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## Former councillor says elections act must be updated

CTV London

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A former city councillor says the Municipal Elections Act needs to be updated or the public will have no confidence in the democratic process.

The suggestion comes after *CTV News* first raised questions over the timing of campaign expenses incurred by mayoral candidate Joe Swan.

"People who are law abiding and respect the system and the integrity of our democracy, are in fact penalized because people who can abuse it, knowing there are no consequences, will abuse it," Ed Corrigan says.

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A decade ago, Corrigan sought a compliance audit of Coun. Paul Van Meerbergen's 2003 campaign expenses.

Six violations were found, but deemed unintentional by the investigating committee.

"It was actually quite time consuming and you have evidence of certain things and that's hard to get."

Now Swan faces questions after unveiling lawn signs and campaign literature before officially filing his nomination papers.

Any voter can request a compliance audit, but Corrigan says it has no teeth.

The rules around when a request for an audit can be made at city hall are also a source of concern for some because that window of opportunity doesn't even begin until months after the election is over.

Complaints can only be lodged within the three months after campaign financial statements are due so concerns about this October's election can only be made between March 27 and June 25 2015.

City clerk Cathy Saunders says if auditors discover corruption, criminal charges may arise. Penalties include a fine of up to \$25,000, a six-month imprisonment and losing the council seat.

But Corrigan says unless these penalties are imposed, they are not a deterrent.

"If there are no consequences to someone breaking the law, there will be people who will break the law."

Corrigan also says there is a disincentive for voters to complain because if no violations are found and the request deemed frivolous the person who applied for the audit must pay the substantial costs.

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