letter of Transmittal

September 29, 2009

Mayor and Members of Council
City of Vaughan
2141 Major Mackenzie Drive
Vaughan, Ontario
L6A 1T1

Dear Madame Mayor and Members of Council,

We are pleased to present the final report of the City of Vaughan's Task Force on Democratic Participation and Renewal.

Appointed in 2007, the members of the Task Force have worked diligently over the past two years to develop the recommendations contained in this report, with the goal of increasing the turnout of 2010 voters to 50 per cent.

Both of us have found the work of the Task Force immensely challenging, but even more stimulating---given the intelligence, dedication, and commitment to the democratic process so clearly demonstrated by our Task Force colleagues.

We take this opportunity to thank each of them, as well as City Clerk, Jeffrey Abrams, for his ongoing cooperation, and Assistant City Clerk, Rose Magnifico, for her unfailing support.

Yours truly,



Tony Carella, FRSA
Co-chair



Steven Del Duca
Co-chair

INTRODUCTION

"...to increase to 50 per cent the turnout of eligible voters in the 2010 municipal election"

- from the *Terms of Reference of the
City of Vaughan's Task Force on Democratic Participation and Renewal*

The Task Force recognizes that many of the challenges surrounding citizen engagement in the political process are not unique to the City of Vaughan. Nevertheless, the recommendations contained herein are intended to build awareness of what the City of Vaughan does for its citizens, create a more informed and engaged voter, and increase access to voting options---all in the hope that any or all of these recommendations will increase voter turnout to 50 per cent in the November 2010 municipal election.

In the Task Force's initial report, it was noted that the new City Clerk would be invited to attend a Task Force meeting to discuss initiatives---including some techniques used in other jurisdictions---for enhancing voter participation in advance of Vaughan's 2010 municipal election. Indeed, the City Clerk, Jeffrey Abrams, has attended a number of Task Force meetings, where he provided a sense of the direction that his office was planning to take for the 2010 election. In turn, the Task Force provided the Clerk with some insights into the conceptual basis for the recommendations that the Task Force was in the process of generating. These sessions have proven useful for the Task Force as it has provided additional perspective on the timelines that the Clerk and his team are employing for the proper administration of the next municipal election.

Over the course of the Task Force's mandate, the issues relating to democratic participation and renewal have been categorized as follows:

- Alternative voting methods
- Increased access to election information
- Voting tendencies, including reasons why individuals do not vote in municipal elections
- Convenience of voting in Vaughan

To ensure the Task Force was informed of the views of our citizenry, a survey

was developed, to be linked to the City of Vaughan's website, and promoted via the City Page in community newspapers, as well as by Task Force members to their electronic mail contacts.

The survey was conducted in February and March 2009, and when it was closed a total of 658 responses were collected from Vaughan residents, a number that exceeded the Task Force's goal of contacting 500 individuals by more than 30 per cent. The data collected from the survey has helped guide the Task Force in generating the final recommendations to Council, while providing validation for several suggestions raised in the Task Force's earlier reports.

With respect to the demographics of the survey, 89.4 per cent of all survey respondents were between the ages of 25 and 64 years of age, with nearly 14 per cent being under the age of 35. The survey itself was balanced in respondents from the core areas of the City of Vaughan, with Woodbridge and Thornhill/Concord each accounting for 37.5 per cent of the survey respondents. Over 38 per cent of all respondents have lived in the City for less than ten years, while nearly a quarter did not vote in the last municipal election in Vaughan.

The survey also provided some insight into the reasons why eligible voters opted not to cast a ballot in 2006. Many identified that they did not have sufficient information about their local candidates to make an informed choice. Others expressed a loss of interest in voting following a negatively-spirited campaign for the mayor's seat. In some circumstances, there were feelings of discontent with the quality of candidates at various levels. However, the most telling reason expressed was that there was a lack of personal contact with candidates, with many reporting that the absence of candidates at their doors and insufficient all-candidate meetings prevented them from truly getting to know their candidates. Altogether, the survey provided a brief snapshot of some of the factors which resulted in the voter turnout being just below 38 per cent, and giving the Task Force some validation regarding recommendations proposed in this document to help increase voter participation in 2010 and beyond.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Alternative Voting Methods and Processes

Throughout its term, the Task Force on Democratic Renewal and Participation has discussed a significant number of topics and considered a seemingly endless number of options. While many of these options are presented as formal recommendations, the Task Force hopes this document provides some insight into related issues that were discussed over the past two years, as they may be matters that Council and the Clerk may wish to consider in the future.

