

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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NEED ELECTION TALK BE *JUST* TALKS?

Talking about things **in general** will not help the electors to control their civic business. Only **particular** information provided **before** civic elections, will enable candidates to talk and citizens to think and act intelligently in the election campaign. The supplying of such information **after** civic elections, (when the people who are to manage the city's business have already been chosen) is not good enough. That this is the existing situation, and that it has been so for many years, seems almost incredible. But it is a fact.

HOW TO "BRING OUT THE VOTE"

When we used to trade jack-knives, it was — to use the then boyish vernacular — "sight unseen". **Must** civic elections be a gamble?

The Bureau suggests that if the City Council really desires to increase the proportion of potential voters who become actual voters, it may do so by increasing the importance of the electoral body in the conduct of City affairs.

GIVING ELECTORS MORE IMPORTANCE

This end may be attained by giving the electors some food for thought and discussion as a basis for electoral action.

The following documents issued before the campaign would tend to supply this food for thought and discussion:—

- (a) A statement of expenditures for the current year, actual for ten months and estimates for two months.
- (b) A summary of departmental activities for the first ten months in the year.
- (c) An itemized statement of proposed expenditure and anticipated revenue.

All this could be done if the will to do it existed. It is too late this year, but not for next year if an early start is made to get it in motion.

After all what is wanted is not more voters but a greater proportion of interested voters. An election conducted in a vacuum (that is without pertinent information) might conform to the technicalities of the law, but does not give much satisfaction to electors, many of whom abstain from voting on account of its seeming futility and many of whom, who vote only from a sense of duty, but with a feeling of frustration.

It might be possible to increase the number of voters by imposing penalties on non-voters, but the proportion of informed, determined and independent voters could not be so increased. An increase in the number of uninformed and casual voters would actually be a danger to and not a safeguard of community well being.

SOME PERTINENT FINANCIAL FACTS

(From Bureau White Papers and Official Estimates)

Decrease in net tax levy (1939-1945) (including supplementary revenue from taxes for 1945) (See City estimates)	\$3,802,549.**
Decrease in Debt Charges, General and School (1939-1945) (See White Papers Nos. 250 and 303)	\$3,856,218*

* The estimated debt charges, city estimates, general and Board of Education have decreased by \$3,743,214. There was also a decrease in Separate School Debt Charges.

** Should read \$3,812,549. If the supplementary revenue from taxes were not included for 1945, the difference would be \$4,004,549.

That is, there was during this period almost no reduction in current expenditures other than Debt Charges (Interest and retirement of principal.)

During the same period estimated salaries, wages and other payment for personal services increased \$2,557,611 (See Bureau W.P. Nos. 250 and 303). On a comparable basis, upkeep items probably increased considerably during the same period but not sufficiently to maintain the city's plant at the required level of efficiency.

In both these items Toronto's taxpayers are faced by unavoidable increases in the next half decade. The essential increase in the size of the police department and the return in all departments of men from overseas warrant forecasting an increase in the salary and wage bill. The unavoidable postponement during war years of much upkeep expenditure will require a further increase in "other services".

Debt charges on inescapable capital expenditure will also have to be provided for in the reconstruction years.

In fine, if the corporation intends to keep up adequately its civic plant, to fulfil its commitments to returned men, to maintain essential services at the level of efficiency demanded, annual tax levies must greatly increase. Tax rates must also greatly increase, unless property assessed valuations are lifted and much property now exempted or partially exempted from taxation are added to the active assessment roll.

On the whole, some of the years between 1939 and 1945 were marked by increases in cost of service (except debt charges) without increased or restored service. If this tendency is continued, the citizens and taxpayers are in for a bad time.

QUERY

Would longer terms, overlapping, for members of elected bodies, bring out more candidates, foster independence of members of elected bodies and promote continuity of policy? It is the considered opinion of the Bureau that it would. It believes further that recent tendencies to increase the cost of services without increasing services is largely a result of the one-year term for elected representatives.

OPEN LETTER

To the Electors of Toronto

Men and Women:

Time was when every capital expenditure involving the issue and sale of City Debentures (except for Local Improvements) was voted on by those who would be called upon in the last analysis to supply the funds to retire the debentures through taxes. Then followed a time in which the custom grew to get special legislation to make consent of rate-payers unnecessary.

Now City Councils may and, at least sometimes, do apply to the Ontario Municipal Board for authorization of such capital issues without consent of the electors.

Conceivably emergencies might arise to make this course expedient, but such application in November when it is known that there will be a civic election on January first is hardly in the nature of an emergency.

The law does not forbid municipal councils to submit proposed money by-laws to the electors. Quite the contrary. One would think that if the voters had confidence enough in members of City Councils to elect them, members of the City Councils might well have sufficient confidence in civic electors to submit to them undertakings involving the use of the City's credit, which in effect rests on the tax-paying ability of electors.

If a city-wide plan were adopted, as it should be, there would be no danger of a special project being turned down on account of sectional jealousy.

During the next ten years, there will be many such undertakings, some small and some large, but all having to be financed at the expense of taxpayers. How many of these will be submitted to the judgment of the electors depends on the electors themselves. If they are willing to be told what is good for them, and to pay what is asked without consultation, that will be the policy adopted. If you think that the electors should be consulted, why not use the telephone or the mail to get in touch with members of City Council?

Yours sincerely,

BUREAU OF MUNICIPAL RESEARCH

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