Municipal Democratic Renewal (Added Motion)

Whereas citizen participation in municipal elections remains historically lower than civic participation in both federal and provincial elections.

And As elected representatives and a Council we have an obligation to support initiatives that encourage and promote civic engagement and public participation in our democratic institutions and the future of our city.

And Whereas there is increasing public concern with the extraordinary concentration of campaign contributions from a single set of interests.

And Whereas almost half of the $766,923 raised for the 2006 election campaign came from corporations or trade unions.

And Whereas business and unions are not allowed to contribute to the campaigns of candidates running for federal office or to any national political parties.

And Whereas Council should seek to create an even playing field for candidates of diverse views and backgrounds representing a wide range of needs and interests.

And Whereas candidates in communities that have implemented municipal election contribution rebate programs rely more on individual contributions and less on contributions from corporations.

And Whereas staff have provided early estimates that such rebate programs could cost in the range of $120,000 - $160,000 plus administrative costs.

Therefore be it resolved:

(a) That the Government of Ontario be requested to amend the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 to provide Municipal Clerks with the ability to use any resources available to them to create a more accurate voters list.

(b) That Hamilton City Council join the Town of Ajax in requesting the Government of Ontario to provide all municipalities in the Province with the authority to pass a by-law that would prohibit a corporation that carries on business in Ontario or a trade union that holds bargaining rights for employees in Ontario from making contributions to any candidates for municipal council.

(c) That this report be referred to the Audit and Administration Committee to investigate the various options, criteria and formula for a Municipal Election Contribution Rebate Program and report back to Committee of the Whole by October 2009 on proposed parameters and cost estimates of a Rebate Program for individual contributions from Hamilton residents, similar to tax incentives provided to federal or provincial parties and candidates.