

Open Letter Issued by the Bureau of Municipal Research, 137 Wellington Street West, Toronto 1



# CIVIC AFFAIRS

May 20, 1949.

An independent fact-finding organization reporting to the public on civic affairs.

## ARE WE SUPPORTING DEMOCRACY ON THE HOME FRONT?

*(Voting Analysis and Commentary)*

### I--AN ANALYSIS OF THE JANUARY VOTE

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 \$4.00. 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 ballot for Board of Education candidates. The two separate school representatives to the Board of Education are appointed by the Toronto and Suburban Separate School Board. This Board, which holds office for a two-year term, was elected in January 1948.

### Individuals Eligible to Vote

In each ward, the citizens who have the vote are those who are owners or tenants of property in that ward, whether resident there or in another ward or actually outside the City. One individual will be listed as non-resident owner or tenant in all those wards where he meets the property qualifications; but a voter's name cannot be listed twice for one ward even though he has residence there and is the owner or tenant of other property in the same ward.

	<u>1948</u>		<u>1949</u>	
Resident Owners	116,716	---	122,220	---
Total Resident Voters (Owners, tenants; their wives or husbands)	---	308,019	---	327,033
Non-Resident Owners	29,267	---	30,890	---
Total Non-Resident Voters (Owners, tenants; their wives or husbands)	---	59,368	---	60,565
Total Owners	<u>145,983</u>		<u>153,110</u>	
Total Voters	<u>367,387</u>		<u>387,598</u>	
Public School Supporters	341,440		361,179	



Individuals Who Voted in Each Ward

Ward	1947	1948	1949
1	10,625	15,013	13,272
2	9,977	11,750	10,391
3	5,238	7,107	6,313
4	10,512	14,332	12,839
5	14,966	20,766	17,833
6	17,882	24,982	21,718
7	8,606	11,260	10,302
8	15,116	19,277	17,983
9	17,003	21,472	18,646
	<u>109,925</u>	<u>145,959</u>	<u>129,297</u>

While the ward totals are correct, it should be remembered that this makes for some duplication in the aggregate figures because in each year a small proportion of those voters entitled to a franchise in more than one ward exercised this right. These multiple voters, then, show up as individuals in the voter-count of more than one ward and the aggregate of "individuals who voted" is therefore slightly higher than the actual number of people who turned out at the polls.

VOTES CAST ON VARIOUS BALLOTS

Votes for Mayor

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.

	1947	1948	1949
Actual	105,823	138,350	121,404
Possible	306,339	308,019	327,033

Actual as Percent of Possible

Ward	%	%	%
1	29.5	40.5	33.6
2	36.7	42.5	35.0
3	30.1	40.7	34.8
4	37.4	49.3	39.3
5	34.1	44.9	35.7
6	30.9	42.4	34.0
7	35.4	45.8	38.8
8	34.9	44.1	38.5
9	42.3	53.2	44.9
All Wards	34.5	44.9	37.1



Voting to Elect the Four Controllers

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. Such 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; or, 2) in order to assist a particular candidate, the elector has resorted to 'plumping'.

	<u>1947</u>	<u>1948</u>	<u>1949</u>
Actual	293,693	401,701	362,251
Possible	1,225,356	1,232,076	1,308,132

Actual as Percent of Possible

<u>Ward</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
1	20.7	29.2	25.3
2	25.1	31.0	25.8
3	22.4	31.8	27.6
4	21.4	30.2	25.3
5	19.1	27.2	22.4
6	21.2	30.2	24.9
7	26.3	34.6	30.3
8	25.7	33.6	30.3
9	34.0	44.8	38.3
All Wards	24.0	32.6	27.7

Votes Cast for Ward Representatives

	<u>Aldermen</u>			<u>Trustees</u>			
	<u>1947</u>	<u>1948</u>	<u>1949</u>	<u>1947</u>	<u>1948</u>	<u>1949</u>	
Actual	172,845	189,439	210,781	Actual	125,722	205,883	103,166
Possible	732,030	583,494	775,196	Possible	593,070	682,880	408,746

