



For Immediate Release
March 17th, 2006

Helen Kennedy Launches Campaign for Olivia Chow's Council Seat

Toronto (March 17 – St. Patrick's Day!) Helen Kennedy, a former City Councillor in East York, and a key member of Olivia Chow's successful team at City Hall, has launched her campaign to succeed Olivia as City Councillor for Ward 20/Trinity-Spadina.

"For the past seven years I have had the remarkable experience of working with Olivia Chow to get things done in this ward. I am very proud of what we achieved together – what we have helped residents and business owners achieve, by focusing on constituency issues and community activism," says Kennedy. "I have always been guided by a vision of a vibrant community that achieves the dynamic balance of being a great place to live as well as a great place to do business. We have made real strides in downtown Toronto, and I am committed to building on this legacy."

Helen has led the way in challenging developers and ensuring community input on behalf of residents – her successful leadership in helping to stop the ROM Tower and the Tip Top Tailor Tower are two recent examples.

"Our ward is a community of neighbourhoods – and each neighbourhood, and every person who lives in them, must be respected and encouraged to participate in the decisions that are crucial to the future of our city," says Helen. "That is how I operate. That is who I am."

Olivia Chow, now the MP for Trinity-Spadina, has enthusiastically endorsed Helen's candidacy.

"Thanks to Helen Kennedy's outstanding work with constituents and community groups, I was able to take on many roles in City Council," says Olivia. "Together, our team achieved an amazing amount of groundbreaking work. Helen knows her way around City Hall – and our Ward – better than anybody. I have watched up close for seven years and I have seen how effective she is at getting results for the community. It will be a great help to me as MP if Helen is our City Councillor. City Council needs a strong, effective and experienced councillor for our ward. Helen Kennedy is my choice."

Helen's candidacy also has broad support from local residents who have seen her effectiveness first hand. Here's how Kensington Market, writer, broadcaster and Governor General's Award Winner David Gilmour sums up his experience with Helen:

"You want a dream candidate? I know one. Helen Kennedy is someone from City Hall who actually gets things done, brings people together and cuts through the red tape. I've seen her in action. We had a big problem in Kensington Market and she fixed it. No delays, no passing the buck, nothing. It just got done, and my street - and the streets around it - are a better place to live as a result. I support her wholeheartedly in her candidacy for City Councillor – we need to keep her on our side at City Hall!"

Helen is seeking the NDP endorsement – a process which should be completed in May.

About Helen Kennedy

As a young woman of 21, Helen Kennedy left her native Ireland, where she had faced limited opportunities for women and little scope for political participation, and took a trip to Toronto in 1979. She has never looked back.

Helen began her career as an activist and change agent with her first job in Canada, with the Industrial Accident Prevention Association, where she became a champion of workplace safety and of people with disabilities, building awareness as Editor of the Association's magazine. Her efforts were recognized by the NDP, and in 1985, she was hired by the NDP Ontario caucus at Queen's Park – where she served the Party for 14 years, in opposition and government.

During that time, Helen retained a focus on community activism and organizing --founding the East York Tenants Association, which lobbied effectively for rent controls and tenant rights. She also established Citizen's for Access – an awareness campaign to open up public buildings to people with disabilities. In 1988, she ran for City Councillor in East York (the first campaign in Canada to provide campaign literature on tape for the blind), was readily elected, defeating two incumbents. She served until 1991, leaving due to the increased demands of her position at Queen's Park when the NDP won the provincial election and formed the government.

In 1999, Helen returned to her first love of community organizing when she joined Toronto City Councillor Olivia Chow's team at City Hall, as constituency assistant in the Trinity-Spadina Ward.

During her time at City Hall, Helen championed many causes taking on and continuing the fight to:

- § Close the Toronto Island Airport.
- § Organized the successful iDance Rally at City Hall giving youth safer places to dance.
- § Pushed for and won changes to licensing of nightclubs throughout the city making them safer and more accountable to patrons and neighbouring communities.
- § Fighting for the preservation of heritage buildings, Bishop's Block at Adelaide and Simcoe being the most recent success.
- § Worked with community groups to undertake Heritage Studies of Queen, and Robert Streets and Madison Avenue, and a planning study for the future of Bloor Street from Avenue Road to Christie all currently underway.
- § Successfully defeated the ROM tower on University Avenue.
- § Successfully lobbied the University of Toronto to construct a 5,000 seat Varsity Stadium instead of a 20,000 seat Varsity Stadium which was to also host rock concerts.
- § Working with the community to save the College Street St. Stephen-in-the-Fields Church and its social programs.
- § Successfully lobbied for funding to save the Queer Parenting Network program.
- § Found funding for the construction of a new basketball court in Atkinson Co-op
- § Found funding for 2 new children's' playgrounds for Atkinson Co-op and Alexander Park.