



HUMANIZE TORONTO

Real Democracy + Human Rights + Environment

City Elections 2003 - Platform

Three years ago Humanize Toronto said that Toronto needed to make Human Rights, the Environment and Real Democracy its focus. Now, three years later, everyone is talking about "Toronto's decline". Homelessness and smog increases, there's a lack of affordable childcare, the TTC is crumbling and the erosion of neighbourhood power continues. Meanwhile, City Council flounders, lacking the vision to make the necessary changes.

Of course, the Federal and Provincial governments share a large portion of the responsibility for our state. But, beside some thoughtful initiatives put forward, there is surely more that the City could be doing to address the dehumanization of our city.

For our part, we're not waiting: even though no HTO candidates were elected in 2000, we've continued to work for the Toronto we want to live in. For three straight years, we've run our Real Budget project – a door-to-door campaign to organize public input into city budget. And with the feedback we received, we've run campaigns to stop TTC fare hikes, and in 2002 and 2003, we worked to make the TTC free on smog days.

The candidates of Humanize Toronto believe that together we can solve our problems. Our city is an incredibly wealthy city, drawing human knowledge and experience from every culture and corner of the planet. The expertise and imaginative power to create a truly humanized city exists right here, right now.

However, in order to reap the collective knowledge of the people of Toronto, we need to put power in the hands of the neighbourhood. We need a decentralized city where all our voices can be heard and where we can have a real say in how our city and neighbourhoods are run. For example, we need a Participatory Budget system so all of us can decide what kind of Toronto is built with the resources we have.

Our proposal is that Toronto frame all of its activities around Human Rights, a Healthy Environment and Real Democracy. That is, we must ask ourselves if everything we are doing is working to meet the basic human rights of all people in Toronto; if everything we are doing is creating a greener, healthier and safer environment in the city; and if everything we are doing is helping to devolve decision-making power down to the neighbourhood, to let people have a real say in the running of their city.

Now is not the time for empty statements about "a new deal for cities" or "stopping Toronto's decline". The fact is, we know what kind of city we want. We know what challenges we face. What we need is more faith in ourselves and in each other, and power to the neighbourhood.

On November 10th, in XX wards across the city, vote to **Humanize Toronto**.

HUMAN RIGHTS

While there are a number of human rights areas to look at in Toronto, including those involving seniors, natives, and children, the number one human rights problem at this moment is **housing and homelessness**. The candidates of Humanize Toronto believe that efforts at City Hall should be focused immediately on solving this problem. Here we are not simply talking about finding new shelters with the onset of winter – the entire city should move to pressure the upper levels of government for more funding, and every effort should be made within the City to find new solutions to this crisis. Fortunately, some positive advances have been made recently.

Not far behind housing in the Human Rights department lies **child welfare**. A staggering 34% of children are living in poverty in Toronto. In simple English, that is entirely unacceptable. A clear calendar for the reduction of child poverty and homelessness should be established – one that goes beyond the shortsighted 3-year scale corresponding to municipal elections.

To keep the issue of Human Rights front and centre in Toronto, Humanize Toronto proposes the **establishment of a Human Rights committee** at City Hall that would evaluate the progress made on Human Rights in the city and report annually to the people of Toronto through a publication, a website and neighbourhood meetings.

NEIGHBOURHOOD POWER – REAL DEMOCRACY

If our democracy is to be real and not just a formality, it must allow us the greatest possible control over the issues and corresponding decisions that affect our lives.

All power to the neighbourhood!

Coherent with our belief that democracy is something that needs to be fostered permanently and not just mentioned during elections, in January 2001 HTO launched a door-to-door campaign to organize public input into a process that is fundamental to how Toronto is shaped: the city budget. Besides stating what their top spending priorities were, neighbours also expressed an overwhelming desire to have a say in the budget process. We've repeated the "Real Budget" project every year since, and criticized the City every time for not following our example.

