

Mayor of Toronto, David Miller, today pledged his commitment to empower youth in the decision-making process at city hall at the Youth Pavilion during the opening day of the International AIDS Conference.

“I commit to empowering youth directly in the decision making process at City Hall, including in preparation for Medico City AIDS 2008,” he wrote.

On a tour of the Youth Pavilion, a colorful, lively hub for the over 1,000-strong youth participants, Mayor Miller displayed surprise at the quality of youth key messages, designed in part through e-consultation, several months ago.

“And this is all youth-developed?” he asked, to which organizers of the Toronto YouthForce affirmed their earlier statements, providing him with a variety of stickers and a t-shirt that read “Access”: a reference to increasing youth access to increased access to youth-friendly health services, including prevention, treatment, volunteer counseling and testing, and harm reduction.

Other key themes included: “Listen,” “Sex,” “Money,” and “Truth.”

During his tour, Mayor Miller allowed a young woman from the Condom Project to pin a purple-papered art-piece, which featured a condom on its back, to his suit jacket.

“Overcoming all kinds of stigma and ignorance is incredibly important, and this kind of project is brilliant,” Miller said. “Plus...I get to wear art!”

Completing his full tour of the pavilion, the Mayor signed his commitment to youth before thanking and issuing a warm commendation to the participants surrounding him.

Referring to his belief in the right of every individual--regardless of geographic location--to reach their full potential, he connected his own reasons for public service to the work of the youth conference participants.

“AIDS causes disempowerment, and it is young people such as yourselves who are helping to fight against this,” Miller said.