

A Municipal Partisan System in Toronto

Application

Candidates have as early as 4 months before the election to apply, in this application there will be a mandatory short bio, platform description, and picture. Once application has been approved fundraising can begin.

Voter education

Each candidate is given a webpage on a city managed site, to populate as they see fit for their campaign, including party affiliations and branding. They are not allowed to use any other website, as the city website will organize and list all the pictures, platforms, and bios of the candidates and the ballots they are on, and no third party sites are allowed. If a candidate chooses not to spend time on their webpage (or possibly money, but the webpages will be fairly basic and easy to populate without needing professional help), at the minimum their picture, platform, and bio will be there for voters to see. This ensures all candidates are on equal footing with their web presence, and it is all in one easy-to-search place for voters.

Donations

Campaign donation limits are \$100 per registered voter (no anonymous donations), and they must have their primary residence in the candidate's ward, no outside contributions and no in-kind donations of services, up to a maximum of \$10,000 total (this number can be adjusted, but the lower the number the more democratic and equitable the system). Total donations for each candidate will be listed on their city webpage within 2 days of receiving the donation. Even if members of the same party, under no circumstances may candidates pool resources and there are no donations to a party, only to a candidate and only during the campaign period. For example the candidates of a party can all hire the same graphic designer, but they must all pay the designer separately. This does not exclude candidates of a party each paying the same designer (or other professional) a flat rate to do all their work in bulk together, but each candidate must pay an amount reasonable for what was produced for them.

However, it is acceptable for a donor to also be paid for labour related to the campaign; this replaces in-kind donations and ensures candidates do not have unfair advantages because of highly skilled friends or family. Volunteers cannot produce anything material to the campaign (ie. designing signs, making buttons, etc), or it must be counted as an expense and the labour must be compensated. A volunteer's role is to support the candidate, help them organize the campaign, and may canvas for them.

Campaign spending cannot begin until the campaign is able to officially raise money (earliest 4 months prior to election), but candidates are free to go canvassing between elections, declaring their intentions to run and letting the voters know their platform, as long as they do not spend money on materials prior to the campaign commencing.

Expenses

Expenses are limited to flyers/brochures, mailouts, business cards, buttons, bumper stickers, posters (for voters' windows or otherwise), services (web design, graphic design, etc), food and drinks for volunteers, and any other reasonable expenses material to the campaign. Expenses must be posted on a candidate's webpage as they occur, and will have an ongoing total.

No billboards, newspaper, transit, bus shelter, television, radio, web, non-print media, or other public advertising is allowed, third party or otherwise. Candidates can only promote themselves handing out material face-to-face, using the city website (posting pictures, video clips, and written content), and convincing voters to display their material. If pictures or video clips show any sophistication beyond basic editing and personal device quality filming, for example professional sets, lighting, or make-up, photoshopping, complex animated titles, or motion graphics, it will be considered a campaign expense and the labour must be accounted for in the campaign expense report. Lawn signs are also forbidden; voters can display posters in their window, stickers on their cars, or buttons on their jacket, but no plastic lawn signs will be permitted.

Using commercial spaces, whether owned, rented, or borrowed, is strictly prohibited, campaign headquarters must be out of a private residence.

Campaigning

The formal election campaign starts 2 months prior to elections, and the website goes live (unless candidates do not wish to release their site just yet). Incumbent councillors will still need to be able to send their newsletters to residents (there is useful information that should not be denied the residents), but at all times in their communications with residents in their capacity as councillor they are not allowed to offer personal opinions of the mayor or other councillors, or refer to elections, parties, voters, donations, support, or anything that can reasonably be construed to be campaigning instead of merely communicating community information directly relevant to residents. Incumbents must also run their campaign through the city website, and are ruled by the same campaign restrictions as other candidates. Candidates can still join the race until 1 month prior to election day.

Debates

After all candidates have applied, during the final month of the campaign period the city will ensure one all-candidates debate occurs in each ward, other debates are completely up to the community, even if they choose to exclude certain candidates. In the all-candidates debates, audience members will be required to submit questions in writing prior to the start of the event, only one per person allowed and the question must address all candidates. While candidates are giving their self-introductions, limited to 2 mins each, the audience questions are being tallied. A civilian moderation panel (not sure how to determine this, maybe an impartial group from the city) will be like moderators, determining which questions to ask all candidates. The candidates each get 2 mins to respond to a minimum of 3 questions, no matter how many candidates there are. The minimum time for a debate will be 2 hours, if

there are fewer candidates and the questions are being answered quickly, the moderators will keep choosing questions until the 2 hour mark is met.

Mayoral campaigns will have the exact same rules and limitations of councillor campaigns, although with 5 all-candidates debates (in each of the boroughs).

Elections

Candidates may cast their vote on voting day, but must not linger at their polling station. Party affiliations are allowed on the ballot. They are not allowed to speak with any voter at the station beyond the staff running the station, including family or friends, within 500m of the polling station. Unspent campaign donations will go to the city.

By Adam Smith

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