

DAVID
SOKNACKI

Real Change. Real Ideas.

*David Soknacki's Platform
for Election 2014*

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“We need a new mayor. But that’s not enough. We also need a new way of thinking.”

David Soknacki



Toronto faces some tough challenges: underbuilt transit services, broken infrastructure, the struggle for well-paying jobs, and a gradual decline in the quality of our public services.

Part of the answer: we need to do a better job of executing on the plans we already have.

We need to start construction on the modern LRT transit routes that Metrolinx planners have already laid out and financed for Scarborough, on Finch and on Sheppard. We need to make a Commuter Relief Subway Line our top new infrastructure priority for this decade.

But we also need bold new ideas to face these challenges.

Let's make better use of our transport capacity: free Early Bird TTC fares can cut rush hour transit crowds.

Ban onstreet parking on key downtown streets to make room for bike, TTC and car traffic.

We need new thinking on the budget, too. Seventy cents of every new tax dollar raised in the last five years has gone to increases in the police budget, even as crime has gone down in Toronto and across the continent. I'll save money from policing to invest in other priority services, like transit, housing repairs and parks, without reducing the frontline police complement.

As your Mayor, I'll promote innovation inside City Hall - and outside it, too - to bring new jobs and better services to our City. And we need civility and real reform to end the circus at City Hall.

This platform covers the key commitments in my plan. If you want more detail, we'll soon be releasing an extended version – Real Change, Real Ideas, Real Details – with budget information and updated policy papers on transport, housing, governance and parks. But if this is enough, you can help to change Toronto now. Simply pass this platform on to friends, family and colleagues.

David

David Soknacki
Successful Entrepreneur, former 3-term Scarborough councillor.

Real Transit, Immediate Relief

My “Transit Prime Directive:” we should never rewrite transit plans that are already paid for, designed, and engineered.

- I support the agreement that is still in force to build a modern, seven-stop LRT in Scarborough instead of a wasteful 3-stop subway, and I support **existing Metrolinx plans to build modern LRT lines on Finch and Sheppard.**
- To reduce transit crowding and add two new subway transfer points, I will make a **fully-automated Commuter Relief Line** our highest new infrastructure priority, with Phase I complete in less than ten years.

We can make better use of the transit capacity we have for immediate transit relief.

- To immediately relieve TTC crowding, I will offer **Free Early Bird Fares** for riders boarding transit vehicles from 6am-7am. Once Presto’s electronic fare cards are fully in use, time-of-day fare discounts will replace Early Bird fares.
- We have a legal and moral obligation to **make subway and transit stations accessible** to Torontonians with disabilities. I’ll invest the \$250m needed - with or without provincial help - to get construction moving.

Better transit isn’t free.

- I will fund **the City’s share of costs for Commuter Relief Line subway** with conventional debt/property taxes once planning is complete in 2016-17 or (preferably) fund it with a dedicated transit tax by agreement with Queen’s Park.
- I will set aside \$22m in 2015 and \$65m in 2016 for a **“Better Transit Fund”** for Early Bird and “Immediate Relief” transit improvements. These funds will support the cost of the Early Bird program, and implementation of rear-door boarding, express bus expansion and other TTC service improvements.



Many critics have complained that I don't have a transit map like other candidates. That's because it's not a politician's job to draw transit routes on a map; we pay professional planners and transit engineers to do that for us.

This map – published by Metrolinx – shows the transit routes planned and in place as of September, 2013 – before politicians like Mayor Ford and John Tory began to redraw those plans to suit their own personal political interests. Not seen: the potential routes for a Commuter Relief Line that would cut transit congestion on the Yonge and Bloor-Danforth Corridors.

If you feel I need a transit map, this is it.

*Singapore's **free Early Bird free fares cut rush hour crowding by 7%.***

*TTC crowding: **5%+ excess ridership at transfer points & corridors.***

*Melbourne **cut rush hour commuter train crowds by 1.5% with free Early Bird fares.***

Real Solutions to fight Gridlock

To make more room for car through-traffic, safe cycle lanes and onstreet transit, I would **phase out street parking in the downtown core** – between Bathurst, Bloor, Jarvis and Front - on major streets only, over 2016-2018.

We can offset some of the lost parking downtown with **partnerships to build multi-floor parking on up to eight surface Green P lots downtown.**

We need more separated lanes to make biking safer for riders and drivers alike. I will **double the bike lane budget** to build up to 200km of new, commuter-grade bike lanes. I will speed up lane expansion by frontloading environmental assessments. I will expand bike parking in condo towers (through zoning policy) and along key bike routes.

I support the investment of **\$3m annually for safety fixes at bike/car accident hotspots.**

I will hire a construction industry veteran into the Mayor's Office to offer expert, independent policy advice to the Mayor and Council on pricing, cost controls and innovation for the City's multi-billion dollar infrastructure budget.

