

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL**

*HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR  
AND COUNCILLORS*

**SUBJECT: 2011 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTION REVIEW AND FUTURE  
RECOMMENDATIONS**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. THAT Council approve the recommended changes to the City's voting process, as outlined in the report.

**REPORT**

The Executive Committee of Council, at its meeting held on 2012 May 17, received and adopted the *attached* report providing feedback on the use of an electronic voting system as a pilot program during the 2011 Advance Voting Opportunities and to make recommendation for improvement for the 2014 Local Government Election.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor P. Calendino  
Chair

Councillor P. McDonell  
Vice Chair

Councillor D. Johnston  
Member

Attachment

Copied to: City Manager Deputy City Manager Director Finance Chief Information Officer Director Planning & Building City Green Team
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**TO:** CHAIR AND MEMBERS  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL

**DATE:** 2012 May 09

**FROM:** CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER

**SUBJECT:** **2011 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTION REVIEW AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS**

**PURPOSE:** To provide feedback on the use of an electronic voting system as a pilot program during the 2011 Advance Voting Opportunities and to make recommendations for improvement for the 2014 Local Government Election.

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. **THAT** the Committee request Council approve the recommended changes to the City's voting process, as outlined in the report.

**REPORT**

**1.0 BACKGROUND**

On 2011 July 27, a memorandum was provided to Council regarding the introduction of an electronic system, as a pilot program for the 2011 Advance Voting Opportunities, with the intent of making the election process more efficient and sustainable. This system utilized an electronic list of electors which allowed names to be struck off electronically from the list as electors received their ballots at the voting place.

The electronic system is an internet based strike-off system for the list of electors, which utilizes a centralized database and laptops (electronic poll books). When an elector attends the voting place, their name can be quickly retrieved from the list of electors by scanning a unique bar code on their Where To Vote card. Their name is then struck off the list in real-time via the internet, prior to being issued a ballot. When and where the elector voted show up in the central database and electronic poll books.

A total of 3,460 votes were cast during the Advance Voting Opportunities, comprising over 10% of total votes. The advantages of using the electronic system were:

- faster processing of electors – electors were processed in about a third of the time it would take to record them manually
- reporting capabilities and efficiencies – at the end of Advance voting a list of electors who voted in advance was generated and the sectional list for each voting division was produced with the names of those electors struck off. Candidates had access to this information during these days in real time

- access to information – information on electors that voted, including demographics
- greater control – in ensuring each elector only voted once.

The electronic system continued to maintain the confidentiality of electors’ information and secrecy of their votes.

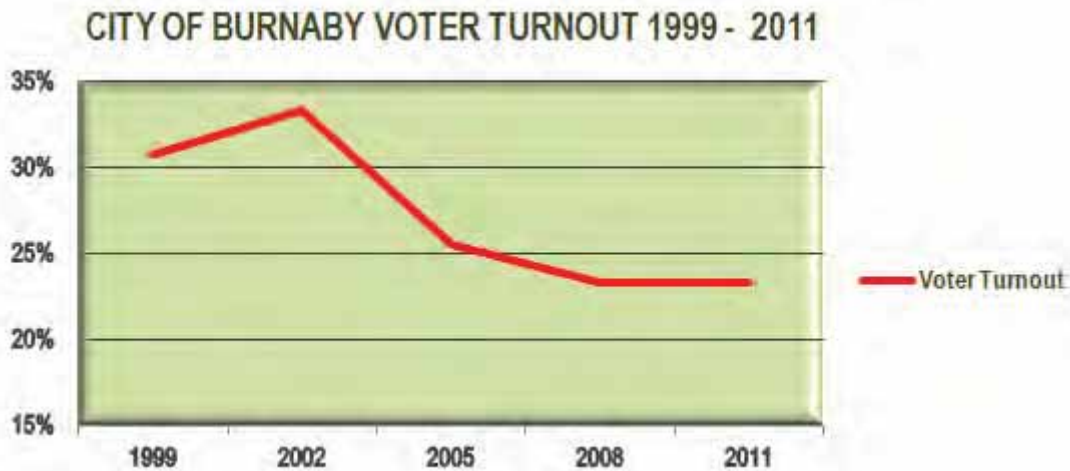
## 1.1 City Initiatives

The City is recognized as an environmental leader and is in the process of developing an Environmental Sustainability Strategy to set a direction for continued environmental protection, stewardship, enhancement and resiliency. In 2009 June, the City’s Green Team was established based on direction from Council’s Environment Committee with the goal of updating and enhancing guidelines and City practices for sustainable purchasing.

