

# City of St. John's 2025 Election Report



ST. JOHN'S



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# Executive Summary

## Background

The City of St. John's held its 2025 Municipal General Election on Wednesday, October 8, 2025. The City conducted the election through a vote-by-mail (VBM) process, which was established under the Municipal Elections Vote By Mail By-Law enacted by City Council in July 2001. As always, the City's goal was to deliver a fair, inclusive, and accessible election with integrity and independence.

## Highlights

- Total ballots counted: 27,178.
- Voter turnout: 39.7 per cent.
- 29 candidates ran for 11 positions.
- Six out of 11 elected officials were incumbents (with one Councillor moving into the Deputy Mayor position)
- Five out of 11 were newly elected Council members.
- Eligible voters had 17 business days to cast their vote (approximately 120 business hours) from September 15 to October 8, including VBM kit delivery/pick-up and election day.
- Seven VBM kit drop-bins were available at various City facilities throughout the election period.
- Seven voting centres were open on election day.



## Key Election Dates

First day for nominations	Thursday, August 28, 2025
Last day for nominations	4 p.m. on Thursday, September 4, 2025
VBM kits inducted into Canada Post	Friday, September 12, 2025 Monday, September 15, 2025
Last day to mail return envelope (via Canada Post)	Wednesday, September 24, 2025
Start of Canada Post Strike	Thursday, September 25, 2025
Truth and Reconciliation Day	Tuesday, September 30, 2025
Election Day – Original (Postponed)	Thursday, October 2, 2025 <sup>1</sup>
Last day to request and pick up a VBM kit	Tuesday, October 7, 2025
Election Day – New Date after Postponement	Wednesday, October 8, 2025
Swearing-In Ceremony	Tuesday, October 14, 2025
Candidate campaign contributions and expenditures due	Saturday, November 8, 2025

The nomination period began on Thursday, August 28 and continued until 4 p.m. on Thursday, September 4. The last day to withdraw nominations was Friday, September 5.

The election period began with distribution of VBM kits to Canada Post on Friday, September 12 and Monday, September 15. The last day to return completed kits via Canada Post was Wednesday, September 24. Eligible voters who did not receive a VBM kit through the initial batch could request one, and they were distributed via Canada Post until 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, September 25.

A postal disruption affecting Canada Post services began the evening of Thursday, September 25.

As a result of the postal disruption, the last day to request and pick up a VBM kit, in accordance with [Section 20 of the Municipal Elections Vote-by-Mail By-Law](#) was adjusted from Monday, October 1 to Tuesday, October 7. Election day – originally scheduled for Thursday, October 2 – was adjusted to Wednesday, October 8.

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<sup>1</sup> On November 1, 2024, the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs distributed a [News Release](#) advising that the date of the 2025 general municipal election for all cities, previously set to take place on September 30, 2025, would be deferred to observe the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

## Pre-Election Engagement

From April to August, the Election Coordinator and Chief Returning Officer conducted Election Information Sessions with the following Council Advisory Committees and community groups to provide information on the election and gather input on ways to increase election engagement and awareness:

- **Affordable Housing Working Group**
- **Arts and Culture Advisory Committee**
- **Building Safer Communities Steering Committee**
- **First Light**
- **Inclusion Advisory Committee**
- **Seniors' Advisory Committee**
- **Sustainable and Active Mobility Advisory Committee**
- **Youth Engagement Working Group**



## Key Engagement Takeaways

- The voting process is perceived as complicated; VBM kits need simplification.
- Youth disengagement is linked to reliance on digital platforms and unfamiliarity with mail.
- Accessibility challenges exist for newcomers, those facing housing insecurity, and residents with multiple jobs.
- There is a lack of clear, centralized candidate information and election details.
- Language barriers and limited outreach affect equity-denied communities.
- Weekday voting is inconvenient for many; Sunday voting was suggested as an alternative.
- Feeling connected to the community and fulfilling civic duty motivates voting.
- Quality candidates and clear platforms encourage participation.
- Awareness that municipal politics directly impact daily life increases engagement.
- Homeowners are more inclined to vote, while renters are less motivated.



## Engagement Group Recommendations

- Simplify VBM kits and provide visual guides.
- Explore accessibility options, such as online/electronic voting (noting current legislative restrictions).
- Launch youth-led, authentic social media campaigns targeting 18 to 40-year-olds.
- Partner with community organizations (e.g., First Light, newcomer groups, arts advocates).
- Create a centralized, neutral candidate information hub.
- Offer pop-up information booths at community spaces and schools.
- Provide translations and alternate formats for election materials.
- Consider full-time compensation for Councillors to attract diverse candidates.
- Increase outreach to marginalized voices and newcomer communities.
- Collect disaggregated demographic data to identify underrepresented groups.

In response to the recommendations, the election team:

- Developed guides on completing VBM kits;
- Worked with First Light to enhance voter awareness and engagement within their community organization; and
- Used digital campaigns to ensure campaign messaging was available to audiences of various age demographics.

The City already offers alternate formats for election materials, though not in languages other than English, and is exploring online/electronic voting as a possible future option.

The City will consider the recommendations in future elections.



## Communications

The City established an Election Communications Plan in April 2025 and updated the plan as required. The City designed the plan with the intention of encouraging eligible residents to register to vote, ensuring registered voters receive accurate information describing how, when, and where to vote. The City distributed election information through a variety of media, including the City website, emails to subscribers, digital campaigns and advertising, media interviews and stories, radio, social media, flyers, and signage.

The City quickly updated communications efforts to include a process to address the challenge(s) of the postal strike.

## Accessibility

The City met accessibility benchmarks in the 2025 Municipal General Election, including:

- Providing Braille overlays and Braille instructions for use at City Hall prior to the election and at each of the voting centres on election day;
- Disseminating election information in multiple formats, including the City website, social media, phone, email, and the Inclusion Advisory Committee network;
- Providing voting centre election staff inclusion and accessibility orientation, including facility and set-up considerations as well as etiquette for supporting voters with disabilities and gender and cultural diversity;
- Ensuring election voting kits and information met the **Canadian National Institute for the Blind's Clear Print Guidelines**;
- Inspecting and selecting voting centres based on accessibility standards and wheelchair accessibility;
- Ensuring each location had appropriate lighting, large-print lists of candidates posted on each privacy screen, and signature guides and magnifiers in each privacy booth;
- Welcoming service animals at voting centres; and
- Assisting voters in marking ballots, if requested.



## Election Staff

The City hired an Election Coordinator to administer the election. This position is typically in place six months before the election and kept in place until a month after the election. In this case, the City filled the position in August 2024 for the Ward 3 by-election and retained the position through to the 2025 General Municipal Election to oversee research related to electronic and telephone voting and to meet with committees on ways to improve election engagement in the four-month interim between elections.

The City hired five Election Period Clerks to work throughout the election period, from September 12 to October 8, paid at a rate of \$20 per hour. Responsibilities included:

- Processing returned, completed VBM kits received via mail or via the drop-bins;
- Preparing VBM kits upon request and/or new voter registration; and
- Other duties as assigned by the Elections Coordinator or Chief Returning Officer.

