



# Thinking about Policy...

Platform Planning for Municipal Candidates

August 21, 2018

# This Presentation

- **The role of policy on a municipal campaign**
- **Can you ever run on policy (and get elected?)**
  - Knowing yourself: the importance of knowing yourself
  - Knowing the job: what should I run on?
  - Knowing “the voter” and what “they” want
  - Policy filters
  - Political filters
- **Putting it all together to a working platform**

Any opinions expressed herein are purely those of the author.

# Can you ever “run on” policy?

*“An election is no time to discuss serious issues”*

- Kim Campbell, 1993



# Does policy even matter in elections?

- Municipal elections: less info available to the voter
  - No party
  - Limited media coverage
- Voters often go by familiarity: "Do I know the candidate?"
- Incumbency is a big advantage.
- "Knowing" the candidate is more than just "name recognition."
- It is also a brand associated with simple values...

# How brand relates to policy...Some samples

Theme	Policy example...
Manager	Keep taxes down, cut spending
Builder	Downtown renewal, new rink or rec centre
Neighbourhood	Limits on growth
Services	Fix the roads
Social services	Seniors, childcare, housing
Crusader	Stop “it” (Cannabis, growth, a highway exit)
Environmentalist	Climate change, recycling, banning straws...
Process Leader	Ethics, consultation, engagement...

# So, how do you think about choosing policy?

1. Know yourself
2. Know the job
3. Know the voter

# “Knowing Yourself:” Authenticity

- **It’s the right thing to do:**  
You have to live with it...  
So will your community
- **Its good politics:**  
Voters can spot phonies.

***This above all: to  
thine own self be  
true.***

**Hamlet**  
(Act 1, Scene 3)

## Know yourself:

**Known for your own  
ideas & reputation...**

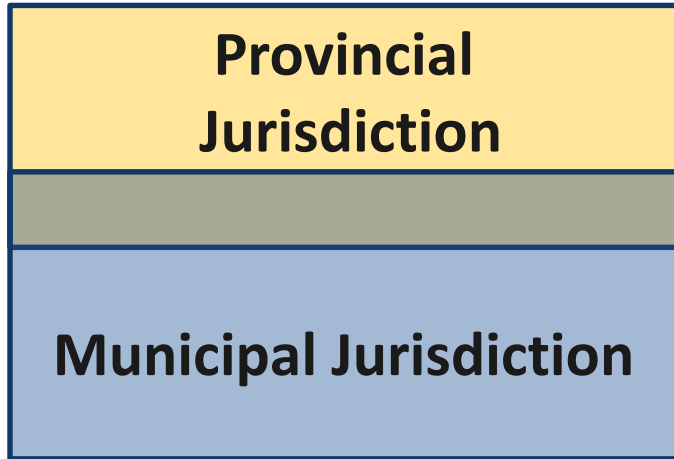
or

**Known for your  
party affiliation**

**Remember: Either one can have its downfalls...**



# Know the Job: Don't sound like you are running to be MPP...

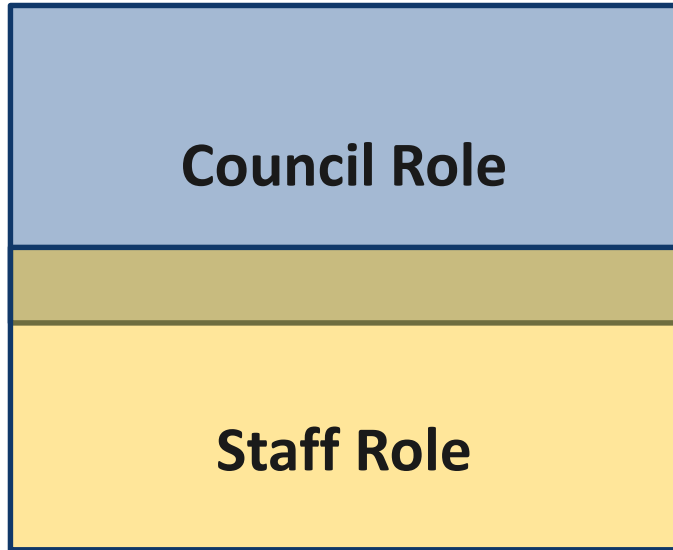


Municipalities have wide jurisdiction...

- Governance,
- Accountability & transparency,
- Financial management
- Economic, social & environmental well-being, climate change.
- Health, safety & well-being of persons.
- Protection of persons & property, consumer protection.