City Hall likes to complain that it has no power, that it is a puppet of the upper tiers of government, and overall this complaint is valid. We live with a system of government that subordinates municipal politics to the power of provinces, and this is a situation that we must change. But nonetheless, if the City really believed in democracy, it would begin to treat its citizens with the same respect that it demands for itself. If the City really believed in democracy, it would bring decision-making power down to the neighbourhoods with a Participatory Budget.

Participatory Budgeting

The Brazilian city of Porto Alegre (pop. 1.3 million) has been drawing up their budget with the input of about 100,000 residents for the past 14 years. Their model has spread throughout Brazil and other parts of the world.

In order to create such a budget, the city is divided into 16 regions and public participation is organized through grassroots neighbourhood associations. The participatory budget is applied not only to financial matters but also to issues like urban planning, transportation,

public health, etc.

Through public community meetings, the election of street and district representatives, and delegate committees to Council, the residents of Porto Alegre have a very direct say in the drawing up of their budget, as well as a direct ability to scrutinize the effectiveness of their council in carrying out the mandate given to them.

While massive public participation in this system did not arise overnight, once residents began to see that participating neighbourhoods had their needs met, things began to change. And far from being a free-for-all of naive demands resulting in Porto Alegre's bankruptcy, the city's economy is better than before.

Naysayers will level many criticisms against such a model. Rather than explain why such a system is not possible (when experience shows clearly that it is), effort would be better spent on studying ways to reconfigure our city decision-making process to include the residents of Toronto. The participatory budget experience of Porto Alegre is a proven model that needs to be developed here.

HOUSING and HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness is growing in Toronto. In less than a decade, the numbers of people using nightly shelters has practically doubled, and the number of people using emergency shelters has increased by almost 40% (roughly 30,000 people, children included). We all know it, but it's worth mentioning again: in a city as rich as Toronto, people still die every year from living on the streets.

One of the factors aggravating our homeless crisis is the lack of affordable housing. While figures indicate that construction in Toronto is booming and that the vacancy rate is the highest it's been in 30 years, these figures don't tell you that these new homes are luxury condos downtown. The fact is that a third of Toronto families (about 350,000) spend more than 30% of their total income on housing¹ and more than 100,000 families spend more than half their income on housing². With 45,000 households on the Toronto Social Housing Waiting List, it's clear that the affordable housing crisis is still very real.³

The Federation of Metro Tenants Associations provides a stark picture of Toronto's rental housing situation:

*Average rent for a 2-bedroom apt in Toronto in 2003: \$1153.00

*Gross annual income needed for a 2-bdrm apartment: \$46,120 (rent should be 30% or less of one's income)

*Percentage of rental households spending more than 30% on shelter: 42.2%

*Percentage spending more than 50% on shelter: 20%

*Vacancy rate on "below average" 3-bdrm apartment in Central Toronto: 0.66%

* Vacancy rate on "Grade A" bachelor in suburban Toronto: 6.67%⁴

One often hears that there is just no money for housing programs. This argument, aside from revealing that money is being valued above human beings and our rights, is also wrong. The fact is, it costs more to put people up in shelters than it does to let them live in a small apartment. The Mayor's own Task Force on Homelessness (1999) found that it

¹ Canadian Mortgage and Housing Commission

² City of Toronto

³ City of Toronto

⁴ "Rental Housing Fact Sheet" - FMTA

costs \$30-\$43 per night to keep someone in a homeless shelter, but only \$22-\$30 to house a person in a pre-existing, self-contained, one- or two-bedroom apartment. Make that a new building, and the cost rises to just \$36/night.

Fortunately, September 2003 saw some good news for housing and homelessness in Toronto. For the first time in 10 years, private developers announced a project to build 904 new low-income rental housing units in the city, thanks to the help of all three levels of government. Fort York Residence, a new 98-bed housing facility for homeless men, was also opened. Residents here will receive help in finding a job, saving money and moving into permanent housing.

