

# BUREAU OF MUNICIPAL RESEARCH

Monthly



Letter

137 WELLINGTON STREET WEST, TORONTO

Letter to Electors

Regarding the Civic Election

on January 1, 1947

Men and Women:

## GETTING OUT THE VOTE

On January first next, electors of Toronto will choose members of the City Council, Board of Education and Separate School Board, responsible for supervising the expenditure of about thirty-nine millions of dollars on current accounts and administering community assets of at least ninety-one millions of dollars. The quality of their service will affect the lives and welfare of 685,000 persons - men, women and children. This, in itself, should bring out a very large vote on election day. No further stimulus should be required. If we are not sufficiently interested now in our own affairs to select candidates and choose between candidates, in some not-too-distant future persons interested in their own welfare, will present candidates to us with no option of choice on our part.

In a nation which has so lately spent much blood and treasure to maintain its free institutions and the personal liberty of its citizens we should not now have to be exercised about the apathy of its citizens toward the municipal vote, which is one of the buttresses of democratic freedom. In addition to the choosing of members of our governing boards in the forthcoming civic election, stimuli to our interest are also provided as follows:

- (a) Vote of electors entitled to vote for Mayor on a proposed by-law to extend the term of office of members of the Council to two years.
- (b) Vote of electors entitled to vote on money by-laws on the following question:

"Are you in favour of the City undertaking as a low cost or moderate cost rental housing project, with possible government assistance, the clearance, replanning, rehabilitation and modernization of the area bounded by Parliament, River, Gerrard and Dundas Streets known as the Regent Park (North) Plan at an estimated cost of \$5,900,000?"

- (c) Vote of electors entitled to vote on money by-laws on the following question:

"Are you in favour of the City acquiring, for the purpose of a Civic Square, certain lands and buildings within the area bounded by Bay Street, Queen Street, Chestnut Street, and a line approximately 460 feet north of Albert Street, and having an assessed value of approximately \$2,000,000?"

- (d) Vote of electors entitled to vote for Mayor on the following question:

"Are you in favour of the issue of dining lounge licenses and lounge licenses in Toronto as proposed in the Liquor License Act, 1946?"

- (a) The Length of Term (By-law No. 16688)

The Bureau devoted its December letter to the topic of the two year and two year "staggered" term. The question is fully discussed there. Obviously terms can be too short or too long. Thus six months would be too short and seven years would be too long. If a term longer than one year is modified by the "staggered" system, democratic control is adequately protected and continuity of policy furthered. Democracy does not consist in the number of elections or in the number of persons elected, but in the measure of control of public affairs by the voters. A vote however, in favour of a two year term is a move in the right direction.

- (b) The Regent Park (North) Plan (By-law No. 16763)

There can be no doubt that large central areas in the city are stagnant, dead or dying, if extensive programmes of rehabilitation are not initiated, not only residential population, but business, will migrate to centers on the "fringe".

If a man is drowning in river or lake he does not refuse to save himself because persons on the shore are not interested in his fate. So Toronto must save itself by its own efforts even if it receives no co-operation from senior governments.

If all cities in Canada asked for so-called aid from the Federal Government and received it, how much better off financially would Toronto be?

- (c) A Civic Square (By-law No. 16764)

This seems to be a somewhat nebulous proposal. In making his decision, the elector should satisfy himself that:

1. He has enough information.
2. That the City Planning Board has been consulted and has reported that it is definitely in favour of the proposal and that it will "tie in" with the contemplated City Plan.

As the acquiring of the property is only the first step in the cost of the proposed new Civic Square, further information should be made available.

(d) Lounge Licences (By-law No. 16765)

**THE TIME TO SET SALARY INCREASES OR MAXIMA AND MINIMA INVOLVING GREATER EXPENDITURE**

The Budget of Civic Estimates of revenue and expenditure is one of the two most important financial documents issued by the City during any year. It sets forth the Corporation's plan of what current work is to be done during the year and what current revenue is to be available to meet the cost for the same year. The 1947 budget making body should be responsible for the passing of the 1947 budget. There should be no attempt on the part of a 1946 body to tie the hands of a 1947 body by a *fait accompli*. In March 1946 shortly after the 1946 budget time the Board of Education appointed a special committee to study salary schedules. This was certainly correct practice; but instead of forwarding the report of this Committee to the 1947 Board with strong recommendation for its adoption, it adopted the report itself providing for increased maxima and minima which would involve a large addition to the expenditure of 1947.

After study, the Board became convinced that increased maxima and minima were desirable and necessary in the interest of the children. There is no quarrel with this conviction, but the way a thing is done is of great importance, and, with all due respect to the Board, the Bureau believes that the 1946 Board should have left the 1947 Board free to adopt the new schedules and to incorporate the resulting increase in the 1947 budget. The people of Toronto look to the Board, in whose hands their children are for purposes of schooling, to lead an example of correctness and efficiency. To say that the report was adopted late in November in order that it might be an issue in civic elections is beside the mark. A recommendation to adopt would have been equally effective for this purpose.

Respectfully submitted,

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President

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P.S. It is to be hoped that Council has not in mind for the future the sale of any large amount of debentures without first obtaining the sanction of electors entitled to vote on money by-laws.

December 17th, 1946