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PICKERING CITY COUNCILLOR

Before You Vote Look at the Record

Leadership is more than campaign promises. Ask who showed up, who spoke up — and who stayed silent before there was an election to win.

Election campaigns are full of promises. Candidates tell you what they will do, what they believe and what kind of leader they hope to be. But when someone is asking to lead an entire city, I believe voters deserve to ask a much more important question: What have you already done?

Before the signs went up, before the campaign literature was printed and before anyone started asking for your vote, were you paying attention? Were you attending council meetings? Were you watching them? Were you reading the reports? Were you speaking up when major developments were proposed that could permanently change our communities? Were you asking questions about taxes, debt, infrastructure and spending? Were you engaged when there was no election to win and no political reward for being there?

Those questions matter even more when someone is asking to become Mayor. Pickering has spent the past four years making decisions that will affect this city for decades, so voters should ask every candidate a very simple question: Where were you?

Were you attending council meetings over the past four years? Were you delegating, writing to Council, challenging decisions or speaking publicly about development, taxes, debt, infrastructure and accountability? And when something happened that you knew was wrong, did you speak up — or did you stay silent?

Leadership is not only about what you say when you want the job. It is also about whether you were willing to speak when there was nothing politically convenient to gain from it.

If you now want to lead this city, show residents where you were, what you contributed, what you stood for and when you were willing to speak up before you became a candidate.

Because silence is also part of a record. For nearly four years, the residents of Pickering have been able to see my record in real time. My votes are recorded. My motions are recorded. My questions are recorded. My opposition is recorded. So are the occasions when I stood alone.

People do not have to agree with every position I have taken. That is democracy, and I would be surprised if any voter agreed with any politician on absolutely everything. There may be an issue on which you and I strongly disagree. You may disagree, for example, with my position that women and girls should have access to sex-based private spaces. I respect your right to hold a different view. But disagreement on one issue should not erase an entire record of work, and a political label should never replace an honest examination of what somebody actually believes.

Too often today, difficult arguments are answered not with facts but with labels. Words such as "racist," "homophobic," "transphobic" or "conspiracy theorist" can become shortcuts for dismissing a person without ever addressing the substance of what they said. I do not believe maintaining privacy and sex-based spaces for women and girls means harbouring hatred toward anyone. Others are free to disagree with me. That is precisely why democratic debate matters.

The same principle should apply to what voters read and hear during an election. A headline is not evidence. A social-media post is not evidence. A rumour repeated a hundred times does not suddenly become a fact. Even a newspaper column — including this one — should not be accepted unquestioningly. Go to the original source. Watch the meeting. Read the report. Look at the motion. Look at the recorded vote. Examine what was actually said rather than relying solely on somebody else's characterization of it. That standard should apply to me just as much as it applies to every other candidate. And when I say look at the record, I mean exactly that.

Look at who supported tax increases and who pushed back. Look at who supported opening Northeast Pickering to further development and who argued that Seaton should be completed first. Look at who supported plans that could open portions of our federal lands to development and who argued those lands should remain protected. Look at who repeatedly supported more growth, intensification and high-density development, and who kept asking whether our roads, infrastructure, services and taxpayers could actually carry it.

Look at who supported major spending and who questioned whether taxpayers could afford it. Look at who challenged the growing use of consultants and who consistently voted to approve the spending placed before Council. And just as importantly, look at what happened to public debate.

Look at who supported restricting opportunities for residents to speak at City Hall and who fought to preserve them. Look at who supported reducing delegations, limiting public questions, restricting debate and making it harder for residents to directly challenge decisions — and look at who opposed those changes. Transparency is not something you promise during an election. It is something you defend when you already hold power.

Those are not campaign slogans. Those are decisions.

For much of this term, I have been the opposition voice on many of the biggest issues facing Pickering. Sometimes that meant being the lone vote. Sometimes it meant putting forward motions that never received a seconder. Sometimes it meant asking questions nobody else wanted to ask. People are free to disagree with those votes, but nobody has to guess where I stood.

