

# From the life of the party to sudden invisibility

## Former Edmonton politicians talk about their time in office and how they've moved on

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Former municipal politician Robert Noce with wife Nicole and son Domenico.

Photograph by: Larry Wong, The Journal, Edmonton Journal

### **ROBERT NOCE**

At 15 months, Domenico Noce can almost spit out one word: "Dada."

Domenico's dada is pretty well-known. Robert Noce served two terms as city councillor in the late 1990s and ran twice for mayor, losing first to incumbent Bill Smith, and in 2004 to the current office-holder, Stephen Mandel.

Noce was 28 when he was first elected to city hall in 1995. Young and confident, he announced after his win that he intended on "taking this city into the next century."

After coming in second in his first shot at the mayor's chair in 2001, Noce returned to his legal practice full-time and married his wife Nicole, also a lawyer. When he lost to Mandel, Noce told reporters the public scrutiny during the campaign had been tough.

"People comment on everything about you, from the way you dress, the way you act, the way you talk, the way you look. And you still have to get up every morning and put a smile on the face," he said tearfully on election night.

"It's not fun to lose," says Noce now.

"But you win in other ways," his wife pipes up.

"I think every candidate believes that when they put their name on a ballot they have a shot at winning," Noce says. "I did, absolutely. But for whatever reason, things didn't work out. But I'm also a true believer that things happen for a reason."

Stepping out of the limelight has led to his proudest achievement: building a family.

"I look at my life today both at a personal level and a professional level and I'm very happy," he says. "For about 24 hours (after defeat), it's hard, but then you sit back and you realize that yeah, you can stay depressed and saddened by the result or you move on."

Having a law career to fall back on helped bring him back to a normal routine. Noce and his family lead a relatively quiet, yet bustling life. They're excited to welcome their second child, due in November. Noce's career has also made strides. He joined national law firm Miller Thomson as a partner in its Edmonton office and was appointed to Queen's Counsel in 2007.

The more time he spends away from city hall, he says, the less he misses it.

"As every day goes by, politics and public life become less and less attractive, because life takes over and your priorities change."

Family is Noce's top concern now, but he still finds other ways to contribute to the community outside of city hall. He teaches, volunteers and writes regularly for legal publications as well as the *Edmonton Journal*, where he recently launched a monthly column in the weekend Condos section.

"I miss being part of city council," admits Noce, who has nurtured a political streak since junior high student council. "I always enjoyed being a part of a body that was able to make decisions and improve the quality of life of my fellow citizens -- that for me was very exciting. I enjoyed the people aspect of politics and I also enjoyed cutting a few ribbons. Absolutely, I miss it."

While he says he never viewed politics as a "long-term commitment" and has no plans to run again, he doesn't rule out returning to the fray.

"I've learned to never say never," Noce says. But he's likely to stick strictly to municipal politics and notes he has "no interest in running for federal or provincial politics."

Having tasted success and defeat twice, Noce has plenty of experience to share with current and future political candidates.

First, he advises, "defeat is possible, so be prepared to deal with that eventuality. Second, surround yourself with your family and friends to make that transition a lot easier.

"There's no shame in losing. You should stand up and be proud of the fact that you put your name forward and that you contributed in some way to democracy."

And finally, remember "there is life after politics.

"I can assure you that your life does not come to an end and, in fact, I think it's another opportunity in your life to try something different."

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