For instance, with respect to voting methods and processes, one suggestion that emerged was the development of regional wards; that is, the election of regional councillors representing particular parts of the municipality rather than being elected “at large”.

Further, given our aging population there is a need to enhance the ability of elderly and disabled residents to cast a ballot, given any physical limitations. While proxy voting and our recommendations may resolve some of these concerns, further discussion is needed to ensure that those residents are offered equal access in exercising their right to vote.

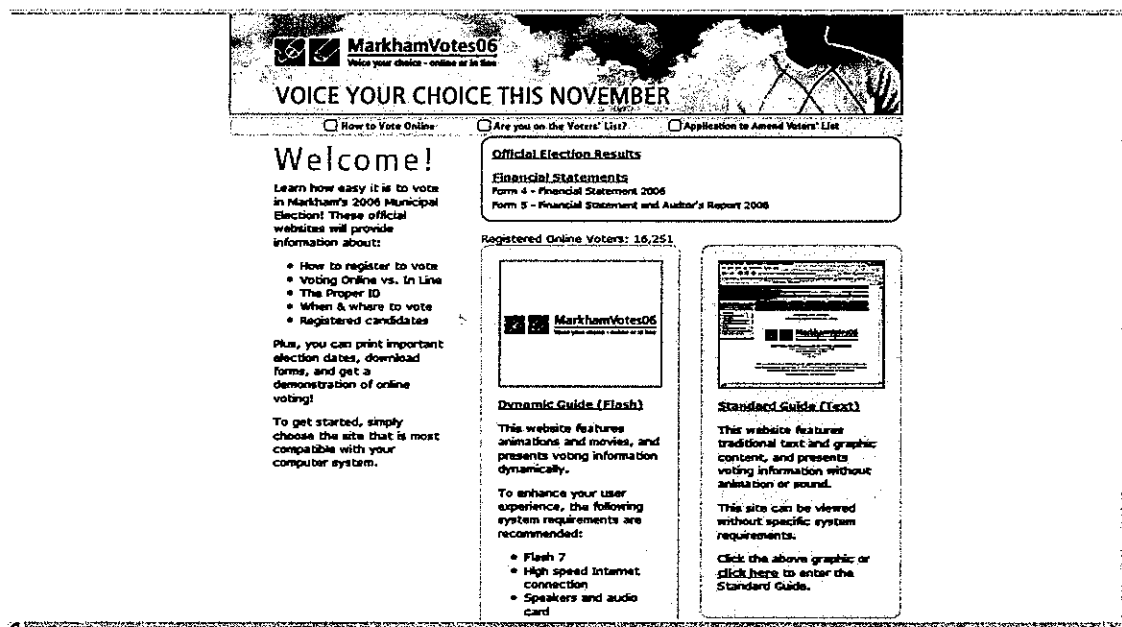
Recommendation 1

Introduce secure Internet voting as an option.

The Task Force’s goal is to raise eligible voter turnout to 50 per cent in the 2010 election. While our recommendations work toward that goal, the Task Force has also been focusing on the long term effects of its recommendations in order to ensure that they have an impact beyond the 2010 election.

Our recommendation to introduce Internet voting in future municipal elections in Vaughan is one example of this. Internet voting is successful in engaging typically difficult-to-reach citizens, including disabled voters, business travelers, and university students, and could level the playing field so all eligible members of society have an equal opportunity to be engaged in the electoral process.