The City sought election day staff from existing employees, with priority given to casual, part-time and on-call employees who would not otherwise be working. The rate of pay was \$20 per hour straight time. Full-time permanent employees could also apply, with the option of taking annual leave and receiving \$20 per hour rate of pay. The hours of work varied, but ranged from 7:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.

When the election date changed, the City sought additional election day staff to accommodate the expected increase of in-person voting and offered management staff the option to be seconded to work the election.

The number of election day staff working on election day<sup>2</sup>, October 8:

- Counting Room Clerks – 21
- Election Clerks – 25
- Greeters – 8
- Runners – 12
- Security – 7

**Staffing per Ward Voting Centre:**

Ward 1: Paul Reynolds Community Centre

- Supervisor/Election Clerk
- Election Clerk #2
- Election Clerk #3
- Election Clerk #4
- Greeter
- Runner #1
- Runner #2
- Commissionaire/Security

Ward 2: First Light

- Supervisor/Election Clerk
- Election Clerk #2
- Election Clerk #3
- Greeter #1
- Greeter #2
- Runner #1<sup>3</sup>
- Runner #2
- Commissionaire/Security

Ward 2: Bannerman Pool House

- Supervisor/Election Clerk
- Election Clerk #2
- Election Clerk #3
- Greeter Commissionaire/Security

Ward 3: HGR Mews Community Centre<sup>4</sup>

- Supervisor/Election Clerk
- Election Clerk #2
- Election Clerk #3
- Election Clerk #4
- Greeter
- Runner #1
- Runner #2
- Commissionaire/Security

Ward 4: Kenmount Terrace Community Centre

- Supervisor/Election Clerk
- Election Clerk #2
- Election Clerk #3
- Election Clerk #4
- Greeter
- Runner #1
- Runner #2
- Commissionaire/Security

Ward 5: Shea Heights Community Centre

- Supervisor/Election Clerk
- Election Clerk #2
- Greeter
- Runner #1
- Runner #2
- Commissionaire/Security

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<sup>2</sup> Two of the five Election Period Clerks were seconded to voting centre locations on election day.

<sup>3</sup> Ward 2 Runners serviced both Ward 2 voting centres.

<sup>4</sup> The Election Coordinator worked as an additional Election Clerk at the Ward 3 voting centre from approximately 4 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Ward 5: Goulds Recreation Centre

- Supervisor/Election Clerk
- Election Clerk #2
- Election Clerk #3
- Election Clerk #4
- Election Clerk #5
- Greeter
- Runner #1
- Runner #2
- Commissionaire/Security



	Election Clerks	Greeters	Runners	Security	Total
Paul Reynolds Community Centre	4	1	2	1	8
First Light	3	2	2	1	8
Bannerman Pool House	3	1	0	1	5
HGR Mews Community Centre	4	1	2	1	8
Kenmount Terrace Community Centre	4	1	2	1	8
Shea Heights Community Centre	2	1	2	1	6
Goulds Recreation Centre	5	1	2	1	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>52</b>



## Election Information and Help Services

### Website

The City launched [StJohns.ca/Vote](https://stjohns.ca/vote), a dedicated 2025 Municipal Election website with detailed election information, including a list of candidates, key dates, accessibility information, and information on where and how to vote. The City also posted election results to this site, once all votes had been counted. The webpage was visited by approximately 35,000 users.

### In-person, Telephone or Email

Access St. John's staff and election staff were available from September 15 until the conclusion of the voting period on election day (8 p.m. on October 8). Voters and candidates could contact the Election Coordinator during regular business hours, or Access St. John's at any time, to ask questions, get information about the voting process, request a VBM kit, confirm they were on the voters list, and/or get their voters list information updated. The Election Coordinator was often available after business hours as well, responding to phone calls and emails throughout the election period.

### Voter Portal

The City launched a voter portal on its website in June 2025 for eligible voters to confirm their information and/or register to be added.

Election communications stressed the importance of residents checking the voter portal online, in person or by phone, to confirm that they were on the voters list and that their information was correct.

Some residents noted they were unable to use the portal, did not understand how to use it, and/or were unable or did not want to upload their personal identification to get added to the list. The City offered residents the alternative of calling 311 or election staff for this purpose.

A total of 10,776 people visited the voter portal. While 6,826 people (63.3 per cent) navigated to the voter portal and found themselves not on the list, only 3,370 of those people (49.4 per cent of the 63.3 per cent) completed the registration process; 3,950 people (36.7 per cent) navigated to the voter portal and found they were already registered.

### Am I on the Voters List?

Total searches: 10,776

### On the List

3,950

### Not on the List

6,826

### Total # of added Voter Registrations

3,370

Importantly, if voter information was updated, the City's election software would invalidate any previous kit sent to an elector, and generate a new voter declaration form, which meant an elector could only vote once.



## Ballot Status Look-Up

As a result of the postal disruption, the City launched an online Ballot Status Look-Up portal on October 1 for residents to confirm if their vote had been received. If residents confirmed the City had not received their ballot, they could request a new VBM kit in advance of election day or make plans to vote in person. Before creating a new VBM kit, the City's election software would invalidate any previously sent kit and generate a new voter declaration form, ensuring an elector could only vote once.

Of the 12,135 people who used the Ballot Status Look-Up portal, 9,850 people (81.2 per cent) confirmed the City had received their vote and 2,285 (18.9 per cent) found their vote was not received. In comparison, 4,664 votes were received at voting centres on election day.

## Has my Vote Been Received?

Total searches: 12,135

### Vote Received

9,850

### Vote not Received

2,285

## Number of Votes Received at Voting Centres on Election Day

4,664



## Vendor Support

Through a request for proposals procurement process, the City secured the following contractors for the 2025 Municipal General Election:

- **DataFix** provided the election administration software VoterView, which provided:
  - o Voters list management capabilities;
  - o VBM kit registration and processing;
  - o Voters list access for candidates; and
  - o Voters list look-up and registration for electors.
  - o Services also included the printing of VBM kits and additional ballots, and the induction of the kits into Canada Post.
- Dominion Voting (now **Liberty Vote**) designed and drafted the ballot template and provided tabulation services on election day. Dominion staff were onsite to scan each ballot. Their system provided the final tabulation report of the election result.

The City also updated its Election Business Reply Mail Account with Canada Post for the distribution and return of VBM kits.

## Candidates

Twenty-nine candidates were nominated for the 11 Council positions:

- Two for Mayor;
- Three for Deputy Mayor;
- Six for Ward 2;
- Two for Ward 4;
- Two for Ward 5;
- 12 for Councillor-at-Large; and
- Two acclaimed for Wards 1 and 3.

## Voter Participation

The 2025 Municipal General Election saw a 39.27 per cent voter turnout, down by 7.83 per cent compared to 2021. Additionally, the voter turnout for the two by-elections held in 2024 were also lower than usual: the Ward 4 by-election was 19.6 per cent and the Ward 3 by-election was 29.12 per cent.

