

ELECTIONS PROVIDE GEORGISTS WITH AN AUDIENCE

By Frank de Jong, Toronto, Ontario

Elections are magical, unique times. People are open to new ideas, they listen, they give every candidate a fair shake. During campaigns voters dare candidates to say something interesting, something real, to get their attention, to earn their vote. For a month or two people visit your website, they read your blog, they're approachable at their front door, on the street, hundreds attend all-candidate debates to hear what the candidates have to say.

During elections the media is more accessible and will relish the chance to use you to sell more papers, attract more viewers. If your campaign is bold, creative, energetic, well financed, organized and credible, they will cover you.

In short, elections offer Georgists what we most lack: a captive, attentive audience. As a Green Party member I have run as a candidate a number of times, each time feeling more confident on environmental issues. But since becoming a Georgist, my campaigns have gained depth and credibility since I am now confident speaking on economics, which underpins most issues and ultimately determines a candidate's electability.

This autumn I ran for a seat on Toronto City Council, came third out of 12, and in the process touched thousands of people. My team and I fundraised \$12,000 and distributed two different leaflets to all 18,000 doors in my local ward. My website (www.votefrankdejong.ca) and Facebook page received many hundreds of visits, I received good newspaper coverage, and I spoke at numerous well-attended all-candidate debates.

My key messages were varied as I was wary of being dismissed as a one trick pony, cult ranter. I didn't want anyone to be able to play, "Spot the Georgist". But Geonomic principles figured prominently in my literature, on my web presence, and whenever I spoke.

One minute I demanded the strip joints in my neighbourhood be shut down, the next minute I talked about how the municipal tax on buildings punished people for fixing up and renovating their houses. One minute I argued passionately for bike lanes to reduce smog, the next I explained how capturing land value upkick could finance transit construction. One minute I emotionally demanded a hand-gun ban, the next I explained how seniors should be able to pay their taxes out of home equity. One minute I called for ranked ballot voting, the next how untaxing multi-unit buildings would incent the construction of as much affordable housing as needed without government subsidies.

Running in elections takes guts, for sure, but offers Georgists a unique opportunity to impact the larger community. Win or lose, you will attract support, some light bulbs will go on, some blinkers will come off, and edging our movement forward a notch or two is time well spent. Elections are perhaps one of best ways for us to win friends and influence people. Don't hesitate, you won't regret it. It's fun, too.

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