
Comments – Report from the Saskatoon Municipal Review Commission Municipal Elections Committee

Recommendation

That the Governance and Priorities Committee recommend to City Council that:

1. City Council adopt, in principle, the recommendations of the Saskatoon Municipal Review Commission respecting the mandate, term of office, and electoral support of the Returning Officer as well as the dedicated lines of communication and independent location; and
2. the financial implications be considered as part of the 2019 and 2020 Budget deliberations

Topic and Purpose

The purpose of this report is to respond to a deferral by the Governance and Priorities Committee on May 22, 2018, regarding recommendations received from the Saskatoon Municipal Review Commission respecting the mandate, term of office, and electoral support of the Returning Officer, as well as the dedicated lines of communication and independent location.

Report Highlights

1. The Governance and Priorities Committee has deferred consideration of recommendations of the Saskatoon Municipal Review Commission and requested additional information with respect to financial implications.
2. Financial implications related to the mandate, term of office, and electoral support of the Returning Officer, as well as the dedicated lines of communication and independent location have been provided.
3. The Governance and Priorities Committee is being asked to approve the proposed recommendations of the MRC in principle and consider the financial implications during the 2019 and 2020 Budget deliberations.

Strategic Goal(s)

This report supports the Strategic Goals of Continuous Improvement and Quality of Life as it promotes transparency of municipal government and supports City Council in providing good governance to the citizens of Saskatoon.

Background

City Council considered a report of the Saskatoon Municipal Review Commission Municipal Elections Committee (SMRC) at its Regular Business Meeting held on June 26, 2017, containing various recommendations regarding the administration of the City of Saskatoon's municipal election process.

On May 22, 2018, the Governance and Priorities Committee received a report from the City Solicitor and the City Clerk providing comments for consideration of the Governance and Priorities Committee with respect to each of the various recommendations made to City Council by the SMRC (Attachment 1).

The Governance and Priorities Committee subsequently reported to City Council on May 28, 2018 recommending:

1. That the City Solicitor be instructed to redraft Parts I & II of The City of Saskatoon Bylaw No. 8491: *The Campaign Disclosure and Spending Limits Bylaw, 2006* in accordance with the Administration's recommendations outlined in the report of the City Solicitor and the City Clerk dated May 22, 2018;
2. That the Administration conduct a review and update of election sign rules prior to the end of 2019; and
3. That the City Clerk be directed to revise the 2020 Candidates Guide to include plain language clarification of election sign rules for the 2020 civic election.

The Governance and Priorities Committee also deferred consideration of the following recommendation to the June 18, 2018 Governance and Priorities committee meeting, with the intent of receiving a report back on financial implications:

“City Council adopt the recommendations of the Saskatoon Municipal Review Commission respecting the mandate, term of office, and electoral support of the Returning Officer as well as the dedicated lines of communication and independent location.”

Report

At the May 22, 2018 meeting of the Governance and Priorities Committee, the Committee deferred consideration of the following recommendations of the Saskatoon Municipal Review Commission respecting the mandate, term of office, and electoral support of the Returning Officer, as well as the dedicated lines of communication and independent location, to this meeting, with the intent of receiving a report back on financial implications. It should be noted that election costs are cost-shared with both School Boards (School Board total share – 50%) and estimated costs and budgets are shared with School Board administration in advance for budgeting purposes.

1. **Mandate**
The SMRC recommends that in the future, the Returning Office be staffed to manage an election with no additional duties beyond election preparation, management and execution.
2. **Independent Location**
The SMRC recommends that, as part of their independence, the Returning Office be granted their own location, preferably outside of City Hall.

3. Term of Office

The SMRC recommends that the Returning Officer be appointed to a term of 12-18 months prior to the election date.

4. Electoral Staff and Candidate Support

The SMRC recommends that the Returning Officer be authorized to hire and train an Assistant Returning Officer.

5. Dedicated Lines of Communication

The SMRC recommends that the City provide dedicated lines of direct communication between the Returning Officer and electoral candidates (phone line, email address)

Financial Implications:

The City currently budgets \$166,000 per year in order to support the voting function for civic elections. A significant portion of this budget (\$135,000) is an annual contribution to a reserve which is withdrawn in an election year in order to offset the increased costs.

The recommendations of the Municipal Review Commission, outlined above, are expected to cost a total of \$206,100 per election as outlined:

- Independent Location \$ 39,000
- RO Term of Office \$ 87,100
- Electoral Staff (Asst. RO) \$ 30,000
- Dedicated Communication/Admin Support \$ 50,000

The above is not accounted for in the current reserve contribution. The annual voting budget already includes \$5,500 for an independent location, \$80,000 for an outside Returning Officer, \$15,000 for Electoral Staff (Asst. RO), \$5,000 for dedicated Communication/Admin Support; therefore, the net budgetary impact to implement the recommendations would be \$100,600 every four years.

As noted earlier, election costs are cost-shared with both School Boards (School Board total share – 50%) following an election, and estimated costs and budgets are shared with School Board administration in advance for budgeting purposes. The costs referred to above would be shared with the School Boards following the election; reducing the City's requirement to \$50,300.

If the above recommendations of the MRC are supported for implementation in 2020, a one-time increased contribution to the reserve in 2019 in the amount of \$50,300 would be required; to be funded from the Reserve for Capital Expenditures. Following 2019, an operating base contribution of approximately \$16,800 would need to be implemented as part of the 2020 Business Plan and Budget process in order to reach the 4 year funding target gap of \$50,300.

The May 22, 2018 report to GPC also discussed an FTE in the City Clerk’s Office with a portion of duties dedicated to election preparedness. This position is identified in the 2019 budget submission from the City Clerk’s Office and not as part of the Voting Budget as there will be other duties included to support the work of the City Clerk’s Office. The financial impact is expected to be \$108,000 (salary and benefits) and \$31,000 (one-time costs for renovations and fixed assets).

Options to the Recommendation

The Committee may choose not to support any of the recommendations of the Municipal Review Commission and recommend a different model for Election mandate, term of office, and electoral support of the Returning Officer as well as the dedicated lines of communication and independent location. Should a different model be preferred, a review of financial implications would be undertaken.

Public and/or Stakeholder Involvement

The proposed Voting Budget for the 2020 Municipal and School Board elections will be shared with the administrations of both School Boards in advance of the 2020 Civic Election for input and budgeting purposes.

Implications

There are no Policy, Environment, Privacy, or Safety/CPTED implications.

Financial Implications

Financial implications for each of the recommendations have been addressed in the body of the report.

Due Date for Follow-up and/or Project Completion

The 2020 Civic Election Budget will be addressed as part of City Council’s 2019 and 2020 Budget Deliberations.

Public Notice

Public Notice pursuant to Section 3 of Policy No. C01-021, Public Notice Policy, is not required.

Attachment

1. Report – Comments – Report from the Saskatoon Municipal Review Commission Municipal Elections Committee (May 22, 2018)

Report Approval

Written and Approved by:	Joanne Sproule, City Clerk
Reviewed by:	Patti Warwick, City Solicitor
Reviewed by:	Clae Hack, Director of Finance