

UrbanVision endorses David Soknacki for Ward 44 City Councillor

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With Toronto City Council set to appoint a councillor for Ward 44, two candidates have clearly emerged as the front-runners for the position. David Soknacki (former Scarborough City Councillor, former Toronto City Councillor, City's budget chief under Mayor David Miller) and Jim Hart (former executive director of Municipal Licensing and Standards, former General Manager of Parks, Forestry, and Recreation).

Ron Moeser was a Scarborough City Councillor, first elected in 1988. He was elected as Toronto City Councillor, three times, in closely contested elections by the 45,000 voters in Ward 44 (Scarborough East). He was an able and effective City Councillor placing the interests of Ward 44 residents first and foremost.

While Jim Hart stepped in to handle the day to day duties of former councillor Ron Moeser, during his illness, Mr. Hart has never been elected to office but rather has merely spent 30 years working for the City.

We believe that a City Councillor, elected or appointed, should ably represent the people rather than simply "standing pretty firmly with the mayor" on any issue in Ward 44 and Toronto.

Mayor John Tory has criticized Mr. Soknacki for seeking the position on the grounds that he does not live in the Ward. While the Mayor has not decided who, of the 48 applicants, he will support, his staff are actively campaigning against Mr. Soknacki.

In our opinion, David Soknacki has the requisite experience and expertise for the position. In assessing the available, respective backgrounds of both David and Jim, we believe that Mr. Soknacki will be the best caretaker City Councillor for Ward 44 until the next municipal election. UrbanVision, therefore, endorses David Soknacki as the interim City Councillor for Ward 44 (Scarborough East).

"Mr. Soknacki's residence should not be a prerequisite for the position, especially as 25% of the current councillors do not reside in the Wards in which they were elected", said Alan Kasperski, spokesperson for UrbanVision.

"The most important factor between Mr. Soknacki and Mr. Hart should be experience; the experience of being elected as a City Councillor. We find a 'residence criteria' being raised by the Mayor to be self-serving given that he was 'parachuted' into the safest Conservative seat (Dufferin - Peel - Wellington) in the province in 2009 for MPP as leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario".

About UrbanVision

UrbanVision is a city-centred political movement that includes forward thinking people, community groups, neighbourhood organisations, and is open to all who believe that Toronto City Council must be better if Toronto is to be the global, innovative city that it seeks to be.

UrbanVision is currently exploring the idea that Toronto should be granted greater autonomy from Queen's Park and Parliament Hill. With a \$12 billion operating budget and a \$35 billion capital budget, Toronto needs an increased ability to make decisions that are not reliant on funding from the provincial and federal governments. Toronto needs to keep income tax and sales tax dollars within the city so that it can effectively deal with issues like public transit, housing, the environment, the economy, governance, and social equity.

UrbanVision is working toward Toronto being more responsible for how the needs of the people of Toronto are addressed, decided on, paid for, and implemented. There are no single or easy solutions. There are challenges in every neighbourhood across the city; and local groups that are working on solutions to those local problems. There are city-wide problems that face all of us; and community groups that are working on solutions to these challenges.

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