Expect other electronic tools: MARLIN traffic management, a 'big board' map online using open data to track construction plans publicly, alongside new rules to limit congestion caused by private on-street construction.

I support plans to relocate the Gardiner East as this will maximize use of land and minimize disruption. We need to expand the Redway Avenue to reduce traffic risk in Leaside, and I support the use of temporary tolls for optional single-passenger car traffic on the existing bus and HOV lanes on the Don Valley Parkway to fund extension of one complete HOV lane along the entire Parkway.

- We need better coordination of policy – not just management- of transportation in Toronto, so I would hire a Chief Transportation Officer, and merge various committees (including the TTC) into a single City Council Transportation Committee. The TTC would remain intact as a corporation, with the Transportation Committee serving as its board.



“Save to Invest” - Our **Budget Projections**

Property tax targets, measured against inflation:

■ **2.6%** tax increase (versus 1.5% Bank of Canada projected inflation) in 2015.

■ **2.0%** tax increase (versus 2.0% Bank of Canada projected inflation) in 2016.

New investments:

■ **2015: \$22m** in the Better Transit Fund.

■ **2016: \$65m** in the Better Transit Fund.

The day is 24 hours long, but we pay for 28 hours of policing.

Delaying necessary investments will cost more than debt over the long run. I would use debt (if necessary) or other sources of capital to fund **\$250m for TCHC housing repairs** and **\$250m for access to TTC stations and services for persons with disabilities**. Funding from Section 37 grants (20%) will help to finance TCHC housing repairs.

Note: Toronto's debt is scheduled to begin dropping in 2019 without the Scarborough Subway – so these investments will stabilize rather than increase debt over time.

Some planned savings measures include:

- \$65m per year by 2016 from changes in Toronto Police Service operations;
- Reductions in the City's car fleet, replacing some vehicles with carshare plans;
- \$8m saved by reducing the footprint of city offices by 5% by 2016;

New revenue: giving tax breaks for vacant commercial properties – as Toronto must by provincial law - gives property owners an incentive to drive up rents. Vacant properties also cost cities more in services over time. If Queen's Park doesn't lift this requirement on request, **I will use powers in the City of Toronto Act to seek a new vacant property frontage levy** on vacant streetfront properties of all types to recover \$20m.

New city tax revenue over the last five years



- GOING TO POLICE
- GOING TO ALL OTHER CITY SERVICES

Modernizing Policing

We've done little to change the way we police Toronto in decades, even as community needs, technologies and policing methods across the continent have changed around us.

Crime rates are declining across North America – and right here in Toronto. The Toronto Police Service budget has grown out of control, and the next police contract expires shortly after Election Day. With a new chief on the way, it is the time to step in with some financial restraint – without cutting frontline officers.

I will sit on the Police Board. I will save over \$65m by:

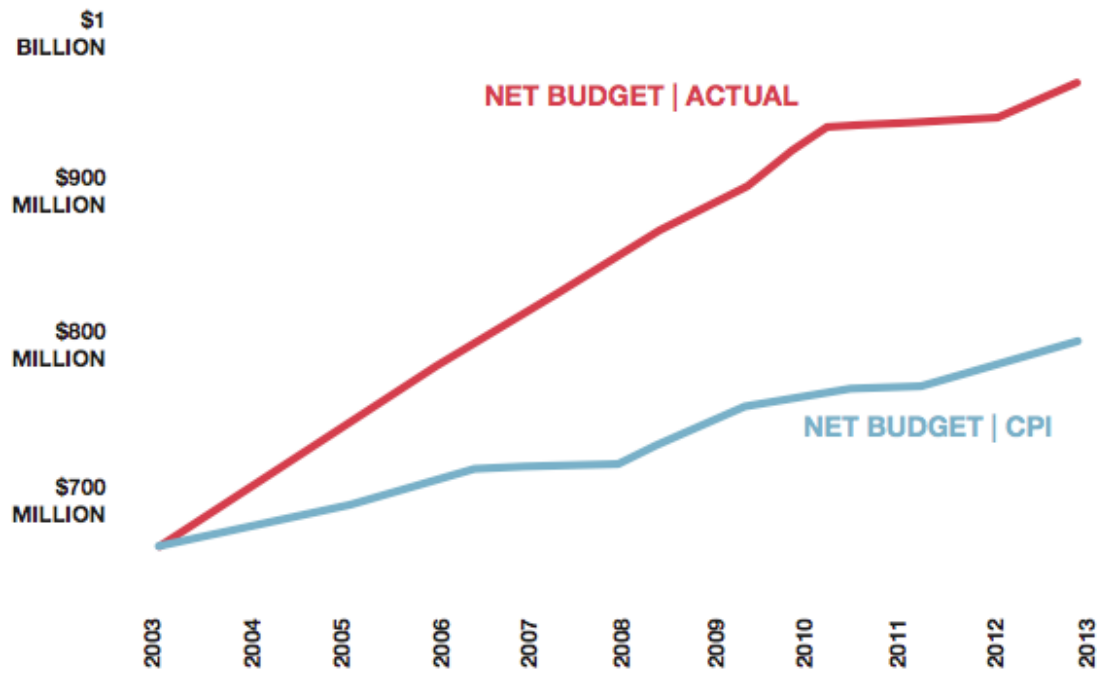
- Using a four-platoon shift model rather than a five platoon shift model, as other cities do. Toronto now pays for 28 hours of policing in every 24 hour day, and reducing shift overlaps can save over \$25m.
- I'll use incentives and other measures to replace light duty officers and retirement-eligible officers with new recruits for a savings of \$25m.
- I'll insist that we allow for limited use of one-officer car patrols in the police contract, as almost every other city in Canada does, for a savings of \$15m.
- We desperately need to increase the use of technology to cut paperwork in our police system, to deliver a savings target of \$2.5m

