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They were taking sides

Money trail shows battle between 'Team Katz' and 'Team NDP' in 2010 civic election

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If you follow the money behind Winnipeg's council candidates last year, it turns out there was truth to Mayor Sam Katz's characterization of the 2010 civic election as a battle between him and Manitoba's NDP.

Early last year, Katz used his annual state of the city speech to vow to do whatever he could to prevent NDP candidates from taking over city council.

At the time, some observers thought the mayor had lost it. But audited financial statements from the 2010 campaign reveal donation patterns that divided many council candidates into those funded by two opposing groups that could be characterized as "Team Katz" and "Team NDP."

In 12 out of 15 wards, Katz-friendly candidates were funded by a similar list of donors, dominated by Conservative-affiliated businessmen. The most enthusiastic backers of Team Katz, in terms of the frequency of their appearance on the donor list, were hotelier Leo Ledohowski, developer Sandy Shindleman and developer Arni Thorsteinson.

Team NDP, on the other hand, was active in seven out of 15 council races. NDP supporters such as union spokesman Liam Martin, Prof. John Loxley and activist Tom Simms were among the most active donors, with cameo appearances by NDP-affiliated city councillors and MLAs.

While this did not exactly play out as a head-to-head battle between the two sides, the donor lists illustrate how the co-ordinated efforts of like-minded individuals can defeat the spirit of provincial election rules that ban union and corporate donations in municipal elections.

The list of donors also revealed a few quirks, such as Daniel McIntyre Coun. Harvey Smith's financial support of Fort Rouge candidate Shane Nestruck in his failed bid to defeat NDP-affiliated Coun. Jenny Gerbasi. Smith resigned from the NDP in 2010 after he lost a nomination battle for the seat he wound up retaining.

In Fort Rouge, Gerbasi had the distinction of being supported by Mike Davidson, president of the city's largest union, CUPE Local 500. Conversely, St. Charles Coun. Grant Nordman enjoyed the support of Phil Sheegl, who's now Winnipeg's chief administrative officer and de facto senior manager.

All but two of Winnipeg's victorious council candidates spent close to the limit allowed for their respective wards. Only Coun. Dan Vandal, who faced little competition in St. Boniface, and rookie Coun. Thomas Steen, who won a heated battle in Elmwood-East Kildonan, did not come close to their fundraising and spending ceilings.

The following list of selected council candidates illustrates the financial patterns -- included are all the victorious 2010 candidates and the runners-up who enjoyed significant or noteworthy support:

Charleswood-Tuxedo

\$31,969 spending limit

Coun. Paula Havixbeck (rookie winner): Spent \$27,625. Donors included philanthropist Gail Asper, lawyer and financial executive Jason Stefanson and developers Sandy Shindleman and Arni Thorsteinson.

Jarret Hannah (finished second): \$31,060.

Daniel McIntyre

\$29,711 spending limit

Coun. Harvey Smith (won sixth term): Spent \$24,958. Donors included former city councillor Ken Wong and businessman Abdo Eltassi.

Cindy Gilroy-Price (finished second): Spent \$25,533. Donors included Liberal Sen. Sharon Carstairs, ad agency owner Drew Cringan and former city councillor and federal Liberal candidate Terry Duguid.

Keith Bellamy (finished third): Spent \$26,193. Donors included labour leader Kevin Rebeck, union spokesman Liam Martin and NDP MLA Andrew Swan.

Lito Taruc (finished fourth): \$25,562. Donors included hotelier Leo Ledohowski and developer Arni Thorsteinson.

Elmwood-East Kildonan

\$30,800 spending limit

Coun. Thomas Steen (rookie winner): Spent \$12,654. Donors included hotelier Leo Ledohowski and developer Sandy Shindleman.

Shaneen Robinson (finished second): Spent \$30,164. Donors included NDP MLA Bill Blaikie, federal NDP candidate Kevin Chief, Coun. Ross Eadie, Coun. Jenny Gerbasi, NDP MLA Kerri Irvin-Ross, Prof. John Loxley, union spokesman Liam Martin, activist Tom Simms, Coun. Dan Vandal.

