

McCallion urges council teamwork; After fractious election campaign, mayor appears conciliatory

Thu Dec 2 2010

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Section: News

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Illustrations: Hazel McCallion was sworn in Wednesday night for her final term as mayor of Mississauga. The balance of power has tipped back in her favour. RENÉ JOHNSTON/TORONTO STAR

If this is indeed Hazel McCallion's last term as Mississauga's mayor - as she has stated - her swan song might well be, "Hit me with your best shot."

But even with a new council sworn in Wednesday night, one with three rookies who have tipped the balance of power back to her side, the 12-term mayor's legacy might not escape the damage of those blows.

"I look forward to working with you for the next four years," McCallion told council shortly after it was sworn in.

During her inaugural address, she praised fellow council members for being responsive to residents and repeatedly stated she looked forward to "working as a team."

It was a stark contrast to her election campaign, when McCallion repeatedly denounced the "group of seven" councillors that pushed for the ongoing judicial inquiry into her alleged conflict of interest over a land deal led by her son's company. The inquiry will reconvene in two weeks and its report is expected early in the new year.

The mayor will also have to start answering questions that councillors have begun asking about her private fundraising. Councillor Sue McFadden said Wednesday she will bring up the subject at the next council meeting, after city staff recently failed to provide her with a proper accounting of all city resources used by the mayor for her private fundraising efforts.

A broader question McFadden said she will ask is why the mayor has used city staff for years to raise millions of dollars for her own private initiatives.

It's a question that may be handled by **George Rust-D'Eye**, Mississauga's new interim integrity commissioner, who began his role Wednesday. The office aims to bring accountability and transparency to city hall, with far-reaching powers to examine the conduct of elected officials and city staff.

There is even the possibility that McCallion's sway over council may be eroded next week when a Ward 1 ballot recount takes place. Incumbent Carmen Corbasson lost by 129 votes to McCallion's favoured candidate, Jim Tovey.

The mayor's biggest rival from the previous council got no such reprieve. But even without Carolyn

Parrish, who lost to the mayor's candidate, Ron Starr, at least five returning members of the former "group of seven" will continue challenging the 89-year-old matriarch.

Along with McFadden, the group includes Eve Adams, George Carlson, Nando Iannicca and Frank Dale.

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