



## City Hall shakeup starts now: Ashton

Massive budget cuts needed for 2012, so say goodbye to gravy train, hello to a revolution

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What do the Fords know about Lean? And why should you care?

Toronto's election is barely over and already we find ourselves halfway through the 2011 budget wrestling match.

The complaining is well underway with some saying give the mayor a chance, while others e-mail, phone, or fill the meeting halls to protest cuts. Since Mayor Rob Ford was elected to cut the city budget, and stop the gravy train, something has to give.

Ford's budget team, led by Coun. Mike Del Grande, and closely shadowed by the mayor's big brother, is just nibbling around the edges and picking at the table scraps. Coun. Doug Ford, never at a loss for words, says it best: "I guarantee you'll see the gravy pouring out over the 2012 budget."

In the many budget debates I have sat through, at the heart was a general acceptance that the city's core services were wanted and needed. Like today, we cut and trimmed, sought out efficiencies, improved services, and complained the other levels of government were taking more than they gave.

So is a dramatic makeover of your city government in the works? If you believe Ford's election promises, like saving \$1.7 billion over four years, it's going to take much more than tweaking around the edges.

What's to come will be more a revolution than a movement. Unlike former mayor David Miller's green movement, this will be a no-holds-barred private-versus-public-sector crusade. Quite simply, the Fords see government like a business.

I predict that soon the Fords will jettison their crisp, effective gravy train one-liners, and replace them with the Fords' "Lean Action Plan." A private sector movement describing Japanese business practices during the late 1980s. The core idea is to maximize customer value while minimizing waste.

Here is your step-by-step "Lean" guide to transforming your organization, your city government in this case. You judge whether the strategy is already in play.

First, find an agent of change. Check!

Hire a consultant to implement the Lean strategy. Surprise!

Forget grand strategy for the moment. Might scare the shareholders!

Seize a crisis or create one. Homemade!

Demand immediate results. Bye-bye council perks!

Deal with excess people at the outset, and then promise no one loses their job. Damn unions!

Remove the anchor draggers. Naysayers out!

Once you fix something, fix it again. Inertia out!

So what's wrong with running a city like a business? Nothing if you don't object to becoming a consumer and not a citizen. Nothing if the worth of your service is measured by your ability to pay and not your needs. Why not cut under-performing TTC routes while leaving those without cars to their own devices?

For many that voted to stop the gravy train, it meant eliminating waste, rejecting public sector entitlement, and limiting government expansion.

But for the Fords, it means much more.

Doug Ford speaks plainly when proclaiming his brother's mandate to cut the size of government.

He is even more outspoken in offering privatization of city services as the means to cutting costs of city programs. But are these claims realistic? There is a lot of experience with privatization that suggest savings are short-term and illusory. And hard to reverse once a government workforce is disbanded.

Many people have told me they voted for Rob Ford to shake things-up at City Hall. I think you are about to get your wish.

Like the running of the bulls in Pamplona, the goring has just begun.

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