



# CIVIC AFFAIRS

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## GOOD CANDIDATES MAKE GOOD ELECTIONS

Perhaps the most effective way to arrest the decline of interest in municipal elections is to encourage the entry of more high calibre candidates. Changes that might be made in the law and custom of Ontario's municipal nomination process include nominations supported in writing by a large number of electors, money deposits by candidates, a less onerous nomination process if possible for candidates with council experience, publication of election finances by candidates and limits on campaign spending, and various types of intervention by citizens organizations.

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### Municipal Vote Continues Low

Public apathy in municipal elections has become a chronic condition in Canada in recent years. The dwindling garrison who recognize the importance of local government must realize that attempts to improve matters in this respect will have to deal with fundamental causes.

The discrepancy between voting turnouts in the Toronto area in the municipal elections of 1958 and the provincial general election of 1959 was widely noted and deplored. Statistics of the 1958 civic elections show that less than 31% of eligible electors in the Metro municipalities cast ballots in contested elections for the chief office (this excludes entirely the municipalities of Forest Hill, New Toronto and Swansea, where the highest offices were won by acclamation). In 1959, in the provincial election, over 52% of the citizens entitled to vote exercised their right, in the constituencies that coincide with the Metro area. This state of affairs has persisted for years. The Bureau of Municipal Research has many times expressed alarm at the "double standard" our people apparently apply to their public obligations. It is of no comfort that since the early 1940's there has been a steady decline in the proportion of provincial voters also.

Only a limited number of approaches, all debatable, can be used in an effort to increase the municipal vote. Such formal mechanisms as extension of the franchise (whose effect in the City of Toronto we shall watch with interest), the two-year term, simplified ballots and partisan elections have been discussed in many quarters. The evidence of their consequences, where tried, is inconclusive. Informal programmes, such as electioneering by citizen groups and "get out the vote" campaigns by service clubs, are helpful, but those who participate will testify to their limitations.

### Good Candidates Make Good Elections

The Minister of Municipal Affairs of Ontario is concerned about the skimpy municipal vote. He has directed the Municipal Advisory Committee, a body which reports privately to him, to study the problem. A small survey conducted here at the Minister's request last spring brought forth most commonly one response: more good candidates make better elections.

Like almost everything else, this has been said before. To put it another way: the nomination of candidates is a most potent factor in stimulating (or depressing) interest in civic elections.

Experience has shown that a normally dormant electorate awakes to something resembling life when prodded by a sensational issue, e.g., traces of corruption, Sunday sports, the drinking of beer. When no such battle slogans present themselves a great many of our politicians seem to have nothing to say. Fortunately, this criticism does not apply to all local politicians. We contend that the nomination as candidates of more persons able to understand the continuing vital problems of civic affairs, and able to take sides coherently on the really significant issues, would attract more voters to the polls.

### The Law Governing Nominations

The law should regulate the nominating process as little as possible, lest that process become biased in favour of the status quo. Certain safeguards of sobriety and responsible conduct must, however, be enforced. The law cannot oblige citizens to nominate good candidates; the law can create conditions that would encourage the determined candidacy of strong, intelligent people without inhibiting unfairly the radical, the rebel, even the fanatic.

With allowances for insignificant local variations, the present Ontario law governing municipal elections stipulates that by a certain date a nomination meeting must be held in the municipality; at this meeting candidates may be nominated, nominations being made and seconded in writing by qualified electors of the municipality. The proposer and seconder must be present, the nominee need not. Ward nomination meetings are to be held within the respective wards, but the Ontario Municipal Act does not say that either the candidate himself, the proposer or the seconder must be a qualified elector in the ward (no doubt a non-resident candidate would be gravely handicapped in a contested election). That is all there is to the nominating process.

Once nominated, the candidate is given approximately one day to file with the municipal clerk:

- 1) a sworn declaration that he is a qualified elector in the municipality and lives in it or within five miles of its borders,
- 2) a written oath of allegiance, and

3) a certificate that he has paid his local taxes up to and including those of the preceding year.