Through our research, and as confirmed by a significant number of respondents in the Task Force's citizen survey, the Task Force on Democratic Participation and Renewal is strongly in support of exploring Internet voting as a new option to help engage younger voters, and those who would prefer to vote from the privacy of their home or office. In fact, Internet voting was the most popular vote-increasing option cited by residents in the recent survey. Indeed, over 70 per cent of all respondents said that it would encourage them to vote. This supports the Task Force's initial belief that Internet voting would be well received by residents, as it provides an added mode of access to the election process in Vaughan. Moreover, online voting could result in an increase in voter participation in the wards where turnout is well below the average.



Internet voting has been a success in several municipalities including the Town of Markham, which has offered Internet voting since the 2003 election. A media release from the Town of Markham indicates that over 10,000 residents opted to vote online in 2006, a 48 per cent increase over 2003.¹ One in ten online voters in Markham did so from their office, while 86 per cent cast their ballots from their residence.²

¹ http://www.markham.ca/Markham/Departments/NewsCentre/News/Archives/070608_OnlineVote.htm

² Delvinia Interactive, Understanding the Digital Voter Experience, 2007 (available online at www.delvinia.com/ego)

The Markham model is a strong format for the City of Vaughan to emulate. Markham established a website (markhamvotes.ca) to provide information regarding the registration process, which required that those interested in casting an online ballot be on the voter's list by a set date. Once their voter information package was received---including a voter identification number---interested residents would log onto the website with the number and register online to vote electronically during the specified times.

The introduction of Internet voting in the City of Vaughan would require a comparable site with detailed information to educate interested citizens about the process. As a result, an integrated communications campaign would be required to both inform residents about the opportunity to take the online option, and to educate citizens about online voting, which in turn may increase voter awareness and positively influence voter turnout.

The Task Force on Democratic Participation and Renewal recommends that Internet voting be made available to the citizens of Vaughan, provided the process is secure in every respect.

Recommendation 2

Provide a tax rebate on campaign donations in the City of Vaughan.

Currently, the limit on campaign donations made by an Ontario resident or corporation during a municipal election campaign is \$750 per candidate. However, these donations do not generate a tax credit as available to provincial and federal election contributors. An examination of the donations contributed in the 2006 election in Vaughan shows that a clear majority of the funds came from corporations, businesses and numbered companies. Without a rebate or credit of some kind, there appears to be little incentive for individual citizens to contribute to various campaigns.

The Municipal Elections Act does permit municipalities to pass by-laws by which rebates are paid by the municipality, out of its general revenues. This is the case in the City of Toronto, where donors to municipal campaigns are entitled to receive a rebate of up to 75 per cent of any contribution to a candidate. Indeed, citizen contributions in the City of Toronto during the 2006 election accounted for 68.2 per cent of the total, compared to just 20.9 per

cent in the City of Vaughan.³

Given that there has been criticism of excessive corporate donations to incumbents in municipal election campaigns across the province, this would level the playing field by encouraging candidates to raise funds from a relatively untapped source. At the same time, residents would most likely feel more engaged in the political process, given their opportunity to support their candidate or candidates of choice (either incumbent or non-incumbent) both monetarily and via the ballot box.

The Task Force on Democratic Participation and Renewal recommends that Council enact a by-law in advance of the 2010 election period to make donations from individuals eligible for a rebate as permitted by the Municipal Elections Act.

Recommendation 3

Prohibit the use of campaign funds generated from previous campaigns.

The Task Force on Democratic Renewal and Participation examined a broad number of issues over the course of its mandate. These included issues which may be beyond the jurisdiction of the City of Vaughan, but which should be recommended to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

In this era of transparency, citizens have expressed clearly through our survey that there is a lack of trust in their elected officials. As the 2010 election approaches, another issue will likely manifest itself due to a loophole in the Municipal Elections Act, which enables an incumbent to access funds that were generated in his or her previous election campaign but went unused, and apply them to their upcoming campaign.

There are examples of this practice in the City of Vaughan and it gives an unfair advantage to incumbents and former incumbents to effectively leapfrog over their competition financially. Discouraging this practice would provide an added layer of equality in election campaigns as all candidates, whether incumbent or non-incumbent, would be working from a zero balance in terms of campaign fund-raising.

