
TO: CITY MANAGER **DATE:** 2014 March 12

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

SUBJECT: LOCAL GOVERNMENT AWARENESS WEEK 2014

PURPOSE: To propose Burnaby's participation in Local Government Awareness Week 2014.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **THAT** Council approve the City's involvement in Local Government Awareness Week 2014, as outlined in Section 2.3 of this report.
2. **THAT** a copy of this report be forwarded to the Social Issues Committee for information.

REPORT**1.0 BACKGROUND**

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 undertaken as a regular program item of the UBCM from 1987 to 2003. In 2010, following an endorsed resolution at the 2009 UBCM Convention, the initiative was reinstated with additional support provided by the UBCM for associated activities. UBCM now delivers LGAW in partnership with CivicInfo BC¹, the Local Government Management Association², the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development, the Ministry of Education, the BC School Trustees Association and the Public Works Association of BC³. Burnaby has participated since 2011.

Last year, LGAW took place from 2013 May 19 – 25. No particular theme was designated by the UBCM, and local governments were encouraged to develop their own themes. The City developed a theme of 'Support Burnaby Business', which sought to:

¹ 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.

² The Local Government Management Association works to promote professional management and leadership excellence in local government in BC: www.lgma.ca.

³ 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>.

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- increase citizen awareness of the role(s) the City plays in promoting economic development (e.g. development of the Economic Development Strategy 2020), supported by its partnership with the Burnaby Board of Trade; and
- further educate the public as to the benefits that accrue to the local economy when citizens support Burnaby-based businesses.

The Burnaby Board of Trade partnered with the City in celebrating this theme. Specific activities included a proclamation, website and social media promotions, and a Board of Trade display at the City Tourism Information Booth in Metropolis at Metrotown.

The purpose of this report is to propose a theme and activities for Burnaby's participation in Local Government Awareness Week 2014. The UBCM is encouraging municipalities to develop their own theme.

2.0 PROPOSED LOCAL GOVERNMENT AWARENESS WEEK 2014 IN BURNABY

This section presents the rationale for the City's involvement in Local Government Awareness Week (LGAW) 2014, outlines a proposed theme, and includes a list of suggested activities to mark the week. This year, LGAW will take place from 2014 May 18 – 24.

2.1 Rationale for Involvement

One of the major themes that emerged from public consultation during development of the *Burnaby Social Sustainability Strategy (June 2011)* is 'Getting Involved'. Indeed, it was identified as one of seven Strategic Priority areas that work together to move Burnaby forward in achieving the goals and vision outlined in the Strategy.

Through the Strategy development process, it became evident that Burnaby residents place great value on the many existing opportunities in Burnaby to be involved with community organizations and initiatives, and to be aware and engaged in civic matters. Several actions in the Strategy reference avenues for increasing public awareness of the roles and responsibilities of local government and how to be an engaged citizen, including Action #53 (examine ways to increase voter participation).

The majority of the subject actions are ones that the City is already involved in and will continue to implement on an ongoing basis. Select other subject actions, such as Action #50 (creating a 'how to' guide about how citizens can get more involved and provide their input at the civic level) and Action #51 (exploring opportunities to expand the City's existing public consultation programs) have been identified for focus over the next five years or more during the implementation of the Strategy in Phase 1.

In support of the Social Sustainability Strategy, Local Government Awareness Week provides an appropriate opportunity for the City to highlight its roles and functions and to encourage and educate its citizens about how to become involved civically, socially and culturally.

With Council's approval, this would be the fourth annual observance of LGAW in Burnaby.

2.2 Proposed Theme

Within the Social Sustainability Strategy, Strategic Priority area of 'Getting Involved, as mentioned above, Action #50 references creating a 'how to' guide for citizens about how to get more involved and provide

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input at the civic level. In order to implement this action, staff have begun working on an online portal that will be a 'one stop shop' for civic involvement-related information within the existing City website structure⁴. Some of this information will be newly prepared content, and some will be presented as links to pre-existing information housed on other sections of the City website. Printable versions of the information will also be provided online or in hard-copy by request. This work will be completed by early 2014 May, and it is proposed that the portal be 'launched' and promoted during Local Government Awareness Week 2014.

Additionally, as supported by Action #53 (examine ways to increase voter participation) of the Social Sustainability Strategy, the City of Burnaby Election Office is currently preparing a range of communications materials and information for the upcoming province-wide local government election on 2014 November 15. It is proposed that these materials also be 'launched' and promoted during Local Government Awareness Week 2014. This information will focus on two key messages – firstly that voting is a primary component of being civically engaged; and secondly that citizens can "Vote Anywhere" - where they live, work, play or learn. With this messaging and the additional advanced voting locations, approved by Council at its meeting of 2012 September 17, LGAW will highlight the significant increases to the flexibility of voting opportunities in Burnaby.

With this in mind, the theme proposed for Local Government Awareness Week 2014 is '*Your Voice Counts - Be Involved Burnaby*'. This theme would seek to increase citizen awareness of the many avenues for Burnaby residents to get involved in their local government and community, and further educate residents as to their rights and opportunities surrounding voting and the election process.

2.3 Suggested Activities for Local Government Awareness Week 2014

Based on the '*Your Voice Counts: Be Involved Burnaby*' theme, the following activities are proposed to recognize LGAW 2014 in Burnaby:

- City Proclamation: issue an official City proclamation recognizing 2014 May 18 – 24 as Local Government Awareness Week in Burnaby.
- Website and Social Media Features: highlight information on the City website about the launch of election information and the online 'civic engagement portal'. This information would also be distributed through the City Facebook page and Twitter account.
- Newspaper Highlights: explore opportunities with the local newspapers to contribute to and/or collaborate on insertions outlining the '*Your Voice Counts: Be Involved Burnaby*' theme.
- Election Office 'Open House': provide an open house setting for Burnaby citizens to visit the Election Office, view a mock 'voting place', ask questions about voting (e.g. how to register, advance voting locations), and learn more about the 2014 Burnaby Municipal Election. The intent of this opportunity is to provide an educational backdrop for individuals and groups who are unfamiliar with, or new to, voting in Burnaby, to learn more about the mechanics and procedures of voting.

All of the suggested activities would be undertaken with existing staff and budget resources.

⁴ Housed within a re-formatted, existing page of the webpage: <http://www.burnaby.ca/Things-To-Do/Be-Involved.html>

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3.0 CONCLUSION

As demonstrated through the development of the *Burnaby Social Sustainability Strategy (June 2011)*, Burnaby residents place great value on the opportunity to be civically engaged and active in their community. Local Government Awareness Week (LGAW) is an opportunity for the City to build upon this strong base to develop greater awareness among the public of the roles and responsibilities of local government.

The proposed 2014 theme of '*Your Voice Counts: Be Involved Burnaby*' would focus on increasing citizen awareness about how to be civically involved and to further educate residents as to their rights and opportunities surrounding the election process.

As such, this report recommends that Council approve the City's involvement in Local Government Awareness Week 2014 through four proposed activities, as outlined in *Section 2.3* of this report. It is further recommended that a copy of this report be forwarded to the Social Issues Committee for information.


Lou Pelletier, Director
PLANNING AND BUILDING


Lynne Axford, Chief Election Officer
ELECTION OFFICE

RM/JW/SL/sa

Copied to: City Manager
Deputy City Managers
Director Engineering
Director Finance
Director Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services
Deputy City Clerk
OIC – RCMP
Chief Librarian