

MOTION

3. An Imminent Risk to Local Government Democracy in British Columbia: Anticipated Record Low Turnout for the 2018 Local Government Elections

On September 18, 2018, Vancouver City Council referred the following Motion to the Regular Council meeting immediately following the Standing Committee on City Finance and Services on September 19, 2018, as Unfinished Business.

MOVER: Councillor Affleck

SECONDER:

WHEREAS

1. The Province of British Columbia has moved local government elections in 2018 up one month to October 20 from the traditional November election date, significantly reducing the crucially-important post-Labour Day local government election campaigning period;
2. New local government election campaign finance restrictions in place for the 2018 local government elections will likely result in a significant reduction in campaign advertising than has traditionally been the case;
3. The Province of British Columbia has not provided any tax credits, subsidies or transitional funding to assist candidates or elector organizations for the 2018 local government elections;
4. A province-wide referendum on proportional representation is taking place during the same time period as the 2018 local government elections which may lead to considerable voter confusion;
5. To date, neither Elections BC, the various the regional districts, nor the Union of British Columbia Municipalities have undertaken any special public awareness campaigns surrounding the 2018 local government elections in British Columbia;
6. A very real threat exists that the 2018 local government elections in British Columbia may see record low levels of voter turnout due to the collective impact of the above-noted factors;
7. The democratic effectiveness of local government, and local government elections, in British Columbia requires that more – not fewer – eligible voters are actively encouraged to engage and participate in the local government electoral process.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT given the unique set of circumstances evident in advance of the upcoming 2018 local government elections in British Columbia – circumstances which may collectively lead to record low voter turnout and a resulting diminishment of the democratic effectiveness of local government – that Vancouver City Council, through the Mayor, make an urgent request to the Province of British Columbia to immediately consider enhancing the existing communications budgets for Elections BC, the various regional districts, and the Union of British Columbia Municipalities to help raise public awareness of the imminent 2018 local government elections in British Columbia on an emergency basis.

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