



Dear Law Amendments Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on possible amendments to the Halifax Charter to allow the municipality to establish campaign finance bylaws.

It may appear that currently there are no rules for campaign financing, but there are. Every donation of \$50 and over requires disclosure and documentation of the donors name and address. There is an Official Agent and the process is arm's length, independent and has an audit function. However, these regulations should be reviewed and there are some definite changes which should be implemented. An example is now a candidate can be his or her own Official Agent. This is not transparent, is a conflict of interest, and should be prohibited. As well family members of a candidate should not be eligible to be an Official Agent.

During the last election the now Mayor's campaign fundraising was extensive. The funds raised were in excess of \$350,000. To put this in context, these funds are far more than the average cost of a house in Halifax Regional Municipality. There should be reasonable fundraising and expenditure limits. As well, the (now) Mayor paid himself, and a Campaign Manager a significant monthly salary and a stipend to a Sign Manager. There should be limits on where the funds can be expended. There should be no incentive to be a candidate and donations should only be related to ensuring a candidate has the ability to communicate their message. Also this could also put other candidates at a disadvantage who may not have name recognition nor the ability to raise massive sums of money. Fundraising for the Mayoralty campaign in the last election was highly unusual and not indicative of any problems at the municipal level throughout Nova Scotia. However I agree that it should be reviewed.

The 2012 election saw a reduction of seven Councilors' and a significant increase in the number of residents Councilors' represent. For example I used to have two MLA's sharing some of the same districts in my Council district and now I have four. Essentially an HRM MLA district is one half the size of a municipal district. The size of the new districts makes it very difficult to campaign door to door let alone mail brochures and place signage in all communities.

I refer to the MLA's as I analyzed the maximum allowed to be raised by the four MLA's that cover the district I represent and the total spent by each, as well as the eligible voters and actual votes cast. The cost per eligible voter for the MLA's ranged from a low of \$2.11 per voter to a high of \$6.68 per voter. I compared this to my district and the cost per voter was \$1.04. It is notable that both a candidate running in my district and I raised the most funds of Council candidates, but the cost per voter was very low. In addition, no government funds go back to electoral districts during municipal elections but they do for provincial elections. In provincial elections \$1.50 per voter goes back to the constituency if the candidate achieves 10% or greater of the votes cast. As well each political party has general funds which assist in spreading the campaign message and all donations are tax deductible. Thus any consideration of campaign reform by the province should also consider provincial elections.

I support Halifax Regional Municipality reviewing municipal campaign financing but strongly feel it should be for the entire province. It is important that campaign financing be open, transparent, fair and regulated by strict policy. There will be continued amalgamations and I see no need for different regulations for Halifax Regional Municipality. We are continually criticized for wanting different legislation and this is a clear example of why the same rules should be applied throughout Nova Scotia. If there are problems identified in municipal campaign financing, please fix them province wide. We need public confidence in municipal government throughout Nova Scotia.

Provincial staff met with municipal staff and elected officials across the province and throughout their presentation the word "consistency" was applied. On page seven of the provincial consultation discussion paper there are good recommendations such as only making contributions to an agent and having a separate bank account for them.

As someone who has run in several elections, I can attest to the significant cost to purchase signage, brochures, postage and websites. The first time I ran, I personally paid for most of the campaign. Due to the expense I was unable to mail to the entire district. As well due to my employment I was unable to get to every door. I came a close second in a large field of candidates. Many voters stated if they did not see any information or have a visit from a

candidate they would not consider voting for them. In districts almost twice the size of MLA districts, if campaign fundraising ability was severely limited I am not sure how an independent candidate (not with a political party) would be able to obtain recognition by the voters. Any changes should consider new candidates for office and the fact that sitting representatives have an advantage during an election, thus regulations should not further marginalize the process. They should also consider the ability of candidates to raise funds and deliver their message to residents. It is important to ensure that any member of the public including those that are young, disenfranchised, etc. is able to run an appropriate campaign.

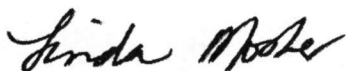
I support transparency, openness and fairness. If Halifax is granted the legislative authority to create our own bylaws, I respectfully suggest that an independent body such as someone from Elections Nova Scotia participate in the review. There should be no political bias in reviewing best practices and determining the optimal regulations for municipal campaign financing in Halifax or the province.

Many of the existing Councillors and the Mayor would have resources from the last election and some may even have funds. For example I have about \$5,000 worth of signs in my shed. If you severely limit what a NEW candidate can raise in 2016 it puts the incumbent in a favourable position. Due to this advantage, I would suggest the best time to implement any new changes would be after the next municipal election, and at the very least for Mayoralty candidates, as the incumbent already has a significant advantage and the cost to run an HRM wide campaign is significantly more.

Sincerely,

Linda Mosher, Councillor, District 9, Halifax Regional Municipality

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda Mosher".

Linda Mosher,
Councillor, Halifax Regional Municipality