³

Robert MacDermid, *Funding City Politics*, 2008, page 14, available online at www.votetoronto.ca

The Task Force on Democratic Participation and Renewal recommends that the Council of the City of Vaughan request that the Province of Ontario amend the Municipal Elections Act to the foregoing effect, with such funds to be allocated to the election reserve.

Convenience of Voting

Recommendation 4

Extend voting hours to accommodate commuter residents.

Every level of government employs different rules when it comes to the hours of operation for a polling station. The federal government recognizes the time zone issues which result in a 9:30 am to 9:30 pm voting period. In 2007, the provincial government expanded voting hours to a 9:00 am to 9:00 pm time frame across the province, an hour later cut-off time than in previous campaigns. However, municipally, the hours of operation remain between 10:00 am and 8:00 pm.

Through discussions with Jeffrey Abrams, City of Vaughan Clerk, the Task Force learned that the City has the ability to amend the time that polls open on election day, but extending the closing time is under the exclusive jurisdiction of the provincial government.

The City of Vaughan is comprised of residents many of whom work throughout the Greater Toronto Area, making Vaughan to a significant degree a commuter city. This is an additional challenge for residents wanting to cast a ballot during traditional voting hours. In fact, the Task Force posed a question about voting hours during its recent survey, and nearly 64% of respondents said that an extension of voter hours, either into the morning rush hour or later into the evening, would encourage them to vote.

The Task Force on Democratic Participation and Renewal recommends that the City of Vaughan open polling stations earlier to accommodate individuals en route to work. Similarly, the Task Force recommends that the City of Vaughan encourage the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to revisit the rules requiring that polls close at 8:00 pm on election night for future municipal elections.

Recommendation 5

Promote advance voting days as “Advance Voting Week”.

While expanding voting hours on election day is among the Task Force’s recommendations-well supported by our survey results-another is the better marketing of advance voting days across the City. Over 55 per cent of survey respondents said that additional opportunities to cast an advance ballot would encourage them to vote. We believe that promoting advance voting days as “Voting Week” is a more effective means of marketing this opportunity.

The Task Force strongly recommends that the advance voting dates be increased to seven and promoted as “Advance Voting Week”.

Recommendation 6

Utilize electronic voters’ lists during “Advance Voting Week”.

In conjunction with the recommendation above, our conversations with the City Clerk afforded the Task Force the opportunity to know that a “live” version of the voters’ list (that is, on-line and “real time”) may be feasible for use the 2010 election cycle. This list would be used during the advance voting period or “Advance Voting Week” and would allow the on-going update of the voters list, no matter where polling might take place. Recommendation 7 will provide additional insight into why the electronic voters’ list is necessary for 2010.

The Task Force recommends that if the technology allows for the secure use of an electronic voting list, the City Clerk implement it for use during the 2010 advance voting period.

Recommendation 7

Provide alternative voting locations during “Advance Voting Week”.

When it comes to elections, there are a number of factors which impact all voters, including where they vote on election day and during the advance polling period. The Task Force explored numerous ideas including expanding the number of voting locations, and encouraging the City to avoid using religious facilities as voting locations.

With the potential introduction of a “live” voters list during the advance voting period, it opens a series of opportunities to explore. The most intriguing is to situate advance voting stations in non-traditional locations. For example, a live voters’ list would enable the City to operate a voting station seemingly anywhere. In particular, the list would allow the Clerk to operate simultaneously multiple advance voting locations such as in shopping malls within the City (e.g. The Promenade and Vaughan Mills) where residents would have the opportunity to cast a ballot while shopping.

The Task Force recommends the use of alternative voting locations like shopping malls and libraries during “Advance Voting Week”, to enable residents the opportunity to cast a ballot in a public location perceived as more mainstream than traditional polling locations

Increased Access to Election Information

The issue of access to election information has been a frequent topic of discussion with the Task Force. From the branding of elections to the City's web presence, members of the Task Force have agreed that access to election information---regardless of media source---is critical. Indeed, in the Task Force survey, 85.7 per cent of respondents found newspaper coverage to be "important or critical" to them during an election campaign.

