



## **COUNCIL REPORT**

Report Date: April 14, 2025  
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Meeting Date: May 20, 2025  
[Submit comments to Council](#)

TO: Vancouver City Council  
FROM: Chief Election Officer  
SUBJECT: 2025 Municipal By-Election Review

### **Recommendations**

THAT the following report be received for information.

### **Purpose and Executive Summary**

A Municipal By-election was held in the City of Vancouver on April 5, 2025. This report provides a review of the 2025 Municipal By-Election in Appendix A.

### **Council Authority/Previous Decisions**

There is no applicable Council Authority or previous decisions relevant to this report.

### **City Manager's Comments**

The City Manager concurs with the foregoing recommendations.

### **Context and Background**

On December 12, 2024, the City Clerk received former Councillor Christine Boyle's written resignation from office as a member of Vancouver City Council. On January 15, 2025, the City Clerk received former Councillor Adriane Carr's written resignation from office as a member of Vancouver City Council. Under section 142(2) of the *Vancouver Charter*, a resignation from office becomes effective when it is received by the City Clerk, even if a later date is set out in the resignation, and the resignation may not be revoked after it is received. Under section 10(1)(b) and 10(3) of the *Vancouver Charter*, an election must be held to fill a vacancy in

the Council if the person holding the office resigns and the resulting vacancy occurs prior to January 1 in the year of the general local election.

At the January 21, 2025, Council meeting, Council appointed the City Clerk as the Chief Election Officer. As required under the *Vancouver Charter*, the general voting day was set to take place on a Saturday no later than 80 days after the date the Chief Election Officer was appointed. General voting day for the local by-election was set as Saturday, April 5, 2025.

Local elections, including by-elections, held within the City of Vancouver are governed by the *Vancouver Charter*, the City's Election By-law and the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act* (LECFA), which sets out financial reporting and other responsibilities for candidates and electoral organizations as well as the role of Elections BC.

The Council-appointed Chief Election Officer (CEO) is responsible for ensuring that all elections are conducted in accordance with the *Vancouver Charter* and the Election By-law. The CEO has a statutory responsibility to impartially manage election planning and proceedings and protect the integrity of the election, while balancing against a need for fiscal responsibility.

## **Discussion**

Appendix A provides a detailed review of the 2025 Municipal By-election, highlighting the planning efforts undertaken by staff, the effectiveness of new and enhanced initiatives, associated costs, and key lessons learned. The strong voter turnout observed during the 2025 by-election, relative to previous by-elections in Vancouver and other municipalities, offers useful insights that will inform strategic planning and support recommendations for the upcoming 2026 General Election.

## **Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

## **Legal Implications**

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**APPENDIX TITLE**

# 2025 Municipal By-Election Review



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## Table of Contents

1. Introduction .....	3
2. Statutory Requirements.....	3
3. Resource Planning .....	4
4. Voting Opportunities and Turnout .....	6
5. Advance Voting and Election Day Operations .....	6
6. Election Workers .....	8
7. Vote By Mail .....	9
8. Accessibility .....	11
9. Communications and Social Media Overview.....	12
10. Public Feedback.....	16
11. Budget Methodology .....	18
12. Lessons Learned.....	21

## 1. Introduction

This report provides a comprehensive overview of the 2025 by-election, including budget considerations, resource planning and rationale, improvements implemented, and key lessons to guide future elections.

While the by-election successfully achieved many of its objectives, the Election Office acknowledges several challenges emerged due to lack of capacity to meet voter volume, most notably extended wait times at voting places, which in some instances reached up to 3.5 hours due to limited staffing and insufficient voting place capacity. While these delays were not anticipated, they became a defining aspect of the 2025 by-election experience. Feedback from voters about these issues has been instrumental and will inform strategies to enhance service delivery and reduce barriers in future elections.

## 2. Statutory Requirements

The general election requirements as set out in Part I of the Vancouver Charter apply to by-elections. The requirements set out in the Local Elections Campaign Financing Act, which is administered by Elections BC, also apply.