Voter turnout was low across the region<sup>5</sup> :

Municipality	Population	Region	Eligible Voters	Ballots Cast	Voter Turnout
St. John's	110525	Eastern	68519	27178	39.7%
Conception Bay South	27168	Eastern	19623	3840	19.6%
Paradise	22957	Eastern	13822	4269	30.9%
Mount Pearl	22477	Eastern	18859	5327	28.2%
Corner Brook	19316	Western	15592	4616	29.6%

Additional voter turnout information can be found under the Voter Turnout section on page 16.

From September 15 to October 7, eligible voters could vote in advance of election day by using VBM kits. The City distributed these kits to registered voters via Canada Post starting September 12. Voters who did not receive a VBM kit could request one and either have it mailed to them (prior to the postal disruption) or collect it from City Hall (during business hours between September 15 and October 7). VBM kits accounted for 83.2 per cent of votes received; 16.8 per cent voted in person on election day.



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<sup>5</sup> Voter turnout data provided by Municipal and Community Affairs, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

## Drop-Bins

The City has used a drop-bin for elections since 2001. The drop-bin was located in front of City Hall to provide convenience and accessibility for voters wishing to drop off completed VBM kits.

During the 2025 Municipal General Election, the City introduced six additional drop-bins across the City's community centres in each ward, for a total of seven drop-bins. This initiative offered added convenience for voters wishing to return their completed voting kits at their local community centre.

In addition to accessibility, the presence of drop-bins served as a visual reminder of the election for those visiting City facilities.

The additional drop-bins proved especially valuable during the postal disruption, providing a secure and convenient option for returning VBM kits directly to the City.

The City restricted drop-bin locations to City facilities only, ensuring bins were securely located where City staff could monitor and safeguard them. This restriction also guaranteed accessibility for timely pick-up and maintained fairness by providing consistent, equitable placement across wards in City-managed sites.

### Drop-bin locations:

- City Hall, 10 New Gower Street
- Paul Reynolds Community Centre, 35 Carrick Drive
- H.G.R. Mews Community Centre, 60 Blackler Avenue
- Kenmount Terrace Community Centre, 85 Messenger Drive
- Shea Heights Community Centre, 130 Linegar Avenue
- Goulds Recreation Centre, 509 Main Road
- Southlands Community Centre, 40 Teakwood Drive

Drop-bins were in place by September 12 and were available during the hours of operations of the respective facility, except for the City Hall drop-bin, which was available at all times. Each drop-bin remained available until 8 p.m. on election day.

## Election Day

On election day, voting centres opened at 8 a.m. and closed at 8 p.m. All eligible voters in line at 8 p.m. were given the opportunity to vote, as per [Section 33\(3\) of the Municipal Elections Act](#).

There were seven voting centres on election day:

- Ward 1 – Paul Reynolds Community Centre – 35 Carrick Drive
- Ward 2 – First Light Centre for Performance and Creativity, 42 Bannerman Street
- Ward 2 – Bannerman Park Pool House, 25 Bannerman Road
- Ward 3 – H.G.R. Mews Community Centre – 60 Blackler Avenue
- Ward 4 – Kenmount Terrace Community Centre – 85 Messenger Drive
- Ward 5 – Shea Heights Community Centre – 130 Linegar Avenue
- Ward 5 – Goulds Recreation Centre – 509 Main Road

The counting room also began operations at 8 a.m. on election day, with the opening of secrecy envelopes and scanning of ballots. Secrecy envelopes contained sealed ballots received from eligible voters. Election staff opened envelopes, removed the ballots, and flattened them to scan through the tabulator equipment. Staff checked the ballots to ensure they were completed correctly (i.e., that they were not spoiled and were filled out in a manner that would make them legible for the tabulator). The Returning Officer or City Solicitor would review any questionable ballots and, if required, re-create the ballots in front of the candidates' official agents.

## Ballots Received

The breakdown of returns during the election period of the 2025 Municipal General Election:

### Total Ballots Received:

27,693

### Total Number of Ballots Rejected during Election Period:

505

### Total Number of Ballots Rejected on Election Day:

10

### Total Number of Ballots Scanned and Accepted:

27,178

## Reasons for ballot rejection included:

- The voter declaration form was not returned with the secrecy envelope;
- Only the secrecy envelope was returned, without return envelope or voter declaration form;
- The voter declaration form was returned with the secrecy envelope, but it was unsigned;
- The signature portion of the declaration form was not included in the return envelope;
- The return envelope did not contain a secrecy envelope or ballot; and
- The ballot was intentionally spoiled (e.g., identifying marks).

## Rejected Ballots – during Election Period:

Code	Explanation	Total
VN	Voter Declaration Form - Not included	306
VU	Voter Declaration Form - Unsigned/Improperly Signed	159
VS	Voter Declaration Form - Too Many Signatures	0
VM	Voter Declaration Form - Too Many	0
VI	Voter Declaration Form – Invalid	4
VR	Voter Declaration Form - Voter Invalid (ex. used forwarded kit from old address in different ward).	10
VA	Voter Declaration Form - Already Accepted/Voted	4
SI	Secrecy Envelope - Identifying Marks	0
SN	Secrecy Envelope - Not included	22
SM	Secrecy Envelope - Too Many	0
SE	Secrecy Envelope – Empty	0
SU	Secrecy Envelope - Unsealed & unable to be resealed	0
RL	Return Envelope - Received Late (after 8:00 p.m. on October 8)	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>505</b>

An additional 10 ballots were deemed spoiled on election day after being opened in the counting room at City Hall. Those ballots were either blank or had been intentionally spoiled by the elector.

## Vote-By-Mail Kits Received, Processed, and Accepted by Date

The following table illustrates the number of VBM kits accepted throughout the election period, the number of votes received on election day through drop-bins located in various City facilities and community centres, and in-person voting at voting centres.

Voting Location	Recorded Date	Voted
VBM or Drop-Bins	September 17, 2025	239
VBM or Drop-Bins	September 19, 2025	1,450
VBM or Drop-Bins	September 22, 2025	2,102
VBM or Drop-Bins	September 23, 2025	2,000
VBM or Drop-Bins	September 24, 2025	2,550
VBM or Drop-Bins	September 25, 2025	2,899
VBM or Drop-Bins	September 26, 2025	2,798
VBM or Drop-Bins	September 29, 2025	2,099
VBM or Drop-Bins	October 1, 2025	752
VBM or Drop-Bins	October 2, 2025	908
VBM or Drop-Bins	October 3, 2025	496
VBM or Drop-Bins	October 6, 2025	752
VBM or Drop-Bins	October 7, 2025	663
VBM or Drop-Bins	<b>October 8, 2025 Election Day</b>	2,806
In-Person at Voting Centres	<b>October 8, 2025 Election Day</b>	4,664
<b>Total</b>		<b>27,178</b>

Due to the postal disruption, some mail-in ballots were held within the Canada Post system and not delivered until after postal service resumed. The following table illustrates the date and quantity of mail-in ballots received post-election.



