

# Citizen Control of the Citizen's Business

TORONTO'S CITIZENS CAN CONTROL TORONTO'S AFFAIRS ONLY THROUGH FREQUENT, PROMPT, ACCURATE AND PERTINENT INFORMATION WITH REGARD TO TORONTO'S BUSINESS.

ISSUED BY THE

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## THE RECENT CIVIC ELECTION

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there was a slightly increased vote for Mayor, a decreased vote for Controllers, a slightly decreased vote for Aldermen, and a decreased vote for Board of Education compared with January, 1926. On the basis of percentage of possible votes there were decreases in all cases, very slight in the votes for Mayor and Aldermen. Compared with the election of January, 1925, however, the voting percentages were much better. In view of the number of other elections recently and of the fact that the election was held on a Saturday, the result in voting efficiency from a comparative standpoint is encouraging. Yet on the basis of unofficial figures, less than one in two voted for Mayor, less than one in three voted for Controllers, slightly more than one in five voted for Aldermen and less than one in five voted for Board of Education. If this is any measure of popular interest in civic affairs, it leaves much to be desired.

### IS IT POSSIBLE

that interest in civic business would be stimulated if the methods of conducting that business were improved. For example would a decrease in the size of the City Council, a decrease in the number of wards or their abolition, the constitution of the Board of Control as the only standing committee of Council and an increase in the length of term of members of the City Council and Board of Education tend to facilitate City business and would this result in increased interest on the part of citizens and taxpayers?

### SOME OFFICIAL SUGGESTIONS

The recent report of the 1926 Special Committee of Council on a "New Form of Civic Government" registered the opinion of the Committee against the adoption of the Commission form of Government. This is in line with the best recent thought. Possibly a similar committee of the 1927 Council might pursue the inquiry further and reach definite conclusions as to Council-Manager government or some modification of this system.

The Committee in its report lists the following suggestions made by the department heads to the Committee:-

- (1) Application should be made to the Ontario Legislature for a Civic Charter which will enable the City to carry on its business without continually making application for legislation to enable them to do so.
- (2) That the Heads of the Civic Departments should assume all responsibility for engaging members of their staffs without reference to Council, so long as the amount of money appropriated in each year for each department is not exceeded.

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- (3) That the Heads of Civic Departments should meet weekly or bi-weekly as a Committee, and after electing a Chairman should be allowed to consider matters relating to their several Civic Departments, with a view to improving the manner of carrying out the business connected therewith. In other words, more cooperation in the Departments, thereby doing away with overlapping of work.
- (4) That the Heads of the various Departments be required to be present at all meetings of the City Council for the purpose of giving information to the members when desired.
- (5) That the Estimates of the various Civic Departments should be revised by the Heads of Department in joint conference before submitting the same to the Board of Control for consideration.
- (6) That all accounts in connection with the several Civic Departments be paid at once, when signed by the Head of the Department, thereby doing away with the necessity of reporting long lists of accounts to the City Council as at present.
- (7) That no increase in salary should be made without the recommendation of the Head of a Department.

The Committee also reports its feeling that much time would be saved if certain executive details such as location of garages, licensing of butcher shops, removal of residential restrictions, etc. be left entirely in the hands of Heads of Departments.

All these suggestions are certainly worthy of careful consideration by Council and by the Taxpayers.

### TENDENCY IN BRITAIN TOWARD SIMPLIFICATION

A recent observer of municipal tendencies in Britain gives his impressions as follows:

"..... There is everywhere a tendency to develop the administrative as distinguished from the legislative branch. The City Council, or similar body, finds it impossible to do more than lay down the general policies and furnish the necessary funds. Instead of participating in the details of city services the legislative branch considers a programme presented to it by the Administrator.

"There is everywhere a tendency to regroup services which have developed independently and through an integrated system centre responsibility in one head" ..... The conditions which have produced the City Manager plan in America have (in Britain) increased the powers of the town clerk until his chief work has become that of co-ordinator of various services and programmes, his legal duties being rapidly subordinated to the more important task of general supervision."

The Toronto Bureau of Municipal Research is an independent non-partisan citizen organization, for the promotion of informed citizenship and, through it, of efficient municipal government. Its methods are:

1. The ascertaining of the facts regarding municipal government.
2. The study and analysis of these facts.
3. The publication of these facts in clear, concise form, with constructive suggestions based on the facts.

Since its inception in 1914, the Bureau has made no criticism of any undesirable conditions without offering a constructive suggestion as a means of removing or minimizing the condition.

The Bureau is conducted in the interests of all the citizens and taxpayers of Toronto. Its work is not spectacular, but persistent and calculated to exercise a wholesome influence on municipal affairs.

The Bureau receives no municipal grant, but is supported by the contributions of public-spirited citizens. The Council of the Bureau welcomes the cooperation of an even larger number than at present of citizens and taxpayers in supporting the work.