



City looks to limit campaign donations

Corporations, unions banned

By BRYN WEESE, SUN MEDIA

Last Updated: 25th November 2009, 4:02am

Corporations and unions may be shut out of the municipal electoral process in Toronto, but they aren't going quietly.

At least not without a heckle from some city councillors who oppose banning them from donating to municipal election campaigns.

As part of a package of electoral reforms recommended by city staff, Toronto's executive committee yesterday voted 7-2 to ban corporate and union donations from municipal campaigns, starting with next year's election.

Council will vote on the ban next week.

"In the modern world, it's up to individuals to vote and to contribute to people who run for office," Mayor David Miller said after the vote. "It's outdated to say if you own a business you get to contribute twice, whereas somebody who doesn't own a business only gets to contribute once, which was the effect of the old law."

Miller and eight other councillors didn't accept any corporate or union donations in the 2006 election. Currently, the law limits corporate and union donations to \$750 per candidate.

But detractors of the ban argue, among other things, that corporations will still contribute, only it will be underground and not traceable.

Councillor Howard Moscoe called the ban "let's-pretend-politics," and argued it will make election financial disclosures less transparent, not more.

Other councillors weren't so civil.

At times, they were even cautioned by Miller not to "heckle" each other and members of the public who appeared before the committee in support of the ban.

"This is good news," said Bill Freeman of Vote Toronto, an organization that has been tracking and studying corporate and union donations in the GTA.

"We're really looking forward to the council meeting, and we certainly hope that it's going to pass there," he said.

But the vote likely won't be unanimous.

Councillor Gloria Lindsay Luby asked members of Vote Toronto yesterday if they were taking their "spiel" to other GTA municipalities.

Lindsay Luby, who funded 22.8% (\$4,950) of her campaign with corporate donations, also asked what Vote Toronto would "attack" next.

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