

Mississauga News

Crombie broke election rules?

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Page: 1

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Former Mississauga MP and current Ward 5 candidate Bonnie Crombie could be the subject of a Municipal Elections Act investigation if she wins next month's by-election. Crombie, who represented Mississauga-Streetsville in Ottawa before being defeated in May's federal election, contends she broke no rules when she had a team conduct polls earlier this summer to gauge her popularity and help her decide whether to run in the Sept. 19 by-election. The Act prohibits candidates from incurring election expenses outside the campaign period, which in this case began Aug. 5. At issue is the definition of election expenses, referenced in the Act as "costs incurred for goods or services by or on behalf of a person wholly or partly for use in his or her election campaign." Crombie argues her advance polling wasn't an election expense because she's not using any of the information obtained for her campaign. It cost her \$226 and she paid for it herself. "I'm on solid legal ground. It's permissible to do research in advance of registering for an election. I'm not the only politician to do this," Crombie told The News. "If you're doing research on whether or not to enter a campaign, this is entirely allowable." Crombie maintains that none of the information in her polling would be used during her campaign. When told that some candidates would consider filing a complaint against her if she wins, Crombie replied: "They're entitled to file whatever they want and waste their own money." Two candidates The News spoke with this morning said any violation of the Act should be dealt with accordingly. "I don't want it to seem like sour grapes after the fact, but if someone is being accused of not playing by the rules, I have an issue with that and I think I have a duty to ensure it gets looked at," said Mark Cashin. Sandeep Patara declared: "I would definitely file a complaint." If a complaint were to be filed and a victorious Crombie was found to be in violation of the Act, she could be fined or forced to vacate the seat. **George Rust-D'Eye, a municipal law expert** and the City of Mississauga's interim integrity commissioner, has said while the Act is ambiguous, a case like this could be a violation, as the information could be used to target certain areas in a campaign.

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