

PRO-ARMENIAN POLITICIAN RUNS IN TORONTO ELECTIONS

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After more than 25 years as Member of Parliament representing the Toronto suburb of Scarborough-Agincourt, Hon. Jim Karygiannis resigned his position earlier this year to run as councillor in the upcoming October 27 Toronto municipal elections in Ward 39, which covers the same area. Because of the significant number of Armenians who live in Ward 39 and because of his long-time friendship with the Armenian community, Keghart.com interviewed Mr. Karygiannis on October 4, 2014.



Keghart.com: *What are the three most important initiatives you would like to realize when you become Councillor?*

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Keghart.com: *What are the three most important initiatives you would like to realize when you become Councillor?*

Jim Karygiannis: The three big issues are transportation, hospital care, and responsible community development.

I will work with my colleagues and federal and provincial partners to ensure the extension of the Sheppard subway line becomes a reality. The federal and provincial governments must come to the table to ensure that the Sheppard subway line is extended to Scarborough Town Centre

Over the years I have witnessed the deterioration of services at the Scarborough Hospital-Birchmount Campus. I have fought over the last 25 years, and will continue to fight, to make sure that Scarborough Hospital-Birchmount Campus continues to operate as a full functioning hospital

that meets the needs of the residents of Ward 39.

Responsible community development is another priority.

Keghart.com: *Why do you think you are the best qualified to represent your ward as Councillor?*

Jim Karygiannis: As the Member of Parliament for Scarborough-Agincourt for more than twenty five years, I was an effective voice for the people of Scarborough-Agincourt and have vast political experience and a proven record of public service.

I have forged good working relationships with my colleagues at the municipal, provincial and federal levels of government. Together, we worked on issues of critical importance to the community including: establishing, with law enforcement agencies and various government departments, a Task Force to combat marijuana grow houses; strengthening community safety; helping to ensure the safety of residents of rooming houses in Scarborough-Agincourt; and, quickly addressing the issue of salaries, through Employment Insurance, of people who were affected by and working on the front lines against SARS.

I will bring political experience to City Hall and a proven track record of working with residents, other levels of government and community organizations to meet the needs of Ward 39.

Keghart.com: *How much do you know about the Toronto Armenian community and its concerns?*

Jim Karygiannis: For many years, I worked with the Armenian Diaspora with respect to issues of concern to the community, most notably, recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

In 1999, I introduced a Private Member's Motion in the Canadian House of Commons calling the House to recognize the Armenian Genocide. That Motion did not pass. Over the years, several of my colleagues and I, together with the Armenian Diaspora in Canada, pressed Parliament to recognize the Armenian Genocide.

In a landmark vote conducted in the House of Commons on April 21, 2004 on Motion M-380, the House acknowledged "the Armenian genocide of 1915" and condemned "this act as a crime against humanity." Members of Parliament voted overwhelmingly in favour of the Motion. On April 19, 2006, the Prime Minister affirmed that the Government of Canada officially recognized the Armenian Genocide.

I was privileged to lead a Canadian delegation to Armenia on the 90th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. We joined millions of Armenians from around the world, in laying flowers at the Genocide Memorial's Eternal Flame. Armenians, members of the international Armenian Diaspora and diplomats from around the world sent a powerful message - the atrocities of 1915 will never be forgotten.

I was the first Canadian Member of Parliament to visit Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, to observe the 2012 Presidential Elections.

In the fall of 2014, The President of Armenia, Serzh Sargsyan, decreed that I will be awarded the Mkhitar Gosh medal for 'his substantial input in international recognition of the Armenian Genocide.' I am humbled and honoured by this recognition of my work with the Toronto, Canadian and International Armenian communities on social justice and human rights issues.

Keghart.com: *The previous council deferred to the upcoming council the decision to erect an Armenian Genocide memorial in Toronto. Would you support such an edifice?*

Jim Karygiannis: Toronto's Armenian community wants the City of Toronto to commemorate the Armenian genocide with a donated monument on public land marking the 100th anniversary in 2015.

In April 2014, The City of Toronto's Executive Committee voted to send the request to staff for consultation with both Armenian and Turkish groups along with the federal and provincial governments. A report back isn't expected until early 2015 - after the municipal election.

I, along with members of the Toronto Armenian community, was very disappointed that the previous Toronto City Council deferred the decision to erect this monument.

I support the construction of the memorial. If elected to Toronto City Council, I will advocate on behalf of the community on this issue.

Click on [Hon. Jim Karygiannis](#) to visit his website and on [map](#) to view the boundaries of Ward 39.