Information from the City should be equally as important, and accessible. The City of Vaughan does currently provides information about the upcoming election on its website (www.vaughan.ca), including a list of registered candidates, ward maps, and advanced polling information. An easily identifiable URL for election-related content (e.g. vote.vaughan.ca) should be introduced so that voters do not have to surf through a series of pages to reach the election content.

Recommendation 8

Modify vaughan.ca's list of registered candidates to include brief messages from each candidate.

During each election campaign period, the City of Vaughan's website (www.vaughan.ca) features an official list of registered candidates for each position, including the individual's name, official address and telephone number, along with the option to include an email address and website URL.

One of the Task Force's working hypotheses was that residents feel that they do not have adequate information to make an informed choice in municipal elections, and as a result, many opt not to vote. The survey earlier this year helped validate this view, as over 20 per cent felt they did not know who the candidates were, and did not understand the issues. Almost 80 per cent of all respondents said they were either likely or very likely to review a website containing this information before casting a ballot.

The Internet offers an unprecedented opportunity to provide residents with greater access to information at little to no additional cost. It would be advantageous for the City of Vaughan to capitalize on this to give its residents a basic level of information about the municipal election process and the

candidates.

The Task Force on Democratic Participation and Renewal recommends the expansion of the existing listing of candidates on the City website to include a set-length message from each candidate, to be submitted to the Clerk's Department. The message could contain brief information about the candidate and their background/resume. While every candidate would have space allotted to them for an entry, the process would be voluntary. The goal is to help introduce all candidates to the residents and encourage residents to seek out more data if they so desire. At the same time, the Clerk and the City will have afforded residents a minimum amount of information to make an informed choice.

Recommendation 9

Rebrand the election and accompanying public relations campaign.

One of the comments made repeatedly during Task Force meetings is that the 2010 election is an opportunity to move forward from the challenges experienced in the past and start afresh. As part of this view, the optics of the election is critical.

For many years, the City has utilized a basic logo as the image or icon for the election period. Designed in black and white, it includes the "V" from Vaughan's logo along with the year of the election.

It is critical that this old logo and public relations strategy be retired and be replaced with a more vibrant and contemporary logo that will catch the attention of residents, to be used in various promotional materials produced by the City in advance of the election.

In conjunction with this new logo, and revamped literature (referenced in recommendations below), it is imperative that the City of Vaughan implement an aggressive public relations campaign to draw sustained attention to the 2010 election and encourage residents to cast their ballots.

The Task Force on Democratic Renewal and Participation recommends that the City and the Clerk's Department revise the election logo in favour of a more contemporary look for election-related materials.

Further, the City must draw upon its existing resources in Corporate Communications to establish a sustained public relations program for the duration of the election cycle, to ensure that election information is frequently circulated in a number of ways including but not limited to press releases, City publications, and the City website.

Recommendation 10

Increase municipal resources to promote the election.

While the election cycle for the 2010 municipal election begins on January 1, the majority of the content (from candidates and the City alike) will reach residents in the final 60 days of the campaign period. Nevertheless, there is an opportunity for the City to provide consistent promotion of the impending election throughout the course of the year. At various times, the City issues flyers and brochures like the recycling and garbage collection schedule, and seasonal recreation and culture guides. These documents reach the majority of Vaughan residents through the mail, online, and as newspaper inserts. We believe this is an untapped opportunity to create awareness of the upcoming election.

For example, a targeted campaign to create awareness of the importance of voting could aid in encouraging a greater number of residents to cast ballots in November 2010.

The Task Force on Democratic Renewal and Participation recommends that the City prioritize its communications budget for the 2010 election to allocate space in its recreation brochures and any other publications, to allow for full page advertisements promoting the election dates, how and where to vote, municipal services, and the 2010 campaign logo and/or slogan. In addition, the 2010 election logo (as noted in an earlier recommendation) should be affixed to Vaughan branded flyers like the recycling schedule and Concerts in the Park brochure, to promote greater awareness of the election throughout 2010.

Recommendation 11

Use mobile signs to advertise “Advance Voting Week” and voting day.

