

2024 Local Government Elections – Establishment of Polls (Including Hospital, Personal Care Facilities and Similar Institutions Polls and Homebound Voting), Polling Places and Hours of Voting

ISSUE

The Local Government Election Act, 2015 (LEGA) authorizes the Returning Officer to establish polling areas and places, establishment of advance polls and polling places in hospitals, personal care facilities and similar institutions and permits homebound voting.

BACKGROUND

Amendments to the LEGA and *The Local Government Election Regulations, 2015* (LGER) came into effect in January 2024. In accordance with the LEGA, a number of decisions related to the establishment of polls for the municipal election are required by the Returning Officer. This report is being presented for information to the Governance and Priorities Committee and the public for the following:

- Establishment of election day polls
- Locations and hours of advance polls and polling places located in hospitals and personal care facilities

CURRENT STATUS

For the upcoming election, ten advance poll locations, advance polls at post-secondary institutions and drive-thru voting have been established along with 68 polling locations for Election Day. At the time of drafting this report, polls at hospitals and personal care facilities have been established, and the Returning Officer will work with each personal care facility for a convenient voting time to host the poll between November 4 – 8, 2024.

The schedule for voting opportunities is provided below:

Advance Polls – November 1 to 4, 2024, between 12:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Advance Post-Secondary – November 4 – 8, 2024, between 10 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Advance Personal Care Facility Polls – November 4 to 8, 2024, times to be coordinated with each facility

Homebound Voting – November 4 to 9, 2024, as required (for homebound voting applications approved by the returning officer)

Advance Drive Through Poll – November 9, 2024, between 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Election Day Polls – November 13, 2024, between 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Hospital Polls – November 13, 2024, between 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

To maintain consistency for voters, the 2024 polling stations have been established where possible at the same locations as prior elections.

Election Day Polls

Subsection 22(1) of the LGEA states that the Returning Officer shall divide the municipality into as many polling areas as considered necessary for the convenience of voters and name the polling place for each polling area so established. Attached is a map dividing the city into 68 polling areas, including one Public School Board poll at Whitecap Dakota First Nation that is being confirmed (Appendix 1). In addition, a list of polling places is also provided (Appendix 2). Election staff have visited locations to review the accessibility and suitability of these locations in order to provide accommodations where necessary.

A new polling station has been established for the Confederation Urban Centre Neighbourhood, due to its change from Ward 3 to Ward 2. Neighbourhoods which have seen uptake in population from 2020, like Brighton, now have a poll established within their boundaries, and Aspen Ridge has been separated from Evergreen.

In addition to the regular polls on Election Day, for the first time, two super-poll locations are also planned to be established at Market Mall and City Hall. These super-polls meet full accessibility standards and will accommodate voters from any ward to vote in their eligible ward and include provision of accessible voter-assist terminals (touchscreen, audio, paddles, and sip and puff) for voters with accessibility needs to select candidates. These polls will have ballots for all 10 wards and school division trustee elections.

Contingency Plan for Emergencies

Section 47.1 of the LGEA provides for emergency powers of the Returning Officer, if, in the opinion of the Returning Officer, an emergency exists that would cause a substantial number of voters who are entitled to vote at a polling place to be unable to vote, the Returning Officer may do one of more of the following:

- a) extend the hours during which a polling place is to be kept open;
- b) suspend voting at one or more polling places and postpone that voting to a date not more than 7 days after the day of the election;
- c) move the location of one or more polling places.

The 2020 Local Government Election was postponed due to a snowstorm. In order to have a contingency plan in place for the 2024 Local Government Election, all advance poll locations have been booked on November 18 should a similar situation occur. Should the Returning Officer take any action as listed above, required notice of any action and reasons for the action would be provided in accordance with the LGEA.

2024 Local Government Elections – Establishment of Polls (Including Hospital, Personal Care Facilities and Similar Institutions Polls and Homebound Voting), Polling Places and Hours of Voting

Advance Polls

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

Ten advance polling stations have been established within each ward and the locations are listed in Appendix 3. In addition, an advance drive-through poll will be held at City Hall.

For the first time, the Returning Officer is working with each of the post-secondary institutions within the city to establish an advance poll within the week of November 4 – 8, 2024. The University of Saskatchewan has historically hosted an advanced poll and will have a poll stationed for two days – November 5 and 6, 2024. Other institutions will have a poll for one day each. These would be considered in addition to the 10 advance polling stations and are provided in Appendix 3.

