

# **INDEPENDENT ELECTION TASK FORCE**

FINAL REPORT

# TERMS OF REFERENCE

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The purpose of the Task Force is to recommend changes to Council concerning the delivery of municipal elections in the city of Vancouver that will lead to improved public confidence in the electoral processes at the municipal level and increase voter engagement – with a key goal being to increase voter turnout to at least 60% by 2025.

# TERMS OF REFERENCE

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**Create a plan for advancing previous Council directives to staff regarding electoral procedures including:**

- Request to Province for ability to implement campaign finance reforms including limits to contributions and a ban on corporate and union donations;
- Request to Province for ability to use proportional voting systems;
- Request to Province to make anonymous balloting data available in open data format after an election;
- Request to Province to conduct an online voting pilot; and
- The priority actions from the Engaged City Task Force and the Healthy City Strategy including:
  - Increasing the number of “positive cues” to encourage voting;
  - Targeting voter registration;
  - Investigating the extension of voting rights to permanent residents;
  - Using the election ballot to get feedback on voter satisfaction with the current voting system;

# BACKGROUND TO OUR WORK

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- City of Vancouver elections are governed by provincial legislation, which includes the Vancouver Charter, the School Act and the Local Elections Campaign Financing Act (LECFA). The City has some ability to shape election processes through its Election By-law.
- In 2012, the City established the Engaged City Task force. In their 2014 final report they identified electoral reform, referring both to voting reform and to other election processes.

**Requests to the Provincial government (both before and after the Engaged City Task Force report) to change the Vancouver Charter to address these reforms has, to date, not led to change.**

# INDEPENDENT ELECTION TASK FORCE

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In 2016 Vancouver City Council established an Independent Election Task Force to recommend changes around five directives concerning the delivery of municipal elections in the City of Vancouver.

## KEY GOAL

INCREASE VOTER TURNOUT  
TO AT LEAST

**60%** BY 2025

**These directives all have the potential, if implemented, to contribute to improved public confidence in the electoral processes at the municipal level and increase voter engagement**

# INDEPENDENT ELECTION TASK FORCE

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- Shoni Field, Chair
  - Hilary Farson
  - Mark Friesen
  - Ela Esra Gunad
  - Antony Hodgson
  - Sonu Kailley
  - Cynthia Kent
  - Robert Matas
  - Shona McGlashan
  - Halena Seiferling
  - Devon Richards\* Jordan Simmons\*
- \*unable to complete

## SUPPORT WAS PROVIDED BY CITY STAFF & AN INDEPENDENT PROFESSIONAL FACILITATOR:

- Jessica Nelson, Election Manager, City of Vancouver
- Amanda Mitchell, Public Engagement Specialist, City of Vancouver
- Grant Murray, Lawyer, City of Vancouver
- Diana Bulley, Facilitator, Ideaspace

# TIMELINE AND MEETING SCHEDULE

## **JUN 2** **MEETING 1**

Welcome, Terms of Reference, KSA sub-committee selection

## **JUL 6** **MEETING 2**

Elect Chair, identify Shared Values, progress reports for each KSA on research findings

## **JUL 20** **MEETING 3**

Guest presentations, past candidate survey development

## **JUL 27** **MEETING 4**

Guest presentation, progress reports for each KSA

## **AUG 17** **MEETING 5**

Review implementation plans for each KSA

## **AUG 31** **MEETING 6**

Review cost estimates for each KSA, review past candidate survey results

## **SEPT 10** **MEETING 7**

Half day session to review, discuss and prioritize the KSAs

## **OCT 18** **MEETING 8**

Review draft Final IETF Report, closing activity

# SIX MEASURES OF PUBLIC CONFIDENCE & VOTER ENGAGEMENT

## KEY GOAL

INCREASE VOTER TURNOUT  
TO AT LEAST

**60%** BY 2025



POLITICAL EQUALITY



REPRESENTATION OF  
DIVERSE VIEWPOINTS



ACCOUNTABILITY OF  
THOSE ELECTED TO  
VOTERS



VOTER SATISFACTION  
WITH CANDIDATES



VOTER POLITICAL  
KNOWLEDGE



VOTER TURNOUT

# PRIORITIZED LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

**A**

**ADOPT A PROPORTIONAL VOTING SYSTEM**

**B**

**REFORM CAMPAIGN FINANCING**

**C**

**INCREASE ELIGIBLE VOTERS & VOTER TURNOUT**

**D**

**MAKE ANONYMOUS BALLOTING DATA AVAILABLE**

**E**

**CONDUCT AN ONLINE VOTING PILOT**

# A. ADOPT A PROPORTIONAL VOTING SYSTEM

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**Use a deliberative participatory process (Citizens' Assembly) to produce a model of PR voting suited for use in Vancouver's municipal elections.**



Request that the provincial government allow the City to adopt the proportional representation model recommended by the Citizens' Assembly.