Date Received	Count of Ballots Returned
Wednesday, October 15	1
Tuesday, October 21	617
Friday, October 24	1,305
Tuesday, October 28	5
Monday, November 3	1
Tuesday, November 4	2
Wednesday, November 5	3
<b>Total ballots returned after the election</b>	<b>1,934</b>

Canada Post has returned approximately 6,000 VBM kits as undeliverable to the City since mid-September.

## Voter Turnout

Voting centres on election day were very busy.  
Eligible voters who visited voting centres in their wards:

- needed assistance to register, receive a ballot and vote;
- were registered and on the voters list, but did not complete and return their VBM kit prior to election day; or
- were unable or chose not to register and receive their kit at City Hall by the deadline prior to election day.



### Voters Registered and Votes Processed in Person at the Voting Centres (excluding VBM drop-offs)

	Total Votes Received
Paul Reynolds Community Centre	798
Bannerman Park Pool House	674
First Light Performance and Creativity Centre	429
HGR Mews Community Centre	799
Kenmount Terrace Community Centre	618
Goulds Recreation Centre	1152
Shea Heights Community Centre	194
<b>Total</b>	<b>4664</b>

### Comparison of Votes Received via Drop Boxes/Mail vs. In-Person at Voting Centres

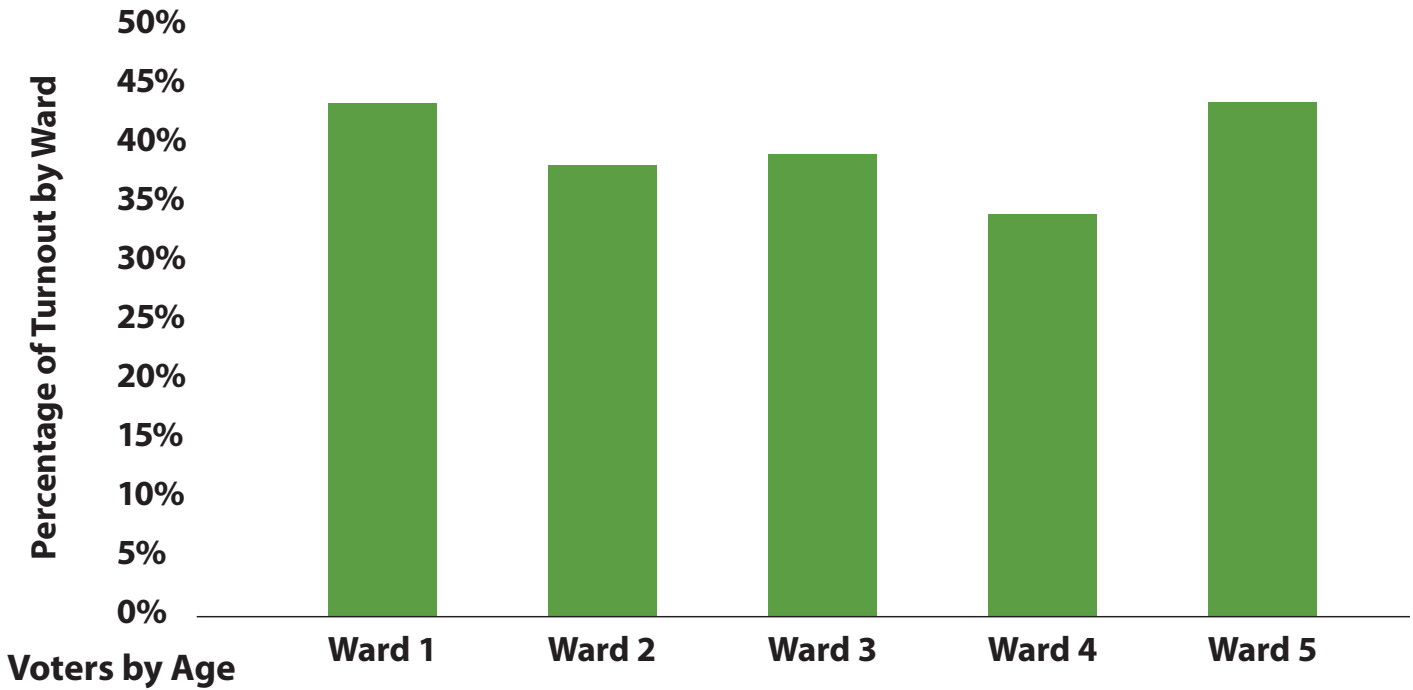
Total Votes Received	Total Votes Received from Voting Centres	Total Votes Received by Drop Boxes or Canada Post	Percentage Received in person on Election Day	Percentage Processed Via Drop Box or Canada Post
27,693*	4664	23,029	16.8%	83.2%

\*Includes rejected ballots.

### Voter Turnout by Ward

Ward	Total Addresses	Eligible Voters	Voted	Turnout
1	6,341	13,796	5,964	43.2%
2	7,922	14,064	5,364	38.1%
3	6,907	13,642	5,311	38.9%
4	6,769	12,323	4,180	33.9%
5	6,972	14,693	6,359	43.3%
<b>Total</b>		<b>68,518</b>	<b>27,178</b>	<b>39.7%</b>

### Voter Turnout by Ward



The following table breaks down the total votes cast and percentages for each ward, as well as voter turnout by age.