Council, at its Open Meeting held on 2011 March 21, adopted the 2011 Green Team Work Plan, outlining initiatives to achieve the goals of the Team and Environment Committee. Included in that report was a Green Office Campaign focused *on electronic processing of certain offices to leverage the ‘One Ream Less’ paper campaign*. Introduction of an electronic system for the election provides several opportunities for reducing the use of paper and other impacts on the environment, in keeping with the initiatives outlined in the report. An example of this is the significant reduction in paper usage during the Advance Voting pilot program.

## 2.0 DISCUSSION

The City’s Social Sustainability Strategy has identified examining *ways to increase voter participation in civic elections* as one of its priorities. Voter turnout has been on a steady decline over the last decade (see graph below). The recommendations in this report focus on increasing voter participation by making it more convenient for electors to cast their ballots and enhancing the overall experience at the polls, through a faster and more streamlined process.



To: Chair and Members, Executive Committee of Council  
From: Chief Election Officer  
Re: 2014 Election Recommendations  
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In 2012 February, Election staff hosted meetings with stakeholders from other BC municipalities that utilized the electronic system, as well as the system provider, to discuss areas for improvement and election best practices. Information gathered during these sessions assisted staff in developing recommendations for enhancements to the election process and overall elector experience.

***Staff recommend implementing the electronic system for the entire election process, in addition to areas for improvements discussed in this report. This recommendation is based on a review and evaluation of the advantages of using the system and consideration of further opportunities for efficiency and reduced consumption.***

## **2.1 Vote ‘At Large’**

In past elections, the City established designated municipal voting divisions for Election Day, as per Section 103, Division 10, of the *Local Government Act*. This structure mitigates against electors voting more than once under the manual system of recording electors. A Sectional list of registered electors, based on address, is produced for each Voting Division with the names of electors that must vote at this location. Electors’ names are crossed off the list as they vote and a new elector can only register at their designated Division. This system restricts electors to only voting at the location where they are registered on Election Day, often leading to confusion and inconvenience, for example, in cases where electors have moved since the last election.

The use of an electronic system allows electors to vote at any location (Vote ‘At Large’), as their names are checked off the list of electors in real-time and new electors are added to the list instantaneously, so the system is able to indicate whether an elector has already voted. This system is also permitted under Section 103, Division 10, of the *Local Government Act* and would result in electors being able to vote at the most convenient voting location, potentially increasing voter turnout. As with the manual system, electors would still be required to sign an oath before receiving a ballot, declaring that their name and address stated are correct and they have not previously voted in the election.

The concept of Vote ‘At Large’ is utilized by other municipalities in the Lower Mainland such as Coquitlam, Richmond and Surrey, as well as Victoria, some of which have adopted it for several elections. It is also utilized by many Ontario municipalities such as Ajax, Barrie, Cornwall, Peterborough and Quinte West.

***Staff recommend the City adopt the Vote ‘At Large’ concept for future elections.***

## 2.2 Voting Locations

For the 2011 Local Government Election, the City established one Advance Voting location (Shadbolt Centre for the Arts), available over four days, sixteen Special Voting Opportunities (held at Care Facilities), thirty five General Election Day Voting Divisions and one mobile poll at Burnaby General Hospital.

