

NSV - Neighbourhoods for a Sustainable Vancouver

January 30, 2012

Mayor Robertson and Councillors
City of Vancouver
453 West 12 Avenue
Vancouver, B.C. V5Y 1V4

Dear Mayor Robertson and Councillors,

Re: Council Meeting January 31, 2012 - Motion on Notice - B3 - Increasing Fairness and Citizen Involvement in Municipal Elections

Please accept this as our general **support** for, and **requests for amendments** to the proposed Motion B3 Increasing Fairness and Citizen Involvement in Municipal Elections.

Neighbourhoods for a Sustainable Vancouver (NSV) is pleased that Council is considering a motion on election reform, however we have comments and request that the motion be amended as follows:

Motion Item #6. *Require that all donations and expenses for candidates, elected officials and elector organizations be disclosed on a continuous basis at six month intervals.*

NSV comment: We agree and further suggest more stringent disclosure requirements immediately preceding and during election campaign periods. Clarify that #6 includes advertising and in-kind donations from third-parties.

Motion Item #9. *Appoint the Provincial Chief Election Officer to oversee municipal elections in BC, and establish penalties and mechanisms for enforcement of offences under the amended local government elections legislation.*

NSV comment: We have some concerns in regard to the potential costs and effectiveness of placing responsibility for municipal elections oversight with the Provincial Chief Electoral Officer. We think that the issue of appropriate oversight needs further discussion and consideration. However, we support this as a reasonable interim solution.

Motion Item #11. *Oppose allowing corporations the right to vote in local elections.*

NSV comment: We request this recommendation be included in this 2012 motion. We note that the 2012 motion has removed #11.

The original Council report dated March 25, 2010 says:

"Corporate Vote

While other municipalities in BC have had some form of corporate vote in the past, the City of Vancouver never has. Concerns around the amount of local ownership of a company to be eligible to vote, the requirements for being based in the City, and the ability to enforce such a provision were all determining factors in the Committee recommending against bringing any form of corporate vote to Vancouver or in the Province."

For these reasons, #11 should also be included in the recommendations to the province.

Motion Item #12. *Provide local governments with the authority to use any method of elections they wish to use, and repeal the requirement for Lieutenant Governor in Council approval to adopt such a change.*

NSV comment: We disagree. - Granting local authority over electoral process could lead to chaos and the possibility of vote rigging to benefit the incumbents. If not under provincial legislation, there must be a process to ensure that cities are accountable to voters for changes to method of election. Another approach used in parts of the U.S., is to have cities classified according to population and have different methods in smaller towns than large cities.

Motion Item #13. *Amend the definition of election offenses and related penalties to include individuals acting as an intermediary in third-party campaign contribution schemes.*

NSV comment: Please add this text: Third-party advertising and in-kind campaign contributions should be defined as "donations" and be subject to the same regulations as donations.

We thank Councillor Reimer for proposing this Motion B3. Please also consider the requested above changes.

Finally, and equally important, we urge all elected officials, elector organizations, and future election candidates to voluntarily abide by these requests to the Province, even if the Province does not enact the proposed reforms.

Sincerely,

The Steering Committee
Neighbourhoods for a Sustainable Vancouver ((NSV)

Group contact email: nsvancouver@hotmail.com

Website: <http://www.nsvancouver.ca/>

Links for Reference:

2012 Council Motion B3: <http://vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20120131/documents/motionb3.pdf>

2010 Council Report:: <http://nsvancouver.ca/images/stories/pdf/ElectionReform/City-Recommendations-for-Election-Reform-Mar.23%2C2010-a5.pdf>

2010 Council Minutes: <http://nsvancouver.ca/images/stories/pdf/ElectionReform/Electoral-Reform-Council-March-25%2C-2010%20penv20100325min.pdf>

2010 NSV Letter to Council: <http://nsvancouver.ca/images/stories/pdf/ElectionReform/NSV-Letter-CoV-Motion-Election-Reform-Mar.2010-F.pdf>

2010 NSV letter to Province: <http://nsvancouver.ca/images/stories/pdf/ElectionReform/NSV-Letter-to-Province-Election-Reform-Apr.2010-F.pdf>