



# CIVIC AFFAIRS

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

May 30, 1955

## THE MEANING OF NON-PARTISAN ELECTIONS

Fellow Citizens:

As a supplement to this open letter, the Bureau is again issuing its annual analysis of the turnout in City and suburban elections. Voting returns for the latest year-end reveal a decided improvement within the City which contrasts with a decline in electoral participation in a majority of the suburbs.

Returns for Toronto proper indicate increased interest in both city-wide and ward contests. With four candidates seeking the mayoralty, a close race developed between three of the contenders. While the vote for other Board of Control candidates was also up in each ward over 1953, the gains were less impressive. Apparently the mayoralty contest served as the chief stimulus to Toronto's larger turnout.

Aldermanic seats were contested in eight of the nine wards. In seven wards, the turnout was the best since the election of December, 1951. Voting for school trustees was similarly strong. In Ward 7, a point of interest was the first contest for school trustees in no less than five years; yet only one elector in four took up the opportunity to register a preference among the candidates.

In four out of the twelve suburban municipalities, the chief office was filled by acclamation. When compared with the previous contest, the vote dropped off in five of the remaining eight suburbs but increased in three. In Mimico, where there has long been a two-year term, the contest for mayor was the first since December, 1948. Polling in this suburb was down approximately one-third from the peak participation of the earlier year. The Town of New Toronto, by contrast, enjoyed a much more spirited election. With half the eligible voters going to the polls, the increase in percentage turnout just about balanced the decline experienced in Mimico.

### Local Elections are Different

In the Toronto area as elsewhere the percentage of eligible voters who take part in local elections falls far below the proportion who participate in either provincial or federal elections. At the same time, there are differences in the conditions that govern the polling process. Two points of contrast stand out in particular:

1) Speaking generally, the municipal franchise throughout greater Toronto is confined to owners or tenants of real property together with their wives or husbands. They must in addition be British subjects and twenty-one years old. The voting group in provincial and federal elections is considerably larger since it includes for all practical purposes each adult citizen without reference to any interest in real property.

2) The great bulk of provincial and federal candidates seek office as official representatives of a recognized political party and the majority party or a coalition forms the government of the day. By contrast, local candidates rarely claim party sponsorship and the elected representative ordinarily participates in the deliberations of a council or school board without regard to any party affiliation he may happen to hold. By long-standing tradition, local government in Ontario is accepted as strictly non-partisan.

#### Effect on the Vote

A broadening of the municipal franchise and the introduction of party contests in local elections have both been advocated from time to time in Ontario. If the only purpose is to promote a larger turnout at the polls, neither change is supported by the existing factual evidence.

The Citizens Research Institute recently conducted a survey of the voting turnout in a representative sample of Canadian municipalities, both urban and rural. The tabulation enables us to compare the size of the vote under the limited franchise such as exists in Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes with the somewhat broader franchise found in British Columbia and with the universal suffrage which is in effect throughout Alberta and in a number of municipalities in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. The information obtained from this one survey is not sufficient to be conclusive. For what it is worth, however, the evidence actually reveals a heavier vote where the property franchise exists than under the wider forms of suffrage.

Recognized political parties do not play a significant part in local elections in any part of Canada. In some Canadian centres, municipal voters leagues may back particular candidates and even secure their nomination. But they do not attempt the rigid control over those elected to office that is commonly attributed to our provincial and federal parties. In order to find a suitable comparison, therefore, it is necessary to turn to other countries.

In England, the participation of political parties in local politics dates at least from the early days of the London County Council, that is, from about the turn of the century. The more general introduction of party contests, however, is associated with the rise of the Labour party. Today, municipal elections throughout England and Wales are conducted along party lines almost without exception. Indeed, local government contests frequently serve as tests of party strength between national elections.

Throughout the United States, the formal participation of political parties in municipal and school elections dates back even further. Party contests in American local elections were associated with the earliest frontier days. More recently, many U.S. citizens have been working to establish local government elections on a non-partisan basis. Over the past half-century, their objective has continued to gain in popularity until today just over 60 per cent of cities over 5,000 population hold non-partisan elections.

