

Developers donated \$78,854 of \$229,185 raised in Stouffville election

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union contributions.

Still, the report found developer campaign donations played a significant role in the election.

"Candidates getting financial support from the development industry are more likely to get elected than those who don't get developer money. That's not fair," the report said.

Money from the development industry makes up more than half of all money from corporations and the development community spends more on elections where there is more development taking place, it said.

Of the \$171,670 in monetary contributions to Aurora candidates from all sources, including from candidates themselves, \$26,600 came from the development industry.

Of the \$154,113 raised by candidates in Bradford West Gwillimbury, \$24,364 came from the development industry.

Of the \$94,075 raised in East Gwillimbury, \$2,750 came from the development industry.

In Georgina, the development industry contributed \$24,950 of the \$98,807 raised.

In King, the industry donated \$11,000 of the \$64,125 raised.

In Newmarket, the industry contributed \$14,550 of the \$277,947 raised.

And in Whitchurch-Stouffville, it donated \$78,854 of the \$229,185 raised.

"Developer donations are a significant

concern," MacDermid told York Region Media Group.

"It (developer campaign donations) is an important role to play, when you think that one of the things that council does is create a profit for developers. A developer purchases a piece of land, a farm maybe when it is zoned agricultural, and as the boundary of the city creeps out, they have it switched to residential," he said.

"And in that switch, the developer multiplies his investment several times over. And when he further subdivides the land into little parcels, he multiplies that wealth again. It is the acts of council that create profit for developers. So, it's hugely important and developers understand that. That's why they fund candidates and that's why they are very strategic about who they fund and make sure councils have a majority of people who are pro-development."

On Monday, on the heels of the release of the Campaign Fairness report, the provincial government announced it is introducing changes to the Municipal Elections Act.

The changes will include giving municipalities the option to ban corporate and union donations, something Toronto did in advance of the 2010 municipal election.

Debbe Crandall, director of policy with Save The Oak Ridges Moraine (STORM), called the province's move to give municipalities the right to ban developer campaign donations a good first step, but said a prohibition should be mandated provincially.

"I think it's time to separate the develop-

ment interests from elected officials. Let's create a fair playing ground with them because the ordinary person or community group certainly doesn't have the same resources to gain the same access to the politicians that they're going to be dealing with on a day-to-day basis," she said.

'\$750 is a nice dinner out with a few people at a restaurant and that's not going to sway a politician. That's absurd.'

"So, I think it's an excellent move forward. I would go further than giving municipalities the right to ban it. I think they should bring down a regulation that that practice will not happen any more."

The province isn't forcing a ban on developer donations across Ontario because it recognizes that municipalities outside of hot housing markets, such as the Greater Toronto Area, have different needs, Newmarket-Aurora MPP Chris Ballard said.

But the move does recognize concerns about municipal campaign donations, he said.

"Over the years, we've heard this call from citizens, from elected officials and from some of the councils out there that we need not only to clear up and make more democratic how people are elected, make that more open

more transparent, but also the fundraising rules," the former Aurora councillor said.

There is nothing wrong with developers donating to election campaigns, Joe Vaccaro, CEO of the Ontario Home Builders' Association, said.

"Businesses are legally participating in the democratic process. Candidates ultimately determine their own fundraising sources and are responsible for the required campaign filings," he said in an email.

"As you can see by the Toronto skyline, the city continues to grow and develop even with the 2009 ban on developer donations."

To think that a donation up to the maximum of \$750 per municipal candidate is going to have an influence down the line on a development application is ridiculous, Frank Greco, a director with Heritage Hill Developments in Kleinburg, said.

"The story that came out seemed to suggest that there was a relationship between developer contributions and developments that happen in the community. The reality is that all politicians need funds to carry out a campaign and if people think that a \$750 contribution to a particular candidate is going to be such that it creates some type of favouritism, \$750, are we kidding? Really, are we kidding?" he said.

"\$750 is a nice dinner out with a few people at a restaurant and that's not going to sway a politician. That's absurd. To think a \$750 contribution is going to sway a politician, it's not reality. I know people want to suggest that, but it's not reality."

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