It's time to end paid duty. I support the creation of a public, security-level unit trained and led by the Toronto Police Service - in line with the cadet or security programs in other Canadian cities - to handle construction sites, TCHC security and TTC patrols.

We can also improve the accountability of policing by acting on new police board policies to limit police stops ("carding"). I also support the mandatory use of lapel cameras for officers on duty, given their success in other cities.



Toronto Police Budget: Actual budget growth versus growth if held to inflation/CPI



Building the City We Want

Housing is a crisis in Toronto:

- Learning from other cities, I'd lead a **zero-homelessness strategy** to shift our focus from managing homelessness to actually housing the homeless. This will save money (since it costs more to serve and treat homeless people on the streets), over and above the compassionate value of the policy. Funds saved will be used to invest in more micro-housing to house more of the homeless.
- **I support the gradual decentralization of the Toronto Community Housing Corporation over twelve years** so that non-profits, smaller city agencies and land trusts can be more responsive to tenant needs.
- My budget plan (on page 8) is the only plan from a major candidate to include new revenue streams (including 20% of all 'Section 37 grants) and **new capital investments to attack the TCHC housing repair backlog.**
- Affordable and rental housing: I'll fight to **extend my 2005 tax rate reductions for renters.** I'll propose rules to ensure that **for many classes of new development, 10% of units built must be set aside for affordable rental housing.**

Parks are the heart of our City, yet Toronto has less park space per capita than many similar cities around the world.

- We need new funding and new rules to **expand Toronto's network of alternative parks** – “high line” style parks, rooftop parks and even temporary parks on empty properties – so every Torontonians can live within walking distance of a public park.
- I will create a **Toronto Parks Board**, modeled on the Library Board. Budgets for local parks would be open for participatory budgeting by citizens by 2016
- The new Parks Board would have the authority to negotiate for the **creation of Parks Conservancies** in areas where sufficient volunteer and donor interest exists for a park to be self-managed. The City would retain ownership.

Arts and library Programs are critical to the cultural life of our city.



- We improve our City by recognizing artistic excellence. I created the Toronto Poet Laureate program with Council support in 2010, and **support the creation of three more laureate or in-residence honors for arts and heritage disciplines** by 2018.
- Public art doesn't have to be a million dollar concrete sculpture. I'll launch ArtCity Wide – a new program to **set aside four hundred and sixteen (416) public spaces for free use by artists and arts groups** by 2018.
- Public libraries are public parks for the mind. As Toronto changes and technologies evolve, there is more room for diversity and specialization in our library offerings.
- Through a **'Signature Libraries' strategy**, I'd support specialization of community libraries (be it in languages, services, technological offerings, programs, or even through offering different hours) to better serve distinct groups or neighbourhoods. This would be achieved without diluting basic services, and funding would be available after 2016 to achieve this.

Innovation and the Economy

I will set aside funding in the budget for a **Mayor's Office Innovation Unit** to survey City Hall for opportunities to improve services with better technology.

Technology startups can bring new thinking to city services. Partnering with startups can help to build Toronto's tech industry. I will launch Innov8TO – an annual competition – **to partner up to eight startups directly with City departments and agencies every year.**

We should make Toronto the easiest place to start a new business in Canada. I will ask Council to let **new companies defer license fees until the end of their first year** so they can earn money to pay those fees, with online business license registration and renewal.

“Open data” is the process of releasing public (not private) data held by the government to help businesses plan and design products. Releasing open data can also help to keep City Hall accountable for spending and outcomes. By 2018, if I'm elected, **Toronto will release more open data** than any other city in the world, and I will enforce that goal by writing goals into managers' contracts for each department.

