



Chickens an election issue?

By **DON PEAT AND IAN ROBERTSON, TORONTO SUN**

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Outlawed Toronto chickens may be jumping from the backyard into the fryer depending on who wins this year's mayor's race.

Councillor Rob Ford said Hogtown is no place to keep chickens.

"We're not living on the farm," Ford told the Toronto Sun Wednesday. "This is the city."

"We're not farm country."

As reported Wednesday, one mid-town woman, dubbed the Toronto Chicken, is flaunting a city bylaw by raising chickens in her backyard. Her city councillor, Joe Mihevc, is pushing for the ban to be changed to allow people to keep three to five hens — but no roosters.

Mihevc said the issue is likely to be on council's plate when Toronto Public Health unveils its urban food strategy this summer.

Deputy Mayor Joe Pantalone said he voted against banning the birds in the first place and doesn't see what the harm would be in letting hens lay eggs on private property.

"I argued against their prohibition," Pantalone, also a mayoral candidate, crowed. "We're back to the future."

"If we do it smartly, in terms of allowing some pilot projects ... it's really bringing the farm into the city."

He said he was confident City Hall could make backyard chicken raising happen while ensuring safeguards were in place to satisfy any concerns.

Candidate Rocco Rossi said growing up as the son of poor Italian immigrants in Toronto's east end, he's no stranger to backyard chickens.

"I don't need the city to teach me about urban agriculture," Rossi said, adding his grandmother raised chickens, pigeons and rabbits in the family's backyard.

Rossi added that his grandmother could sort the whole issue out in less than a minute.

Whether people are raising the chickens to can make ends meet, embrace their culture or just have access to fresh food, the city should let people keep the fowl.

"I think City Hall should be focused on important stuff ... not the minutiae," he said.

Candidate Sarah Thomson said she's all for it.

"As long as it's regulated and we don't have roosters," she said. "To each their own."

Councillor Giorgio Mammoliti declined comment. George Smitherman did not respond to an interview request.

Councillor Howard Moscoe, who heads the city's licensing committee, said having a paltry amount of poultry might be okay under the right circumstances.

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