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## Toronto bans campaign contributions from corporations and unions

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Toronto council has banned corporations and unions from giving money to candidates in next year's municipal elections.

The vote, after a debate which lasted most of the day, was 29 to 12 – not as close as some had predicted.

Supporters of the ban said it will put pressure on the Ontario government to ban corporate and union campaign contributions in all municipalities across the province.

"It's a sign of the times," said York University political scientist Robert MacDermid, who has chronicled the patterns of campaign contributions in Ontario.

"The province is going to have to act."

The ban was spearheaded by Councillors Michael Walker and Cliff Jenkins, but drew support from a broad spectrum of councillors – including both Mayor David Miller and his often-time nemesis Councillor Rob Ford.

Jenkins asked councillors to listen to their citizens.

"I've never heard some say: Please, please keep corporate and union donations," Jenkins said.

In fact, citizens almost unanimously agree with ban, he said.

He said when he was first elected, he got no offers of corporate donations until he eventually emerged as a front-runner, and then was surprised to see a flow of unsolicited offers of support.

"What they were trying to do, I believe was have influence – perhaps undue influence – on decisions being made at council," he said.

But opponents of the ban – who also spanned the political spectrum – said corporate officials will find other, less visible ways of supporting candidates.