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**TO:** CITY MANAGER **DATE:** 2011 March 29

**FROM:** DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING **FILE:** 2125 20  
*Reference:* UBCM

**SUBJECT:** LOCAL GOVERNMENT AWARENESS WEEK

**PURPOSE:** To propose Burnaby's participation in Local Government Awareness Week 2011.

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. **THAT** Council approve the City's involvement in Local Government Awareness Week 2011, as outlined in this report.

**REPORT****1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Local Government Awareness Week (LGAW) is an annual Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) initiative held in May to educate the public about the roles and responsibilities of local government, and to encourage public participation in local government processes.

LGAW was originally established in 1987. However, LGAW lapsed in 2003 as many local governments were already organizing their own awareness activities. LGAW was then re-established in 2009 following an endorsed resolution at that year's UBCM Convention requesting that the initiative be reinstated, with additional support provided by the UBCM for associated activities.

UBCM now delivers LGAW in partnership with CivicInfo BC<sup>1</sup>, the Local Government Management Association<sup>2</sup>, the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development, the Ministry of Education, the BC School Trustees Association and the Public Works Association of BC<sup>3</sup>.

The theme for LGAW 2011, which will take place from 2011 May 15 – 22<sup>4</sup>, is '*Be Heard*' in recognition of the upcoming local government elections. Individual local governments are being encouraged to focus their planned 2011 LGAW activities on this theme.

**2.0 PROPOSED LOCAL GOVERNMENT AWARENESS WEEK 2011 IN BURNABY**

The following sections present a rationale for the City's involvement in Local Government Awareness Week (LGAW) 2011, along with a list of suggested activities to mark the week.

**2.1 Rationale for Involvement**

In 2009, *Maclean's* magazine named Burnaby the 'Best Run City in Canada', based on a nation-wide survey. The survey was conducted by the *Atlantic Institute for Market Studies*. According to *Maclean's*, cities across Canada were assessed against a comprehensive list of criteria of interest to the public

including fire services, road conditions, garbage collection, policing, public transit and taxation levels. The survey also took into account factors such as socio-economic status and population.

In particular, Burnaby received top marks for economic development, environmental health, and culture and recreation. However, the survey also noted that almost all local governments, including high-achiever Burnaby, have faced difficulties in recent years in encouraging community members to vote in local elections. Indeed, the UBCM estimates that in the most recent local government elections (2008) only 26.8% of eligible voters across B.C. cast ballots. This was down from 30.7% of eligible voters who participated in the previous 2005 elections.

The theme of LGAW 2011 provides an appropriate opportunity for the City, in concert with other local governments around the province, to further educate community residents regarding their voting rights, as well as to highlight the roles and responsibilities of local government.

## **2.2 Overview of Current Voting Awareness Initiatives**

The City of Burnaby's election office staff plan to pursue a number of initiatives to increase awareness of the election and encourage eligible electors to vote in 2011 November. As an example, the inside back page of the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department's Spring Leisure Guide advises of the upcoming local government election.

Similar to previous election years, information about how to vote, and how to determine eligibility to vote will also be featured on the City website, in *InfoBurnaby* and in the *Burnaby NewsLeader* and the *Burnaby Now*. As well, materials containing voting information will be developed and distributed through recreation centres and other City facilities and operations. Initiatives are also being considered to reach out to new electors through the Simon Fraser University (SFU) Student Society, and the B.C Institute for Technology (BCIT) Student Association.

In 2008, the City partnered with surrounding local governments to develop joint initiatives with an aim to provide a streamlined, consistent message across the Lower Mainland to increase awareness of the responsibility to vote among electors. Election staff will once again look at regional initiatives to complement the work to be completed by Burnaby.

## **2.3 Suggested Activities for Local Government Awareness Week 2011**

Based on information provided by the UBCM and on discussions with staff from the Burnaby Election Office, the following activities are proposed for LGAW 2011 in Burnaby:

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- <sup>1</sup> CivicInfo BC is a co-operative information service for those who work, or have an interest in British Columbia's local government sector. The main goal of CivicInfo BC is to facilitate the free and open exchange of local government information, which is done primarily through the web site: [www.civicinfo.bc.ca](http://www.civicinfo.bc.ca).
  - <sup>2</sup> The Local Government Management Association works to promote professional management and leadership excellence in local government in BC: [www.lgma.ca](http://www.lgma.ca).
  - <sup>3</sup> The Public Works Association of BC is a non-profit organization that supports individuals working for municipalities, utility companies and engineering consulting firms by providing opportunities for information sharing, education and professional development: <http://pwabc.cpwa.net/Index.html>.
  - <sup>4</sup> For more information on Local Government Awareness Week please see: [www.lgaw.bc.ca](http://www.lgaw.bc.ca).

- issue an official City proclamation recognizing 2011 May 15 – 22 as Local Government Awareness Week in Burnaby.
- develop a LGAW quiz, to be distributed through *InfoBurnaby* or other wide-reaching distribution channels, which highlights basic voting information. Completed quizzes could be submitted for a draw for complimentary 'b active' day passes or another similar prize.
- feature information about LGAW, including the above quiz, on the City website and Facebook page.
- encourage the *Burnaby Now* and the *Burnaby NewsLeader* to publish features which reference LGAW, present basic voting information, and encourage participation in the community.
- explore creating an ongoing *InfoBurnaby* feature highlighting the work and services of different City departments and programs. This feature could be included in future *InfoBurnaby* editions based upon space availability.
- host one-day displays in local shopping malls to introduce LGAW, and present basic voting information in an interactive matter.

It is expected that all of the suggested activities can be undertaken with existing staff resources and within existing budgets.

### 3.0 CONCLUSION

Local Government Awareness Week (LGAW) is an opportunity for local governments to develop greater awareness among the public of the roles and responsibilities of local government while encouraging the public to participate in local government processes. As the theme of LGAW 2011 is '*Be Heard*', in recognition of the approaching local government elections, the week also provides an appropriate opportunity to highlight procedures and information related to the civic responsibility of voting.

As such, this report recommends that Council approve the City's involvement in Local Government Awareness Week 2011, as outlined in *Section 2.3* of this report.



B. Luksun, Director

*for* PLANNING AND BUILDING

RM:sa:jc

cc: Deputy City Managers  
Director Engineering  
Director Finance  
Director Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services  
OIC – RCMP  
Fire Chief  
Chief Librarian  
Chief Election Officer  
City Clerk  
City Solicitor