

# BUREAU OF MUNICIPAL RESEARCH

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

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TORONTO,  
CANADA

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## What will Toronto Municipal Electors Do in the 1944 Civic Election?

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### Open Letter to the Citizens of Toronto

Men and Women:

In the 1943 election there were 361,342 names on the voters' list. Individual actual voters numbered 73,083. Many of these did not cast as many votes as they were entitled to and so fell short of exercising their full voting franchise. As a matter of fact only 15.63% of the total number of possible votes for aldermen was actually cast and not more than 20.66% for controllers.

## WHY?

The fact that the Mayor was elected by acclamation is given by some as a reason for the poor record. It is not a reason, but an excuse. If the Mayor had large powers of appointment and financial control, as in many United States cities, apart from his membership in the Board of Control and City Council, the attitude of the elector who does not vote when there is no mayoralty election might be at least partially condoned. The office of Mayor carries with it tremendous influence, but no more voting power than a controller and alderman. The real reason why people do not vote is because they do not think it worth while.

Why do they not think it worth while? A few may refrain from voting because they are satisfied that in any event there will be the best possible City Council in the best possible city. But many do not think it worth while on account of a feeling of frustration as the result of long experience. There will be no significant improvement in the record of Toronto electors in civic election till the real causes are listed and concrete steps to eliminate these causes taken. Otherwise to exhort people to "vote as you like, but vote" will be almost fruitless.

As a matter of fact the vote is only one part of the franchise. An even more important part is the power to nominate. Those who take part in the nominations really control the quality of Council. Others merely choose between candidates that are selected for them. It may be a choice between unknown or too-well-known candidates.

It is not too early to begin to think of getting out candidates in your ward for whom you can vote conscientiously and enthusiastically. If there is any removable reason why you cannot induce candidates of your liking to run for office, you should combine with others to have changes made in legislation which will remove this reason. Municipal citizens are not helpless unless they feel helpless. Local democracy will work if citizens will work it. It won't work itself. There is no mechanical way to secure 100% good local government. The science of mechanics can help in deciding what power should be applied, and how and where; but there is no such thing as perpetual motion either in the science of mechanics or in the science of politics.

When the war is over the best antidote to over-centralization of government will be vigorous local institutions. It is our national duty not to let them die or be weakened beyond repair.

Yours respectfully,

T. G. ROGERS,  
President.

H. L. BRITAIN,  
Managing Director.

## SOME IMPORTANT FINANCIAL FACTS

1. The City Council, Board of Education and Separate School Board are responsible for the estimated expenditure in 1943 of \$36,721,193 — not including local expenditure out of provincial school grants.
2. At the end of 1942 the gross debt of the city was \$109,730,883 and the net general and educational debt was \$41,428,463. The corresponding figures in 1932 were \$195,064,861 and \$72,070,203 — a decrease per capita of 47.32% and 46.17%.
3. The total assessment has decreased in the decade (1932-42) from \$1,061,652,753 in 1932 to \$950,667,404 or 10.45%. Part of the difference is explained by the abolition of the Municipal Income Tax which meant in 1936, the loss of \$35,269,406 of assessment.
4. The total expenditure of the city decreased from \$40,537,483, to \$36,414,256, or 10.17% during the same decade.
5. The population increased from 626,674 in 1932 to 669,130 in 1942 or 6.77%.

**On January first, 1944, the citizens of Toronto will elect fifty persons to administer this huge business.**

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## EXTRACTS FROM A PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL MUNICIPAL LEAGUE OF THE UNITED STATES

"The integrity and strength of the community and the enlightened co-operation of its citizens have never been more important than now. This has been clearly demonstrated by English experience during a period of great trial, and it is coming into sharp focus in this Country".—  
*John G. Winant, Ambassador to Great Britain and President, National Municipal League.*

"In running his *private* business Mr. Citizen is well-informed as to its workings, and carefully selects manager and other employees".

"Democracy makes Government Mr. Citizen's *public* business, but "How much thought does Mr. Citizen give to his public business?"

"Nearly everyone wants 'good government', disapproves of patronage or favoritism, abhors waste and inefficiency in public affairs", but good government can only be secured "through the leadership of aroused and determined public-spirited citizens".



## WHY NOT VITALIZE

Municipal election campaigns by:

1. Making a proposed budget of expenditure and taxation for the following year an issue in the annual elections.
2. Conducting regular budget hearings open to all voters?

If a tentative budget were prepared by the end of November, subject to action by the new Council in January, Civic business could be made the subject of definite discussion.

It would also bring forth definite pronouncements as to what the Candidates proposed to do during the coming year with regard to budget proposals.

Then the slogan: "VOTE AS YOU LIKE, BUT VOTE!"  
would have new meaning.

The Bureau of Municipal Research is, and has been from the first, supported by private subscriptions from public-spirited citizens. It has received no governmental or municipal grants, for the reason that its statements of facts, and suggestions as to policy, must not only be independent and unbiased, but must be so considered by the general public. The value of the Bureau to the citizens of Toronto depends on its independence as an agency of constructive criticism and citizen co-operation.

If you could use additional copies of this White Paper or desire additional information, please telephone.