In a sizable municipality the nomination meeting is archaic, but since so little has to be done there, the obligation to hold such a meeting cannot have much effect on the number or quality of candidates.

As it happens, at nomination meetings in Toronto candidates for various offices frequently nominate one another.

The Ontario nomination process is about the simplest the wit of man could devise. American observers have voiced the fear that such ease in nominating will lead to an outlandish number of candidates. In the Toronto area, this is not borne out, although one ward last year had ten candidates for the two Council posts at stake. A large proportion of candidates in the biennial elections in the Metro area, however, obviously have had no real appeal for the electorate. Our voice would be the last to call for machinery to stifle candidates solely because they or their platforms are unpopular, but some by their appearance lend the proceedings a farcical air or in other ways detract from the high purpose of the elections. We suggest that the performances put on during campaigns by office seekers who are petty-minded and occasionally ignorant forestall the candidacy of many potentially fine public leaders. By raising the nomination hurdle a few notches the standard of competition might be improved. May it not apply in politics as in sport that the toughest contests attract the best performers?

The stiffening of the qualifications for candidacy would also tend to cut down the sometimes forbidding number of names, on various ballots, facing the voter at the poll. In the extreme case in Toronto in 1958, voters in Ward 5 had to weigh the merits of three candidates for Mayor, 11 for Board of Control, 10 for Council, 7 for Board of Education, 31 in all.

#### Possible Changes in Procedure

What changes can be made in the nomination process?

The following tentative suggestions have their pros and cons, which we try to state. Some would demand Provincial legislation, others voluntary action by citizens. Required legislation could be enacted by private bill in amendments to the Metropolitan Toronto Act, following the precedent established in the institution of the two-year term and the uniform voting date in the Metro municipalities.

#### 1) Nominations supported in writing by a large number of electors.

In some cities, the nomination of a candidate for mayor must be supported in writing by a certain number of qualified electors, a nomination for Councillor by a lesser number. In a sizable community, if the number be small, this requirement becomes quite perfunctory, therefore meaningless; if the number be very large, the election becomes difficult to administer. But to ask for, let us say, 100 signatures in support of a nomination is far from a mere formality. In the 1958 Toronto elections, nine out of 53 Council aspirants obtained fewer than 600 votes (this excludes the acclamations in Ward 9). If these candidates could enlist so little support within the guarded confines of the polling booth, conceivably they might not have been able to find 100 supporters willing openly to stand up and be counted. A would-be alderman unable to convince the required 100, 150 or 200 people to sign his nomination papers would not be a contender. Local councils are the training ground for future mayors, reeves and holders of other high offices, so it would not be wise to restrict unduly the choice of the electors, nor to make too stony the path of the newcomer; and therefore, prudence must govern in determining preliminary requirements for candidates. All the same, in a city or township council election there is no room for fourth-raters.

The procedure of requiring many nominators has the added benefit of stirring up interest even before the day of the nomination meeting, and it immediately gives a large number of people a certain stake in the election.

Such a procedure needs some controls; for instance signatures of nominators must be checked for validity. But should it be objected that this would be unfeasible for administrative reasons, consider that since 1924 the charter of the City of Boston, Massachusetts has provided that the nomination papers of a candidate for mayor must be "signed in person ... by at least three thousand voters"!

## 2) Money deposits by candidates.

Candidates in Canadian federal elections must post cash deposits, which are forfeited by candidates who fail to obtain at least one-half of the winning candidate's vote. In Britain the required proportion is one-eighth.

Intended to deter frivolous candidates, this device has had mixed results. The candidate regarded as "frivolous" may see himself in quite a different light. If he is a fanatic or a crank, the gamble of a reasonable sum of money will not frighten him. A cash deposit rule would nevertheless make a municipal election campaign an expensive lark.

## 3) "Previous experience" bonus for candidates for senior positions.

Most mayors of Toronto and mayors and reeves of its suburbs had served as members of Councils or Boards of Education before seeking the higher office. Election law might place a premium on experience

i) by requiring mayoralty candidates to have served in an elective public office, or,

ii) in places where cash deposits and/or many nominators are required, by releasing previous office-holders from all or part of the requirements.

