

# ST. JOHN'S

## **Committee of the Whole Report - City Council**

**Council Chambers, 4th Floor, City Hall**

**February 18, 2025, 3:00 p.m.**

**Present:** Mayor Danny Breen  
Deputy Mayor Sheilagh O'Leary  
Councillor Maggie Burton  
Councillor Ron Ellsworth  
Councillor Sandy Hickman  
Councillor Jill Bruce  
Councillor Greg Noseworthy  
Councillor Tom Davis  
Councillor Carl Ridgeley

**Regrets:** Councillor Debbie Hanlon  
Councillor Ophelia Ravencroft

**Staff:** Kevin Breen, City Manager  
Derek Coffey, Deputy City Manager of Finance & Corporate Services  
Tanya Haywood, Deputy City Manager of Community Services  
Jason Sinyard, Deputy City Manager of Planning, Engineering & Regulatory Services  
Lynnann Winsor, Deputy City Manager of Public Works  
Cheryl Mullett, City Solicitor  
Theresa Walsh, City Clerk  
Jackie O'Brien, Manager of Corporate Communications  
Jennifer Squires, Legislative Assistant

**Others** Victoria Etchegary, Manager, Organizational Performance & Strategy  
Christine Carter, Elections Coordinator

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## 1. 2024 Municipal By-Elections Report and Recommendations

The City Clerk reviewed the 2024 Municipal By-Elections Report, which contained information on registration, accessibility, voter turnout, and cost. The 2024 Municipal By-Elections Report also included three key recommendations: mandatory voter pre-registration, seeking legislative changes to allow for electronic and telephone voting options, and reducing the number of Satellite Drop-off Centres (SDOCs). These recommendations are interconnected, as changes in voting methods could influence the need for vote-by-mail kits. If electronic and telephone voting are implemented, mandatory pre-registration could follow, ensuring that kits are only sent to registered voters who request them.

The report suggests that while recommendations 1 and 2 may not be ready for the upcoming election, Staff are advising that recommendation 3 implemented immediately. This would mean returning to the practice of having one SDOC per ward on election day, reducing costs while maintaining accessibility. Additionally, the City is considering placing additional drop-boxes at City-owned facilities to improve voter convenience and accessibility and increase election awareness.

Councillor Ridgely, while supportive of the recommendations, requested that consideration be given to a second SDOC in Ward 5 due to the size of the ward. Members of Council voiced their support of having a second SDOC in Ward 5. Councillor Davis noted that voter turnout was a challenge and felt that requiring mandatory registration may deter residents from participating in the democratic process. The importance of accessibility was noted, and support was shown for the provision of additional satellite drop off boxes at City facilities.

Councillor Hickman and Mayor Breen agreed that changes to the Municipal Elections Act to allow electronic and telephone voting were an important next step for voter engagement. They were optimistic about discussing the legislative changes with the Province once Staff are ready to move forward with the recommendation.

### Recommendation

**Moved By** Councillor Burton

**Seconded By** Councillor Ellsworth

That Council accept the 2024 Municipal By-Election Report, allowing staff to begin work on the recommendations it contains, deferring mandatory registration until legislation allows for telephone/electronic voting. Council also approves the reduction of the number of Satellite Drop-off Centres per Ward, returning to pre-pandemic practice, with one SDOC location per Ward with consideration for 2

SDOC locations in Ward 5 for the upcoming 2025 Municipal General Election in October.

For (9): Mayor Breen, Deputy Mayor O'Leary, Councillor Burton, Councillor Ellsworth, Councillor Hickman, Councillor Bruce, Councillor Noseworthy, Councillor Davis, and Councillor Ridgeley

**MOTION CARRIED (9 to 0)**

**2. Strategic Plan Report 2024 and Action Plan 2025**

The City Manager provided Council with an overview of the 2024 Strategic Plan Report and Action Plan for 2025. Acknowledgement was given to the progress made on sustainability initiatives, and support was shown for the planned Metrobus improvements, which include the electrification of the fleet, Visa and Mastercard tap options, and six new bus shelters.

Recommendation

**Moved By** Councillor Ellsworth

**Seconded By** Councillor Bruce

That Council approve the 2025 action plan.

For (9): Mayor Breen, Deputy Mayor O'Leary, Councillor Burton, Councillor Ellsworth, Councillor Hickman, Councillor Bruce, Councillor Noseworthy, Councillor Davis, and Councillor Ridgeley

**MOTION CARRIED (9 to 0)**