

# BUREAU OF MUNICIPAL RESEARCH

Monthly



Letter

137 WELLINGTON STREET WEST, TORONTO

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Fellow Citizens,

## Voting Strength

Last New Year's Day, close to 45 percent of Toronto electors went to the polls to record their votes for mayor of the city. Although far short of a complete ballot, it was a vast improvement over January, 1947. Then, in the mayoralty contest, only one in three used his franchise. The total number who turned out to the civic elections rose from 110 thousand in 1947 to 146 thousand in 1948. Organizations and individual citizens concerned with getting out the vote found tangible encouragement in the 1948 showing. It was the best vote in eight years.

Greater interest in civic voting is one of the aims of your Bureau of Municipal Research. Each year when the official results of the voting are released we make an analysis of these returns. The 1948 statement, which is attached to this letter, summarizes actual balloting and relates it to the possible vote. It shows how the vote in your ward compared with other wards, how heavy the poll was for each office and how the standing looked in relation to 1947.

The election turnout can be an important indicator of democratic vitality. A small vote, as in 1947, should be an obvious danger signal. Perhaps in that year non-voters were satisfied with most of the election results but they had no guarantee that they would be. Voter apathy can allow an undesirable candidate to make a better showing than he deserves. Even if he doesn't get elected, non-voters are taking a risk for his partial success in one year may help to increase his following the next year. By the time they take his vote seriously, it may be difficult to defeat him.

Non-voting is still a real threat. We would do well to remember that even in this year's "heavy" polling, less than half the people voted. Those elected can only hope that they have actual majority backing.

A large vote, on the other hand is a favourable sign but no automatic proof of a healthy community. People vote for a variety of reasons and all are not equally commendable. This New Year's the weather was mild and streets were clear of snow. It meant extra votes for most candidates. Again, a candidate who can stir the popular fancy by a sensational campaign may draw quite a following. He may at the same time have little aptitude for day to day civic business. Then, too, people who have taken no interest in nominations may be moved to vote for a candidate merely as the lesser of two evils. Of course all voters are not influenced by such considerations. The person who is active in his community, who serves on a housing committee, or the Red Cross Council, or the Symphony Orchestra Board, is pretty sure to vote and to vote intelligently.

### Compulsory Voting

Each community must have its pattern of disciplines ranging from school attendance or payment of taxes to what speed we may drive on city streets. In some countries, it is not regarded as inconsistent with the democratic political form to include voting as a mandatory duty of citizens. In Australia, for example compulsory voting in Commonwealth elections has been the law for over twenty years. By means of a stiff penalty for non-voters, they have brought the poll up to about ninety-five percent of the possible vote.

This method would certainly overcome part of our problem in Toronto where, left as an open privilege of the electorate, it has become, for many, the freedom not to vote. There is a good deal to be said in favour of a compulsory scheme but there are also serious objections to it. In this letter, however, we wish merely to throw up the question for discussion. But there is one point which should not be overlooked. The extra ballots would be marked by both the informed and the uninformed. Unless steps were taken at the same time to acquaint all voters with the real election issues and to broaden the base for nominations, the additional votes might actually hinder a good selection.

### Making It Stick

Before the last election, communism was the one issue which held the spotlight. In the light of world events, this became a real issue and a live one, and the campaign was waged not without fervour. It had much to do with the heavy 1948 vote. The contest centred around candidates running under the Labour-Progressive label. Electors were urged to the polls to register a clear expression of their views on this party. Interest was awakened in the choice of candidates and the large vote it brought is a good sign.

This single issue, however, will not guarantee a high vote year after year. Other questions which too are important should not be overshadowed by it. If we are to hold this heavier vote and to add to it, problems relating to civic undertakings must also come to the fore.

### Corporation Voting

If evidence is needed that a heavy vote is not assured for 1949, the corporation vote on the money by-law ought to prove this fact. Voting was higher in 1948 for all elective offices and for the money by-law but corporation voting on the by-law dropped off badly. In order to vote, corporations must file the name of a nominee with the City Clerk. The communist issue did nothing to encourage such action.