The second alternative is preferable. In exceptional circumstances, a newcomer may suddenly command wide popular support, as Mr. Jean Drapeau did in Montreal in his first mayoral contest. The door ought to be left open for such candidates.

## 4) Publication and limitation of candidates' finances.

Provincial candidates are obliged by law to submit to the returning officer statements of all election contributions they have received exceeding in amount or value \$50, and complete statements of their election expenses. The returning officer then must publish abstracts of these statements in the local press. Federal candidates are under a similar obligation. There is no limit to what the candidates may spend, but they are supposed to let the public know how they spent it.

These laws, provincial and federal, are more commended than observed, but their feeble enforcement does not nullify the principle behind them, nor does it mean that a publication law for municipal election finances could not be more rigorously applied.

A further control, tested by experience elsewhere, is possible.

In the United Kingdom, the law limits the amount of money a Parliamentary candidate may spend on his campaign (the maximum varies with the size of the constituency), and restricts the uses to which the money may be put. Most observers agree that enforcement of these restrictions is quite effective. Yet this idea has not caught on in Canada, despite the extent to which we share British political traditions. The limitation of campaign spending in municipal elections is suggested, therefore, with frankly slender hopes of acceptance.

Such regulations for publication and limitation of expenses could encourage the emergence of a high quality of candidate by eliminating or diluting certain advantages that presently accrue to some office seekers, unrelated to their character or ability.

## 5) Intervention by citizen organizations.

In some American cities, notably New York, Cleveland and Seattle, citizen organizations have made a practice of giving their endorsement, sometimes with qualifications, to declared candidates.

A more aggressive step is the public nomination and promotion of candidates by bodies organized for the purpose. An outstanding example is the City Charter Committee of Cincinnati, Ohio, which is "non-partisan" in the American sense (i.e., not Democrat or Republican) but which unblushingly allows itself to be referred to as "the party". Similar organizations have functioned in Canada, notably in the west, but there the "party" tag is resented because of the implications the word carries in people's minds.

From time to time in Toronto candidates have enjoyed the endorsement of one group or another, but only sporadically and on a small scale. There are advantages in having an organized group of citizens, not formally committed as to policy, seek out and openly support candidates. In large municipalities, candidates need organized help to present themselves and their programmes adequately. To an independent citizen, however well motivated towards public life, the amount of money and organizational effort required to make himself and his views known to the voters may be utterly appalling. The help that can be expected from present groups and individuals may appear quite inadequate. If an organization set up for the purpose were to be available to such a person, with the finances and the services that only an organization can provide, he would probably be more inclined to enter the lists.

A danger lies in the chance that an electoral organization may come to occupy a position approaching a monopoly of power. The simple way to cure or prevent that is to compete, to organize against interests that threaten and for desirable public objectives. To some readers this may sound like a prescription for local parties. This does not necessarily follow, but in any event it is unrealistic to shun the word "party" in discussing local politics. Montreal now seems to be working towards a sort of local party system, and there are indications that Winnipeg is also.

As the Bureau has said before, "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. If the outcome is one or more parties which are able to elect candidates and control them like puppets, is the fault not ours for failing to develop a better alternative?

### A Word on Parties

The arguments most often advanced against the party system in municipal elections apply when the local parties are affiliated with national or provincial parties. It is generally agreed that the party system excites interest and provides a stimulus in turning out the voters. A local electoral association, not chained by loyalty to a provincial or federal party, can have some of the best of both worlds - freedom from irrelevant partisan obligations, plus the benefits of organized effort.

Experience in Canada and the U.S.A. has shown that local electoral associations can avoid the undesirable characteristics of the party "machine". The key is to preserve the independence of the candidates. Various existing organizations achieve this by constituting themselves in such a way that they retain no means of putting pressure on candidates who are elected.