The food truck by-law limits food trucks, when we should be more flexible. I will ask Council to rewrite the rules so these “restaurant incubators” can serve us more freely.

I oppose highest-and-best-use taxation on our storefront streetscapes, and will take aggressive action to **end tax breaks for vacant commercial properties** which artificially increase commercial rents (see below). I led the implementation of **gradual business tax rate reductions** in 2005, and I will extend those rate reductions past 2015 until we are competitive with other GTA cities.

We can promote Toronto's economy more effectively if we work within and sell ourselves as part of a larger, regional economy. To foster regional economic development, **I will sign municipal trade deals with Greater Toronto Area partners** to harmonize business processes and recognize licenses across borders.



StartUp

End the Circus at City Hall

Council's most powerful committee is the Executive Committee – and entire regions of the city are often left off the Committee. I will change City rules to guarantee that one Councillor from each region (elected by regional colleagues) will always be on the Exec.

I will invest \$500,000 annually in **an inspector-general model for City accountability officers** to offer better coordination and more investigative support.

I built my own food manufacturing business. I have committed to **separate my business interests by acting only as a shareholder if elected Mayor**, so there will be no “Deco White House” in my term of office.

Our voting system rewards wedge issue politics, negative campaigning and divide-and-conquer thinking. **I will lobby in favor of a ranked ballot elections** so that you can vote for the candidates you want, instead of having to vote against the candidates you dislike.

I support **ward redistribution** so that Council will have 44 wards, but based on newer, fairer boundaries. If we do not do do this, there will be unfair disparities between wards, or we'll have to increase City Council to 51 to distribute new wards evenly, at a higher cost.

I've promised that the Mayor or Deputy **Mayor must be within the GTA at all times to preserve emergency authority** for any disaster, and will propose rules to make this law.

By the time you read this, I'll have voluntarily released **information on my campaign donor list in advance of Election Day** - a historic step for transparency. I challenge other candidates to follow suit.

The Big Picture

One of the most shameful legacies of the Ford era is the habitual marginalization of many in our diverse community. Since my schedule will be published regularly, the public will be able to measure my commitment to work directly and regularly with the LGBTQ community and other Torontonians who have been treated as outsiders in their own city.

Despite many years of controversy and change, Toronto's waterfront is still one of our City's most treasured assets. I would push Ottawa to agree to bring the Toronto Port Authority under the complete control of Waterfront Toronto, and reorganize it accordingly. This outcome is important enough to consider offering concessions to the federal government to achieve it.

I would oppose any Island airport expansion for jets unless the Toronto Port Authority can guarantee compliance with existing noise and environmental regulations. Onshore City of Toronto infrastructure costs related to the expansion must be paid for by the Authority.

Toronto is now dense enough that every public space is premium space. It's time to radically rethink the relationship between schools, school space, public space and the city at large so that City Hall can play a constructive role in making sure that outdoor and indoor community space is always available for community use. I would ask Council for a mandate to begin a long-term conversation with Queen's Park and the TDSB to see if there's a better way for the City and the School Board to cooperate in the use of school buildings and school fields.

About David Soknacki

David Soknacki is a successful entrepreneur and a former city councillor. In 1986, he founded Ecom Food Industries, which imports, manufactures and exports herb and spice ingredients for commercial use. Ecom now has clients in over 30 countries.

David was first elected to office as a councillor in the former City of Scarborough in 1994. He then served as a councillor in Toronto after amalgamation, winning a by-election and two general elections to represent Ward 43 (Scarborough East). He successfully pushed for a ban on nepotistic hiring at City Hall, chaired the Board of the Toronto Atmospheric Fund, and moved the motion to create the honorary position of Poet Laureate of Toronto.

David led Toronto's budget process as Council's budget chief from late 2003 until 2006. In that role, he was widely respected for working constructively with councillors of all political stripes. Still, he was also willing to take a stand on principle, voting against the decision to sole-source the TTC's streetcar purchase. He was also praised for reforms to make Toronto business taxes more competitive, to reduce rental apartment tax rates for tenants, and for enacting Toronto's first long-term financial plan to manage debts and reserves.

David later served as chair of the Board for Canada's Downsview Park Corporation. Since he retired from Council in 2006, David has also been a candid critic of City Hall as a columnist for Metroland newspapers, where he promoted a balanced approach to urban development, pushed for evidence-based transit planning, sought greater civility at City Council, and called for a strategic review of Toronto's public safety services.

David earned his Bachelor's degree in Commerce from the University of Toronto, and an MBA from the University of Western Ontario. He lives with his wife in Scarborough, where he was also born and raised.