In 1947 there were two by-laws up for consideration. The Board of Trade addressed an appeal to its five thousand members but at that only 245 corporations took the trouble to qualify. Only corporations owning property can vote. Even so it was hardly an impressive total. But if the 1947 record was bad, 1948 was much worse. This year an industrial dispute prevented printing of the Board of Trade circular. This is no excuse, however, for the mere handful - just 82 corporations - who obtained nominees.

### Issues for 1949

Last December, the proposed lakeshore highway encountered public opposition in the absence of an approved overall traffic plan. The Spadina by-law suffered in the voting for the same reason. It got scant support in the west end and was voted down in two east end wards.

Before 1949 comes around there is plenty of time for an official traffic blueprint to be prepared. It should go before the electors in December. Reassessment has been scheduled for completion by September 30th. Voters should also have a report on this work. Again, interim or final reports should come forward from the Civic Advisory Council on two problems which have been given to them for study: the need for financial assistance from the Province; and metropolitan government. Candidates should be asked to get down to details on these and other civic problems. And with this information, citizens should voice their own opinions before the election date.

This is a concrete method and perhaps the best way of building voting strength on January 1st, 1949.

Respectfully submitted,

*J G Rogers*

President

*Eric Hardy*

Director

## V O T I N G   A N A L Y S I S

In Toronto civic elections, the vote is given under provincial law to individuals who are owners or tenants of real property assessed at not less than \$400. The wife or husband of such an owner or tenant is also entitled to vote. In every case, voters must be British subjects of the full age of twenty-one.

Individuals may vote for aldermen in each ward in which they are qualified electors. All may vote for mayor, controllers and aldermen but only public school supporters cast ballots for Board of Education candidates as the separate school representatives are appointed by the Separate School Board.

On money by-laws the vote is restricted to owners and is not extended to their wives or husbands. A corporation owning property assessed at \$400 may apply for a vote to be exercised by its nominee. Both corporation nominees and individuals may vote in each ward in which they own the required property.

### Individuals Who Actually Voted

<u>Ward</u>	<u>1947</u>	<u>1948</u>
1	10,625	15,013
2	9,977	11,750
3	5,238	7,107
4	10,512	14,332
5	14,966	20,766
6	17,882	24,982
7	8,606	11,260
8	15,116	19,277
9	17,003	21,472
	<u>109,925</u>	<u>145,959</u>

### Individuals Eligible to Vote

Note: One individual may be listed as a non-resident owner or tenant in as many as nine wards but his name cannot appear twice as both resident and non-resident in the same ward.

	<u>1947</u>		<u>1948</u>	
Resident Owners	111,720	---	116,716	---
Total Resident Voters (Owners, Tenants and their Wives or Husbands)	---	306,339	---	308,019
Non-Resident Owners	30,490	---	29,267	---
Total Non-Resident Voters (Owners, Tenants and their Wives or Husbands)	---	59,676	---	59,368
Total Owners	<u>142,210</u>		<u>145,983</u>	
Total Voters		<u>366,015</u>		<u>367,387</u>
Public School Supporters		339,089		341,440

VOTES CAST ON VARIOUS BALLOTS

We have presented figures on the number of individuals who actually came to the polls in the 1947 and the 1948 elections and have set out the total number of names appearing on the voters' lists under the several classifications. Now a more detailed breakdown follows. The actual number of votes cast for each office and for the money by-law is compared with the estimated possible vote. Here it is assumed that duplications have been eliminated and no substantial number of names omitted from the lists. To prevent duplication within the wards, civic officials have now an accurate system of cross-checking names of residents and non-residents. Spoiled ballots are not included in the detailed treatment of total votes cast. No adjustment has been made to allow for unavoidable absence from the polls through illness or other cause.

