

Notes for Remarks By

Rocco Rossi

Candidate for Mayor of Toronto

“Taking Back City Hall Part II”

Queen’s Park

September 2, 2010

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Good morning.

One of the major challenges in this municipal election is to overcome apathy and cynicism.

That is not entirely surprising, given that we see so much nonsense at City Hall. Based on the current crop of city politicians, many people figure it is simply not worth the bother to vote.

Toronto deserves better, which is why I am running for real change at City Hall.

The other day I introduced my three R's of voting reform.

Respect, results, recall.

Recall is last on this list for a very good reason.

When Toronto voters get respect and get results, recall is a tool that will sit on the shelf unwrapped, and unused.

When they don't get respect and results, recall is a tool for them to take back control of City Hall.

Almost all sitting politicians opposed my recall announcement. But online and radio polls show massive public support.

I'm with the people.

That's why we're standing in Queen's Park today for very good reason.

Voter Recall in Toronto requires approval of the Ontario government.

The other day premier said we should concentrate on raising Toronto's low voter turnout.

I agree. Toronto's turnout is embarrassingly low.

The sad reality is that in Toronto only about 40 per cent of eligible voters cast ballots in the 2006 election. Provincially, turnout sits at 52 per cent and 58 per cent of Canadians voted in the last federal election.

The other day the premier said recall wasn't on his agenda.

Well, Premier McGuinty, recall is on my agenda. And it's on the agenda of the 73 per cent of Torontonians who supported it in a poll released yesterday.

Recall is just the beginning of my efforts to raise voter turnout. As I said on Monday, it takes dead aim at luring back those voters who have drifted away because they feel their vote doesn't count. Recall gives them a reason to come back to the polls.

And I am pleased to take the premier up on his challenge today by offering two additional ways we can spike voter turnout.

Today I am announcing that I will sign my name and commit to delivering on three essential innovations in my first term.

- imposing term limits at City Hall,
- bringing voter recall legislation to the people, and
- introducing on line and telephone voting options to increase voter turnout.

I truly believe that holding political office is a time of service rather than a career. It is one of the highest callings available to citizens in a democracy. But it is not a retirement plan.

The mayor and members of council should not be settling into long, cozy careers at taxpayers' expense. YOU don't have a job for life. Why should they?

Unlike some of my opponents, I am running for Mayor to DO a job, not HAVE a job.

Under my proposal, which I am announcing here today, mayors and councillors would be limited to two and three terms respectively. After that, they would be required to step down and make room for new perspectives, fresh approaches.

If, after a time out of office, a politician wants to throw his or her hat back into the municipal ring, they would be able to do that. But consecutive terms would still be limited.

In addition to my promise to implement Term Limits, I am announcing that, as mayor, I will make sure that Torontonians will be able to vote for their city government online and by telephone in the next election.

Canada has the highest internet use per capita in the world.

And the people of Toronto are among the most computer literate in the world. Particularly our young people. So bringing voting online is a winning combination to me.

The advantages of internet and telephone voting are clear.

After properly registering, you can vote from home or from the office. There is no need to line up at a polling station, no need to travel to a voting location. Voting online should be as convenient as shopping online.

Peterborough and Markham do it. In Markham, internet voting was permitted for the first time for advance polls in the 2003 election. While overall turnout for that election remained unchanged, turnout for the advance polls increased by 300 per cent.

In Halifax, advance polls offering internet and phone voting increased turnout by more than 50 per cent.

Many of these are voters who have never voted before. Young people. People who get their news from less mainstream sources. In other words, it brings new fresh citizen input into city government.

And certainly telephone voting will help to keep our seniors in Toronto involved in the electoral process if they can't get to a polling station.

This week I have committed to three new measures to get the people of Toronto back in the driver's seat at City Hall by raising hope and raising voter turnout.

Intelligent initiatives such as Recall of failing politicians, Term Limits to replace cozy political careers with fresh vision and ideas, and telephone and online voting will help us to take back the city and make Toronto a better place to live and work.

Delivering results has always been one of my defining characteristics, both as an executive at major businesses and in charitable fund raising.

On behalf of the three quarters of Torontonians who want to take back control of city hall, I sign my name to these commitments and promise to deliver.

Thank you.