In both England and the United States, the active role played by political parties in local elections has been credited with helping to achieve a broadening of the municipal franchise. Universal suffrage in local elections is almost as old in the United States as in state and federal elections. In England, general adult suffrage was introduced into municipal elections at the close of World War II.

The influence of party activity on the size of the vote is much less clear. Although complete statistics are not available, the strength of the vote in local elections both in England and in the United States lags well behind the turnout in central or state elections. What is more, the percentage turnout at local elections in England and the States does not appear to be significantly ahead of the situation prevailing in Canada.

Politics Without Parties

The merits of universal adult suffrage and the formal participation of recognized political parties at the local level are both questions of some complexity. Since their relationship to the size of the election turnout is to say the least doubtful, it is not our purpose to consider them further at this time. Of more importance is an understanding of the full implications of the system of non-partisan government now in operation.

As long as our local governments continue to operate on a non-partisan basis, greater individual responsibilities rest alike on each person who votes and on each representative who takes office.

In preparation for civic nominations, a number of local voters will often band together to search out acceptable candidates and to convince them to run for office. Groups of this sort may at times continue in existence between elections. Seldom, however, do they achieve a position of strength or permanence which is at all comparable to that enjoyed by a recognized political party. The result is that the primary responsibility to enlist suitable civic candidates falls back repeatedly on the individual elector.

In local elections, the candidate is not required to put up an election deposit as a guarantee that he or she is a serious contender who expects to capture a significant proportion of the votes. Consequently, if the opportunities and responsibilities of citizenship are generally recognized, it should be much easier for the electors to place qualified candidates in the field. The only valid reason for an acclamation would then be that the electors were either satisfied with the performance of the present incumbent or with the qualifications of the single person nominated.

Candidates for local councils and school boards come under election laws designed to prevent corrupt practices and to rule out certain types of campaign expenditures. At the same time, there is no statutory limit on the amount of election expenditures that may be incurred. In these respects, the regulations are quite similar to those governing provincial and federal candidates. But an important difference is that municipal candidates are not required to publish any statement of their election spending after the contest is over. A candidate with the necessary financial backing is entitled to pour as many dollars as he wishes into legitimate campaign advertising. And anyone with a special interest to promote is thereby quite free to secure the nomination of a sympathetic person and to back his campaign to the extent he sees fit with financial contributions.

Citizens who ignore their nominating and voting responsibilities run the risk of being saddled with representatives who turn out to be unduly preoccupied with the promotion of particular causes. Public business is never carried on in a vacuum. The course of civic affairs is directed by those who for one reason or another are prepared to interest themselves in local government and to give some time to it. Actively or by passive consent, the electors themselves set the tone of public deliberations.

At local elections, the use of the secret ballot ensures that the choice exercised by the voter is his own private concern. But at meetings of councils and school boards, the representatives, who have a responsibility to their constituents, must declare themselves openly. Subject to certain prescribed exceptions, representatives in attendance must vote and their stand on each issue becomes a matter of public record.

In federal or provincial legislatures, the individual representative commonly votes according to the collective decision of his political party and the party, in turn, assumes a measure of responsibility for the recorded stands of its elected members. In the absence of party government, each local representative must make up his own mind and vote on each question as he himself sees fit. Under the circumstances, an electorate which keeps itself informed on community business is in a position to assess the actions of each local representative separately. While the representative may have more freedom of choice as new issues arise, his individual decisions come under a sharper spotlight.

Under non-partisan government, the biggest share of the responsibility, both in the electoral process and in the day-to-day conduct of local affairs, rests with the individual. One direct measure of the recognition of this civic responsibility is the turnout on election day.

