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## Toronto doesn't need a corporate-style CEO

**Mayor Miller already shows a chilling disregard for those who disagree with him**

April 07, 2008

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They are making a big mistake. Mayor David Miller and Premier Dalton McGuinty are out to install a corporate model for running the City of Toronto even though they don't exactly explain it that way.



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Mayor David Miller

They want to enlarge the mayor's authority so that the mayor can consult with a few trusted cronies he has placed in the civil service and on council's executive and then this tight little circle will be able to get things done ... particularly when it comes to making up city budgets.

The remaining members of city council may be consulted from time to time but once the inner circle has made a decision, the outer circle of council members won't be able to do much to alter it.

They call this the "strong mayor" approach to government and if it sounds familiar, it is pretty much the way corporate chief executive officers operate.

The CEOs consult their vice-presidents and then they make a decision and get things done. The outer circle of managers and department heads may be called in from time to time but they don't sit at the big table when the crucial choices are being made.

There is, however, an essential ingredient missing from this corporate lifestyle the McGuinty-Miller team is cooking up for Toronto: the discipline of the

marketplace.

A corporate CEO faces constant challenges. If he makes poor decisions, the public won't buy the products or services his company offers. The value of his company will diminish. The price of his company's stock will fall. Every day, there are people making judgments about the quality of a corporate CEO's decisions.

Following an election, the mayor of Toronto and his cronies don't have to worry about anyone passing judgment on them until the next election, four years down the road.

The mayor doesn't even have to listen to dissenting voices if he doesn't want to. And Miller has shown a chilling lack of respect for people who say things he doesn't want to hear.

He placed veteran Scarborough Councillor Brian Ashton on the city's powerful executive committee but when Ashton showed some independence and voted against Miller's first attempt to jack up the land transfer tax, Miller had him yanked off the executive.

The city held four open meetings so people could tell politicians what they think about municipal taxes. Miller didn't turn up at any of them. The explanation was that civil servants would write reports that the mayor and others could read.

But that means people who spoke at those meetings have to trust that civil servants understood what they were trying to say and that the mayor and his cronies read the reports carefully.

Reading a report of a public meeting is no substitute for being there – especially when people are talking about taxes and spending priorities.

Some time early in life Miller decided burning garbage was dangerous to public health. He can hardly bear to hear the word "incineration" uttered in his presence.

But the technology of burning garbage has improved since Miller was a lad, and York and Durham regions are moving ahead now on incinerators. Toronto, meanwhile, is spending \$220 million on a landfill site near London, Ont., that will probably last only another 15 years. What will we do when it starts to fill up?

If Miller gains the power to completely disregard dissenting voices, what are the chances we will ever have an open, honest debate about incineration as a solution to Toronto's chronic garbage problems?

Miller's insistence that the mayor always knows best just because he's the mayor is maddening when you remember that Toronto has done well when dissenters got the chance to speak up.

In the 1950s, Queen's Park forced Toronto and its suburbs into a federation called Metropolitan Toronto and made Fred Gardiner the first Metro chairman.

Gardiner had only one vote. He had to face cantankerous council members, some of whom were out to sabotage this new-fangled federation. But under Gardiner's leadership, Metro still approved the Bloor subway, the University Ave. subway, the Gardiner Expressway and the Don Valley Parkway.

In 1972, David Crombie became a reform-minded mayor of Toronto. Crombie, too, had only one vote and he could count on only eight or nine politicians on a 22-member council to support him consistently.

Yet with Crombie's leadership, Toronto passed a new official plan limiting the size of office towers and promoting residential condominiums downtown, got the Toronto Film Festival underway and started work on the St. Lawrence neighbourhood, a project that pioneered a new low-rise architectural style for subsidized housing.

Gardiner and Crombie faced critics, argued them down, made compromises when they had to and moved the city ahead. Miller can't manage the dissenters on his council so he wants McGuinty to give the mayor the power to ignore anyone who challenges him.

Miller wants us to believe that this form of authoritarian, corporate decision-making will be better for us than the substance of democratic political leadership.

That's not the kind of mayor we need in Toronto.

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