Key dates in relation to the by-election were as follows:

By-Election Event	Date
Candidate information packages available	February 3
Advance registration ends	February 11
Voters List - public inspection period begins	February 18
Nomination period	February 18 – February 28
Declaration of candidates	February 28
Random ballot name order draw	March 7
Declaration of election by voting	March 10
Mail ballot packages available	March 18
Advance voting days at City Hall (8 am – 8 pm)	March 26 <sup>1</sup> & April 1
General voting day (8 am – 8 pm)	April 5
Declaration of official election results	April 9
Elected candidates to take oath of office	April 15

<sup>1</sup>First day of advance voting was during Spring Break

Throughout the process, preserving election integrity remained a top priority for the City's Election Office. While the by-election presented several operational challenges, none of these issues affected the integrity of the election. The Election Office and its team dedicated significant effort to ensuring all legislative requirements were met, security protocols were rigorously followed, and the voting process remained transparent and accessible. As a result, the by-election was conducted without any concerns that would call its legitimacy into question—an outcome that reflects the team's strong commitment to maintaining public trust in the electoral system.

There were 450,492 registered voters in the city of Vancouver of which 67,962 voters cast ballots. Voter turnout was 15.1%.

### **3. Resource Planning**

In 2025, the City reduced the number of voting places from 50 (in 2017) to 25, in an effort to align resources with expected voter turnout and to ensure operational efficiency. This decision was driven by several factors:

#### **Historically Low Voter Turnout:**

- By-elections in Vancouver historically have low turnout. The 2017 by-election had a 10.99% turnout, and the 1992 by-election had 10% turnout. The 2025 by-election planning projected for just under 60,000 voters, with an estimated breakdown of 8,600 vote by mail, 5,400 advance voting turnout and 45,000 election day voter turnout. The reduced number of voting places and increase in vote by mail was projected to serve the voter population adequately.

#### **Cost Considerations:**

- The local by-election is funded through the City's tax-supported Election Reserve. As part of the City's annual operating budget process, funds must be set aside each year to cover the costs of general local elections. Since by-elections are not included in the regular election budget, additional planned allocations are necessary to ensure the Election Reserve has sufficient funds for the 2026 General Local Election.
- In 2017, the budget was \$1.54 million—which would be equivalent to \$1.93 million in 2025 dollars after adjusting for inflation if the 2017 voting place model was used in 2025. However, the school facilities were provided at no cost in 2017 as an election was held for School Board Trustees.
- The 2017 by-election cost the City \$1.2 million, in part due to the use of 44 free School Board voting places and 1 free City facility (Vancouver City Hall). The same model in 2025 would require an additional \$350,000–\$400,000 for rental fees for 25 additional school facilities, additional staffing and additional equipment. Each voting place costs approximately \$15,000 (including staffing, venue, equipment, training).

#### **Availability of Alternative Voting Methods:**

- Vote-by-mail was strategically prioritized and actively promoted as a key voting method for the 2025 by-election given its growing popularity and accessibility.
- Advance voting was offered at City Hall for two days (March 26 and April 1, 2025), the same as was provided for the 2017 by-election.



**Turnout at Low-Performing Voting Places:**

- In 2017, the 15 lowest-performing voting places ranged from 242 to 512 voters per voting place, with some election officials only processing 2.5 voters per hour. These low turnout voting places were targeted for consolidation or elimination in the 2025 by-election to ensure efficient use of resources.
- The planned vote-by-mail turnout was expected to offset in-person voting at nearly 20 of the lowest turnout voting places from 2017; however, it ultimately offset 15 of those voting places.

**Geographic Dispersion:**

- The 25 voting places for 2025 were geographically distributed to ensure broad access throughout the city, while maintaining cost-effectiveness.
- Community centres operated by the Park Board are used as voting places as they are provided at no additional cost to the City, are accessible, and are some of the most popular voting places as they are regularly visited by citizens and well established in the community.
- Alongside the reduction in voting places, staffing levels were adjusted to align with expected voter turnout and operational needs. The decision to reduce staff was based on several factors covered in the following sections.

**Staffing Plan and Coverage:**

- A total of 250 election workers were hired for the 2025 by-election.
- Of those, 150 election officials (EOs) were assigned to voter registration laptops on general voting day.
- Each EO was estimated to process ~300 voters/day, equating to 1,200–2,400 voters per voting place depending on the number of EOs assigned.
- This staffing model was based on turnout of 45,000 voters on election day.