Advertising an upcoming election can be an expensive undertaking through conventional means such as radio, television, and local and ethnic publications. While advertising is a necessity for election campaigns, there is an opportunity to draw on another of Vaughan’s existing strengths and incorporate it into the 2010 election strategy,

The City of Vaughan has utilized mobile signs in various locations across the City for several years to promote upcoming civic events, and provide information about garbage and recycling services. The signs are placed in numerous locations, making it next to impossible for residents not to be exposed to at least one of the signs on a regular basis.

Incorporating a mobile signs strategy into the plans for the 2010 election will provide an additional layer of timely information about the election. The signs could be used at first to promote the dates and locations of advance polls, and prior to election day they could be revised to reflect a more immediate message.

These signs have been successful as community message boards. Given the Task Force’s mandate to raise voter turnout to 50 per cent, it would be beneficial to draw upon a tactic that has shown positive results for the City in other ways.

Between using mobile signs and an increased print/online campaign, there is an opportunity to alert residents to election processes, voting days and candidate debates. Using the popular mobile signs will also serve as an additional tool to help engage the public in a subtle manner.

The Task Force on Democratic Participation and Renewal recommends that mobile signs be used by the City to promote non-partisan election information to the general community in advance of election day.

Recommendation 12

Use social media to promote the 2010 election.

In recent years, there has been a virtual explosion in the use of social media in the general community for both maintaining communication and acquiring information. This new form of engagement is a critical component of any changes to the City of Vaughan's election strategy heading into 2010.

Between blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and other forms of social media, there is an increased opportunity to engage the public to a greater degree than ever. Moreover, adopting a social media strategy provides an additional opportunity to reach out and integrate the most disengaged segment of our society, young voters. In recent elections at other levels, various forms of social media have been used to provide information, remind individuals about the dates and times to vote, along with other pertinent data including all-candidate meetings. In all, it provides the public with an additional avenue of access to information prior to casting a ballot.

The Task Force on Democratic Participation and Renewal recommends that the City of Vaughan adopt a social media strategy for the 2010 election, such as the creation of an official (non-partisan) election page on Facebook, and the creation of Twitter accounts to periodically provide comments and notices about the November election.

Related Recommendation

When non-voters are asked why they didn't cast a ballot, the answer often is that they didn't know who to vote for, or what they are voting for. The lack of general information about the political process and how it affects residents of all ages across the City is a growing problem, and one that is not unique to the City of Vaughan. However, with technology allowing residents to access information at their leisure, campaign information can be acquired 24 hours a day.

As the technology allows, the City should explore expanding its online presence to host webcasts of all-candidate debates and other materials that can be viewed on demand at any time.

Recommendation 13

Expand the scope of voter information to include what services the City provides to its citizens.

As noted above, the 2010 campaign should be viewed as a fresh start to the election process in Vaughan. But while the process may be starting from a new foundation, how we communicate with the electorate should also be revisited.

As noted earlier, the Task Force's survey indicated that over 20% of residents felt they lack the information needed to make an informed choice when casting a ballot. While for some voters that can be attributed to a lack of knowledge about candidates or the issues affecting Vaughan, for others it is a direct result of voter ignorance about municipal government *per se* and what it provides by way of services.

Some residents have limited knowledge of what services fall under the jurisdiction of each level of government. More than one citizen will call their local Member of Parliament or Member of Provincial Parliament when their garbage goes uncollected, or the snow on their sidewalk is not cleared.

Rather than dismiss this as a problem, let us view it as an opportunity for the City of Vaughan and the Clerk's Department to be trendsetters, by using the traditional voter information card (admittedly in an expanded format) to educate voters on both the role of municipal government and the municipal election process in a non-partisan manner.

In fact, all documents that are produced by the City for the 2010 election must be designed with a contemporary layout that will attract readers. For example, the City's recycling flyer and events brochures (Winterfest and Concerts in the Park) are printed in colour on quality paper---a format that is more likely to be reviewed by recipients. In comparison, the 2006 Vaughan election brochure was lacking both substance and style. It did contain information on advance voting locations and how to mark a ballot, but it resembled an ordinary piece of ad mail.