<u>Actual as Percent of Possible</u>				<u>Actual as Percent of Possible</u>			
<u>Ward</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Ward</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
1	20.7	29.9	25.3	1	19.7	27.9	*
2	25.7	27.8	25.7	2	23.9	29.2	24.6
3	15.8	*	18.9	3	14.9	21.9	*
4	21.4	30.0	25.0	4	19.9	28.3	23.9
5	21.3	31.1	25.1	5	21.6	27.2	*
6	21.6	30.6	25.3	6	20.4	29.5	22.8
7	24.7	32.5	29.0	7	23.4	31.2	26.6
8	26.2	*	31.1	8	24.6	32.0	29.1
9	33.2	42.0	36.8	9	*	40.5	*
All Wards	23.6	32.5	27.2	All Wards	21.2	30.2	25.2

\* Acclamation

(See following page)



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 the possible vote from those wards in which there have been acclamations has been excluded. 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.

Voting on the Two-Year Term Referendum

As in the analysis of mayoralty returns, the figure used for 'possible' is the total of resident voters only, so again the percentage of 'actual' to 'possible' is slightly too high.

Actual - 123,690  
 Possible - 327,033  
 Actual as Percent of Possible - 37.8%

COMPARISON WITH SUBURBAN VOTING

The basis of comparison used is the percentage of the actual votes to the possible number of votes that could have been cast for candidates contesting the chief office in Toronto and in Greater Toronto.

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>Office</u>	<u>Date Last Contested</u>	<u>Actual as Percent of Possible</u>
York	Reeve	Jan. 1/49	21.5
North York	Reeve	Dec. /40	23.0
East York	Reeve	Dec. 11/48	24.3
Scarborough	Reeve	Dec. 13/48	30.2
Leaside	Mayor	Dec. 6/48	34.9
TORONTO	Mayor	Jan. 1/49	37.1
Etobicoke	Reeve	Dec. 11/46	38.1
Swansea	Reeve	Jan. 1/48	38.2
Forest Hill	Reeve	Dec. 13/48	42.5
New Toronto	Mayor	Dec. 11/48	42.5
Long Branch	Reeve	Dec. 11/48	48.6
Weston	Mayor	Dec. 6/48	51.5
Mimico	Mayor	Dec. 11/48	66.5
Suburban average . . . . .			30.0



II--COMMENTARY

You have just read a tabulated account summing up the turnout of Toronto citizens at the last municipal elections. This type of voting analysis is prepared each year by the Bureau with the single purpose of strengthening public interest in the health of our primary democratic body--local government.

Last year the commentary included a discussion of some general problems of democratic techniques, such as the thorny topic of compulsory voting. This year what we have to say is right on the immediate shortcomings evidenced in the last vote. It shows an unhealthy situation and the crux of the matter can be set down in two points: 1) the turnout of voters slumped badly from the 1948 pick-up, and, 2) the apathy regarding contests for the Board of Education is close to a rank disgrace.

In dealing with the first point, a glance at the tabulation 'Individuals Who Voted in Each Ward', will show the extent by which voting fell away from the 1948 level. It should give all citizens and civic groups cause for sober thinking. Just what went wrong? Perhaps the most destructive factor was simply the cancer of indifference.

This past year, even the heated controversy over the two-year term--in the press at least--failed to shake the complacent. And we can hardly cheer over a voting group whose good intentions are so easily cancelled out by blocked streets or severe cold or social commitments. These points, and there are others, support the serious consideration being given to changing the polling day. However, this leaves untouched the root trouble which is that the pulse of civic consciousness is weak, and with two or three good exceptions, the ailment is general throughout the thirteen municipalities that make up Greater Toronto. The City of Toronto turnout, as can be seen in the comparative table, is lower than several of the suburban municipalities but higher than the over-all suburban rating. Neither turnout figure is anything to be content about.

