

2020 Local Government Election – Polling Location Status

ISSUE

The 2020 Local Government Election will be held on November 9, 2020. In an effort to provide a greater number of voting opportunities, encourage voter turnout, and ensure voting safely during the COVID-19 pandemic, this report provides information on additional voting opportunities during advance poll voting.

BACKGROUND

At its April 20, 2020 meeting, the Governance and Priorities Committee was provided with an information report detailing the establishment of advance poll locations. At its April 27, 2020 meeting, City Council approved 66 polling locations on Election Day. At the May 19, 2020 Governance and Priorities Committee meeting, a subsequent report was brought forward informing that an additional advance poll location was added to the northeast quadrant of the city.

At its meeting held on July 27, 2020, City Council resolved, in part:

“That the Administration report regarding the possibility of establishing additional advance polls and additional regular polling stations for the November 2020 municipal election to be reported on at August Governance & Priorities Committee or a special meeting of City Council in early August.”

This report addresses the establishment of additional polling locations in the City.

CURRENT STATUS

For the upcoming election, eight advance poll locations have been established between October 30 and November 5, and 66 polling locations have been approved for Election Day. *The Local Government Election Act, 2015* (LGEA) also provides for the establishment of the following voting opportunities:

- Mail-in ballot
- Hospitals, personal care facilities, or similar institutions within the municipality
- Homebound voting

The election team is currently working with Elections Saskatchewan to determine appropriate procedures for establishing polls in hospitals, care facilities, and similar institutions due to COVID-19, as well as how to conduct homebound voting which ensures safety of both the voter and election official. A report will be forthcoming when details have been confirmed with provincial partners.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Section 83 of the LGEA authorizes the Returning Officer to establish one or more advance polls for voters at least three days and not more than 15 days before the day of the election and to set the days and hours for advance voting, excepting those to be

established for personal care facilities and similar institutions, which are the subject of a forthcoming report.

Due to an increase in advance voter turnout between 2012 and 2016, additional advance polls were added for the 2020 election. Table 1 below details the number of advance poll locations, the number of days scheduled, and the equivalent number of hours for the 2016 election versus what is currently in place for 2020.

Additional advance poll voting opportunities continue to be pursued. The election team is currently finalizing plans to implement the City's first ever drive thru advance poll voting option, located in the north. Further, two additional advance poll locations are being planned, for two days each. Inclusion of the foregoing advance poll voting locations results in a total increase of 5 locations and 98 hours from 2016 and an increase of 3 locations and 40 hours from what City Council was last informed.

Table 1. Polling location summary

Election Year	# of Locations	# of Days	# of Hours
2016	6	7	183
2020 (approved)	8	7	241
2020 (proposed)	11	7	281

The election team has considered the matter of additional polling locations on Election Day. Polling locations on Election Day require approval of City Council, and 66 polling locations have previously been approved for Election Day. Appendix 1 identifies the polling locations. The approach has been to provide one polling location in each neighbourhood, as is reasonably practicable. The approved hours of voting on Election Day are from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Since approval of polling places for Election Day, the election team has finalized with the vendor the delivery of necessary vote counting equipment (in transit) and has commenced programming, testing, and configuring back-end data and systems for the 66 locations. Vote counting equipment can easily be dual purposed for advance polling places and Election Day polling places; however creating additional polls on Election Day would require more vote counting machines. As noted, the required equipment for Election Day is currently in transit and is scheduled for Logic & Accuracy testing by the vendor in August. Subject to availability, the addition of polls on Election Day would necessitate a change order to the original contract, resulting in increased costs for equipment and vendor support.

Further, the addition of more Election Day polling places would require changes to the poll key and maps, as well as the need for more election officials on Election Day. However, increasing advance polling places can be accommodated easily with little impact to back-end processes and data, since a voter can vote at any advance polling place, whereas a voter must vote at the designated poll on Election Day. The Administration is therefore not recommending an increase to voting locations on Election Day.

Appendix 1 sets out the locations of the 66 Election Day polling places as well as the current eight advance polling places. The addition of three additional advance polling places (north, east, and west quadrants) will create more opportunities for voters to cast their ballot. Dates and times each advance poll location will be open are provided in Appendix 2.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Additional costs will be incurred with respect to election officials and facility/equipment rentals.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Like all locations already planned, additional advance polling locations will be equipped with necessary personal and protective equipment in order to ensure a safe voting experience for voters and election officials.

NEXT STEPS

A copy of this report will be provided to both the Public and Separate School Boards for information. The addition of advance polling locations will be included in the Communications plan.

APPENDICES

1. 2020 Polling Locations - Advance and Election Day
2. 2020 Advance Poll Calendar

Report Approval

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