The Task Force recommends that the City invest further in its communications budget for the election campaign, to ensure information materials are of the same quality as brochures promoting city events and services.

Recommendation 14

Name, as well as number the City's wards.

In an effort to help residents of Vaughan identify with their local community and interact with their local representative, it would be beneficial to assign an official name alongside traditional ward numbers.

The Task Force on Democratic Participation and Renewal recommends that for the 2010 election, the wards as presently planned be officially re-titled as follows:

- Ward 1 – Maple/Kleinburg
- Ward 2 – Woodbridge West
- Ward 3 – Woodbridge East
- Ward 4 – Concord/Carrville
- Ward 5 – Thornhill

Recommendation 15

Hold “meet and greet the candidates” sessions facilitated by the City.

This concept would resemble a trade show, held at different community centres, with each candidate having a station (with a table to display campaign materials) where he or she can talk with local residents. City staff should set the time and location for each ward for such events, to be held independently of any all-candidates meetings with the sessions posted on the City's website.

This format would allow residents to drop in for a few moments, talk with candidates and have an opportunity to make a more informed choice on election. The details on each ward's “meet and greet” night could be promoted via mobile signs, and through the City Page on the vaughan.ca website.

The Task Force on Democratic Participation and Renewal recommends that the City's community centres be used as a drop-in location for residents to meet their candidates, and talk to them about election issues.

Recommendation 16:

Request voluntary, pro-active, Internet-based disclosure of campaign contributions.

Given the negative publicity that has been generated regarding municipal campaign contributions (not just in Vaughan, but across several municipalities) and in the interests of ensuring as much transparency as possible, the City should formally request that all registered candidates voluntarily disclose their contributions via their campaign website. It is further suggested that this disclosure include the dollar amount being contributed, the name of the contributor and, in the case of a corporate contribution, the nature of the business conducted by said corporation. It should be further recommended that this voluntary disclosure could occur monthly between the date of candidate registration and Labour Day and weekly between Labour Day and election day. While this disclosure would not fulfill or replace the statutory requirement for a formal filing of all contributions following election day, it would help to provide voters with additional, relevant information before they cast their ballots.

The Task Force recommends that Council request that all registered candidates voluntarily disclose their campaign contributions via their campaign website during the course of the campaign.

CONCLUSION

The recommendations detailed above are wide ranging, but with a single goal in mind---to raise voter turnout to 50 per cent in the 2010 election. As indicated, there is much to be done in the months ahead.

But these recommendations are also intended to improve the City's existing election model in the longer term, by engaging the community more firmly and breaking down---permanently we hope---barriers to citizen participation.

This document also helps the City identify opportunities to engage the younger generation, many of whom will be (we hope) first-time voters in 2010. They are technologically savvy, but that need not mean they are fated to grow up remote from the political process.

TASK FORCE BIOGRAPHIES

Co-chairs

Councillor TONY CARELLA, FRSA, has lived in Vaughan since 1982, and has represented Ward 2 on Council for nine years (1994-1997, 2003-present). A writer, editor and teacher by profession, he is a graduate of St. Michael's College, University of Toronto, with an Honours BA in Modern History.

STEVEN DEL DUCA, a resident of Ward 2, has lived in Vaughan for 22 years. He currently serves as the Director of Public Affairs for the Carpenters' Union and worked previously as Executive Assistant to Vaughan MPP Greg Sorbara. He graduated from Osgoode Hall Law School in 2007 and is a Director of the Vaughan Health Care Foundation.

Task Force Members

STEPHEN ADLER has lived in Vaughan since 2002 and is a resident of Ward 5. He is the Director of Public Policy and Governmental Affairs for UJA Federation of Greater Toronto. He has a Master of Arts degree in Political Science from Lehigh University as well as undergraduate degrees from both Carleton and Brock Universities. In addition, he is an executive member of the Chai Tikvah Foundation.

