

WESTCOAST NEWS

Candidate expense limits recommended

**All-party committee
endorses spending caps for
municipal elections. » A19**



MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

MLAs urge limits on candidate expenses

Only Vision Vancouver would have had its spending in 2014 curtailed by new rules

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VANCOUVER SUN

VICTORIA — New local expense limits recommended by an all-party committee of MLAs Friday could mean a spending cut for Vancouver's ruling Vision party in the next election.

The legislative committee proposed caps and population-based formulas for local elections at municipal councils, school boards, regional districts and park commissions.

It's not clear if the new rules, even if adopted, would make a significant change to municipal election spending in B.C.'s biggest cities.

For example, of B.C.'s three highest-spending municipal parties in the 2014 election — Vision Vancouver, the NPA and Surrey First — only Vision would have had its spending significantly curtailed had the proposed rules been in place.

Vision spent roughly \$4 million in the 2014 election, well above the \$2.4 million it would have been limited to under the proposed new rules.

The NPA spent only slightly more than it would have been allowed (\$2.4 million compared to \$2.2 million).

And Surrey First spent less than it would have been entitled to under the proposals: \$1.2 million rather than \$1.5 million.

One reason for that is that all three parties ran fairly large slates of candidates. In the case of Vision, it ran 22 candidates: one for mayor, eight for city council, six for park board and seven for school board. Under the proposals, that permits Vision to spend \$207,000 for its mayoral candidate and \$106,000 for each of its 21 other candidates for office.

Not only is the proposed per capita spending cap complex, but analysis is further complicated by the fact that council and mayoral candidates affiliated with municipal parties typically declare nothing in their individual campaign spending reports, due to the fact their expenses are pooled by their party.



Mayor Gregor Robertson, centre, and his Vision Vancouver colleagues make a campaign announcement last year. A mayoral candidate in Vancouver could spend a maximum of \$207,820 under proposed new rules.

That has to change if any new system of spending caps is to be introduced, said Liberal MLA Jackie Tegart, who chaired the legislative committee.

"If a person or group is part of an electoral organization, that candidate is responsible to report where their money went," said Tegart.

She said Community Development Minister Coralee Oakes, who will have to decide whether to implement the caps, is "looking very closely" at forcing an end to blanket financial reporting by parties.

Oakes could not be reached for comment Friday.

The campaign expense caps would apply for advertising, flyers, brochures, signs, campaign offices, research, polling and other campaign functions starting Jan. 1 of the year of a

municipal election. The next local election in B.C. is set for 2018.

For communities with fewer than 10,000 people, a mayoral candidate would be capped at \$10,000 and all other council, school, electoral area or trustee candidates at \$5,000.

A mayoral candidate could spend a maximum of \$207,820 in Vancouver, \$188,748 in Surrey or \$139,490 in Burnaby, depending on the per capita formula, which differs for communities with more than 10,000 residents.

Burnaby Mayor Derek Corrigan, whose Burnaby Citizens Association spent \$429,440 for its slate of 16 people last year, said the limits aren't an issue.

"It's not a significant factor for us," he said. "We do find it interesting that the provincial

government is so interested in our expenses, while they seem to leave theirs alone."

Vancouver's deputy mayor, Andrea Reimer of Vision Vancouver, said the expense caps are fine, but the province failed to consider other key areas, such as limiting the amount an individual can donate.

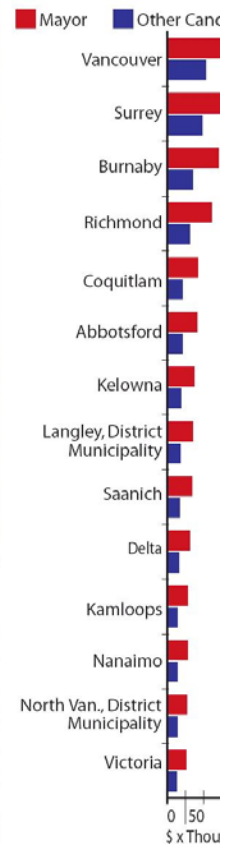
"It's extremely concerning that they continue to pursue this course of action without also bringing in contribution limits and the ban on union and corporate donations," she said.

Third-party advertisers would be limited to five per cent of a mayoral candidate's spending cap, with a \$150,000 overarching limit for a group to advertise in multiple races.

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Proposed limits on local election spending

A government committee proposed the following limit on each city's population



Source: Special Committee on Local Elections Expense Limits, BC Stat