Three things need to be addressed in order for the housing crisis to be solved: **income, stock and support**. That is, people need to have an income with which they can pay their rent. There also must be housing stock available – new affordable housing must be built. And finally, those who are homeless or near homeless need support to move from shelters and transitional housing into their own permanent homes. The Fort York Residence is a good model to replicate throughout the city.

Regarding homelessness, a number of measures should be put in place immediately:

- Specific parks should be designated as safe places of refuge. Security, portable toilets, and tents for warmth should be provided as well as other creative emergency shelters such as trailers, rail cars, mobile homes, etc.
- Sleeping bags - equipped to handle severe cold weather temperatures – must be provided to homeless people sleeping outside, distributed by Toronto's social services
- Each time a homeless death is reported, the City should fly its flag at half-mast.

For Humanize Toronto, human beings are the priority – above money – and housing is a human right, period.

ENVIRONMENT

Garbage and Waste

The city of Toronto currently relies on access to Michigan for disposal of all of the city's garbage. This is not a sustainable solution. Neither is the alternative of sending our waste to Kirkland Lake's abandoned Adams Mine in the event of restricted access to Michigan landfills. Only those who directly profit from the contracts can justify these options. There are other solutions to the city's garbage problems.

City Council must take the leadership and turn Toronto into a healthier place to live, setting an environmental example for the rest of the province to follow. Currently, the city has a plan to divert 60 per cent of household waste from landfill and to divert 100 per cent of waste by 2010. Last year, residents of Etobicoke started sorting their garbage into wet and dry piles and Scarborough, North York and the rest of the City of Toronto will be included in the new system by 2005. At this time, Canada dumps about 80 per cent in landfills, compared to 20 per cent in Japan and 12 per cent in Switzerland. We are years behind other developed countries in the quick implementation of environmentally sensible policies.

Humanize Toronto proposes an aggressive recycling and reduction programme, expanding such services and focusing on increasing recycling and composting facilities in apartment buildings. Given the option, Torontonians will choose to recycle, to separate their garbage into wet and dry, to compost, to do their part. The least the City can do is

allow them to do it. However, there is more to the city's garbage problems than the amount collected from households. The city must also be strict about recycling and reducing commercial and industrial waste.

Humanize Toronto additionally proposes that businesses be held accountable for their waste, shifting financial responsibility from the taxpayer to the producer. This programme is already practiced in other parts of Canada. When responsible for environmental costs, producers will have the economic incentive to create products that are less wasteful and will help in keeping waste from being dumped.

Transportation

The Greater Toronto Region (GTA) is experiencing a rapid and continuous boost in population and motor vehicles. Thousands of people move to Toronto and the GTA every year, increasing urban sprawl as well as the number of people entering the Toronto area from the GTA every day. As a consequence of this rapid increase, gridlock has become a problem in our city. It is a serious threat not only to our environment but also to our health and our economy.

In our Real Budget work, Toronto residents put public transit as their number one budgetary priority for three years running.

And meanwhile, City Council has repeatedly demonstrated a serious lack of vision regarding transportation in Toronto. Unlike the Montreal, Ottawa and Vancouver regions, there is no coordinated transportation and land use plan between the city of Toronto and the GTA. There is not even a clear action plan, nor any officially endorsed strategy that explains how Toronto will deal with transportation issues in the next two decades, when its population is expected to increase by 40 per cent.

We are proposing instead a step-by-step plan to humanize Toronto's public transportation system. This plan is important for our city and includes a commitment to:

- A community-oriented, fully funded, accessible and efficient public transportation system.
- The development of seamless public transportation that would allow for door to door service within Toronto and throughout the GTA.
- New subway and LRT lines, and more surface transit vehicles—buses, streetcars, and minibuses for rush-hour neighbourhood shuttle service.
- A seriously reworked funding model for the TTC, with participation from all levels of government.
- A commitment to cyclists, increasing cycle-only lanes as well as safe and adequately lit bicycle trails.