My own record is there to examine. I have questioned major spending and the use of consultants. I have pushed for greater transparency over where taxpayers' money goes. I have opposed opening Northeast Pickering for development while Seaton remains under construction. I have raised concerns about debt, development, infrastructure capacity and decisions that could shape Pickering for generations. I have fought for greater public participation and for residents to have a meaningful opportunity to question decisions being made with their money and in their name. Some of my positions have been popular. Others certainly have not. But they were my positions before an election was around the corner.

That matters.

It is easy during an election campaign to discover what residents are worried about and build a campaign around those concerns. It is considerably harder to show up year after year, read hundreds of pages of reports, take a position publicly and accept the consequences of that position. It is also easy to promise transparency after spending years silent while public participation was being restricted. It is easy to promise fiscal responsibility after tax increases and major spending decisions have already been approved. It is easy to suddenly become concerned about development after years of remaining absent from the debate.

That is why I believe this election should be about record before rhetoric.

Look beyond the slogans and polished campaign literature. Look beyond the rumours, labels and personal attacks. Ask every candidate — including me — to show you the record.

Where were they while Pickering was making some of the largest financial and development decisions in its history? What did they say? What did they fight for? What did they oppose? Did they participate in the conversation before deciding they wanted to lead it? And when it mattered, did they speak up or stay silent?

When choosing a Mayor, look at the whole picture. Ask whether that person will protect your tax dollars. Ask whether they will challenge unnecessary spending. Ask whether they understand development, infrastructure, municipal debt and the financial pressures facing residents. Ask whether they will protect your right to participate at City Hall. Ask whether they will tell you something you may not want to hear when they believe it is in the city's best interest. Most importantly, ask whether they have demonstrated the courage to take a position before knowing whether that position would earn or cost them votes.

Pickering's next Mayor will face enormous responsibilities. Our city is dealing with affordability pressures, rapid growth, infrastructure demands, debt and difficult decisions about how much more taxpayers can reasonably be expected to carry. This is not a job that should be awarded on the strength of a slogan, a campaign photograph or a promise made weeks before Election Day.

So over the coming weeks, as claims and counterclaims begin flying, I have one request of Pickering voters: do your own homework.

Read the minutes. Watch the meetings. Examine the votes. Read beyond the headline. Look for the evidence. Find out who showed up, who spoke up, who challenged decisions — and who stayed silent. You may not agree with everything you find. You do not have to.

But make your decision based on the whole record, not one issue, one headline, one label or one rumour. Campaigns last a few months. A record lasts much longer. Before you vote, look at the record.



By John Mutton

CENTRAL EXCLUSIVE

Karmageddon

Mr. X-Files: Who Makes Sure the People Who Build Our Communities Get Paid?

By Mr. 'X' ~ John Mutton, Former Mayor of Clarington
CENTRAL EXCLUSIVE

The importance of payment surety in public construction. When your municipality builds. When your municipality builds a new fire hall, community centre, arena, public works facility or police station, most people see the name of the general contractor on the construction sign. What they don't see are all the businesses behind that contractor. The electricians. The plumbers. The concrete contractors. The HVAC companies. The drywall crews. The excavators. The roofers. The equipment suppliers. And very often, those businesses aren't giant national corporations. They're businesses from our own communities. They employ our neighbours. Their employees coach local hockey teams, shop in our stores, pay property taxes and raise their families here. Yet there is a vulnerability in the way public construction works that taxpayers rarely hear about. The municipality may pay its general contractor in full - but that doesn't necessarily mean everybody further down the construction chain has been paid. That's where payment surety becomes so important. A Labour and Material Payment Bond is essentially financial protection for eligible subcontractors and suppliers working beneath a bonded contractor. If the contractor fails to pay qualifying amounts owed, the bond can provide another avenue through which an eligible claimant may seek payment, subject to the particular bond's terms, notice requirements and deadlines.