**Cost Considerations for Staffing:**

- Election worker wages increased 56.1% since 2017.
- In 2017, a fixed staffing model assigned eight registration EOs to each voting place, resulting in an average of 105 voters processed per EO per day (about 9 per hour). At the lowest-turnout location—Westside Baptist Church—only 242 voters were served, equating to just 30 voters per EO per day (2.5 voters per hour), indicating that staff were significantly underutilized. For 2025, a more flexible, data-informed staffing model was implemented, using historical turnout to guide allocations. However, number of voters was much higher than 300 voters per registration EO, which led to long lines and delays—underscoring the need for more flexible staffing models.

Year	Election Day Voters	Average Voters/ Voting Place	Total Registration Election Officials (EO)	Average Registration EO/ Location	Voters Processed Per Registration EO/ Day	Voters Processed Per Registration EO/ Hour
<b>2017 Actual</b>	43,831	877 <sup>1</sup>	416	8	105	9
<b>2025 Planned</b>	45,000	1800 <sup>2</sup>	150	6	300	25

<sup>1</sup>Based on 50 voting places

<sup>2</sup>Based on 25 voting places



#### 4. Voting Opportunities and Turnout

To support accessibility and convenience, voters in the by-election were provided with three voting options:

- **Vote by Mail:** Voters had the option to cast their ballot from the comfort of their own home. Applications for vote-by-mail packages opened on Monday, March 3 at noon. Ballot packages were mailed out or available for pickup starting Tuesday, March 18. Completed ballots could be returned via Canada Post using a pre-paid envelope (for returns within Canada) or deposited in one of seven secure drop boxes located throughout the city. The 2022 general election was the first election where vote by mail was open to all voters.

**Turnout:** 5,430 ballots cast

- **Advance Voting:** Two advance voting days were available—Wednesday, March 26, and Thursday, April 1—from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Vancouver City Hall, allowing voters to cast their ballots ahead of election day.

**Turnout:** 7,678 ballots cast

- **Election Day Voting:** On election day, Saturday, April 5, voters could cast their ballots in person between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. at Vancouver City Hall or at any of the 24 participating community centres citywide.

**Turnout:** 54,584 ballots cast

**TOTAL VOTER TURNOUT: 67,692 BALLOTS CAST**

#### 5. Advance Voting and Election Day Operations

Under provincial legislation, municipalities are required to provide two days of advance voting at one voting place from 8 am – 8 pm. The legislation specifies the timing of one of the advance voting days but allows the municipality, by way of a by-law, to establish the second day.

Two advance voting places were used in both 2017 and 2025. The 2025 by-election had an 84% increase in advance turnout over 2017 as shown in Table 2 below.

**Table 2. Comparison of Advance Voting Between 2017 and 2025**

Advance Voting Opportunities	2017		2025	
	Day 1	Day 2	Day 1	Day 2
<b>Number of registration election officials per day</b>	8	8	9	15
<b>Number of ballot tabulators</b>	2	2	2	2
<b>Number of voting places (City Hall)</b>	1	1	1	1
<b>Number of voting hours</b>	12	12	12	12
<b>Number of ballots cast</b>	<b>4,174</b>		<b>7,678</b>	

