

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.

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A GOOD TIME FOR ACTION

Fellow Citizens:

As a supplement to this open letter, the Bureau presents its fourteenth consecutive analysis of Toronto's voting turnout and the eighth comparison between city and suburbs.

The overall picture which the Bureau's survey reveals is a far from satisfactory one.

Within the City of Toronto, the 1955 vote for mayor and controllers and the average of the ward votes for aldermen and trustees all showed a decline over the previous year's turnout.

The chief office in eight of the twelve suburban municipalities was not contested in 1955. In Etobicoke, East York, Forest Hill and Mimico, the chief magistrate had another year's tenure under a two-year term. Long Branch, New Toronto, Swansea and Weston were still operating under the one-year term at the time. No second candidate for mayor or reeve was forthcoming on nomination day, however, and the incumbent in each case was returned by acclamation. In the remaining four suburbs, the 1955 vote for mayor or reeve showed a respectable increase over the previous contest in North York and Scarborough, but the percentage in Leaside and York Township declined.

The average of the suburban turnouts for the most recent year in which the chief office was contested in each municipality went up by some two per cent. Even with this improvement, on the average slightly less than one suburban voter in three was sufficiently interested or informed to cast a ballot for mayor or reeve. Nor was the 1955 mayoralty vote in the City much better. A percentage turnout of 34.6 compares with 40.5 per cent the previous year and with the overall suburban average of 32.2 per cent.

The chronic problem of inadequate interest and participation in civic elections is not susceptible, the Bureau has always maintained, to any simple or trick formula. In order to achieve any sizable and continuing increase in the voting percentage, a carefully thought out long-run approach would seem to be required. On the one hand, the electors have every right to expect that the electoral system and machinery be as streamlined, intelligible and appropriate as it is possible to make them. But a significant increase in active interest would appear to demand as

well a comprehensive programme of education in and for democratic citizenship.

Toward the first of these objectives, some progress has been made as recently as this past spring.

Item I - A Uniform Election Date and Term of Office

At the most recent municipal elections, the two-year term was voted in by the electors of Toronto and of the two large suburban townships of York and North York. The action increased to a majority of seven the number of area municipalities within Metropolitan Toronto which would henceforth enjoy the longer term. In addition, the seven municipalities where a two-year term had now been endorsed by popular vote embraced a majority of the Metro population. At its spring session, the Ontario Legislature suitably recognized this trend of popular support by making the two-year term mandatory for the City and the twelve suburban municipalities. A uniform election date within Metropolitan Toronto was established under the same legislation.

The two-year term - an improvement which the Bureau has long supported - together with a uniform election date will serve to place all elected representatives in the thirteen area municipalities on a common footing. Under federation, a further advantage is that the full line-up on the Metropolitan Council will become known at one time after each municipal election while the area representatives on Metro will all have an equal tenure of office in which to gain experience and provide service. No longer can the situation arise where some of the metropolitan members are in the midst of campaigning for re-election while their colleagues' terms still have another year to run.

The earlier introduction of the two-year term in some of the area municipalities as well as in other centres indicates that it does not necessarily assure a larger voting turnout. At the same time, a uniform election date and longer term throughout metropolitan Toronto does offer a real opportunity for a greater concentration of interest and publicity in civic elections in this area.

Item II - Toronto's Special Committee on Municipal Elections

On January 30th of this year, City Council gave official recognition to the problem of the light voting turnout in civic elections. A special committee of council was appointed "to investigate the reasons for the small percentage of voters exercising their franchise at election time and to recommend ways and means of improving this situation". To date, the council has endorsed the following proposals emanating from the committee:

- 1) A request to the federal government to provide to the Metropolitan Assessment Commissioner from time to time the names and addresses of all persons acquiring Canadian citizenship in the Toronto area and the names and addresses of those occupants of property who appear on employers' returns for income tax purposes. The Assessment Department has the initial responsibility for preparing the Voters List and the Commissioner suggested that the information requested would assist him in making that list more accurate and complete.

V O T I N G A N A L Y S I S

In civic elections, the vote is given under Ontario law to individuals who are owners or tenants of real property assessed at not less than \$400 in cities, \$300 in the larger towns and \$100 in townships. 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.

I. CITY OF TORONTO

Who May Vote for Whom

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.

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>1953</u>	<u>1954</u>	<u>1955</u>
Resident Owners	135,710	131,018	130,154
Total Resident Voters			
(Owners, tenants; their wives or husbands)	301,024	294,146	287,729
Non-Resident Owners	22,766	23,752	21,687
Total Non-Resident Voters			
(Owners, tenants; their wives or husbands)	50,149	50,268	52,313
Total Owners	<u>158,476</u>	<u>154,770</u>	<u>151,841</u>
Total Voters	<u>351,173</u>	<u>344,414</u>	<u>340,042</u>
Public School Supporters	323,238	317,215	312,440

How Many Voted in Each Ward

While the ward totals shown in the following table 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 those who voted in each ward is therefore slightly higher than the actual number of people who turned out at the polls.