After the province removed its funding, the TTC became the only public transit system in North America that receives no direct federal or provincial funding, giving the TTC the dubious distinction of being the least-subsidized transit system in the continent.

This situation has important environmental and health-related consequences. Transportation activities are the biggest cause of air pollution in Canada's urban areas and there is a common scientific consensus that human activities, particularly the burning of fossil fuels for transportation, are causing increased atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gasses and rising global temperatures, putting our health and our futures at risk.

Air Pollution

In the summer of 2002 and 2003, Humanize Toronto ran a campaign to make the TTC free on smog days. We collected over 2000 signatures and got the proposal put to a vote at City Hall. As we write this, a feasibility study is being done by the TTC on the matter.

People want something serious done about the smoggy air they're breathing – and rightly so. Currently, the Ontario Medical Association estimates that annually 9,800 people are admitted to hospitals, 13,000 people make emergency room visits, and 1,900 die prematurely in our province because of air pollution – 1000 of them in Toronto alone. Crop and forest damage also occurs with increased air pollution and even water pollution results from run-off from roads.

City Council must take seriously our proposals for a humanized, greatly expanded and improved public transit system. Transportation is the leading source of greenhouse air emissions; therefore, public transit can and should be one of the basic strategies for cleaner air and reducing the risk of climate change from greenhouse gas emissions. Car pooling should also be encouraged through incentives and clear goals should be set to reduce the number of cars entering the city each day.

Humanize Toronto proposes replacing our outdated dependence on energy generated through coal burning with energy conservation campaigns and clean alternative energy sources.

We also propose developing clear and enforceable Health Standards on Indoor Air Quality because on average, people spend 80 per cent of their time indoors. An occupational health concern, Indoor Air Quality Standards need to be set, since we may be exposed to a variety of pollutants detrimental to our health originating from human activities, presence in the home or at work.

Urban Sprawl

The city needs a clear, coordinated plan with the GTA in order to curb this phenomenon. Urban sprawl results in increased auto use, causing environmental degradation as land for agriculture, natural habitats or other public purposes is lost. It also raises more barriers to the viability of mass transit. Less public transportation means more cars on the road, which in turn means more congestion, more smog, and more respiratory diseases such as asthma.

Energy

The city of Toronto is far behind other cities in the developed world in energy conservation and alternative energy production. Torontonians constantly suffer because of it, as the air quality diminishes when coal burning plants are used to meet peak energy demands.

The unreliability of our current system was proven during the Big Blackout of 2003. Besides energy conservation campaigns, the city must encourage the construction of new buildings, and the retrofitting of old ones, with environmentally-friendly, energy and heat efficient materials and insulators. Landlords and homeowners should be encouraged to continue to reduce air conditioning and electrical use. Additionally, tree planting, rooftop gardens, windmills and solar panels can all reduce heating and cooling costs and pollution.

Humanize Toronto proposes programmes that support the installation of solar panels or, where suitable, windmills in homes and businesses. We also fully endorse the

recommendations of the Toronto Environmental Task Force. Their complete implementation should be a main concern for the new city Council.

CHILDREN AND CHILDCARE

Affordable, good quality childcare is essential for the health of our children and our city's future.

The Toronto statistics are staggering:

- 1 in 3 children lives in poverty;
- Over 14,000 children approved for subsidized childcare are awaiting spaces;
- In 2002 the City cut 1,616 subsidized spaces and expects to cut a further 700 in 2003;
- The number of available childcare subsidies is at the lowest it's been in seven years;
- The Province has cut funding to childcare in Toronto by \$12 million annually since 1999.

Lack of subsidized housing, a low minimum wage and no increase in the number of childcare spaces (subsidized or not) are among the factors contributing to this crisis.

Although Provincial downloading and cutbacks directly affect quality of life for children and families, there are things that Humanize Toronto would do towards improving the current situation and the future for our children:

- Increase funding to childcare centres to reflect their real operating costs.
- Lead the way in childcare. By considering childcare as critical to the health and prosperity of our city, Toronto can influence the provinces and federal government to develop a national childcare system.