A full debate on the benefits and evils of parties in local politics is outside the scope of this bulletin. For our present purpose, even if some type of indigenous party format should appear to be the offspring of election organizations, the idea is not thereby rendered unthinkable.

No one of these proposals, nor all of them together, would cure the problem of public apathy in municipal affairs. Some of them may be quite unacceptable. But our premise stands: good candidates, able to understand the real problems of civic government and able to express their viewpoints in vital terms, will produce a more active electorate. With this as our object, we shall welcome discussion of our suggestions.

BUREAU OF MUNICIPAL RESEARCH

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CITY OF TORONTO

The municipal voters in the City of Toronto were confined to three categories: the owner of owners and tenants, the last being indicated by the number of votes. However, these categories can be divided into resident and non-resident voters. A municipal voter in the City of Toronto is the ward where he owns property in order to be eligible to vote. Further, he may be listed in more than one ward, (although only once within a ward), and exercise his vote for alderman and ward of alderman in each ward in which he is listed. On the other hand, he is entitled to cast one vote for mayor and four votes for controller no matter how many times he is listed. In ward elections, each voter may cast one vote for alderman and two votes for trustees in each ward in which he is entitled to a ballot. Separate school corporations may not vote for public school trustees.

Points of Note

1) In calculating the figures which appear in the following tables, some degree of estimation was adopted in computing the totals because of the problem of obtaining complete information. The potential errors, however, are not significant, amounting in no case to more than a fraction of one per cent.

2) In comparing the number of votes cast (Table 2) with the number of votes counted for mayor (Table 3) it will be noted that the figures differ. This can be attributed to ballots spoiled, retained or unclaimed.

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This bulletin is issued solely in the interest of advancing objective analysis of a matter of public concern.

## VOTING ANALYSIS

TABLE 1 The qualifications for a municipal voter in 1958 were similar throughout the metropolitan area, being based primarily on a property tenure. In order to qualify as a municipal voter a person must be twenty-one years of age, a British subject, not disqualified from voting by the Ontario Municipal Act, or otherwise by law, and must be listed on the Assessment Roll of the municipality as being an owner, tenant or the wife of an owner or tenant of property of a specific value. This value varies according to the size of the municipality - \$400 in a city, \$300 in larger towns and \$100 in townships.

### Franchise Extension

In 1958 a question was put to the voters of the Corporation of the City of Toronto asking "Are you in favour of extending the right to vote at municipal elections for members of council to all persons of the full age of twenty-one years who are British subjects and who have resided in the municipality for at least one year in accordance with the Municipal Franchise Extension Act, 1958?" The enabling legislation mentioned in the question had been passed, largely as the result of a favourable referendum on the same subject in the City of Toronto at the previous election. To this question 59,799 voted yes and 22,408 voted no, an increased majority from 1956. As it will exist in 1960, the municipal franchise in the City of Toronto will resemble the Provincial and Federal franchise, except for a residence qualification applying to those who are neither owners nor tenants.

### CITY OF TORONTO

In 1958, eligible voters in the City of Toronto were confined to owners, tenants and wives of owners and tenants, the last being indicated on the voters list as MF votes. However, these categories can be divided horizontally into resident and non-resident voters. A municipal voter is not required to reside in the ward where he owns property in order to be eligible to vote. Further, he may be listed in more than one ward, (although only once within a ward), and exercise his vote for alderman and Board of Education in each ward in which he is listed. On the other hand, he is entitled to cast one vote for mayor and four votes for controller no matter how many times he is listed. In ward elections, each voter may cast two votes for alderman and two votes for trustee in each ward in which he is entitled to a ballot. Separate school supporters may not vote for public school trustees.