How Many Voted in Each Ward (cont'd)

Ward	1952	1953	1954	1955
1	14,026	10,549	13,288	11,445
2	10,396	8,584	9,503	8,407
3	6,513	5,901	6,282	6,304
4	11,036	9,252	9,893	8,471
5	15,466	12,712	12,953	11,069
6	20,874	16,957	19,279	15,681
7	10,779	9,202	10,171	8,363
8	18,946	15,186	19,351	16,446
9	19,845	18,058	21,367	18,535
Total	<u>127,881</u>	<u>106,411</u>	<u>122,087</u>	<u>104,721</u>

Votes Cast on Various Ballots

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.

	1952	1953	1954	1955
Actual	123,375	101,195	118,998	99,680
Possible	312,628	301,024	294,146	287,729

Actual as % of Possible

Ward	1952	1953	1954	1955
1	36.1	27.8	36.5	31.1
2	36.6	31.0	36.2	31.4
3	38.6	34.6	42.6	38.6
4	39.2	34.1	38.7	33.8
5	38.1	31.9	35.5	31.1
6	36.6	30.7	36.4	30.4
7	40.4	35.4	40.9	34.0
8	40.7	33.5	43.2	36.3
9	48.4	44.6	53.3	45.5
All Wards	39.4	33.6	40.5	34.6

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'.

For Controllers (cont'd)

	<u>1952</u>	<u>1953</u>	<u>1954</u>	<u>1955</u>
Actual	372,570	305,632	348,679	301,386
Possible	1,250,512	1,204,096	1,176,584	1,150,916

Ward	<u>Actual as % of Possible</u>			
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
1	27.6	21.5	26.8	23.4
2	27.4	23.2	26.4	23.8
3	31.0	27.0	32.9	29.8
4	26.6	23.2	26.0	23.1
5	24.3	21.2	22.4	20.1
6	26.4	22.4	25.8	22.4
7	30.6	26.8	29.8	25.6
8	32.6	26.4	32.7	28.6
9	41.4	36.9	43.0	37.9
All Wards	29.8	25.4	29.7	26.2

FOR WARD REPRESENTATIVES

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.

	<u>Aldermen</u>			Actual	<u>Trustees</u>		
	<u>1953</u>	<u>1954</u>	<u>1955</u>		<u>1953</u>	<u>1954</u>	<u>1955</u>
Actual	154,870	182,801	167,208	Possible	134,913	138,133	99,834
Possible	619,192	639,256	640,084		595,114	514,816	486,274

Ward	<u>Actual as % of Possible</u>			Ward	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>		<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
1	*	26.7	22.9	1	18.9	*	19.5
2	21.8	25.9	22.1	2	20.1	23.7	*
3	17.4	*	21.0	3	17.7	*	18.6
4	22.3	24.1	21.1	4	18.6	20.9	18.6
5	22.4	23.7	20.6	5	21.0	20.4	18.6
6	22.4	21.8	22.1	6	21.2	24.1	20.0
7	26.8	29.5	24.8	7	*	26.1	22.1
8	26.5	23.4	27.9	8	24.5	29.8	24.6
9	37.1	42.9	35.0	9	35.3	39.5	*
All Wards	25.0	28.6	26.1	All Wards	22.7	26.8	20.5

*Acclamation

II. 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.

In four suburban municipalities - Mimico, East York, Etobicoke and Forest Hill - the mayor or reeve is elected every second year for a two-year term. On occasion, the chief elective office in one or more suburbs has also been filled by acclamation. Consequently, the comparison is made with the two most recent years in which the office was contested in each municipality.

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>Office</u>	<u>Date Last Contested</u>	<u>Actual as % of Possible</u>	<u>Previously Contested</u>	<u>Actual as % of Possible</u>
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
Weston	Mayor	Dec./54	39.4	Dec./53	43.6
Scarborough	Reeve	Dec./55	38.6	Dec./54	33.0
Swansea	Reeve	Jan./48	38.2	Jan./45	46.1
Etobicoke	Reeve	Dec./46	38.1	Dec./44	24.1
Forest Hill	Reeve	Dec./49	35.1	Dec./48	42.5
TORONTO	Mayor	Dec./55	34.6	Dec./54	40.5
Leaside	Mayor	Dec./55	34.0	Dec./53	37.8
North York	Reeve	Dec./55	33.1	Dec./54	28.8
York	Reeve	Dec./55	23.9	Dec./54	25.2
East York	Reeve	Dec./54	21.8	Dec./53	23.5
Suburban Average			32.2		30.3