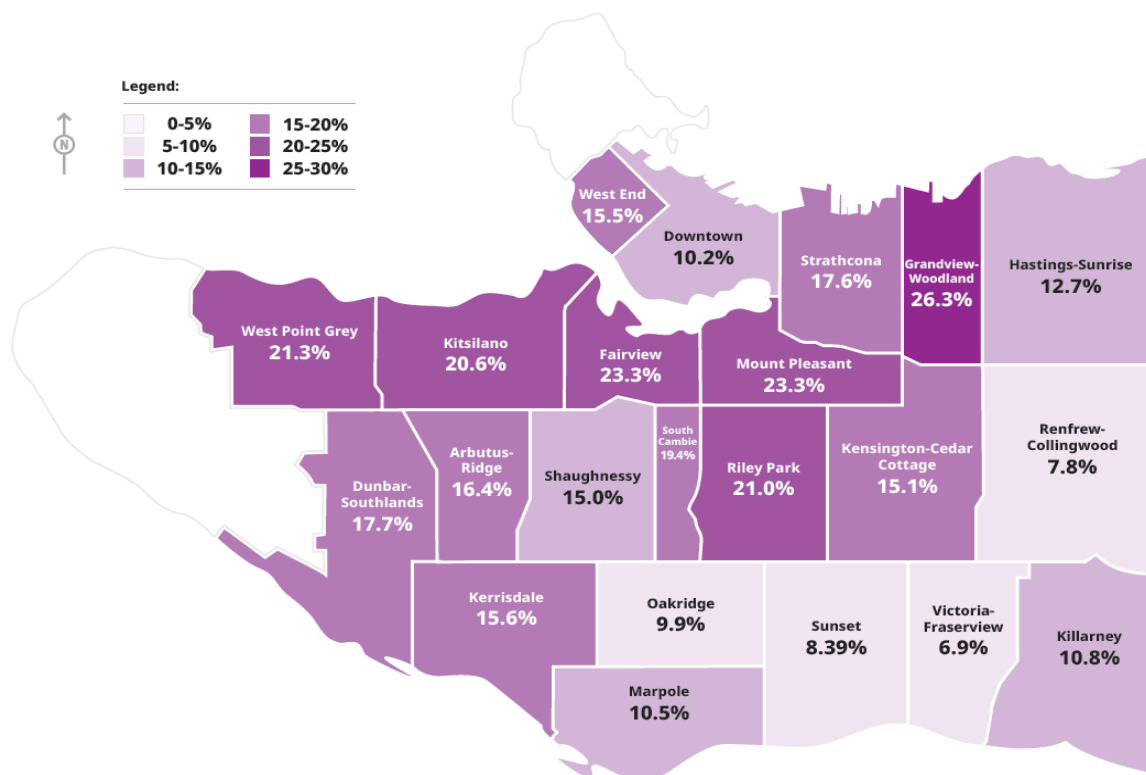
In the lead-up to election day, 30 of the 250 scheduled election officials withdrew. In response to higher-than-anticipated turnout on the first day of advance voting, the Election Office recruited 45 additional election officials, bringing the total to 265 election officials deployed on election day. The short timeframe between the first day of advance voting and election day left insufficient time to train and onboard additional staff beyond the 45, as there are 3-4 hours of mandatory in-person training plus online learning requirements, typically scheduled on evenings and weekends. This reflects a broader challenge in scaling election operations during a by-election. Compressed timelines and fixed training requirements limited the City's flexibility to respond to emerging demands. In addition, election officials were lost to the Federal election. Unlike general elections, by-elections offer little lead time and fewer recruitment opportunities. Similarly, technical resources could not be expanded after initial orders for tabulators, voting equipment, and laptops were finalized in January. Though staff considered adding more laptops following higher than normal advance voting turnout, there was not enough time to secure, configure, and image them while meeting cybersecurity standards. Targeted deployment of additional tabulators (vote counting units) to high-traffic voting places was used to help alleviate line congestion, noting that line-ups experienced were typically at registration and not at the tabulator - a ballot typically took no more than ten seconds to scan and process at the tabulator.

Another challenge in executing a by-election is the short timeframe to secure voting locations as Park Board facilities used for elections typically schedule their programming at least a season (3–4 months) in advance. Larger rooms are already booked, and available spaces were in use for other purposes such as children's and seniors' programming, and weddings. In contrast, for a general election, rooms are usually booked more than a year in advance, ensuring availability and allowing for greater flexibility.

On election day, the turnout was 54,854 voters, which exceeded expectations. The turnout by local area can be found in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1. 2025 By-Election Election Day Turnout by Local Area**

## 2025 By-election Voter Turnout by Local Area



Note: Data is approximate as source of data is from City of Vancouver Electronic Voters list

The 'vote anywhere' model offers significant convenience to voters, allowing them to cast their ballot at any voting place. However, it also presents logistical challenges in planning and resource allocation, as voter turnout can vary widely across voting places—sometimes with two to three times more voters at one voting place compared to another.

## 6. Election Workers

### Training

All election workers were required to complete three to four hours of mandatory training, delivered through a combination of in-person sessions and online learning modules. Training covered various topics, including:

- Role-specific responsibilities;
- Operation of voting technology;
- Inclusive care and accessibility, with a focus on respectful and informed support for voters with diverse needs;
- Health and safety protocols; and
- Safe driving practices.

On voting days, the Presiding Election Official (PEO) at each voting place reviewed specific details with election workers, such as first aid locations, muster stations, and evacuation plans.

