

DECISION/DIRECTION NOTE

Title: Final Report – Ward 2 By-Election

Date Prepared: October 25, 2019

Report To: Committee of the Whole

Councillor and Role: Mayor Danny Breen, Governance & Strategic Priorities

Ward: N/A

Decision/Direction Required:

Report provided for Council's review and consideration of proposed changes to the Vote by Mail (VBM) process during the City's municipal general elections.

Discussion – Background and Current Status:

The Vote By Mail process has been in use by the City of St. John's since 2001. The statistical data outlined in the attached Final Report contains information on voter turn-out, costs and processes used to undertake the Ward 2 by-election which occurred in October 2020. A comparative analysis of vote by mail processes in other North American jurisdictions is also presented for Council's information.

The Office of the City Clerk believes it is timely to consider procedural reform in this area more in line with practices in other major Canadian cities. Such reform is recommended to facilitate both democratic accessibility and enhanced efficiencies as noted in the report.

The following is proposed:

1. Mandatory registration for VBM kits (requiring revision to the Vote By Mail By-Law)
2. Increase the number of polling stations to enable more access to traditional voting
3. Continue to lobby Province about alternative progressive voting methods

Key Considerations/Implications:

1. Budget/Financial Implications: Cost efficiencies achieved through a streamlined process of mandatory voter registration.
2. Partners or Other Stakeholders: Electors of the City of St. John's and municipal candidates.
3. Alignment with Strategic Directions/Adopted Plans: An Effective City: A city that performs effectively and delivers results.

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4. Legal or Policy Implications: Revision to the Vote by Mail By-Law, City of St. John's
5. Privacy Implications: N/A
6. Engagement and Communications Considerations: Extensive communications plan to advise general public of changes in electoral procedures.
7. Human Resource Implications: N/A
8. Procurement Implications: N/A
9. Information Technology Implications: N/A
10. Other Implications: N/A

Recommendation:

That Council approve the recommendations proposed in the Final Report – Ward 2 By-Election and further that the following action be taken to facilitate the recommendation for mandatory registration to receive a Vote by Mail Kit:

1. Vote by Mail By-Law to be amended as per the attached chart and subject to Legal review. Should this revision be problematic in time for the 2021 municipal election, ministerial approval should be considered as per section 4(2) of the Municipal Elections Vote by Mail By-Law cited below:

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the returning Officer, may, with prior Ministerial approval, vary the procedures from time to time as he deems appropriate to ensure the efficiency and integrity of the municipal election.

2. Extensive communications plan developed to advise the general public of changes in VBM process, i.e. mail out cards, social media, etc.

Prepared by:

Approved by:

Report Approval Details

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| Document Title: | Final Report - 2020 By-Election (Ward 2).docx |
| Attachments: | |
| Final Approval Date: | Jan 21, 2021 |

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Elaine Henley - Jan 21, 2021 - 2:08 PM