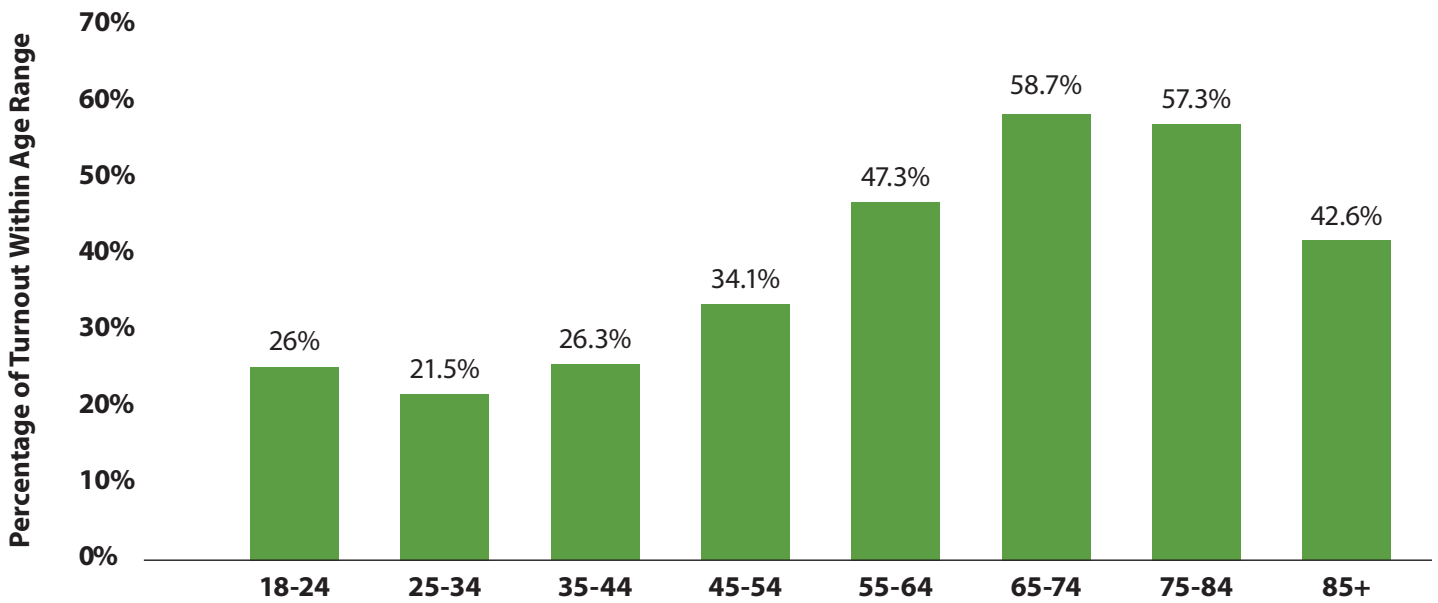


### Voter Turnout by Age

Age	Total Eligible Voters	% of Overall Registrants	Total Voted	% of Turnout within Age Range	% Turnout Overall Registrants	% Turnout Overall Voted
18-24	4,102	6.0%	1,068	26.0%	1.6%	3.9%
23-34	9,697	14.2%	2,087	21.5%	3.0%	7.7%
35-44	11,374	16.6%	2,991	26.3%	4.4%	11.0%
45-54	10,469	15.3%	3,565	34.1%	5.2%	13.1%
55-64	12,067	17.6%	5,710	47.3%	8.3%	21.0%
65-74	11,397	16.6%	6,694	58.7%	9.8%	24.6%
75-84	7,155	10.4%	4,102	57.3%	6.0%	15.1%
85+	2,257	3.3%	961	42.6%	1.4%	3.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>68,518</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>27,178</b>		<b>39.7%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Please note that, due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.

## Voter Turnout by Age Range



## Election Results

The following table provides the vote count for each candidate in the 2025 Municipal General Election.

The “Total Ballots Counted” figure in the table below is the number of total ballots cast, less the rejected number of ballots and the spoiled ballots.

Voter turnout is based on the actual votes counted.



## 2025 City of St. John's Municipal General Election

Position	Candidate Name	# of Votes	% of Votes
<b>Mayor</b>	Danny Breen <b>(elected)</b>	15,216	56.74%
	Ivy Hanley	11,603	43.26%
<b>Deputy Mayor</b>	Ron Ellsworth <b>(elected)</b>	14,787	57.19%
	Bianca Lono	8,636	33.40%
	Rigel Penman	2,435	9.42%
<b>Councillor-At-Large</b>	John Barbour	3,576	3.87%
	Kate Cadigan <b>(elected)</b>	16,577	17.92%
	Paul Combden	4,551	4.92%
	Scott Fitzgerald	7,885	8.53%
	Lynn Hammond <b>(elected)</b>	11,868	12.83%
	Walter Harding	7,994	8.64%
	Sandy Hickman <b>(elected)</b>	11,837	12.80%
	Thomas Pouliot	402	0.43%
	Art Puddister	8,235	8.90%
	Myles Russell	6,846	7.40%
	Nikita Ryall <b>(elected)</b>	10,124	10.95%
	Wallace Ryan	2,589	2.80%
	<b>Ward 1</b>	Jill Bruce	<b>Acclaimed</b>
<b>Ward 2</b>	Philip Barton	92	1.75%
	Greg Dunne	286	5.45%
	Brenda Halley <b>(elected)</b>	2,525	48.13%
	Todd Perrin	471	8.98%
	Greg Smith	1,567	29.87%
	Blair Trainor	305	5.81%
<b>Ward 3</b>	Greg Noseworthy	<b>Acclaimed</b>	
<b>Ward 4</b>	Trini Bragg	1,261	30.96%
	Tom Davis <b>(elected)</b>	2,812	69.04%
<b>Ward 5</b>	Donnie Earle <b>(elected)</b>	3,687	59.16%
	Carl Ridgeley	2,545	40.84%
<b>Total ballots counted:</b>		<b>27,178</b>	
<b>Voter turnout: Voter turnout:</b>		<b>39.7%</b>	

## Election Costs

The following tables illustrate cost comparisons for municipal general elections and by-elections since 2001. General elections saw a slight, but steady, increase in costs, particularly from 2013 onward. For by-elections, the comparisons show a lower cost in 2020, mainly because of the use of manual instead of tabulated counting.



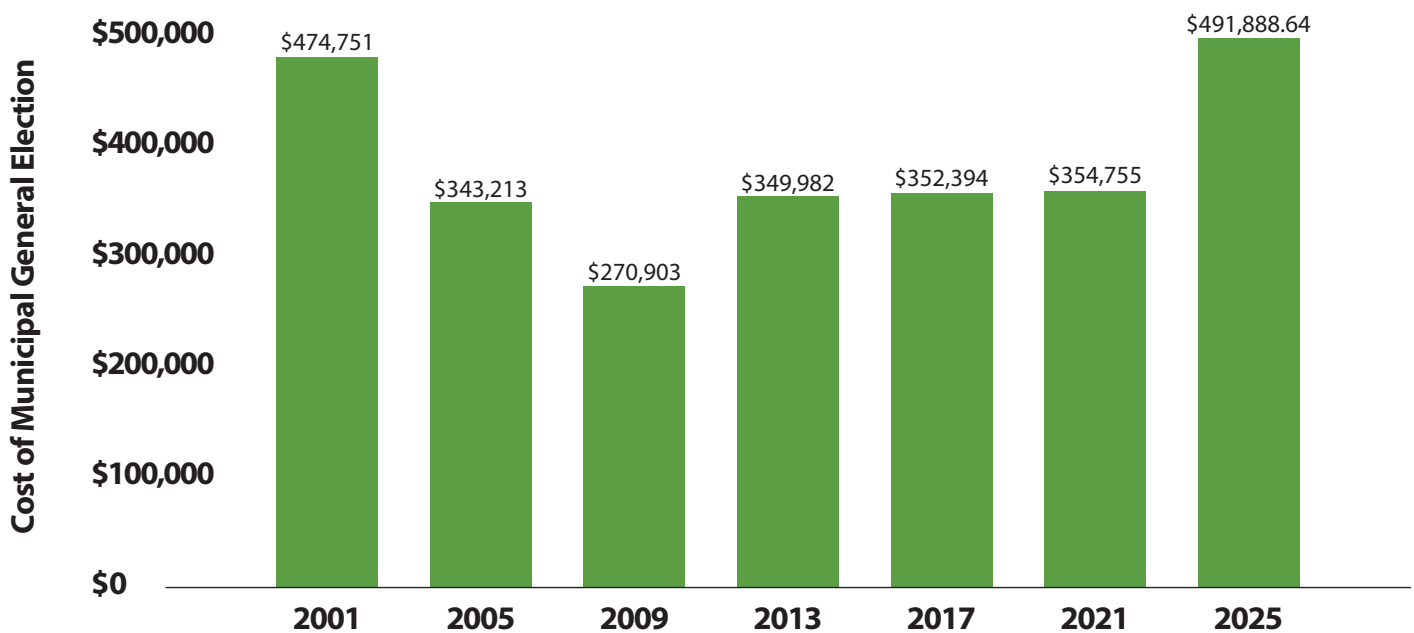
### Election Costs: Past Municipal General Elections