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TABLE 1

	1955	1956	1958
Resident Owners	130,154	127,198	129,969
Other Resident Voters (Tenants & MF's)	157,575	156,915	161,144
Total Resident Voters	276,729	284,113	291,113
Non-Resident Owners	21,687	21,285	21,333
Other Non-Resident Voters (ME, MF and Tenants)	30,626	26,162	25,099
Total Non-Resident Voters	52,313	47,447	46,432
Total Owners	151,841	148,483	151,302
Total Others	188,201	183,077	186,243
Total Voters	340,042	331,560	337,545
Public School Supporters	312,440	303,850	308,685
Separate School Supporters	27,602	27,710	28,860

Voting Turnout in Each Ward

In examining the breakdown by wards of the number of voters who went to the polls in 1958 it should be remembered that there is a certain amount of duplication, due to an unknown number of voters who exercise their voting rights in more than one ward. Although the number of occasions on which this occurs is small, it does mean that the figure which the City Hall reports, as the total number of electors voting, 105,601, is slightly higher than the number of individuals who did turn out.

TABLE 2

Ward	Number of Voters in Each Ward			
	1954	1955	1956	1958
1	13,288	11,445	10,881	11,116
2	9,503	8,407	8,114	9,415
3	6,282	6,304	5,869	6,947
4	9,893	8,471	7,282	8,226
5	12,953	11,069	9,557	11,096
6	19,279	15,681	15,360	15,253
7	10,171	8,363	8,083	8,636
8	19,351	16,441	15,199	16,381
9	21,367	18,535	18,023	18,531
Total	122,037	104,721	98,308	105,601

Number of Votes Cast on Various Ballots

FOR MAYOR

In the vote for mayor, only part of the non-resident vote is entitled to cast a ballot, i.e. those non-resident voters who do not live in the city or who have not already voted for mayor in another ward. Whereas the city calculates the percentage turnout per ward by taking the non-residents plus resident voters as the "possible" the Bureau feels that the percentage as determined by using the number of resident voters only as the "possible", gives a truer picture. For this reason, in several wards the percentages obtained by the Bureau run considerably higher than those of the city.



TABLE 3

	1954	1955	1956	1958
Actual	118,998	99,680	90,356	101,552
Possible	294,146	287,729	284,113	291,113
<u>Actual as % of Possible</u>				
Ward	%	%	%	%
1	36.5	31.1	30.1	31.9
2	36.2	31.4	30.5	33.7
3	42.6	38.6	35.0	40.0
4	38.7	33.8	28.7	33.6
5	35.5	31.1	26.2	32.9
6	36.4	30.4	29.1	29.2
7	40.9	34.0	32.1	33.8
8	43.2	36.3	32.3	36.7
9	53.3	45.5	41.5	43.2
All Wards	40.5	34.6	31.8	34.8

FOR CONTROLLERS

In the case of controllers the voter can mark four choices. This means that in determining the percentage, the possible vote will be four times that for mayor. If everyone were to take full advantage of and make proper use of their voting privilege, the vote for controller should be four times the vote for mayor. But, in fact, many people vote for less than the permitted four names. Some are not familiar with more than one or two candidates while others "plump" intentionally for favoured people.

TABLE 4

	1954	1955	1956	1958
Actual	348,679	301,386	289,277	310,980
Possible	1,176,584	1,150,916	1,136,452	1,164,452
<u>Actual as % of Possible</u>				
Ward	%	%	%	%
1	26.8	23.4	24.3	24.1
2	26.4	23.8	23.9	26.0
3	32.9	29.8	28.7	32.0
4	26.0	23.1	21.5	23.6
5	22.4	20.1	19.1	22.3
6	25.8	22.4	22.5	21.6
7	29.8	25.6	25.5	25.7
8	32.7	28.6	26.8	28.3
9	43.0	37.9	35.2	36.7
All Wards	29.7	26.2	25.5	26.7

FOR WARD REPRESENTATIVES

In the voting for ward representatives the residence classification ceases to be of significance. A non-resident may vote for both aldermen and members of the Board of Education, whether or not he has voted for similar offices in another ward. Because two aldermen are elected in each ward, the possible total vote for this office is twice the resident plus non-resident voters.

When determining the possible voters for trustees the base is still twice the resident plus non-resident voters, BUT the Separate School supporters must be subtracted from this figure.