

Pickering deputy mayor's audit

ELECTIONS ACT BREACHED

By Mark Ostler

The audit of **Pickering** deputy mayor **Doug Dickerson's** campaign finances has found the veteran councillor spent nearly twice the permitted amount during the 2010 election. The news came yesterday afternoon as the auditors' report to council made the rounds.

Auditors **William Molson** and **Bernard Nayman** found that not only did Dickerson contravene the *Municipal Elections Act* by spending \$15,015 more than the \$19,154 limit, but he also accepted \$750 each from **Rose Investments I LP** and **Viva Pickering Limited Partnership**, despite the legislation's ban on corporate donations. Neither donation was returned, as the legislation requires.

A \$750 campaign contribution was made by **Carpet Corral**, a company owned by Dickerson's former spouse, but was returned only after election day.

Molson and Nayman also found irregular spending related to Dickerson's victory party. While the campaign paid \$1,500 for the use of a venue, including a gratuity and open bar liquor costs, the campaign financial statements indicate that \$14,594 was spent on LCBO alcohol purchases for the party.

"These goods were not distributed in relationship to the campaign," the audit report states. Dickerson told the auditors that six of the 288 liquor bottles included in the purchase were donated to charitable events "and that he had retained the remaining alcohol."

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Molson and Nayman note that the 30 **Durham Region** 2010 election day parties held by candidates had an average cost of \$959.

The audit also found that though Dickerson's fundraising efforts had raised the \$19,154 campaign spending limit by September 20, 2010, the councillor continued accepting donations after that date, bringing in an additional \$26,261. Because Dickerson reported the money spent on alcohol as a campaign expense, his financial statements listed a \$1,014 deficit.

"However," the audit report states, "the expenditure on alcohol appears not to be a campaign expense... and has the effect of diverting to the candidate a surplus otherwise payable to the clerk."

Other contraventions of the elections act include the use of signs from a previous campaign, which were not recorded in financial statements and the fact that Dickerson did not record the nomination filing fee or the use of campaign office space at his residence as expenses.

The audit was requested last year by residents **Ian Cumming**, **Jolanta Duszak** and **David Steele**. Cumming ran against Dickerson in the 2010 election, losing 2,649 to 1,905. Pickering's audit committee approved the request over a year ago, but Dickerson appealed the decision last May. In December, Justice **Paul Bellefontaine** denied the appeal. (See *NRU-GTA Edition*, December 21, 2011.)

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• Ian Cumming

In an email to *NRU* late yesterday, Cumming said that he "could not be more pleased with this decision."

"I was told that we three appellants stood little chance when we asked for an audit of Mr. Dickerson's campaign finances, and I was personally warned that this could be perceived by some as sour grapes on my part for losing to Mr. Dickerson in the election," Cumming wrote.

He added that the auditors' conclusions substantiate his long-held belief of irregularities in the deputy mayor's campaign expenses.

"I think the auditors summed it up best when, discussing the diversion of surplus funds and Mr. Dickerson's remarks on the subject, stated 'We find these statements lack credibility,'" Cumming wrote.

Dickerson has spent 17 years on Pickering council, including 10 years as deputy mayor and 10 years on Durham regional council. He did not respond to a request for comment yesterday afternoon. [NRU](#)