2001	2005	2009	2013	2017	2021
\$474,751	\$343,213	\$270,903	\$349,982	\$352,394	\$354,755

### Election Costs: Past Municipal Byelections

2001	2016	2020	2024	
	Ward 4	Ward 2	Ward 4	Ward 3
N/A	\$104,738	\$89,934	\$119,027	\$121,683

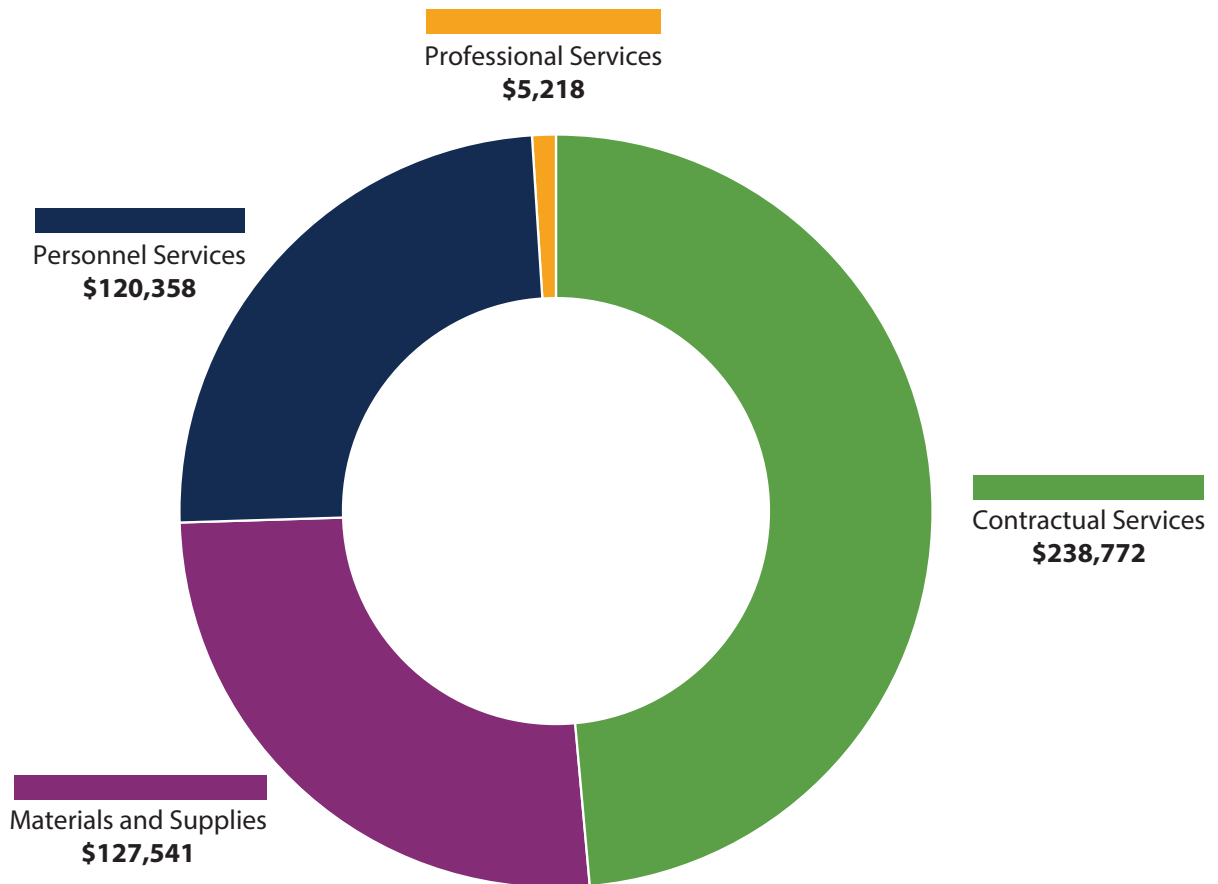
### Municipal General Election Costs



## Election Costs: 2025 Municipal General Election

<b>Personnel Services</b>	
Salaries & Wages	\$88,584
Labour Overtime	\$10,944
Employer Contributions	\$20,830
<b>Contractual Services</b>	
Commissionaires	\$3,648
Voters List and VBM Management	\$171,274
Ballot Scanning Tabulation	\$63,850
<b>Professional Services</b>	
Braille Overlay	\$1,093
Signage	\$1,365
Rental of Space for Voting Centres	\$0.00
Rental of Office Equipment	\$2,760
<b>Materials and Supplies</b>	
Food and Refreshments	\$3,479
Election Materials	\$7,128
Communications and Marketing	\$11,642
Postage	\$104,844
Election Day Float/Petty Cash	\$448
<b>Total Cost:</b>	<b>\$491,889</b>

## 2025 Municipal General Election Cost



Vendor costs increased from the 2021 Municipal General Election:

- Voters List and VBM Management costs increased from \$139,906 in 2021 to \$171,274 in 2025 – a difference of \$31,368. The same vendor, Datafix, was used for both elections.
- Ballot Scanning Tabulation costs increased slightly from \$66,602 in 2021 to \$68,850 in 2025 – a difference of \$2,248. The same vendor, Dominion Voting, was used for both elections.

Postage costs also increased. The City paid \$84,698 in 2021 and \$104,844 in 2025, a difference of \$20,145.75.

### Campaign Finances

Candidates, elected or otherwise, must file a statement of campaign contributions and expenditures within 30 days of the election as per Sections 5 and 6 of the [St. John's Election Finance By-Law](#). The City compiled this documentation in a [report](#) and posted it on the City's website on December 8, 2025.

## Challenges and Issues

### Voters List

As in previous elections, Elections NL provided the voters list, as per an Information Sharing Agreement between the City of St. John's and Elections NL. The City applied ward boundaries and election staff spent significant time reviewing the list, removing duplicates, correcting identifiable errors, and removing deceased voters.

Despite these efforts, the voters list continued to have issues, including:

- Duplicate entries;
- Individual electors listed in differing ways (e.g., Jim vs. James; Pat vs. Patricia or Patrick);
- Errors in voter information (e.g., dates of birth);
- Long-term residents no longer on the list; and
- Updates made during previous elections were not made to the list (e.g., residents who had changed addresses were on the list at previous address, despite having previously advised of the changes).

City of St. John's election staff corrected these errors as they were discovered.

Approximately 6,000 VBM kits were returned to the City marked "return to sender," with those electors no longer residing at the address on the voters list. Election staff did not have the resources to update the voters list accordingly.

The City will provide updates made to the voters list to Elections NL. Election staff will also meet with Elections NL for a post-election debrief to discuss the integrity of the voters list data and ways the City can help address the issue.