Prior to the election, staff made site visits to every voting location to ensure they met the guidelines for an optimal voting experience set out by the Province and other cities. As per the guidelines, voting locations should:

- be accessible to persons with a physical disability or impaired mobility
- be as central as possible within the voting area it is meant to serve
- be of adequate size to accommodate a potentially high voter turnout
- be close to or on a transit route
- provide adequate parking
- provide adequate outside lighting
- provide adequate indoor heating
- provide adequate washroom facilities accessible to voters and staff.

Some locations were found to fall short of the above criteria. Measures were implemented to address these issues, such as providing temporary exterior lighting and electronic door bells, and working with the School Board to build a ramp for accessibility at one location, as well as adjusting the heating and lighting timers. However, based on feedback from staff and electors on Election Day, problems were still encountered at some locations.

On evaluation of the current voting locations, there are some within 1 km of each other and others that fall short of the guidelines. With the Vote 'At Large' concept there can be a greater focus on utilizing more optimal locations and providing more options to electors. Consideration was given as well to other locations which are more central and convenient such as shopping centres. These locations can also accommodate larger groups. During discussions on best practice in 2012 February, some municipalities who utilized recreational facilities and shopping centres found these areas experienced the highest voter turnout, as they are close to where electors work, live or play. They also received positive feedback from electors on the variety of locations and ease of transit access.

***Staff recommend, based on these findings, the City reduce the number of voting locations on Election Day to twenty six (26). This will ensure the locations utilized meet the criteria for an optimal voting experience. See Attachment A.***

### **2.3 Advance Voting Opportunities**

Following the 2011 Local Government Election, requests were made by members of Council, candidates and electors for additional Advance Voting Locations in the four quadrants of the City. The current location (Shadbolt Centre for the Arts) is centrally located and electors are accustomed to the use of this location; however, there is limited access via public transportation. Voter turnout at the Advance Voting Opportunities tripled since 2002. Statistics obtained through the electronic system indicate that in 2011 approximately 57% of electors travelled 3km or more to vote in advance.

Based on these requests, four additional Advance Voting locations in each quadrant of the City are recommended by staff, to provide electors with more options and reduce travelling time. This will require four additional automated vote counting machines, which can be reallocated if the General Election Day locations are reduced.

*Staff recommend that consideration be given to the following five locations for Advance Voting, during 8 am to 8 pm on selected days:*

- *Brentwood Town Centre*
- *Lougheed Town Centre*
- *Metropolis at Metrotown*
- *Edmonds Community Centre (opening 2013)*
- *Shadbolt Centre for the Arts*

### **2.4 Automated Vote Counting Machines**

On 1996 June 24, the City adopted Bylaw No. 10415, “Burnaby Automated Vote Counting System Bylaw”, authorizing the use of an automated vote counting system in the Local Government Election. The City currently has 43 automated vote counting machines in its inventory, assigned to individual voting locations, as well as the Advance and Special Voting Opportunities. Now in their 16<sup>th</sup> year, staff foresee the machines servicing the 2014 election, based on discussions with the provider. However, as the machines continue to age the following should be considered:

- parts are becoming more difficult to obtain
- the risk of glitches on Election Day increases with age
- due to technological advancements, newer machines are more efficient and would overcome the challenges currently faced of compatibility with software and devices when uploading results to the web site
- there are technologically advanced machines available that can assist electors with visual, hearing and mobility impairments.

***Staff recommend, based on the above information, prior to the 2017 Local Government Election the City investigate the advisability and feasibility of a lease agreement to replace the current automated vote counting machines.***

## **2.5 Electronic Efficiencies**

Coming out of the 2012 February discussions on best practices and supplementary features to the electronic system, additions to the system which could be incorporated for the next election include:

- Worker Management Module – to manage online recruitment, develop an electronic staff database and generate payroll
- Training Registration Management Module – to schedule staff training, generate class lists and track attendance
- Election Real-time Results Reporting Module – at the close of voting, the Presiding Election Official (PEO) will have the ability to enter the unofficial results online in real-time, speeding up the time this information becomes available to the public.

These additional modules would lead to greater efficiencies, cost savings and reduced paper consumption.