Perhaps, in retrospect, you will agree that too much of the pressure back of the vote a year ago was the determination to keep certain candidates out of office, rather than the positive attitude of using one's vote to put good men into office. The same lack of a positive approach is too evident in the discussion of issues as well as of candidates. For instance, it is very easy for contenders for office to make the attractive claim that they will see to it that municipal taxes will not go up; but, knowing that certain costs of government are bound to be higher, they fail to suggest how constructive economies can be achieved elsewhere.

In 1949, too many citizens relaxed from the enthusiasm of the 'Vote as you like--but Vote!' campaign that characterized the 1948 election and produced such a marked improvement over the 1947 poll. The voting slogan used has punch, but in itself lacks a constructive note. A possible revision could be: 'Know what you're voting for--and Vote!'. Perhaps as a clarion call this may not have the maximum advertising appeal, but it suggests the line that should be taken.

In the wards where there was a contest for seats on the Board of Education, the vote was not far below that for the Aldermen. This is not surprising since most electors can be expected, if they vote at all, to mark each part of the ballot. Yet the fact that in each ward Trustees obtained a slightly lower percentage of the possible vote than did the Aldermen, leaves little doubt that in the ward elections the chief pull to the polls was the aldermanic contest. The Board of Education candidates got all too many votes which depended on a primary interest in the election of the Aldermen and the Mayor and Controllers. The story was much the same in 1948, in 1947, and in earlier years as well. However, what demonstrates the low vitality in Trustee elections most forcibly is that four of the nine wards ran up the No Contest flag.



An argument can be made that acclamations are not, in themselves nor always, a bad thing. But, to justify the acclamation given these Trustees, a great deal must be assumed, and more than the Bureau finds easily digestible. It must, that is, be assumed that the public school supporters having the vote in wards 3, 5, and 9--totaling over 116,000 possible voters--were of one mind and entirely content to have their respective 1948 Trustees continue in office for the 1949 term; and in ward 1, it must be assumed that, with over 40,000 possible trustee voters, all were convinced that the two new men aspiring to replace the retiring Trustees were the two most competent and no others need be considered or encouraged to stand. Such roseate assumptions strike any observer, surely, as being hopelessly far-fetched. No, the answer more probably lies in the general light-hearted attitude and indifference on the part of the public towards the Board of Education. This attitude of 'Let George do it', so frequent--though not always successful--in the choice of personnel who are to administer benevolent funds or head up fraternal associations, is manifestly out of place when transferred to the Board of Education. Our Trustees do not administer a small fund of money derived from modest membership dues or contributions. Virtually every cent to be spent in their \$17 million budget for 1949 will come from municipal and provincial tax sources. Toronto taxpayers will be billed for over \$13 million for the operating costs of the public primary and secondary schools and debt servicing charges. The Bureau is not here concerned with an examination of the level of expenditures nor is it casting doubt on the integrity and civic loyalty of the Trustees, past and present. But the Bureau has pointed out before, and it is a fact not sufficiently grasped, that for all practical purposes the elected Trustees, and they alone, are responsible for the education costs.

The Trustees' responsibilities are heavy and the Bureau is convinced that this should be better recognized. One clear improvement would be to put them on a modest remuneration basis. At present, Provincial law will not allow this in Ontario municipalities, but it is known that a revision is under serious consideration at Queen's Park. Free service, after all, is sometimes really more costly than paid service. If the Trustees are financially recompensed, the citizens can demand and expect a higher level of energetic and effective work, and it will mean, too, a wider orbit from which to recruit good Trustees. But, even before this, what is urgently required is greater citizen interest in the nomination and election of these representatives controlling the policies and operations of our Board of Education. The electors through their indifference are signally failing to do their part in ensuring that the administration is efficient. That is the present danger signal; for to a weakened city poll has been added this alarming increase in the acclamation of school trustees.

All persons and groups interested in sound and responsive civic administration should join in remedying this trend to 'vacated citizenship'. It is the quiet saboteur of our democratic heritage. The citizens of Toronto can and should produce fuller nominations and a better turnout of voters. It presents a first-order challenge to the press, the schools, the churches, labour, and the business community.

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