Should the request be granted, the City should move forward with implementing the new system for the 2022 municipal election.



Should the request not be granted, the City could consider explore a semi-proportional model that may be compatible with the ballot marking requirements of the Charter.

**Charter change required**

## B. REFORM CAMPAIGN FINANCE

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**Reinvigorate advocacy for Vancouver Charter amendments that would allow the City of Vancouver to create its own rules for municipal election campaign financing.**

**Charter change required**

**To address the issue in the short-term amend the Code of Conduct**

- Without changing the Charter, Council could introduce a new provision requiring elected officials to withdraw from the decision-making process in matters submitted to City Council from corporations, unions, non-profit societies and associations that contribute directly or indirectly to their campaigns. While the Code of Conduct is non-binding, failure to adhere would come with a political cost.

# C. INCREASE ELIGIBLE VOTERS & VOTER TURNOUT

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## 1. Expand on the employment of best practices

- Invest in additional elections outreach resources
- Create and implement post-election polling to be administered after each of the next three elections to give a better understanding of the degree to which different voter engagement tactics and tools are effective.

# C. INCREASE ELIGIBLE VOTERS & VOTER TURNOUT

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## 2. Extend Voter Rights to Permanent Residents

- Create public awareness and engagement opportunities for an open dialogue on permanent residents voting rights.
- Request the provincial government make legislative changes to the Vancouver Charter to allow permanent residents of Vancouver to vote in municipal elections.

**Charter change required**

# C. INCREASE ELIGIBLE VOTERS & VOTER TURNOUT

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## 3. Target Voter Registration Practices

- Request legislation for Elections BC to adopt new voter registration practices by December 2018 to:
  - Support the recommendation of the Chief Electoral Officer from the Elections BC October 2014 Report on Recommendations for Legislative Change to pre-register 16-year-olds.
  - To collect and keep email addresses and, as an option for voters, to register a mobile phone number, for the purposes of government sending voting information and updates.

# C. INCREASE ELIGIBLE VOTERS & VOTER TURNOUT

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## 4. Increase Positive Voting Cues

- Create citizen academies to increase civic capacity.
- Create and administer grants for civic groups to hold non-partisan voter education campaigns, registration campaigns, GOTV campaigns and celebration events.

## D. MAKE ANONYMOUS BALLOTING DATA AVAILABLE

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**Help all involved in Vancouver elections to better understand voter patterns to inform reflection upon activities to increase voter turnout, and possibly motivate reform of our current voting system.**

- Require that ballot scanning machines leased for the next election have the ability to store complete ballot data.
- Direct staff to make anonymous balloting data available in open data format after an election.

## E. CONDUCT AN ONLINE VOTING PILOT

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Online voting was a contentious topic and the Task Force struggled to balance two considerations: some emphasized the need to pursue online voting to improve accessibility. Others emphasized security concerns.

**If the City were to proceed it would include:**

- Asking the Province to establish the independent technical committee recommended by the Independent Panel on Internet Voting.
- Advocating for and supporting Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) resolutions and requests to the Province to authorize online voting.
- Monitoring the deployment of online voting in other Canadian municipalities.

**Charter change required**

# QUICK WINS

Several elements of our recommendations could and should be implemented before the 2018 civic election due to limited costs and/or ease of implementation, without compromising, or delaying work on the top priorities.

- Amend the City of Vancouver Code of Conduct for Council officials to include a provision on avoiding the appearance of conflict of interest.
- Invest additional resources in expanding on the employment of best practices.
- Implement post-election polling.
- Create and administer grants for civic groups to hold voter education campaigns, registration campaigns, GOTV campaigns and celebration events.
- Make anonymous balloting data available in open data format after an election.