## **2.6 Public Awareness**

Public education and increasing voter turnout are objectives of the City’s Social Sustainability Strategy and priorities for the Election Office. In light of changes in life style and technology, staff continue to look for ways to ensure election communication is effective in reaching the public. Public awareness will play a critical role in ensuring electors understand the new systems and their benefits.

### *2.6.1 Clearer Communication*

Most calls received by the Election Office over the past years were inquires from electors to determine:

- if they are registered to vote
- where are they registered to vote
- if they can vote at a more convenient location.

Vote ‘At Large’ creates a simplified process for electors that is easy to understand, as they are able to register and vote at any voting location. A variety of media would be utilized to ensure members of the public are well informed.



### 2.6.2 *Virtual City Hall*

In past elections, the City's web site has been an effective medium for providing information and updates to electors, candidates, election staff and the general public. In 2011, the City launched a new web site 'Virtual City Hall' in its commitment to providing an interactive service to residents. As the City continues to embrace new technology to engage the public, staff recommend an interactive election web page where in addition to confirming if they are registered to vote, electors will also have the ability to fill out the required information online to be added to the list of electors. This information would be saved electronically for ease of retrieval and validation at the voting place, to speed up registration of new electors. Interactive map is another feature which could benefit electors as they can enter an address to find the closest voting place along with directions using Google Maps.

Prior to the 2011 election, the Province established a Local Government Elections Task Force to focus on ways of improving the local government election process. One of the recommendations made by this task force was to require campaign financing disclosure statements be published online and made centrally accessible through Elections BC. This recommendation was not adopted prior to the 2011 election. It is expected, however, that the Province will introduce such changes prior to the next election in 2014. Alternatively, Council has the option of implementing a City bylaw to allow nomination papers and campaign financing disclosure statements to be posted online or by other electronic means.

### 2.6.3 *Social Media*

In the past, election communication has been via conventional forms of media, namely newspapers, web pages, mail-outs, handouts and signage. The use of Social media would foster two way communication between the election office and the public, to address inquiries and obtain feedback, which is not possible using conventional media. User guidelines would be established to ensure these forums remain non-partisan and inoffensive, permitting the deletion of any material that is not within guidelines.

***Staff recommend that the City utilize social media as a communication tool during the 2014 election.***

### 2.6.4 *Publications*

There will be a strong focus on informing and educating the public on the introduction of the Vote 'At Large' concept and use of an electronic system. 'Info Burnaby' has been very effective in the past for educating electors and would be instrumental in providing this information to residents, along with newspaper advertising. To further enhance public awareness, the Candidates' Profile booklet



would be mailed to Burnaby households, ensuring everyone has access to this information. This booklet would also provide details on the new processes.

### 2.6.5 Community Outreach

In line with item 53 of the City’s Social Sustainability Strategy, which looks toward increasing voter participation, staff recommend a focus on building awareness with new electors (young adults and new citizens) on the role of Local Government and the importance of the Local Government Election. This is similar to the community outreach campaign executed in 2011 May, during Local Government Awareness week across the Province, where City Election and Planning staff visited Burnaby shopping centres to build awareness of the upcoming election. Initiatives could include educational sessions at high schools targeting senior students, as well as providing information on Local Government and the election process to new citizens. These initiatives would combine with other activities, such as providing brochures at libraries and community centres.

## 3.0 SUSTAINABILITY

Election staff have been looking at ways to make the election process more environmentally sustainable with support from the City’s Green Team. The recommendations discussed in this report would assist the City in achieving its “Green” objectives and lead to reductions on the impact to the environment.

Use of an electronic list of electors will reduce the need for printing the Master and Sectional Lists of Electors, which would result in a significant reduction in paper usage. Based on staff recommendations, approximately 83,000 sheets of paper would be saved (see table below).

