

How much does it cost to buy a politician?

According to Tim Maxwell organizer for the Federation of Metro Tenants Associations on contract to the city through the Tenant Defense Fund's Outreach Organizing Team, it takes only one meeting in an election year.

Mr. Maxwell says their strategy is to get community legal clinics and other organizations to arrange community meetings at which they are the main speaker, invite city councillors, and being an election year the councillors will all support increased city funding for the group. They won't even bother to organize any of these meeting themselves.

The Federation of Metro Tenants Associations received a total of over \$400,000 in 2005 from the City of Toronto, up from \$100,000 in 1997, up from \$30,000 in 1993. This is 98% of this group's total revenue.

What is this money for?

\$175,000 is for the Federation's Tenant Hotline, manned by unskilled laypeople, which provides a very similar service to

the vastly superior  
tenant telephone advice provided for free by the  
Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal.

Another \$220,000 comes out of the \$325,000 a  
year Tenant Defense Fund,  
for tenant organizing and outreach. Organizing  
funding is NOT provided  
to any other city lobby groups such as ratepayer's  
groups - why not if this is  
a valid use of taxpayer's money?

All of this for a group that has claimed 3,000  
members for the past decade,  
which is really about 1,000 whom pay \$10 to \$15 for  
memberships each.

This is a group that claims it can deliver bodies and  
votes, but has  
repeatedly been unable to deliver, such as in the  
2000 election when  
they put the whole weight of their organization into  
helping Gail Nyberg's  
hugely unsuccessful campaign to unseat Councillor  
Ootes.

Why does no one question how effective this city  
funding is and whether  
it is suitable to the city's mandate. Maybe this is  
why this group feels  
it can buy councillors' votes with meetings  
organized by others.

So if you wonder why all of a sudden the Federation of Metro Tenants wants to invite you to a meeting in your own community to connect you to your constituent tenants you now know what it is really all about.

No wonder the city is having fiscal problems.

Susan Forest