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**TO:** CITY MANAGER **DATE:** 2005 September 14  
**FROM:** CITY CLERK **FILE:** 45000-01  
**SUBJECT:** 2005 PROVINCIAL VOTERS' LIST  
**PURPOSE:** To provide Council with information relating to the use of the Provincial Voters' list for the 2005 Local Election

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. THAT this report be received for information.

**REPORT****BACKGROUND**

In accordance with Burnaby Bylaw 9945 enacted in 1993, the City of Burnaby obtains a copy of the Provincial Voters' list for use as the City of Burnaby Voters' List for the local government election. Use of the Provincial Voters' list has provided a cost savings to the City as it eliminates the need to continually maintain a voters' list, conduct door-to-door enumerations and provide advance voter registration opportunities in election years.

In recent years the Provincial Government has been looking for opportunities to improve the accuracy of the voters' list and to use technology to provide easier registration opportunities for voters. Recently the Provincial and Federal Governments came together to create a "universal list" that would be available for Provincial, Federal and Local elections. In addition, for the first time, the Provincial Government provided on-line voter registration services designed to ensure more voters could register in advance of the 2005 Provincial election.

Given the timing of the Provincial election in May, Elections BC committed to local governments to provide an updated list, complete with their voting day registrations, by mid-August, 2005 in order to allow local governments the opportunity to customize their lists and meet the statutory deadline for closure of the list of electors on 2005 September 27.

**CURRENT SITUATION**

The City of Burnaby obtained a test copy of the voters list on May 04, 2005 in order to start the process of organizing our voters list so that when we received the updated list in August, 2005 we would be prepared to load the new information into our format and the voters list would be ready to go. Our goal was to have this available as soon as possible in order to provide our new online service that will allow voters to confirm they are on the voters list and where they will go to vote.

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At the conclusion of the 2002 local election there were 94,545 registered voters in Burnaby. When the City received the test list in May, 2005 there were 129,364 registered voters in Burnaby. When the City received the updated, "final" version of the voters list on August 16, 2005 there were 94,380 registered voters in Burnaby. Noting the discrepancy of 34,984 fewer voters, Burnaby election staff contacted Elections BC and were advised that voters in some areas of Burnaby had been inadvertently omitted from the list. A new list was provided on August 18, 2005 with 132,764 registered voters in Burnaby.

In addition to the discrepancies in the number of voters, the City has also experienced other problems with the voters list; 218 of the voting addresses came without postal codes - these had to be reviewed one by one and the postal codes obtained and added into the system; 13 names were deleted from the list because they had no street number and we could not verify addresses based on the names provided; 2,967 names were kicked out of the system for various address discrepancies; 1114 names were deleted from the list because the birth year was shown as 1800.

It is important to stress that these issues do not invalidate the voters list. However the efforts to resolve these matters come at a cost to the City through increased staffing costs for the extra time needed to address these issues by 2005 September 27 and mailing, distribution and printing costs associated with including 2900+ incorrect names and/or addresses on the voters list. Similar problems have been experienced in previous years, but never close to the volume of errors that have occurred this year.

The greatest inconvenience however will be to voters who arrive at a voting place thinking they are on the voters list, finding their information is incorrect and having to take time to complete documentation to correct the mistake, or finding they are not on the voters list and they must register in order to vote. Voters often find this frustrating when they are sure they have previously registered and should be on the list. Further, voters who think they are on the voters list don't always bring the appropriate identification with them to the voting place. As a result they are unable to register until they return home to obtain their identification and then travel back to the voting place to register and vote.

### **VOTER TURNOUT**

The number of voters on the City's list is now larger than it has ever been – 29% more voters on the list since 2002. In 2002 voter turnout in Burnaby was 33.38% based on 31,561 persons voting from a voters list of 94,545. In 1999 voter turnout was 30.83% based on 24,945 persons voting from a voters list of 80,841 and in 1996 voter turnout was 27.42% based on 23,500 persons voting from a voters list of 85,695.

Estimating 130,000 people on the voters list in 2005, if the same number of voters turn out as in 2002, the City would see an almost 10% reduction in overall voter turnout, possibly even lower depending upon the number of voting day registrations received.

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**CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this report is to advise Council of some of the issues surrounding use of the Provincial Voters list during this election year. While staff are doing as much as possible to resolve these issues, some voters will be inconvenienced on voting day and may need to register at their voting place while feeling certain they have already done so during the Provincial election.

The on-line voter confirmation system will be available on September 26<sup>th</sup>. Most of our advertising to date and throughout the election period encourages people to check to see if they are on the list and if not, what they will need to produce in order to register on voting day.

Given the address discrepancies in the voters list, we know many will not receive their Where-to-Vote cards that will be sent out during the week of October 24<sup>th</sup>. We are encouraging voters who do not receive cards to confirm they are on the list through the on-line system, by calling the election office directly, or to make sure they bring two pieces of identification, one containing their signature, to the voting place in order to register on voting day.

Voter turnout statistics may appear low following this election given the size of the voters list in relation to the number of voters who usually vote in the local election.

It is also worthwhile to note this problem is not isolated to the City of Burnaby, other lower mainland municipalities who use the Provincial Voters list have encountered varying degrees of similar problems. The issues we are experiencing may simply be the developmental pains associated with the creation of a universal voters list that is attempting to marry the requirements of Federal, Provincial and Municipal elections. It is hoped that these matters will be addressed by Elections BC following the 2005 election, and the voters' list provided in future local elections will be much more reliable.

Respectfully submitted,



D. R. Comis  
Chief Election Officer

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