Wives of (Widows)	317,628	301,028	296,286
Non-Resident Owners	22,812	22,786	23,752
Total Non-Resident Voters (Owners, tenants; their wives or husbands)	340,440	323,814	320,038
President	50,389	50,389	50,389
Director	154,770	154,770	154,770
Total Owners	167,879	167,879	167,879
Total Voters	366,003	366,003	366,003
Public School Supporters	336,003	336,003	336,003

Ward	1951	1952	1953	1954
1	17,697	18,000	10,549	13,288
2	12,559	10,388	8,584	9,503
3	4,590	6,517	5,901	6,280
4	14,586	11,036	9,252	9,897
5	19,586	15,868	12,717	12,957
6	27,559	20,874	16,957	19,279
7	17,517	10,777	9,202	10,171
8	22,527	18,980	15,186	15,151
9	22,515	12,845	18,058	21,367
Total	160,501	127,181	106,011	118,821

In both England and the United States, the active role played by political parties in local elections has been credited with helping to bring a broadening of the municipal franchise. Universal suffrage in local elections is almost as old in the United States as in state and federal elections. In England, general adult suffrage was introduced in municipal elections at the close of World War II.

The influence of party activity on the size of the vote is less clear. Although complete statistics are not available, the size of the vote in local elections both in England and in the United States well behind the turnout in central or state elections. What is the percentage turnout at local elections in England and the United States? It is not clear to be significantly ahead of the situation prevailing in the United States.

Politics Without Parties

The merits of universal adult suffrage and the formal participation of recognized political parties at the local level are both questions of some complexity. Since their relationship to the size of the turnout is to say the least doubtful, it is not our purpose to go into them further at this time. Of more importance is an understanding of the implications of the system of non-partisan government now in operation. As long as our local governments continue to operate on a partisan basis, greater individual responsibilities rest alike on the person who votes and on each representative who takes office.

In preparation for civic nominations, a number of local voters often band together to search out acceptable candidates and to run for two for office. Groups of this sort may at times come into existence between elections. Seldom, however, do they achieve a permanent or permanent which is at all comparable to that enjoyed by a recognized political party. The result is that the primary responsibility for civic nominations falls back repeatedly on the dual elector.

In local elections, the candidate is not required to make an election deposit as a guarantee that he or she is a serious contender to capture a significant proportion of the votes. Consequently, the opportunities and responsibilities of citizenship are placed in the hands of those who should be much easier for the electors to place in the field. The only valid reason for an acclamation of a candidate is that the electors were either satisfied with the performance of the incumbent or with the qualifications of the single nominated candidate.

Candidates for local councils and school boards come under laws designed to prevent corrupt practices and to rule out certain types of campaign expenditures. At the same time, there is no statutory limit on the amount of election expenditures that may be incurred. In fact, the regulations are quite similar to those governing political parties and federal candidates. But an important difference is that candidates are not required to publish any statement of their expenditures after the contest is over. A candidate with the financial backing is entitled to pour as many dollars as he wishes into legitimate campaign advertising. And anyone with a special interest in thereby doing to secure the nomination of a particular person and to back his campaign to the extent he sees fit with contributions.

VOTING ANALYSIS

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. The two separate school representatives to the Board of Education are appointed by the Metropolitan Separate School Board. This Board, which holds office for a two-year term, was elected in December 1953.

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>1952</u>	<u>1953</u>	<u>1954</u>
Resident Owners	138,120	135,710	131,018
Total Resident Voters (Owners, tenants; their wives or husbands)	312,628	301,024	294,146
Non-Resident Owners	22,842	22,766	23,752
Total Non-Resident Voters (Owners, tenants; their wives or husbands)	51,572	50,149	50,268
Total Owners	<u>160,962</u>	<u>158,476</u>	<u>154,770</u>
Total Voters	<u>364,200</u>	<u>351,173</u>	<u>344,414</u>
Public School Supporters	336,003	323,238	317,215

Individuals Who Voted in Each Ward

<u>Ward</u>	<u>1951</u>	<u>1952</u>	<u>1953</u>	<u>1954</u>
1	17,697	14,026	10,549	13,288
2	12,059	10,396	8,584	9,503
3	8,590	6,513	5,901	6,282
4	14,586	11,036	9,252	9,893
5	19,865	15,466	12,712	12,953
6	27,759	20,874	16,957	19,279
7	13,510	10,779	9,202	10,171
8	23,927	18,946	15,186	19,351
9	22,515	19,845	18,058	21,367
Total	<u>160,508</u>	<u>127,881</u>	<u>106,411</u>	<u>122,087</u>

President

Director

VOVING ANALYSIS

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 \$100. 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. The two separate school representatives to the Board of Education are appointed by the Metropolitan Separate School Board. This Board, which holds office for a two-year term, was elected in December 1953.

