

Open Letter Issued by the Bureau of Municipal Research, 32 Isabella Street, Toronto 5



CIVIC AFFAIRS

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

VOTING IS AN OPPORTUNITY

Fellow Citizens:

December is your election month. Throughout metropolitan Toronto, candidates for municipal and school offices are actively campaigning in preparation for the contest at the polls. Before very long, the successful contenders will be sworn in at solemn ceremonies confirming their status as our representatives and authorizing them to proceed with the community business of yet another year.

This is the season when enterprising groups and individuals urge their less zealous associates to get out and vote. It is an occasion for stir and fanfare, one aim of which is to ensure that no one need unwittingly overlook the day of polling in his or her ward or municipality.

Everyone is pleased by a large vote. Yet voters who have to be pressed into service may be doing little more than to give a blind push to the wheel of fortune. Voting is an opportunity. And those whose votes are most needed will always be the people who appreciate the opportunity.

Admittedly, from one year to another the customary provision of municipal services is not much affected by the size or swing of the vote. Regardless of what happens in 1954, we may confidently expect that:

- police will continue to patrol the streets
- lights will come on at the snap of a switch
- schools will remain open for instruction
- streets will be cleaned periodically
- books will be available on loan from the public libraries.

A closer look at municipal services should remind us, however, that many of the public amenities we perhaps take for granted have come about only through the conscious efforts of local citizens and their representatives. As an illustration, it was no mere chance that established Toronto as the first Canadian city to launch a large-scale slum clearance and re-development programme.

In 1953, the ratepayers of greater Toronto were required to pay \$91,650,000 in taxes. This huge sum amounted to more than \$78 each for every man, woman and child. In the year to come, the total taxation can hardly help but be larger.

Our local governments also obtain funds on a large scale from provincial tax sources. The new per capita grant is expected to bring in over \$4,400,000. Provincial payments to the Metropolitan School Board will total \$7,830,000.

Again, public utilities sponsored by our municipalities turn over many millions of dollars in the course of their annual operations.

Obviously, the voting day does not give us a chance to cut off the entire flow of civic spending. Since, however, the people we put in office are our trustees for all such revenues, election-day does provide a point of control.

Civic elections serve as an opportune time to explore and weigh the trend of future spending and to give it a push in one direction or another. Citizens who favour the acquisition of new metropolitan park lands will vote for candidates who have declared their support for such a project. People who feel that the cost of some present service is running too high will back the candidates who prove sympathetic to their point of view.

Both locally and at the metropolitan level, the December elections give the citizen his one opportunity to place conscientious and qualified representatives in the positions of authority.

Your Election Dates

Saturday, December 4th--SWANSEA and YORK

Monday, December 6th--ETOBICOKE, LEASIDE, NORTH YORK, TORONTO, SCARBORO, WESTON

Saturday, December 11th--EAST YORK, LONG BRANCH, MIMICO, NEW TORONTO