

VIEW FROM QUEEN'S PARK: Record Medal Count

Record medal count caps a great success story

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The outstanding performance of Canadian athletes has topped off the most successful Pan Am Games ever for our country. Team Canada won a record 217 medals at the TORONTO 2015 Pan Am Games. Ontario athletes had a strong showing, with 109 medals, and helped Canada finish in the top two at the largest international multi-sport event the country has ever hosted. The Games will leave behind a far-reaching legacy that will continue to enrich Ontario for decades. This includes the Athletes' Village, which will transform into the Canary District, a vibrant and diverse new Toronto neighbourhood. The 25 new and renovated sports facilities ? such as the Cisco Milton Pan Am/Parapan Am Velodrome and the CIBC Pan Am/Parapan Am Aquatics Centre and Field House ? will serve as world-class training sites for the community and for future national teams, and will also be available for public use. From August 7 to 15, Ontario will again host top athletes from the Americas and the Caribbean. About 3,200 athletes and officials from 28 countries and territories will compete in 16 sports at the largest-ever Parapan Am Games. Stay tuned for more action and excitement.

Municipal Election review

With the most recent municipal election this past fall, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing is conducting a review of the Municipal Elections Act to determine if it is meeting the needs of Ontario communities.

The government wants to make sure the rules governing how municipal leaders are elected are clear and simple, and reflect how modern campaigns and elections should be run. The areas our government are examining include the use of ranked ballots, campaign financing, accessibility, third-party endorsement, and enforcement. You can find detailed information on the Ministry's website: www.mah.gov.on.ca.

You have probably read in this paper that Ontario has committed to providing municipalities with the option of using ranked ballots in future elections, starting in 2018, as an alternative to the current system.

Ranked ballots allow a voter to rank candidates in order of preference ? first choice, second choice, third choice, etc. ? instead of just voting for one candidate.

There are different degrees to which ranked ballots could be used. For example, some municipalities in other countries use ranked ballots for all of council. Some other municipalities use ranked ballots for only the mayor or head of council while the rest of council is elected using a first past-the-post system.

Campaign Finance

Campaign finance refers to all of the funds raised or spent during an election campaign. This includes the value of contributions of goods and services as well as cash.

The Municipal Elections Act sets out the municipal campaign finance rules that candidates and campaign contributors must follow. For example, under the Act, any person who is a resident of Ontario may make a contribution to a municipal candidate's campaign at a maximum of \$750 to a single candidate.

The ministry intends to review the financial rules to see if they are consistent and set out transparent, accountable, fair and modern election finance practices.

Accessibility

Under the Municipal Elections Act, all voting places in municipal elections must be accessible to people with disabilities. The government wants to determine if the accessibility rules under the Municipal Elections Act meet the needs of Ontarians.

Third Party Advertising

In the context of an election, a third party is an individual or group that is not a candidate. A third party advertisement is a message that is not paid for, or sponsored by, a candidate. A third party advertisement either supports or opposes a candidate or takes a

position on an issue.

A third party advertisement can be communicated through radio, television, newspaper, the internet or any other type of media. Campaign buttons, signs, or other things that identify supporters or opponents of any candidate can also be types of third party advertising.

Currently, there are rules for people who want to campaign for the 'yes' or 'no' side of a municipal question on the ballot. There are no rules for third party advertising that supports or opposes a candidate or candidates in Ontario municipal elections.

Enforcement

The Municipal Elections Act sets out some automatic penalties for candidates who break rules set out in the Act. Not all penalties are automatic. For example, if a voter believes that a candidate has broken the election finance rules, they may apply for a review, called a compliance audit, of the candidate's campaign finances.

I'll report more in-depth in the months ahead on these issues as input from citizens and elected officials across the province are turned into proposed changes.

I invite you to contact me on any issue. Please call my community office at 905-750-0019, or visit my website at www.ChrisBallardMPP.ca. I look forward to hearing from you.