Think about why that matters. A \$50,000 or \$100,000 unpaid invoice may be an accounting problem for a huge corporation. For a family-owned electrical, concrete or mechanical contractor, it can be devastating. Payroll still has to be made. Suppliers still need to be paid. Equipment leases don't disappear. WSIB, insurance, fuel and taxes continue coming due. The employees already did the work. And the public facility is already benefiting from it. Public construction should come with public responsibility. Municipalities rightly spend enormous amounts of time protecting taxpayers when they procure construction. We require insurance. We require health and safety compliance. We require performance security where appropriate. We scrutinize bids. But procurement shouldn't stop protecting the public interest the moment the municipality pays the prime contractor. There is another public interest involved: making sure the businesses and skilled tradespeople who actually delivered the project aren't left holding the bag. Payment surety is one important tool for doing that. It also protects the integrity of the procurement system itself. Responsible contractors price work expecting to pay their subcontractors. If companies could obtain public work, receive public money and then simply leave legitimate subcontract accounts unpaid without meaningful protection for those businesses, responsible contractors would be placed at a competitive disadvantage. That's not a procurement system municipalities should want. Maybe taxpayers should start asking another question. When council approves a multimillion-dollar construction contract, councillors routinely ask: How much does it cost? Who won the tender? When will construction begin? When will it be completed?

Perhaps there should be another question: What protection is in place to make sure the subcontractors and suppliers who build this project actually get paid? And municipalities should be able to answer it. That doesn't mean every payment dispute is the municipality's fault. It isn't. Nor does a payment bond automatically mean every disputed invoice will be paid. Bond coverage depends upon the contract, the claimant, the work performed and the requirements of the particular bond. But government procurement can establish safeguards before anybody ever steps onto the job site. For significant public construction, payment protection shouldn't be treated as obscure paperwork sitting somewhere in a procurement file. It should be part of responsible public contracting. Because behind every subcontract isn't just another corporation. There are employees. There are apprentices learning skilled trades. There are suppliers extending credit. There are families depending upon those paycheques. And there are local entrepreneurs putting their own capital and reputations on the line to build the infrastructure the rest of us use every day. We spend a lot of time talking about buying local. Maybe we should spend a little more time making sure that when local businesses help build our communities, they get paid. If local businesses help build our communities, they should get paid.



5 Seconds Can Change Your Life "Time is money"

By Tom Reimer
Metalex Security

Sly prides himself on being a master of opportunity. If there was a weakness, he'd find it. If there was a gap, he'd slip through it. But tonight, behind your house, he felt like he was staring at a fortress disguised as a suburban home. He crept along the back wall, keeping low, scanning for the usual soft spots. The back door? Reinforced deadbolt. The windows? Reinforced glass. The porch? Lit like a stage. He grumbled under his breath, annoyed that you'd clearly done your homework.

Still, he wasn't ready to give up. He moved toward the basement window; the one he'd assumed would be his golden ticket. Basement windows were usually flimsy, forgotten, easy to pry open. But when he reached it, he's stopped cold.

The glass looked ordinary enough, but behind it sat an interior window guard—solid steel bars mounted inside the frame. He leaned closer, squinting through the glass. The guard was bolted directly into the masonry. No screws he could reach. No hinges he could exploit. No angle he could work. He couldn't even touch it. All he could do was stare at it.

Sly exhaled sharply. "Seriously?" he muttered. He tapped the window lightly with a knuckle. The vibration was dull, muted. He knew exactly what that meant. polycarbonate. With a Reinforced frame. And worst of all—an alarm sensor sitting neatly in the corner, blinking its tiny red warning light. He imagined breaking the glass. The explosion of sound. The lights are flipping on. You rushing to the window. The police already on their way. And him, scrambling through a window, he couldn't even fit through because the guard blocked every inch of space. It wasn't worth it. Not even close.

He stepped back, shaking his head. The whole house was like this—every entry point hardened, every weakness eliminated. You hadn't just secured your home; you'd anticipated him. You'd built layers, barriers, deterrents. You'd made sure that even if he tried, he'd fail loudly. Sly wasn't used to being outplayed, but he had to admit it: you'd done everything right. Target hardening wasn't just a strategy—it was a message. A very clear one. He glanced at the basement window one last time. The guard gleamed faintly in the moonlight, unmoving, unbothered, unbeatable. He felt a flicker of respect, the kind he rarely gave anyone. "Alright," he whispered, backing into the shadows, "you win."

He slipped away into the night, defeated but wiser. There were easier houses out there. Softer targets. Places where people assumed locks were enough.

But not yours. Your house stood quiet, secure, and absolutely off-limits to thieves like Sly. Not on watch Sly, next week, let's look at the upper windows, are they vulnerable?