Fort Rouge-East Fort Garry

\$33,662 spending limit

Coun. Jenny Gerbasi (won fourth term): Spent \$25,799. Donors included union spokesman John Baert, salon owner Edward Carriere, union president Mike Davidson, former property director Harry Finnigan, former mayoral candidate Kaj Hasselriis, Prof. John Loxley and Coun. John Orlikow.

Ian Rabb (finished second): Spent \$32,048. Donors included hotelier Leo Ledohowski and developer Sandy Shindleman.

Shane Nestruck (finished third): Spent \$4,104. Donors included Daniel McIntyre Coun. Harvey Smith.

Mynarski

\$27,498 spending limit

Coun. Ross Eadie (rookie winner): Spent \$25,519. Donors included Prof. John Loxley and activist Tom Simms.

Jenny Motkaluk (finished second): Spent 26,795. Donors included hotelier Leo Ledohowski and developer Arni Thorsteinson.

Greg Littlejohn (finished third): Spent \$13,290. Donors included philanthropist Gail Asper.

North Kildonan

\$28,565 spending limit

Coun. Jeff Browaty (won second term): Spent \$26,054. Donors included hotelier Leo Ledohowski, developer Rubin Spletzer, contractor Wilf Tailleu and developer Arni Thorsteinson.

Old Kildonan

\$30,914 spending limit

Coun. Devi Sharma (rookie winner): Spent \$27,329. Donors included developers Robert and Sandy Shindleman.

Point Douglas

\$26,210 spending limit

Coun. Mike Pagtakhan (won third term): Spent \$25,139. Donors included developer/demolition-company owner Wayne Imrie, architect Sasa Radulovic, developer Arni Thorsteinson and developer Eric Vogan.

River Heights-Fort Garry

\$37,307 spending limit

Coun. John Orlikow (won second term): Spent \$24,493. Donors included hotelier Ida Albo, philanthropist Gail Asper, developer Myles Kraut, union spokesman Liam Martin and developer Rubin Spletzer.

Michael Kowalson (finished second): Spent \$37,067. Donors included developer Hart Mallin, developer Sandy Shindleman and developer Arni Thorsteinson.

St. Boniface

\$39,315 spending limit

Coun. Dan Vandal (won fifth term): Spent \$16,105. Donors included hotelier Leo Ledohowski.

St. Charles

\$24,506 spending limit

Coun. Grant Nordman (won second term): Spent \$25,324. Only council candidate to exceed ward limit. Donors included Winnipeg Jets co-owner Mark Chipman, Kirkfield Park Tory hopeful and former council candidate Kelly de Groot, Tory MP Steven Fletcher, developer Guy Hobman, auto dealer Bob Kozminski, hotelier Leo Ledohowski, developer Michael Nozick, Winnipeg chief administrative officer Phil Sheegl, developer Sandy Shindleman, Canad Inns executive Taras Sokolyk and developer Eric Vogan.

St. James-Brooklands

\$26,085 spending limit

Coun. Scott Fielding (won second term): Spent \$26,077. Donors included hotelier Leo Ledohowski, developer Rubin Spletzer and developer Arni Thorsteinson.

Deanne Crothers (finished second): Spent \$17,153. Donors included the Winnipeg Labour Council's Larry Pelzer and labour leader Kevin Rebeck.

St. Norbert

\$35,349 spending limit

Coun. Justin Swandel (won third term): Spent \$33,299. Donors included hotelier Ida Albo, hotelier Leo

Ledohowski and developer Sandy Shindleman.

Louise May (second place): Spent \$33,292. Donors included Winnipeg Citizens Coalition co-chairman Shaun Loney, Wise Up Winnipeg co-founder Todd Dube and philanthropists James and Kathleen Richardson.

St. Vital

\$38,550 spending limit

Coun. Gord Steeves (won fourth term): Spent \$38,468. Donors included businessman Abdo Eltassi, hotelier Leo Ledohowski, developer Sandy Shindleman and contractor Wilf Tailleu.

Transcona

\$25,990 spending limit

Coun. Russ Wyatt (won third term): Spent \$25,737. Donors included hotelier Leo Ledohowski.

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