LOCAL ELECTIONS REVIEW

MLA 'disappointed' by aldermen's absence

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The head of a provincial committee reviewing election laws in Alberta rapped city council's knuckles Thursday for not participating in meetings partially spurred by Calgary's Ward 10 voting scandal.

A committee of three Tory MLAs is leading a review of the Local Authorities Election Act by touring the province seeking input on how to restore public confidence in the system and chip away at growing voter apathy.

While the city is preparing its own submission for November — and providing input at this weekend's Alberta Urban Municipalities Association convention in Calgary — committee chairman Ray Prins said he expected members of council to at least make an appearance.

"I'm disappointed there was nobody here yet from city council," Prins said. "I'd like to make that statement."

Fewer than 20 people showed for Thursday's public open house. A similarly modest crowd, which didn't include any council members, also participated Wednesday.

"I would be interested in having someone from city council come to our meeting and make a presentation, either in the next couple of days or in November," he said.

Prins recognized the city still has time to make its presentation — which will be in November.

The provincial committee, which includes MLAs Lloyd Snelgrove and Ron Liepert, will incorporate recommendations of a report that analysed Ward 10 voting irregularities in the 2004 municipal election.

Prins said campaign fundraising also needs to be reviewed because the dollars become the "personal property" of the candidate.

"There's no law saying what has to happen to that money after the campaign is over," he said.

Mayor Dave Bronconnier, who had more than $300,000 left after last fall's campaign, has said he'll donate remaining funds to "good community (causes)" when he leaves politics.

The panel is also tasked with reviewing voter identification and lists, special ballots, campaign advertising and terms of office.

Kevin Milnes, a Ward 10 resident, said he's frustrated with loopholes in the system: "What happened was scurrilous, and we're very peeved."

Ward 10 Ald. Andre Chabot — elected after initial winner Margot Aftergood resigned when hundreds of disputed mail-in ballots were tied to her campaign — said the city is giving the review its due diligence. Council has initiated its own recommendations for changes to the elections act, which will be presented to the committee, he said.

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