DAVID BINGHAM has worked in municipal government (primarily Finance) for almost twenty-five years and is currently Treasurer and Director of Corporate Finance for the Region of Peel. In addition to an MBA from York University, Dave holds CMA and AMCT designations. Dave and his family have been residents of Maple in Ward 1 for over 15 years.

ELIZABETH BOTTOS has been a resident of Ward 2 in Vaughan since 1982 and has practiced law at Piccin Bottos in Woodbridge since her call to the Bar in 1981. She has an Honours BA in English from York University and an LL.B. from the University of Windsor Law School.

GAIL COPELAND, a resident of Ward 4, has lived in Vaughan since 1987. She is a professional organizer, doing business as The Organizing Gal. Gail holds a General Arts BA from University College at the University of Toronto

TONY GENCO has lived in Vaughan since 1997. He has worked at Parc Downsview Park Inc. since 1999, and is currently President and CEO. He is involved in numerous community and charitable activities including as a Board member of the Vaughan Public Libraries Board and Grand Knight of the Knights of Columbus St. Clare of Assisi Council. He has a degree in history from York University, graduating in 1988.

JOSEPH GRANDO has been a resident of Vaughan for the past 29 years and is retired after 41 years with a financial institution. He is currently Consulting for a Religious Organization and is a Member of the Board of a number of Non Profit organizations. He

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ALAN LEE HOY, a resident of Ward 2, is a Planner for First Urban Inc. He has lived in Vaughan since 2000, and holds a Bachelor of Environmental Studies degree, with Honours in Urban Planning from the University of Waterloo.

BASAT KHALIFA serves as president for Argon Technology Corporation. He attended the University of Waterloo, graduating with an Honours degree in Applied Physics. Basat was also the one of the founding co-chairs member of Run For Vaughan, a charity marathon that takes place every year to raise funds for Vaughan's future hospital.

STEVEN LAISE, a resident of Ward 2, has lived in Vaughan since 1986. He graduated from York University with a Specialized Honours in Political Science and holds a Post-Graduate degree in Public Administration from Humber College. He is currently a member of the Ontario Public Service, working for ServiceOntario.

RICHARD LEONG has lived in Woodbridge East since 1998 and previously lived for ten years in Thornhill. He is a Chartered Accountant and a Professional Engineer. He is a graduate of the University of Toronto with M.B.A. and B.A.Sc. degrees

TAPAS PAIN, a resident of Ward 3, is a partner of the firm Pain & Ceballos LLP. He has lived in Vaughan since 1999, and holds a M.Sc., LL.B., is a registered patent agent in Canada and the United States, and a sessional lecturer at UOIT.

LORETA PAVESE has been a resident of Ward 3 for over 20 years. She is the Chair of the Ontario Trillium Foundation grant review team. Loreta has been actively involved in the community for over 20 years.

AL RUGGERO has lived in Woodbridge since 1982. He is a program manager /consultant who has worked for various organizations including the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the Building Industry and Land Development Association (formerly GTHBA). He previously served as a member of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. Al attended University of Toronto and Ryerson University. Al has served on a number of volunteer boards including, COSTI and the Community Legal Clinic of York Region.

MUHAMMAD SALEEM has been living in Vaughan since 2000. He operates his own transportation consultant business, and is presently serving as General Secretary to the Christian/Muslim Forum in Toronto. Muhammad graduated from the University of Karachi in Pakistan with Law and Bachelor of Commerce degree, and also has a Business Administration degree from Lake Head University in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

DEB SCHULTE, a resident of Ward 2 in Vaughan is active in environmental and community initiatives, serving the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation as Board Secretary. She is an engineer by profession with 22 years, in both management and engineering, with a BSE in Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering from Princeton University.

DAVID SIEGER, a resident of Ward 4, is Vice President, Communications and Events, for OEB Enterprise, a leading public affairs consulting firm. A resident of Vaughan for more

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ELLIOTT SILVERSTEIN, a resident of Ward 5, is Manager of Business Development Processes at Hill & Knowlton Canada. He has lived in Vaughan since 1981, and holds a Masters of Arts degree in Communication and Culture from both York and Ryerson Universities, and a B.A. (Hon.) in Political Science and Communications from York University.