



Neighbourhoods for a
Sustainable Vancouver

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MEDIA RELEASE

NSV says local government election “reforms” conceal a Trojan Horse that will weaken democracy, and calls for deeper and quicker reforms, retention of 3-year election cycle

(Vancouver, October 23, 2013) Neighbourhoods for a Sustainable Vancouver today submitted its comments to Coralee Oakes, B.C.'s Minister of Community, Sport and Cultural Development, on the White Paper on Local Government Elections Reform. Today is the deadline for public comment.

Neighbourhoods for a Sustainable Vancouver (NSV) is disappointed by and largely opposed to the so-called “reforms” put forward by the provincial government in its recently-published White Paper on Local Government Elections Reform.

According to the White Paper, proposed changes “are the most significant in nearly two decades”. But the proposed package of minor adjustments, stemming from work of the Local Government Elections Task Force established in 2009, includes absolutely nothing to restrain the corrupting influence of “big money” on municipal politics. Instead of practical and progressive measures to reign in the unlimited campaign contributions that are undermining the democratic foundations of accountable civic governance, the proposed “reforms” amount in many respects to a regressive attack on grassroots political organizing and free speech.

The main points of the submission are:

1. Proposed "Reforms" do nothing to restrain corrupting influence of "big money" in municipal politics.
2. Some "key changes" will actually hurt grassroots campaigning and free speech.
3. Please do not allow Vancouver City Council to makes its own rules for election campaign finance.
4. Expense limits are not enough. Caps are also needed on campaign contributions – in the 2014 civic election.
5. Please retain the three year terms of civic office. Do not change to four years.

NSV is concerned that the cosmetic changes to campaign finance rules — including a possible shift to four-year terms of office — conceal a Trojan Horse that will weaken democracy.

A copy of the six-page submission is attached.

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Neighbourhoods for a Sustainable Vancouver is a citywide grassroots network of neighbourhoods with roots going back to 2007. In the November 2011 civic election, NSV ran a mayoral candidate and four council candidates for Vancouver City Council, based on Neighbourhood-based Real Democracy, Sustainability, and Vancouver-based Solutions. A major pillar was campaign finance reform..

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