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.

1951	1952	1953	1954	
131,018	132,710	138,120	140,988	Resident Owners
29,146	301,031	312,628	317,146	Total Resident Voters
23,752	22,766	22,812	22,812	(Owners, tenants; their wives or husbands)
50,268	50,112	51,252	50,268	Non-Resident Owners
154,770	158,476	160,962	158,476	Total Non-Resident Voters
317,312	321,173	321,200	317,312	Total Voters
317,312	323,238	326,003	317,312	Public School Supporters

Individuals Who Voted in Each Ward

Ward	1951	1952	1953	1954
1	17,097	17,097	17,097	17,097
2	12,059	12,059	12,059	12,059
3	6,290	6,290	6,290	6,290
4	11,286	11,286	11,286	11,286
5	12,862	12,862	12,862	12,862
6	27,729	27,729	27,729	27,729
7	13,210	13,210	13,210	13,210
8	22,927	22,927	22,927	22,927
9	22,212	22,212	22,212	22,212
Total	160,208	160,208	160,208	160,208

While these 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.

	1951	1952	1953	1954
Actual	156,924	123,375	101,195	118,998
Possible	317,186	312,628	301,024	294,146

Ward	Actual as % of Possible			
	1951	1952	1953	1954
1	46.0	36.1	27.8	36.5
2	43.2	36.6	31.0	36.2
3	51.1	38.6	34.6	42.6
4	50.7	39.2	34.1	38.7
5	47.5	38.1	31.9	35.5
6	48.4	36.6	30.7	36.4
7	50.7	40.4	35.4	40.9
8	52.0	40.7	33.5	43.2
9	55.2	48.4	44.6	53.3
All Wards	49.5	39.4	33.6	40.5

Votes for 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'.

	1951	1952	1953	1954
Actual	419,188	372,570	305,632	384,679
Possible	1,268,744	1,250,512	1,204,096	1,176,584

COMPARATIVE Actual as % of Possible

Ward	%	%	%	%
1	31.0	27.6	21.5	26.8
2	29.0	27.4	23.2	26.4
3	35.9	31.0	27.0	32.9
4	29.9	26.6	23.2	26.0
5	26.3	24.3	21.2	22.4
6	31.0	26.4	22.4	25.8
7	34.5	30.6	26.8	29.8
8	36.7	32.6	26.4	32.7
9	43.2	41.4	36.9	43.0
All Wards	33.0	29.8	25.4	29.7

Votes for Ward Representatives

	Aldermen			Trustees		
	1952	1953	1954	1952	1953	1954
Actual	206,624	154,870	182,801	Actual	153,660	134,913
Possible	728,400	619,192	639,256	Possible	569,420	595,114

Actual as % of Possible

Ward	%	%	%	Ward	%	%	%
1	26.6	*	26.7	1	24.8	18.9	*
2	26.5	21.8	25.9	2	25.2	20.1	23.7
3	19.3	17.4	*	3	*	17.7	*
4	24.4	22.3	24.1	4	22.3	18.6	20.9
5	25.6	22.4	23.7	5	23.4	21.0	20.4
6	26.9	22.4	21.8	6	25.2	21.2	24.1
7	30.3	26.8	29.5	7	*	*	26.1
8	32.0	26.5	33.4	8	29.3	24.5	29.8
9	39.3	37.1	42.9	9	37.3	35.3	39.5
All Wards	28.4	25.0	28.6	All Wards	27.0	22.7	26.8

\*Acclamation

In the elections of ward representatives, an individual may vote in each ward where, as resident or non-resident, he has the required 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.

This makes for some duplication in the aggregate figures because in each year a small proportion of 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 FOR MAYOR - ON VARIOUS BALLOTS

In tabulating the 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.