# Essential for our democratic health

In order to move all of these critical actions forward, the Task Force recommends that:

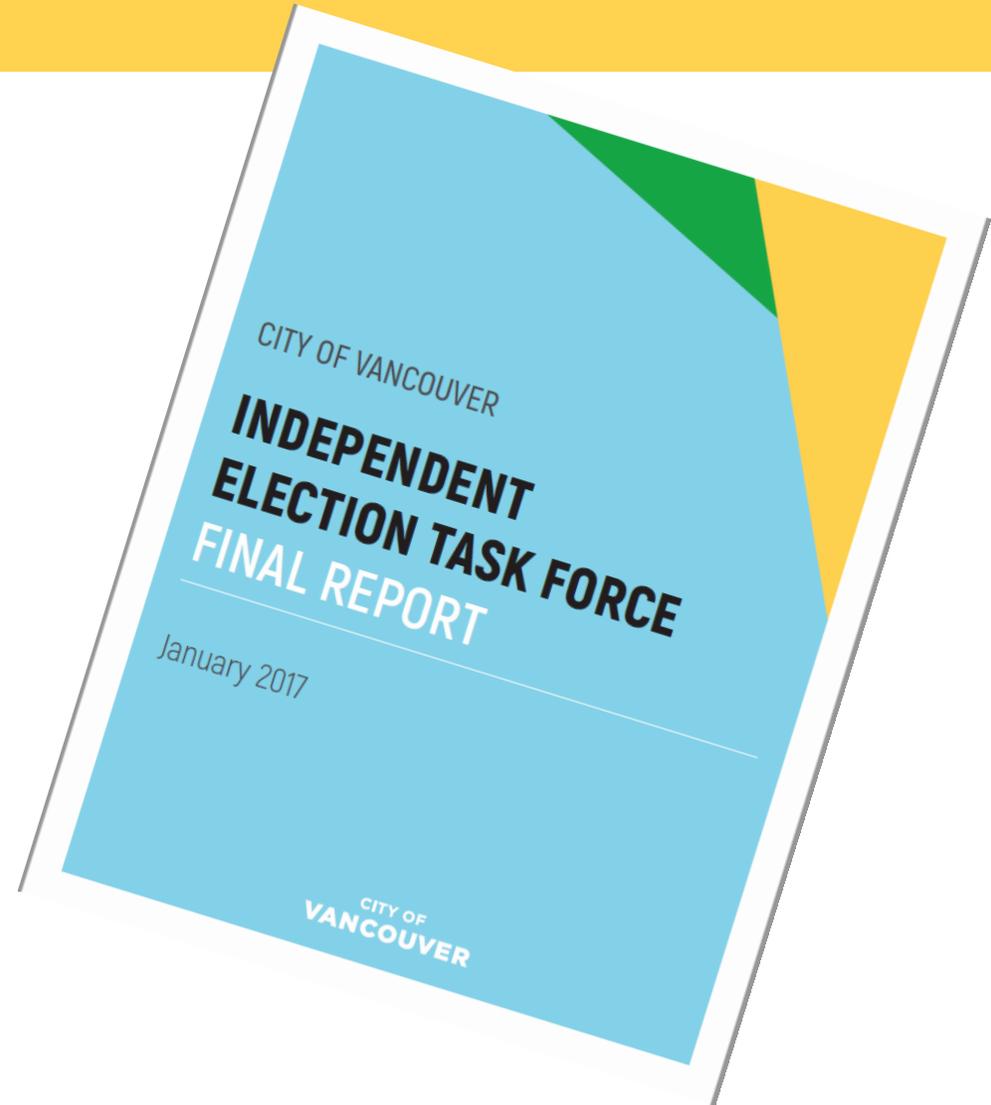
The City designate a dedicated elections advocacy staff position to advance these recommendations and manage inter-governmental relations with the Province.



# Independent Election Task Force

## FINAL REPORT

- History
- Key issues
- Discussion
- Detailed recommendations
- Implementation plans with approximate timelines and costing
- Selected sources



*“More choice and flexibility in how municipalities such as Vancouver manage their elections is critical for increasing public confidence and voter engagement.”*

By tasking citizens with charting a way forward, you have taken another important step in improving public confidence and civic engagement.

THANK YOU