

MEDIA RELEASE

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Councillor Calls For Reform of Election Financing

Toronto Councillor Michael Walker today released the results of a study undertaken by his office on the need for reform of the financing of municipal elections in the City of Toronto.

Among the key findings of that study are:

- Sixty per cent of donations to successful Toronto candidates in the 2000 municipal election were from corporations.
- Nine successful Toronto candidates in the last municipal election received more than 80 per cent of their reported financing from corporations. The highest among those 9 was 90 per cent, and the average among those 9 was 84 per cent.
- Only 4 Councillors raised over 80 percent of their donations from individuals.
- Corporations receive the lion's share of public money rebated to financial contributors.
- Not all financial contributions are required to be recorded by candidates.
- Contributions of "soft money" can be used to hide unreported contributions.
- Some candidates spent more on excluded fundraising expenses alone than the legal spending limit for an entire campaign.
- Expenses by sitting candidates on items excluded from reporting requirements can be open to abuse.
- Some candidates build war chests by raising far more money than they can legally spend. The top 10 successful candidates in the last election each raised an average of \$77,692 – more than three times the allowable spending limit in a typical ward.
- Complaints of election finance violations are administered without independence or impartiality.
- The City's compilation of election finance information is inadequate.
- The City's user charges for public election finance data are inappropriate.

Said Councillor Walker: "Elections are fundamental to democracy. So too are the processes that regulate the financing of those elections. On the basis of our work, I have to conclude that the current rules for election financing are riddled with inadequacies that cry out for reform. My hope is that we can improve the system in time for the November, 2003 municipal election."

Councillor Walker's report recommends that Council establish a Toronto Election Finance Review Task Force. This Task Force would be charged with the responsibility of consulting widely, and

reporting to Council on all aspects of campaign financing, including those raised by the Councillor. These include:

- The prohibition of campaign contributions from corporations, numbered companies, unions and organizations. Contributions should be made by qualified individuals only, a practice that is already in place in Quebec.
- The requirement of the issuance of receipts by candidates for all financial donations.
- The requirement of the public reporting by the City of all recorded contributions.
- Means to compel the reporting of soft money contributions, including the use of candidate affidavits.
- Means to eliminate the potential abuse of spending on excluded items that are essentially election campaign expenses.
- The need for an independent and impartial complaint resolution process free from political involvement.
- The need for improvement in the adequacy of current and historic City of Toronto statistical information gathering and reporting, including a routine process for reporting to Council on all aspects of recently conducted elections.
- The adequacy of print and online advertising of public electoral information, and the need for funding that will eliminate user fee charges for its use.
- The establishment of a permanent independent municipal body charged with the monitoring, reporting and resolution of all aspects of campaign financing.
- The merits of campaign finance legislation specific to the needs of Toronto or Ontario's large urban municipalities.

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