

Election spending should go to vote: council

Vancouver city councillors called on the province Tuesday to put the issue of municipal campaign spending rules to a referendum.

The unanimously supported motion was brought forward by Coun. Andrea Reimer, who lambasted the province's recent changes to its local elections financing act.

"I would argue that it's a bit worse than it was, although it's so bad that we're talking about very slight degrees of dark black here in terms of where the rules are at," Reimer said.

She would like to see a ban on union and corporate donations, caps on single and individual donations, spending limits, and improved disclosure. But as Reimer explained, such changes would require provincial action.

"They are the only ones who can provide the legislative room for us to make rules in this regard," she said.

Peter Fassbender, the minister of community, sport and cultural development, said the government does not anticipate any further changes to municipal campaign finance rules at this time.

"The B.C. government is very pleased with the positive impact Bill 17 makes in providing a level playing field for all local government election candidates," Fassbender said in a written statement. He added that the bill "helped to modernize B.C.'s local elections by maximizing fairness, transparency and accountability."

As reported previously, if the province declines to put the issue of campaign finance reform to referendum, the city could still consider an initiative petition under the Recall and Initiative Act or a municipal referendum.