In a humanized Toronto, children would be considered full citizens of the City, have their human rights protected and their basic needs met, just like their parents.

ECONOMICS AND WEALTH

Three years ago Humanize Toronto said that Mel Lastman's goal of freezing property tax increases was an untenable measure considering the enormous budgetary shortfalls the City was facing. Three years on, and after steady increases in property taxes, our economic situation seems just as untenable. Things need to change.

The City of Toronto is responsible for providing (and therefore funding) a very wide range of services for residents and businesses. While the number of services to fund has grown (because of downloading from the Province), the ability of the City to raise the money required has not. This financial straightjacket is due mainly to the limited powers given to municipalities to raise taxes to handle their own affairs.

The City of Toronto comprises 10% of the population of Canada and produces approximately 20% – 25% of the country's total wealth. Yet we cannot pay for our constantly deteriorating services. This is no surprise when one considers that in 2002 alone the city paid out \$8 billion more tax dollars to the Provincial and Federal governments than it took in. A tiny fraction of that sum would go a long way toward solving our annual budget crisis. (This year the city budget is facing a \$200 million shortfall.)

Humanize Toronto would demand that the Province and Federal governments give the

city more power over its economy and the ability to raise funds. But until that's done, there are things the City can do:

- Considering that the budget shortfall that is expected over the next 5 years is to be more than \$1 billion, the City must implement a Participatory Budget in order to hear from everyone regarding how our tight resources are best allocated (see *Neighbourhood Power - Real Democracy*)
- Toronto must create a community bank that would supply small, interest-free loans to worthy community development projects. Rather than simply charging interest on the loan, the bank would get involved with the new venture to ensure its success, and then be repaid through the profits generated. Examples of interest-free banks are Citibank's Islamic Investment Bank in Bahrain, and the JAK Members' Bank in Sweden.
- Incentives should be created and benefits given to companies that establish worker-capital co-management and that reinvest profits back into the local economy.
- The City should be able to levy a tax on hotel accomodation. Among other things, these funds could go back into helping the tourism industry damaged by SARS.
- Toronto should be exempt from paying PST and GST on City purchases.
- A portion of gas tax revenues collected by the Provincial and Federal governments should be given back to Toronto in order to fund the expansion of public transit. These governments collect over \$5 billion a year and contribute not one measly dime to the operation of the TTC.

POLICE AND CRIME

Every year, the Police budget increases – 25% over the past five years. It's the only sector of the budget to get these kind of increases. Every year, they ask for more money, and every year they get more money. It's clear that there is money for some priorities – the question is, whose priorities are they?

Security on Toronto's streets *is* important to people. And policing has much to do with that - but not everything. Proposals by candidates to "get tough on crime" by increasing the number of police and increasing the police budget are at best naïve, at worst, lies.

It's unfortunate, but simple solutions do not exist for societal problems like crime and insecurity. Humanize Toronto believes that money and energy is better spent addressing the roots of these problems rather than attacking their apparently "criminal" manifestations (ie. money should go into housing, public health, recreation, public transit, childcare). And where police are involved, they should be intimately involved in the daily life of the neighbourhood, working with the neighbours, walking the streets on foot, a part of the fabric of the community – not a force imposed upon it, as it may sometimes appear.

The Helicopter That Wouldn't Die

Police are better on foot, being involved in the everyday life of the neighbourhood, than they are up in the sky in a helicopter. There is no proof that a helicopter is an effective crime-fighter. A study from University of Western Ontario – perhaps the only one of its kind – showed that helicopters do nothing to suppress crime rates. Feeling safe doesn't come from the sound of choppers overhead, bright lights sweeping the streets and the feeling of someone watching you.

Openness and Transparency

People care about policing. They are concerned about racial profiling, and feel a lack of openness and transparency in the Police Service. For example, if the Police budget books

were open for public review, requests for more money could be understood and evaluated reasonably. The Police Services Board should also be opened up. Currently composed of three members appointed by the Provincial government, three members appointed by City Council and one citizen representative, the Board should be reformed to include more citizens. These proposals require action on the part of the Province, to be clear.

