

TO: CHAIR AND MEMBERS
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL

DATE: 2015 February 11

FROM: CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER

SUBJECT: 2014 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTION REVIEW AND FUTURE
RECOMMENDATIONS

PURPOSE: To provide statistics on enhanced election systems, feedback on the success of voter engagement initiatives and identify future recommendations for review in advance of the 2018 Local Government Election.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. **THAT** Council receive this report for information.

REPORT

INTRODUCTION

Burnaby City Council, at its Open meeting held on 2012 September 17, approved a report from the Executive Committee of Council that focused on providing a more efficient and sustainable Election that would improve the overall elector experience and increase voter turnout. Leading up to the 2014 Local Government Election, initiatives for enhanced election systems and voter engagement were implemented. These systems introduced new and adapted technologies resulting in improvements to election operations in keeping with the City's *Environmental and Social Sustainability Strategies*.

Establishing an Election Communication Plan became the base for building public awareness initiatives targeted at voter turnout. This Plan focused on the delivery of effective, focused and timely communications. New approaches were developed to provide a positive voter experience, expand citizen engagement and create community outreach programs, while encouraging partnerships with stakeholders and other Lower Mainland Municipalities.

Successes from the 2014 Local Government Election have been summarized through results, statistics and voter feedback in the *Burnaby Election Systems and Engagement* document (provided under a separate cover).

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ENHANCED ELECTION SYSTEMS

Municipal VoterView (MVV) and the concept of 'Vote Anywhere', as part of an enhanced election system, were first piloted at Advance Voting Opportunities in 2011. This system was approved by Council for use throughout Burnaby in 2014 it increased efficiencies and streamlined the election process as highlighted in the *attached* document.

'Vote Anywhere' made it possible for citizens to vote outside their neighbourhood at any one of the 35 voting locations and five Advance Voting Opportunities in Burnaby. In addition, Special Voting Opportunities were made available at 18 care facilities and Burnaby General Hospital. As a result of positive feedback from Burnaby citizens, 'Vote Anywhere' was a successful component to improving the voter experience.

Moving forward, new technologies in the areas of vote counting machines, improvements to hardware and enhancements to the connectivity infrastructure throughout the City, will further improve and increase efficiencies.

Municipal VoterView

MVV delivered a comprehensive suite of election services that consisted of Voter List Management, Worker Management and Candidate Access. These three modules provided web hosting, internet voter lookup (IVL), electronic voter strike-off and voter registration. Outcomes from data analysis made possible through these modules, are highlighted in the *attached* document.

Electronic voter strike-off was synchronized at each physical voting location, tracking in real-time when and where a voter had cast their ballot. This feature enabled citizens to vote only once at any voting location in Burnaby. MVV was a complete election solution and a vast improvement to the manual processes used in past elections with multiple benefits, including data collection and measurable staff efficiencies. In addition, significant environmental savings were realized through a decrease in printed materials.

Vote Counting Machines

Through discussions with two leading Canadian vote counting machine and election management solution providers, staff will initiate a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the lease of machines during the 2018 Local Government Election, as previously directed by Council. This process will include involvement and partnerships with City stakeholders and interested Lower Mainland Municipalities. Recommendations arising from this evaluation will be submitted to Council for final approval.

VOTER ENGAGEMENT

The Election Communication Plan objectives outlined by the *Burnaby's Social Sustainability Strategy* and findings from the 2011 Election, identified the following four focus areas for voter engagement:

1. Clearer communication
2. Increased use of Virtual City Hall
3. Implementation of social media
4. Enhanced community outreach

The 2014 Local Government Election voter turnout was 28.9%, an increase from 23.3% in 2011. Successes, statistics and stories from these four areas of voter engagement have been highlighted in the *attached* document.

Leading up to the 2018 Election, staff will continue to develop the Election Communication Plan, to address new voter engagement strategies and technological trends, shaping future elections.

Opportunities to Vote

Burnaby citizens unable to attend existing voting opportunities provided feedback requesting alternative solutions. With low voter turnout at Special Voting Opportunities, staff will identify areas for improvement and work with assisted living and complex care facilities to develop and roll-out a program that meets their specific needs.

An evaluation of voting opportunities will be conducted to identify optimal locations to maximize voter turnout. This review will be based on accessibility, convenience, feedback from voters, staff, voter-turnout statistics, and future development within the city. Results from this analysis will be provided to Council for consideration.

New Ways to Engage

Through partnership with care facilities and their residents, assessments will be conducted to identify specific needs and areas for improvement to increase resident participation in the voting process. Also, with a focus on new and non-voters in Burnaby (e.g. youth and new Canadians), staff will evaluate and research best practices that build the 'habit' of voting in Burnaby residents.

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FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REVIEW

This report, in conjunction with the *attached* document, builds on outcomes from the 2014 Local Government Election and provides direction to expand efforts for increased voter turnout. These improvements explore and develop opportunities to deliver an efficient and sustainable election, while continuing to enhance the voter experience and expand public awareness.

With Local Government Elections now on a four year cycle, the span between each election may result in changes that would require further research prior to recommendations being submitted to Council for approval. Factors for study may include future development within the city, technological innovations, voter demographics, public engagement strategies and possible changes to legislation.

Staff will continue to work with stakeholders and other BC Municipalities to review areas for improvement and collaborate to establish election best practices for implementation in 2018. Information gathered will assist staff to develop recommendations for enhancements to the election process and the overall voter experience.

Municipal VoterView (MVV)

Staff will bring forward a report to Council seeking the continued use of election services through Municipal VoterView during the 2018 Local Government Election.

Vote Counting Machine

Staff will initiate a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the lease of vote counting machines for use during the 2018 Local Government Election. Recommendations arising from this investigation will be submitted to Council for consideration.

Voting Location and 'Vote Anywhere'

Staff will research and review specific criteria to identify Voting Locations, including Advance Voting Opportunities, that best meet the needs of citizens to maximize voter turnout. A report outlining these recommendations will be provided to Council for consideration.

As a result of positive outcomes and feedback from 2014, staff will recommend that 'Vote Anywhere' be continued for future elections.

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CONCLUSION

As we move forward, evolving technologies, new methods for communicating and improved system enhancements will play a significant role in future elections. Outcomes from this continued growth are in line with the City's commitment to leadership in the areas of social, economic and environmental sustainability.

Building on the successes of enhanced election systems, voter engagement and outcomes from 2014, staff will continue to expand on this approach for Burnaby's 2018 Local Government Election.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lynne Axford". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lynne Axford
CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER

SL:JW

Copied to: City Manager
Deputy City Manager (Turpin)
Director Finance
Chief Information Officer
Director Planning & Building