*Municipal Act, s. 11(2)*

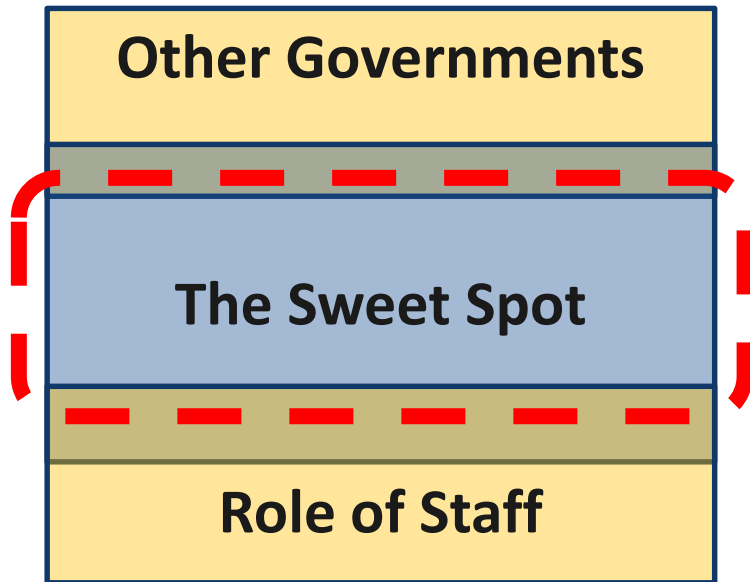
# Know the Job: Don't sound like you are running to be Works Director...



## The Role of Council

- Set policy and oversight... But not to micromanage.
- Don't make operational promises...

# Know the Job: Find the Sweet Spot



You might pledge to advocate for a new hospital...or to make doctor recruitment a priority

You might pledge to fix a broken system...but don't take constituency work too far...

# Know the Job: Part of a Council

- To be successful you have to work with Council
- If you cannot get support for it, you cannot implement it
- There is no “Leader of the Opposition” role in a Council government
- *Ideally, your policy choices should not set you up to be isolated all the time...*

# Know the Voter

- This is the tricky part.
- There is no such thing as “THE voter.”
- But there are ways to get some insight
  - Being part of the community
  - Going “door to door” ...
  - Polls...
  - Focus groups...

# A recent poll of Ontarians

What's the biggest issue to you in the upcoming municipal election?

Answer	Answer by percent
Helping keep young people in the community	8.8%
New leadership for the municipality	9.1%
Improving services like childcare	9.8%
Improving services like road maintenance	12.0%
Managing growth and development	17.3%
Creating jobs	18.3%
Keeping taxes down	24.7%

(Aug 12-16/sample N= 665/online/Ontario wide sample selected to match Ontario demographics)

# StrategyCorp's Annual Survey of CAOs

- 25 CAOs
  - 2016: Large Urban Ontario
  - 2017: Small and Rural Ontario
  - 2018: Canada Wide

We ask:

- What are the top three issues that keep you up at night?



Download your copy at...

[www.strategycorp.com/CAO](http://www.strategycorp.com/CAO)

# The Top Three Issues “Keeping CAOs up?”

## Financial Matters

- Funding /shortfalls and consequences

## Council Role, Direction and Conduct

- Managing Council Expectations

## Planning for Disruption

- Cannabis, opioids, NAFTA

## Managing Public expectations

- “1970’s level services at 1970s levels of taxation”

## Remember:

What you  
campaign on  
today will  
follow you in  
four years



# Listen: the role of focus groups

- How to do it:
  - Invite some people to discuss the issues that matter to them
  - 10-16 people: Try to be representative not just all one sort of resident
  - Have someone else facilitate it
  - Listen to what they say...get out of the bubble
- Do a poll...or maybe just start to try it out at the door

# Vetting the ideas: Policy and Politics Filters

## Fit:

- True to yourself:  
Does it fit your style  
(authenticity)
- Job: and Jurisdiction
- Voter: Will it be popular?

## Policy Filter:

- Four years from now, will it be a “promise broken?”
- Does it fit your community / meet a need?
- Is it affordable?
- Is it doable?

## Politics Filter:

- Does it fit your strategy for election?
- Can you communicate it?
- Will the other side just steal it?

# How much policy is enough? too much?

- You need enough policy to motivate your voters and provide content for your campaign theme...
- Three planks is about all you can manage to communicate. If you have too much, you don't have any...
- How much detail? Enough to explain and defend it.

# Conclusion

- The political system relies on those with the courage of their convictions to step forward with ideas
- Don't ever let the politics undermine your ideas or contribution, but remember Kim Campbell's warning and practice politics defensively...
- Elections are a challenging forum for discussing complex ideas.
- Thank you for your service to the system and to Ontario's Municipalities

# Questions?

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