

# ST. JOHN'S

## Ad Hoc Internal Election Committee Report

Members: Mayor Danny Breen  
Councillor Ian Froude  
Councillor Dave Lane  
Councillor Maggie Burton  
Elaine Henley, City Clerk  
Karen Chafe, Supervisor – Office of the City Clerk

Arising from the **Report of the Citizens' Assembly for Stronger Elections (CASE)**, an ad hoc internal election committee ("committee") was formed to review the proposed recommendations.

It was subsequently determined at the Regular Meeting of Council held July 22, 2019 that in order to ensure objectively and broaden the perspective, an outside panel be engaged. The four-person panel ("panel") was comprised of people in the community with expertise and/or experience in this area.

The panel presented its report entitled "**A Review of Selected Election Processes for the City of St. John's**" to the City on September 30, 2019. The report responded to the issues identified in its **Terms of Reference**.

The committee, through meetings with the panel and continued discussion, deliberation and analysis, present the following recommendations:

### 1. Campaign Finance

- a) Reduce expenditure caps based on the real need of campaigns, the effect on barriers for new candidates, and the relationship with voter engagement.
- b) Ban corporate and union donations based on public trust concerns, and barriers for new candidates.
- c) Amend the necessary by-laws to reduce timeline for disclosure of campaign contributions to allow greater transparency of donors.
- d) Amend the necessary by-laws to require disclosure of expenditures in addition to contributions to improve transparency and public trust.

### Recommendation #1

THAT Council amend the Election Finance By-Law as follows:

- Reduce the limit for a financial contribution considered a “donation” from \$250 to \$100
- Reduce the expenditure caps for each candidate from \$10,000 plus \$1.00 for each voter on the voters list, as follows:
  - Mayor \$10,000 plus .71 per voter on the voters list
  - Deputy Mayor \$10,000 plus .43 per voter on the voters list
  - Councillor at Large \$10,000 plus .14 per voter on the voters list
  - Ward Councillor \$10,000 plus .07 for each voter on the voters list
- Reduce the timeline for disclosure of campaign contributions from the current ninety (90) days to thirty (30) days post-election
- Impose a cap on corporate and union donations to 50 percent of the total allowable contributions in the 2021 election and prohibit any/all corporate and union donations beginning in the 2025 election
- Reduce corporate and trade union donations from \$2,000 to \$1,000 as is currently permitted from an individual
- Contributions can only be made to a candidate within the calendar year of the election
- Require the disclosure of expenditures in addition to the contributions

## **2. Council Structure**

- a) Further study the current and other potential council structures (i.e. ward and/or at-large councillors) and the method of determining the roles mayor and deputy mayor to determine the best fit for your community.

### **Recommendation #2**

THAT Council approve maintaining the current structure which includes the position of mayor, deputy mayor, five ward councillors and four councillors at large.

## **3. Electoral Systems**

- a) Increase proportionality, reduce strategic voting and promote a more equitable democratic process by adopting a ranked ballot for the municipal electoral system.

### **Recommendation #3**

THAT Council engage with Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador (MNL) to determine whether there is a willingness to lobby the Province to change legislation to provide further voting options.

## **4. Voting Method**

- a) Conduct an independent review to determine whether the mail-in-ballot system met the objective of increasing accessibility, improving and diversifying voter turnout and providing cost savings.

**Recommendation #4**

THAT Council continue to engage both the public and staff on ways to improve accessibility, diversity and increase voter turnout.

**5. Enfranchisement**

- a) Lobby the Provincial Government to amend the necessary legislation to change the voting day to enfranchise student voters.
- b) Resolve to allow permanent residents to vote if and when the province has made the necessary legislative changes.
- c) Lobby the Provincial Government to amend the necessary legislation to grant permanent residents the right to vote in municipal elections.

**Recommendation #5**

THAT Council engage with Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador (MNL) to determine whether there is a willingness to lobby the Province to change legislation to permit permanent residents to vote.

**Recommendation #6**

THAT Council lobby the Provincial Government to amend the Municipal Elections Act to reduce the residency requirements from 30 days to 21 days prior to election day.

**6. Election Signage**

- a) Investigate the use of election signage noting that other Canadian jurisdictions have banned the use of such in public places.

**Recommendation #7**

THAT Council approve the continued use of signage in election due to its continued necessity in campaigning.