There is significant public misconception that the City pulls information from assessment and taxation records to update the voters list. Voters

expressed this misconception to election staff frequently, questioning why information on the voters list could be inaccurate when their tax billing information was correct. Using these sources of information to update the voters list would be a violation of the **Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2015**, which dictates personal information is only used for the original purpose for which it was collected. Further, were the City permitted to utilize these sources, it would fail to capture eligible voters who do not own property, such as adult children in families and renters.

### Goulds PO Box

Some Goulds addresses on the voters list were documented as civic addresses but used PO Box mail services. It is against Canada Post policy to accept civically addressed mail for a PO Box. As a result, Canada Post returned approximately 300 VBM kits to the City.

Responsive actions taken:

- The City developed communications advising impacted electors to contact the elections team to arrange pick-up or delivery of their returned VBM kit.
- The elections team submitted a request to Canada Post asking for signage to be placed in the Goulds post office, alerting residents to the issue. Canada Post did not respond.

This issue will continue until the affected Goulds addresses on the voters list are updated to the appropriate PO Box numbers.



## Canada Post Strike

The Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) began national strike action late afternoon on Thursday, September 25, 2025. The strike caused a disruption in Canada Post service, creating challenges because of the City's heavy reliance on the VBM system, with more than 90 per cent of ballots typically coming through the mail system. When the strike was announced the day after the VBM deadline to return completed kits through the postal system, the City had approximately 16,000 VBM kits returned through the mail or secure drop boxes. This represented approximately 50 per cent of returned VBM kits during the 2021 general election.

The strike action posed unprecedented difficulties, halting distribution of VBM kits through Canada Post, including the return of completed kits from eligible voters and the mailing out of new kits, and leaving an estimated 2,000 VBM kits<sup>6</sup> held up in the postal system.

The election team had prepared a contingency plan in anticipation of a postal strike, which would have addressed a disruption prior to the VBM kits entering the mail system. Once the VBM kits were in the system – whether en route to electors or returning to City Hall – that contingency plan was no longer viable, and the team devised a new contingency plan.

The Chief Returning Officer, Elections Coordinator, Manager of Corporate Communications, Deputy City Manager of Finance and Corporate Services, Deputy City Manager of Community Services, and the City Solicitor<sup>7</sup> convened on September 26 and again on September 28 to discuss options for proceeding with or delaying the election, the timeframe for holding the election as outlined by

legislation, and any additional planning needed to secure resources in anticipation of increased in-person voting.

Following a careful review of the available options, and after consultation with the Deputy Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, the Chief Returning Officer decided to delay the election under Section 8 of the Municipal Elections Act. The delay allowed the City to obtain additional resources – hire additional staff, order more ballots, and acquire more equipment, such as computers and scanners – in anticipation of increased in-person voting.

The City released a [media announcement](#) on Monday, September 29 advising of the delay, followed by various advertising tactics to promote the change.

## Voting Centres

Council approved the number of voting centres in February 2025, based on information from previous elections and as per a recommendation made in the 2024 Ward 3 and Ward 4 Election Report. Prior to the postal disruption, the voting centres were:

- Ward 1 – Paul Reynolds Community Centre – 35 Carrick Drive
- Ward 2 – The Knights of Columbus – 49 St. Clare Avenue
- Ward 3 – H.G.R. Mews Community Centre – 60 Blackler Avenue
- Ward 4 – Kenmount Terrace Community Centre – 85 Messenger Drive
- Ward 5 – Shea Heights Community Centre – 130 Linegar Avenue
- Ward 5 – Goulds Recreation Centre – 509 Main Road

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<sup>6</sup> Election Officials, through cooperation with CUPW Local 126 and Canada Post, retrieved 284 completed VBM kits on September 29, 2025. Canada Post returned approximately 2,000 kits to City Hall post-election.

<sup>7</sup> The City Manager was in a conflict of interest due to a familial relationship with one of the candidates and therefore did not participate in the election contingency planning.

The original voting centre for Ward 2, the Knights of Columbus, was not available on October 8, so First Light Centre for Performance and Creativity and Bannerman Park Pool House were implemented as Ward 2 voting centres.

The City initially selected First Light Centre for Performance and Creativity as the sole Ward 2 voting centre, but construction near the accessible drop-off entrance created accessibility concerns. Subsequently, the City added Bannerman Park Pool House as a second location to ensure voting was accessible to all residents.

The City received negative feedback regarding the proximity of Ward 2 voting centres. While scouting for alternative voting centres for Ward 2, the City encountered difficulties in finding locations that met the necessary accessibility requirements, including:

- Accessible parking and drop-off;
- Wheelchair accessibility; and
- Accessible washrooms.

Bannerman Park Pool House met these requirements, was available on election day, and – as a City-owned facility – was cost effective.

The City also received feedback regarding the lack of a second Ward 4 location and the lack of a third Ward 5 location. Specifically, the feedback addressed the lack of a voting centre in Southlands<sup>8</sup>.

Despite proactive planning and the deployment of additional staffing and resources, the increased voter turnout – particularly during evening peak hours – led to long waits and lineups at some locations. While some voting centres were

minimally impacted, others anecdotally reported wait times up to 45-60 minutes. Wait times were compounded by the time required to process each vote (approximately 10 minutes per voter, and about 15 minutes for those who also needed to be registered), which limited throughput during the busiest periods.

Building on this experience, the City will review processes and capacity to reduce transaction times as well as ways to accommodate peak-hour demand and implement improvements in future elections.

Despite long wait times, election staff reported that most electors at voting centres were understanding and patient. Some electors stated they had received a VBM kit but preferred to vote in person.



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<sup>8</sup> Election staff did investigate using Southlands Community Centre as a voting centre, but it was not available on election day. A drop-bin was placed at that location for the election period and remained onsite on election day so electors could complete and drop off their VBM kits.

## Election Signage

The City of St. John's enforces the [Sign By-Law](#), which regulates election signage.

When enforcing the Sign By-Law, the Regulatory Services division treated all candidates equally and arranged removal of all violating signs upon receipt of a complaint. Election signs became a point of contention during the municipal election, with the City receiving complaints throughout the election period. The Election Coordinator forwarded complaints to Access St. John's, in addition to the complaints Access St. John's received directly.

Regulatory Services recorded approximately 55 election sign-related complaints from August 18 to October 30, 2025, with 47 complaints recorded during the election period proper (August 28 to October 8) for an average of eight complaints per week. Election staff received additional complaints, but forwarded them directly to candidates to address, as recommended by Regulatory Services.

The City did not track the number of election signs removed.



## Election Day Technology

Election staff reported issues with technology on election day, specifically with printers and scanners.

Several scanners failed, resulting in election staff manually processing declaration forms. The manual process added additional, albeit minimal, time to the voting process.

While IT staff were on call throughout election day, having IT on site would prove beneficial and provide more expedient solutions.

## Election Day Staffing

The City encountered difficulties in recruiting election day staff to fill all positions, originally seeking to fill 65 positions:

- 6 Election Day Greeters;
- 12 Election Day Runners;
- Election Day Clerks; and
- Election Day Counters.