Documents that can be Reduced/Eliminated	Pages Printed
Master List of Electors	57,000
Sectional List of Electors	15,000
Street Index	6,000
200M Forms	5,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83,000</b>

Other sustainable benefits to be derived include:

Environmental Impact	Strategy	Process
<b>Reduced Carbon Emissions</b>	Vote ‘At Large’	Reduced travel distance to polls as electors may vote at the closest location to where they live, work or play
		Less duplication of resources e.g. delivery of supplies, heating and lighting, due to a reduction in the number of voting locations, focusing on the most optimal ones. Also, using locations that are open on weekends such as shopping centres and recreation centres, as opposed to schools
	Electronic System	Reduced shredding of documents post election due to the use of an electronic list of electors
		Reduced number of “Where to Vote” cards returned in the mail and therefore reduced carbon emissions from delivery, due to a more accurate “clean up” of the list of electors (the electronic system could do a more thorough search for duplicates and address anomalies)
Other Electronic Initiatives	Reduced carbon emissions as job applicants would not need to visit the election office to be tested, due to online testing	
<b>Paper Reduction (Additional)</b>	Other Electronic Initiatives	Reduced printing of training manuals as this information could be provided online
		Reduced printing of assessments sheets for job applicants due to online testing ( <i>approx. 300 applicants were tested in 2011</i> )
	Vote ‘At Large’	Less duplication of resources due to a decrease in the number of voting locations e.g. stationery, forms and signage

Staff would continue to focus on reducing consumption during the election in pursuit of the City’s Green Team initiatives and Environmental Sustainability Strategy once completed. It is foreseen that the new systems recommended in this report would lead to more opportunities for savings going forward.

#### 4.0 FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

The introduction of an electronic system and Vote ‘At Large’ concept would lead to a number of savings, especially in printing costs. Cost savings from a reduction in the number of voting locations would go towards financing the additional Advance Voting locations. There would also be savings on postage costs from the mail out of “Where to Vote” cards, due to a more effective “clean up” of the list of electors, as well as a reduction in administrative costs arising from a more efficient management of staff recruitment and training registration through the electronic system. These savings do not include environmental savings arising from coordinating a more sustainable election.

In conclusion, the scope of the recommendations put forward fall within the City’s election budget and therefore additional funding would not be required.

#### 5.0 BYLAW AMENDMENTS

The recommendations in this report are regulated by bylaws which are generally established during the election year, at which time appropriate amendments can be made.

BYLAW	YEAR	BYLAW # (Most recent)
Advance Voting Opportunities	Renewed Each Election	12929
Automated Vote Counting System	2008	10415 (Consolidated with 12487)
Park Dedication	Renewed Each Election	12999
Provincial Voters List Adoption	1993	9945
Special Voting Opportunities	Renewed Each Election	12930
Voting Divisions	Renewed Each Election	12948

- Changes required due to the Recommendations
- No changes required due to the Recommendations

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

The recommendations in this report focus on providing a more efficient and sustainable election which will improve the overall elector experience and potentially increase voter turnout. Staff are therefore recommending the concepts of the electronic system and Vote 'At Large'. These systems complement each other and have been successfully implemented in other municipalities. The pilot program utilizing the electronic system during the 2011 Advance Voting Opportunities was also a success.

The benefits of the recommendations provided include:

- streamlining and increased efficiency of election processes;
- increased public awareness through outreach and interactive communication;
- all voting locations would meet established criteria for convenience, comfort and accessibility;
- improvement to the overall voting experience for electors;
- enhanced reporting and auditing capabilities;
- information on who voted more easily available to candidates;
- faster access to unofficial election results online;
- acquisition of valuable statistics on elector demographics, to assist in understanding elector needs and future target marketing; and
- the ability to hold a more socially and environmentally sustainable election.

These outcomes are in line with the City's commitment to leadership in social, economic and environmental sustainability. In addition to these outcomes, the recommendations open up further opportunities for improvements to the election process going forward.

Council is being informed of these recommendations as feedback to the recent 2011 Local Governmental Election and to set a direction for the election in 2014.

Anne R. Skipsey  
CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER

LA:SH

Copied to: City Manager  
Deputy City Manager (Turpin)  
Director Finance  
Chief Information Officer  
Director Planning & Building  
City Green Team