Hospital, Personal Care Facility and Similar Institution Polls

Section 29 of the LGEA states that the Returning Officer may establish a polling place in a hospital, personal care facility or similar institution for a voter who is receiving care in that institution and also take the vote of a caregiver or any staff member of the institution who is a voter in the municipality or school division.

Through collaborative efforts with the Saskatchewan Health Authority, the City has always hosted a poll at the hospitals in the city and the Parkridge Centre. Polls will be established at each hospital and Parkridge Centre on Election Day, November 13, 2024 for voters who are receiving care (Appendix 4).

The LGEA defines personal care facility as a personal care home licensed pursuant to *The Personal Care Homes Act*, a special-care home designated pursuant to *The Provincial Health Authority Act*, a care facility licensed pursuant to *The Residential Services Act, 2019* or an approved home as defined in *The Mental Health Services Act*, but only if the home or facility accommodates or cares for at least five individuals.

The following criteria was applied to institutions falling outside the definition of “personal care facility” but eligible as “similar institutions” under the legislation:

- A “special care home” as defined in the City’s Zoning Bylaw – means a nursing home, supervisory care home, sheltered care home or other facility used for the purpose of providing supervisory care, personal care and nursing care (does not need to be licenced by the Province.)
- A residential development associated with or connected to a Special Care Home or Residential Care Home where the facility provides for residents to age in place.

2024 Local Government Elections – Establishment of Polls (Including Hospital, Personal Care Facilities and Similar Institutions Polls and Homebound Voting), Polling Places and Hours of Voting

- Any institution previously approved as a polling place in previous Local Government Elections, as well as those developments previously defined in the Zoning Bylaw as “special needs housing for senior citizens”.
- Any other institution where it can be reasonably demonstrated that occupants have limited mobility to attend a regular poll, are in need of personal services, supervision, or assistance essential for sustaining the activities of daily living.
- A suitable space to conduct a poll within the institution is available and the permission of the building manager or administrator has been obtained.

Polls are being arranged with personal care facilities or similar institutions that have 25 or more residents and have been confirmed at locations as listed in Appendix 4.

Residents at these facilities will be voting in the ward of the address of the facility, as that is their ordinary residence. Any caregiver or staff member who decides to vote at the special poll shall be voting for the ward in which they reside and not the address of the facility as if they were an ordinary resident of the facility.

Facilities with fewer than 25 residents are being provided the opportunity to register for group mail-in ballots, with arrangements for drop-off and pick-up provided by the election office in accordance with clause 29(1)(b) of the LGEA.

Election officials will continue to work with the personal care facilities and similar institutions to facilitate on-site polls and group mail-in ballots.

Homebound Voting

Section 30 of the LGEA authorizes the Returning Officer to provide for homebound voting any time between the first day of advance polling and the closing of polls on election day to take the vote:

- a) of a voter in the municipality or school division who is unable to attend at an established polling place to vote because he or she has a disability or limited mobility; and
- b) of a resident caregiver of the voter mentioned in clause (a) if the resident caregiver is also a voter in the municipality or school division.

Applications for homebound voting are required to be made to the Returning Officer beginning September 1, 2024, and ending at 5:00 p.m. on October 31, 2024. Upon determination that the application complies with the legislated requirements, the election team will notify the voters of a date and time for attending the home of the voter to capture their vote.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

All costs associated with facility rentals and staffing for polls are included within the Elections budget.

OTHER/ADDITIONAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no privacy, legal, social, or environmental implications identified.

NEXT STEPS

GIS Poll maps, the ‘Where’s My Poll?’ Finder Tool, and communication plan will be updated to reflect polling places and advance polling locations.

A copy of this report will be provided to both the Public and Separate School Boards for information and the list of dates, polling locations, and times will be posted on the City’s website.

APPENDICES

1. City polling area map
2. Election Day Polling Locations List
3. Advance Polls List
4. Hospital and Personal Care Facility and Similar Institution Polls Lists

Report Approval

Written by:

Mary Lasby, Elections Office Coordinator
Charles Ogbede, Elections and Appeals Manager

Reviewed and Approved by:

Shellie Bryant, Returning Officer