Year	Actual	Possible
1951	150,751	317,186
1952	153,375	313,628
1953	101,195	301,021
1954	148,928	321,216

Actual as % of Possible

Year	%
1951	47.3
1952	48.9
1953	33.6
1954	46.4

All Wards in the 1954 election. The number of possible votes for Mayor is 1,204,020. The actual number of votes cast is 305,632. This represents 25.4% of the possible vote. The number of possible votes for Trustees is 595,114. The actual number of votes cast is 134,913. This represents 22.7% of the possible vote. The number of possible votes for Aldermen is 639,256. The actual number of votes cast is 182,801. This represents 28.6% of the possible vote.

Year	Actual	Possible
1951	119,188	1,268,764
1952	175,270	1,280,212
1953	305,632	1,204,020
1954	384,679	1,170,584

COMPARATIVE RETURNS - CITY AND 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 each of the thirteen area municipalities which go to make up the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto. Because the chief office has been filled in some cases by acclamation, the comparison is made with the two most recent years in which the office was contested in each municipality. The Mayor of Mimico and the Reeves of East York, Etobicoke and Forest Hill are elected every second year for a two-year term.

Municipality	Office	Date Last Contested	Actual as % of Possible	Previously Contested	Actual as % of Possible
New Toronto	Mayor	Dec./54	49.0	Dec./53	36.4
Mimico	Mayor	Dec./54	44.4	Dec./48	66.5
Long Branch	Reeve	Dec./54	41.1	Dec./52	46.2
TORONTO	Mayor	Dec./54	40.5	Dec./53	33.6
Weston	Mayor	Dec./54	39.4	Dec./53	43.6
Swansea	Reeve	Jan./48	38.2	Jan./48	46.1
Etobicoke	Reeve	Dec./46	38.1	Dec./44	24.1
Leaside	Mayor	Dec./53	37.8	Dec./52	39.9
Forest Hill	Reeve	Dec./49	35.1	Dec./48	42.5
Scarborough	Reeve	Dec./54	33.0	Dec./53	32.0
North York	Reeve	Dec./54	28.8	Dec./52	29.1
York	Reeve	Dec./54	25.2	Dec./53	21.8
East York	Reeve	Dec./54	21.8	Dec./53	23.5
Suburban Average			30.2		29.5

Actual as % of Possible

Ward	1954	1953	1952	1951	1950
1	31.0	27.6	31.2	28.8	28.8
2	29.0	27.4	27.2	28.4	28.4
3	25.0	21.0	27.0	22.9	22.9
4	29.9	28.6	23.2	26.0	26.0
5	26.3	24.3	21.2	22.4	22.4
6	31.0	26.4	22.4	22.8	22.8
7	31.2	30.6	26.8	22.8	22.8
8	26.7	26.6	26.4	22.7	22.7
9	43.2	41.4	36.9	43.0	43.0
All Wards	33.0	29.8	27.4	29.7	29.7

Votes for Ward Representatives

Ward	1954	1953	1952	1951	1950
1	121,870	126,621	126,621	121,870	121,870
2	61,122	62,226	62,226	61,122	61,122
3	61,122	62,226	62,226	61,122	61,122
4	61,122	62,226	62,226	61,122	61,122
5	61,122	62,226	62,226	61,122	61,122
6	61,122	62,226	62,226	61,122	61,122
7	61,122	62,226	62,226	61,122	61,122
8	61,122	62,226	62,226	61,122	61,122
9	61,122	62,226	62,226	61,122	61,122
All Wards	520,000	520,000	520,000	520,000	520,000

Actual as % of Possible

Ward	1954	1953	1952	1951	1950
1	26.7	21.8	18.9	23.7	23.7
2	27.8	22.2	20.1	23.7	23.7
3	21.4	17.7	17.7	20.9	20.9
4	24.1	22.3	18.6	20.4	20.4
5	23.7	23.4	21.0	24.1	24.1
6	21.8	22.2	21.2	24.1	24.1
7	26.8	26.8	24.2	24.1	24.1
8	26.2	26.2	24.2	24.1	24.1
9	42.9	37.3	32.3	39.8	39.8
All Wards	28.4	27.0	22.7	28.8	28.8

Acclamation

In the elections of ward representatives, an individual may vote in each ward where, as resident or non-resident, he has the required 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 voters is twice the total voters (both resident and non-resident) on the lists. For trustees, the number is twice the total public school support (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.