Staff at most voting centres were consistently busy and had little opportunity to take breaks. Due to the steady flow of voters and growing lineups, staff felt unable to step away and reported not having time to use the washroom, eat lunch or dinner, or get up from their station. Staff recommended during debriefing sessions after election day that the City assign relief staff for future elections to address this issue.

## 2025 Ballot – Faintness of Circles

The Election Office and the City's Access Centre received multiple calls and emails concerning the faintness of the circles that appeared on the ballot.

Ballot instructions advised voters to fill in circles completely, using a black or blue marker, next to the candidate for whom they were voting. For the tabulator software to read the ballot when scanned, voters must properly fill in these circles.

The City approved a proof of ballots with clear and easily visible circles, but voters flagged an issue with visibility upon arrival of VBM kits. The distributed version of the ballots contained circles lighter than they appeared in the proof.

In most circumstances, when election staff advised voters to look at the ballot in a well-lit area and use any assisted reading aids they normally availed of, voters were better able to complete the ballot as instructed.

The City will address this issue in future elections to ensure that ballots are clearly visible.



## Concurrent Elections and Voter Confusion

The 2025 Municipal General Election occurred just before the 2025 Newfoundland and Labrador General Election. The Province issued the writs of election on September 15, 2025, with their election day scheduled for October 14, 2025. Advanced polls were held on Tuesday, October 7, one day before the City's election day. The overlapping election cycles contributed to significant voter confusion and information overload. Residents were confronted with simultaneous streams of provincial and municipal messaging, which led to noticeable election fatigue.

During the municipal election period, the election team received calls and inquiries from residents seeking clarification and occasionally asking questions pertaining to the provincial election. In a few instances, provincial special ballots were mistakenly returned to City drop-bins. These occurrences highlight the challenges that arise when more than one election takes place within the same timeframe: competing deadlines, overlapping instructions, and parallel voting processes can easily blur together for voters.

When multiple elections occur simultaneously or in close succession, it often results in confusion, reduced clarity around responsibilities and procedures, and overall voter fatigue.

## Post-Election Staff Debriefs

The election team conducted debriefs with election staff, accessibility and inclusion staff, and senior executive, and identified areas for consideration in future elections:

- Human Resources
  - o Restructure the core and election day staffing approach.
  - o Move all human resource activities to the City's Human Resources Division.
  - o Increase the rate of pay for election period staff and non-management election day staff to improve recruitment and to be on par with other election recruitments.
- Expand community engagement.
- Extend the communication period to a year before an upcoming election.
- Review accessibility resources to determine requirements and how best to allocate.
- Establish an inventory of accessible locations in each ward suitable for use as voting centres.
- Review voting centre processes and configuration to identify ways of improving efficiency.
- Enhance risk mitigation and contingency planning.
- Develop a process for sending VBM kits and/or special ballots to eligible voters who are outside of St. John's or otherwise unable to vote in St. John's during the election.



## Council Recommendation

Careful consideration of the feedback received, lessons learned, and the various challenges and issues encountered during this election and previous ones has resulted in the following Council recommendation. This recommendation reflects a commitment to continuous improvement and to continued strengthening of the City's electoral processes.

### **Recommendation: Establish an Election Reform Working Group**

This staff-led Working Group would review and consolidate recommendations arising from community engagement, debriefs, voter feedback, and operational experience. Its mandate would include examining:

- Election Operations, Human Resources, and Process Improvement
  - o Consider election-related human resources and staffing model.
  - o Evaluate election operations, efficiency, and process improvement.
  - o Develop a standard operating manual for elections.
  - o Review ways to make the election process more efficient for electors.
- Election-related Community Engagement and Public Information
  - o Strengthen election-related outreach and public education.
  - o Conduct appropriate engagement as required.
  - o Improve clarity and accessibility of election materials.
- Accessibility, Inclusion and Location Planning
  - o Review accessibility resources to determine requirements and how best to allocate.

- o Establish an inventory of accessible locations in each ward suitable for use as voting centres.
- o Provide translations and alternate formats for election materials.
- o Increase outreach to marginalized voices and newcomer communities.
- o Collect disaggregated demographic data to identify underrepresented groups.
- Conduct governance and legislative review research and review alternative means of voting.
- Review and propose changes to legislation, as needed.

As part of its mandate, the Working Group would also examine future voting models, including two specific options presented below:

### **Option A: Discontinue Vote-by-Mail (VBM) and Return to In-Person Voting**

Since 2001, the City has used VBM for municipal elections. While it has historically improved accessibility, recent challenges highlight key risks and inefficiencies:

#### Reliability Concerns:

- Postal disruption during the 2025 election demonstrated the vulnerability of relying on mail services.
- Canada Post's October 2025 extension of delivery timelines increased the risk of ballots not reaching voters between nomination day and voting deadlines.

#### Rising Costs:

- Increasing vendor and postage expenses continue to elevate election costs.
- Transitioning to in-person voting would reduce reliance on postage and third-party VBM production.

### Voter List Accuracy Issues:

- Automatic mailing resulted in returned and duplicate kits.
- Previous registrants were sometimes omitted from the list, undermining confidence.

### Benefits of Returning to In-Person Voting:

- Greater reliability and control over the voting process.
- Reduced dependency on postal disruptions and timelines.
- Lower postage and kit-production costs.
- Improved voter information accuracy in ballot registration.
- More predictable operations and strengthened public trust.

### This model would include:

- Traditional election day voting
- Advanced polling day(s)
- Mandatory registration for special ballots



### Option B: Retaining Vote-by-Mail (VBM) but Requiring Mandatory Registration

If Council wishes to retain VBM, issues related to postal reliability, cost, and voter list accuracy can be mitigated by adopting mandatory registration for VBM kits.

### Benefits of Mandatory Registration:

- Creation of a clear list of confirmed VBM voters, improving predictability for in-person turnout, and enabling proactive communication with VBM voters should issues arise.
- More accurate voter address information.
- Reduction in postage and kit-production costs through elimination of universal mail-outs.
- Improved confidence in the integrity of the process.
- Balanced accessibility – VBM remains available but controlled.

The Election Reform Working Group would be a staff working group, not a Council working group, consisting of representatives from:

- Office of the City Clerk
- Office of the City Solicitor
- Organizational Performance and Strategy
- Marketing Communications
- Other Divisions as deemed necessary

The Election Reform Working Group would bring a final report with recommendations to Council by **June 30, 2028**.

## Conclusion

The City of St. John's 2025 Municipal General Election demonstrated the City's commitment to delivering a fair, accessible, and transparent electoral process. Despite significant challenges, including a national postal disruption and declining voter turnout, the implementation of contingency measures ensured election integrity and maintained public confidence. Lessons learned highlight the need for improved voters list accuracy, enhanced contingency planning, and modernized voting options. Moving forward, the City will review its election model, explore procedural and legislative changes, and develop a plan to strengthen efficiency, accessibility, and resilience for future elections.