Votes for Mayor

	<u>1947</u>	<u>1948</u>
Actual	105,823	138,350
Possible	306,339	308,019

Actual as Percent of Possible

<u>Ward</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
1	29.5	40.5
2	36.7	42.5
3	30.1	40.7
4	37.4	49.3
5	34.1	44.9
6	30.9	42.4
7	35.4	45.8
8	34.9	44.1
9	42.3	53.2
All wards	34.5	44.9

In the voting for mayor, each individual has only one vote as either resident or non-resident. Therefore, the highest number of votes is total residents plus non-residents who live outside Toronto. No figures are available on these non-residents but their number is small. Consequently, for "possible" votes we have used the total number of resident voters only. This method gives the closest practical calculation but percentages of actual to possible votes are slightly too high.

Voting to Elect Four Controllers

	<u>1947</u>	<u>1948</u>
Actual	293,693	401,701
Possible	1,225,356	1,232,076

Actual as Percent of Possible

<u>Ward</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
1	20.7	29.2
2	25.1	31.0
3	22.4	31.8
4	21.4	30.2
5	19.1	27.2
6	21.2	30.2
7	26.3	34.6
8	25.7	33.6
9	34.0	44.8
All wards	24.0	32.6

The same individuals may vote for candidates to the Board of Control as for mayor. Each person is entitled to vote for four candidates. The possible vote then is just four times the possible vote for mayor. However, some individuals who turn out may mark fewer than four names on the ballot. This largely accounts for the smaller actual vote, compared with the possible, than in the contest for mayor. Incomplete voting indicates one of two things: 1. the elector does not know enough about the candidates or has not seen to it that four men he is prepared to support were nominated; 2. in order to assist a particular candidate, the elector has resorted to "plumping".

Votes Cast for Ward Representatives

<u>Aldermen</u>			<u>Trustees</u>		
	<u>1947</u>	<u>1948</u>		<u>1947</u>	<u>1948</u>
Actual	172,845	189,439	Actual	125,722	205,883
Possible	732,030	583,494	Possible	593,070	682,880
<u>Actual as Percent of Possible</u>			<u>Actual as Percent of Possible</u>		
<u>Ward</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Ward</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
1	20.7	29.9	1	19.7	27.9
2	25.7	27.8	2	23.9	29.2
3	15.8	Acclam'n	3	14.9	21.9
4	21.4	30.0	4	19.9	28.3
5	21.3	31.1	5	21.6	27.2
6	21.6	30.6	6	20.4	29.5
7	24.7	32.5	7	23.4	31.2
8	26.2	Acclam'n	8	24.6	32.0
9	33.2	42.0	9	Acclam'n	40.5
All wards	23.6	32.5	All wards	21.2	30.2

In the elections of ward representatives, an individual may vote in each ward where, as resident or non-resident, he has the required property qualifications. The wife or husband is also entitled to a multiple vote. As there are two aldermen to be chosen from each ward, the possible number of votes is twice the total voters (both resident and non-resident) on the lists. For trustees, the number is twice the total public school supporters (both resident and non-resident). Non-residents living outside Toronto are included in both these totals. Therefore figures on the "possible" vote are complete and a fully accurate analysis can be made. In arriving at the total possible vote for all wards, it should be remembered that there is no possible vote from those wards in which there have been acclamations. With two candidates to be elected in each ward, voters may fail to exercise their full franchise by "plumping" or for other reasons voting for only one candidate.

Money By-law Voting

	<u>1947</u>	<u>1948</u>
Actual - Civic Square	46,432	
- Regent Park	47,705	
- Spadina Improvement		66,339
Possible - Individual Owners	142,210	145,983

/continued

Money By-LawActual as Percent of Possible

<u>Ward</u>	<u>1948</u>	<u>%</u>
1	42.5	
2	44.8	
3	36.5	
4	43.3	
5	44.0	
6	43.8	
7	45.2	
8	45.4	
9	54.5	
All wards	45.4	

The actual votes cast for the money by-laws include a small number of corporation votes. In 1947 a total of 245 corporations obtained an approved nominee but in 1948 the number dropped to 82. Some of these corporations had a vote in several wards. The 82 corporations who qualified in 1948 were entered on the roll for a total of 132 nominee votes. No estimate has been possible of the number of nominee votes for which corporations could have qualified.