

Political suitors woo Toronto, but promise... nothing ^[1]

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EXCERPTS.

Note to party leaders: Greater Toronto has needs - and you've been ignoring them.

It has potholes, traffic jams, daycare concerns, homeless and poorly housed residents, cutbacks to immigration counseling.

We represent one of every six Canadians. If you want our vote, we need your help.

The GTA is "ground zero" this election, says Myer Siemiatycki, a politics professor at Ryerson University. The Tories need to win more than a dozen GTA ridings to find their holy grail: a majority.

And so they flock to the region. By the second week of campaigning, Stephen Harper had swung a cricket bat in Brampton; Michael Ignatieff had shaken hands in Chinatown; and Jack Layton had visited a Flower Town factory that makes robots for outer space.

They woo with talking points - chocolate-covered cash for post-secondary studies (Liberals), rose-scented tax credits for gym users (Tories). But we're still waiting for a serious proposal.

"There are a lot of ways in which the needs of Toronto have been ignored and overlooked, notwithstanding the significant population here - and the seats up for grab here," Siemiatycki said.

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Throw in demands for an answer to the shortage of affordable, high-quality child care. "It's really a societal issue," said Martha Friendly, a childcare expert with the University of Toronto. "It's of particular interest to people who want it, but it affects everybody ... it's part of the infrastructure of society."

Toss in the need for immigrant settlement services, which recently suffered a \$43 million federal funding cutback in Ontario. Of that, \$18 million was sliced from immigrant-heavy Toronto alone; 16 local agencies lost 100 per cent of their grants.

So far the Liberals and NDP have been relatively quiet about these cuts as they traverse the country.

-reprinted from Toronto Star

Region: Ontario ^[2]

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