In sum, Humanize Toronto believes that the people of Toronto should be in charge of the police force.

ARTS AND CULTURE

In Toronto, we are fortunate to live in a city that has grown with the contributions of many of the world's cultures. Artists and others from all backgrounds have woven a unique cultural fabric that enriches us all.

Per capita spending on arts and culture programs in Toronto is behind that of cities like Chicago, Montreal and Vancouver. Increased support of the arts not only makes Toronto a more dynamic and inviting place for tourists, it also adds immeasurably to the quality of life of all Toronto residents.

While the human rights issues that we are highlighting in this platform have to do with housing and poverty, culture is also a part of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 27.1 states that, *"Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits."* In keeping with the spirit of this Article, **user fees for recreation and cultural programs must be scrapped.**

To support the arts, Toronto needs to not only support individual artists and arts groups, but also to ensure that a percentage of its infrastructure program goes towards maintaining existing cultural facilities and building new ones. However, any new centres should be built throughout the city, avoiding the centralization of "arts and culture" in the downtown core. "Culture" exists all over - from the amateur band pub night to Ballet Jorgen and everywhere in between - the point is to give it the means to express itself.

HEALTH

The city's healthcare system went through hard times this last summer. We must value the efforts of the front-line personnel who kept providing services for those in need.

Humanize Toronto states that universal, adequate and readily accessible healthcare is a fundamental right for all people. In our city, healthcare demands vary according to different areas and neighbourhoods. Clinics and health centres should focus on fulfilling the needs of specific groups; they should also be properly funded and locally established to meet the community's requirements.

Free dental care programmes should be expanded as much as possible to children, senior citizens and low-income residents of Toronto. Despite what the Canada Health Act says, teeth are medically necessary and Toronto must do what it can to meet the health needs of those most unable to pay for it.

Even an adequately funded healthcare system cannot make Toronto a truly "Health City" when more than a quarter of our population lives in poverty and when our food banks are constantly falling behind the ever increasing demand. Other changes will be needed to reverse this trend.

ISLAND AIRPORT

Don't be ridiculous. Expansion of the island airport is a completely stupid idea that should be stopped immediately. It makes no sense whatsoever, unless you're a speculator who stands to get rich from it. There's no better way to shoot waterfront revitalization in the foot than to expand the airport.

EDUCATION

Toronto has very few options within the area of education. The candidates of Humanize Toronto believe that decision-making power over education must be restored back to the city level, in keeping with our belief that a decentralization is part and parcel of a real democracy. School trustees should also receive an income decent enough to allow them to give full-time attention to their work.

CONCLUSION

Without clearly stated priorities and an articulated vision, statements about "making Toronto great again" and "reversing Toronto's decline" are nothing more than slogans. As Toronto develops, expands and faces the challenges of the future, it is essential that our priorities be clear.

Humanize Toronto proposes that Toronto's priorities be Human Rights, a Healthy Environment, and Real Democracy.

In other words, we need a Toronto for all human beings – where everyone one of us, regardless of income or age, sex, sexual orientation or ethnicity, can have a say in the construction of our future. We need to feel that together we are building a just, healthy and human city and that, from the neighbourhood up, we are bringing the best of ourselves forward. Because there is no real progress unless it is by all and for all.

If this is the Toronto you can imagine in your future, then on November 10th, your choice is to *Humanize Toronto*.

HUMANIZE TORONTO CANDIDATES (as of September 12, 2003)

Cynamin Maxwell	Davenport	Ward 18
Philip Vettese	Trinity-Spadina	Ward 19
Roberto Verdecchia	Trinity-Spadina	Ward 20
Gregory Moskos	St. Paul's	Ward 21
Nick Radia	Broadview-Greenwood	Ward 29
Colleen Mills	Beaches-East York	Ward 32