

Ethiopian Americans Council (EAC)

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LET'S HELP OUR MAN IN CANADA

The Ethiopian Americans Council (EAC) encourages all North American Ethiopian expatriates to register, vote and actively participate in politics. In its mission to serve communities of Ethiopians residing in the US and Canada, EAC supports and encourages the many Ethiopians that are qualified to run for office in local and state levels where they live.

EAC wants to tell you about the candidacy of 33-year-old Canadian Samuel Getachew who is running in Toronto's 2010 City Council elections this October. Getachew is an Ethiopian-born Canadian citizen who is seeking to represent Scarborough East Ward 43 in the eastern part of Toronto, a diverse neighborhood long known as a magnet for newly arriving immigrants to Canada. Scarborough has a population of over 600,000. Approximately 57% percent of residents are foreign born immigrants. These groups include South Asians, Chinese, Filipinos and Black Canadians. There are 30,000 Ethiopians among the 2.5 million people in the greater Toronto Area.

Getachew says he is running because he believes in public service and would like to address the crime and housing issues in his district. "Politics and public service at their very best give us a rare opportunity to connect with people in our community and discuss issues that benefits the public," Getachew said in an interview. "Ward 43 has a large concentration of public housing; crime is a serious concern." The candidate said he was inspired to become involved in the political process here because Blacks are under-represented in the corridors of power. "Blacks don't have much influence here in Canada," he said. "There are very few of us in key political areas and there isn't anything in Canada that's similar to the Black Caucus in the United States."

Mr. Getachew was born in Addis Ababa and arrived in Canada via Zambia. Getachew completed his high school education in Ottawa after arriving in the Canadian capital in 1990 with his family. He pursued Political Science Studies at Carleton University and worked for Elections Canada, the Immigration and Refugee Board, and in the House of Commons. He started a community newspaper in high school and founded the Friends of Ethiopia in Ottawa. Through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities partnership program that matches Canadian and other global cities, he was also instrumental in securing an ambulance that was shipped to Ethiopia. After moving to Toronto in 2008, Getachew became active in that city's Ethiopian community and launched the popular Ethiopia Friday networking event.

In 2006, Getachew's first foray into politics was unsuccessful when he attempted in to become an Ottawa-Carleton District School Board trustee. Two years ago, Getachew spent almost a year campaigning in the U.S. for Barack Obama and had the opportunity to met him in Ohio. "I went to the United States because I wanted to see for myself how the country had evolved from nearly four decades ago when my father studied there" he said. "It's was amazing to see a Black man contending strongly for the presidency then as opposed to the time when my dad went to university and had to use washrooms reserved for colored people". His father,

Getachew Jembere, graduated from New Mexico University and worked for several years as a researcher at York University's Centre for Refugee Studies before relocating to Zambia in 1993, where he's now retired.

Samuel Getachew says the city needs to do more to keep children of recent immigrants away from crime. "It is a very diverse neighborhood and people who live here include Sri Lankans, Tamils, Iranians, Chinese, and as I knock on doors, I often learn the reasons why most young people get into crime...it is a direct result of a broken government system. Often times, immigrants are allowed to come to Canada because of their educational and work qualifications, but are not able to find work in their field of expertise once they land here. They are often forced to work double shifts to survive and their children are forced to grow up without much supervision, making them vulnerable to criminal behavior."

The candidate is going to need help from Ethiopians from across North America. Getachew admits that compared to his challengers, he lags behind both in fundraising and organization. "I admit our campaign is the underdog at this time, both in money and grassroots support, but we have hope and we are determined," he said. "We will work hard to ensure that we meet all of our expectations, and we will win. I look forward to receive the support of those willing to contribute to my campaign".

EAC encourages people to help Samuel Getachew's campaign. The municipal election takes place October 25, 2010.

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