Training began one week before the first day of advance voting. Training was intentionally scheduled closer to voting dates to improve knowledge retention and confidence, as feedback indicated that workers tend to forget information when trained too early. Additional sessions were offered closer to election day for those who missed initial classes or needed extra support.

### Languages Spoken

Staff analyzed Statistics Canada's 2021 census data and identified 14 neighbourhoods where the objective was to ensure that 50% of election workers spoke the predominant language of the area. The language requirements for Cantonese and Mandarin were consolidated into a single Chinese language category, permitting speakers of either language to meet the language requirements for these neighbourhoods. Additionally, election workers who spoke other languages wore name tags indicating the languages they spoke. Table 3 below provides a breakdown of the percentage of staff hired who spoke a language other than English.

**Table 3. % of Staff that Speak a Second Language**

Language	% of Staff
% of staff that spoke Cantonese	40.3%
% of staff that spoke Mandarin	21.5%
% of staff that spoke French	12.1%
% of staff that spoke Korean	2.6%
% of staff that spoke Punjabi	3.4%
% of staff that spoke Tagalog	3.4%
% of staff that spoke Vietnamese	3.4%
% of staff that spoke Spanish	2.6%
% of staff that spoke Farsi	0.8%
% of staff that spoke Arabic	1.5%
% of staff that spoke Japanese	1.9%
Total with a second language identified	180 of 265
Total % of staff with a second language identified	67.9%

## 7. Vote By Mail

In 2021, changes to the Vancouver Charter removed restrictions, allowing all eligible voters to vote by mail. For the 2025 by-election, 6,301 vote-by-mail applications were approved—an 875% increase from the 646 applications in 2017.

To help ensure more completed mail ballots were returned on time, staff coordinated a pickup at the Canada Post depot on election night. As a result, the return rate increased significantly—from 69.4% in 2022 to 91.8%.

**Table 4. Comparison of Vote by Mail Turnout Between 2017, 2022 and 2025**

	2017 By-Election	2022 Election	2025 By-Election
Applications Approved	646	10,423	6,301
Ballots Returned by Deadline	340	7,235	5,785
Ballots Accepted	330	6,727	5,430
% of Overall Ballots Casted	0.7%	3.9%	8.0%

Similarly to 2018 and 2022, in the 2025 by-election, Kitsilano (13.0%), West End (9.2%), Fairview (9.0%), and Downtown (8.6%) remained the top local areas to request mail ballots.

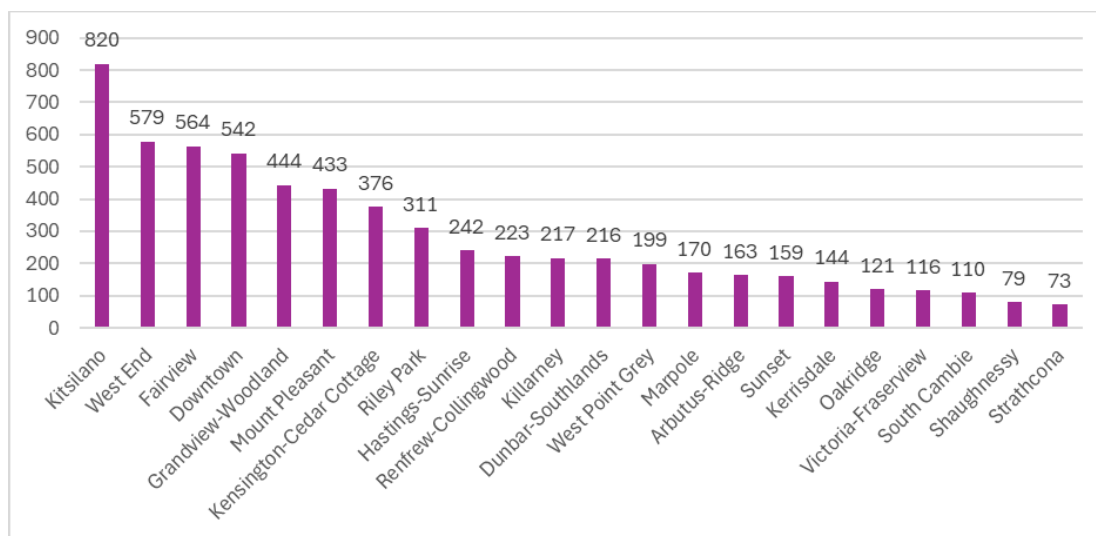
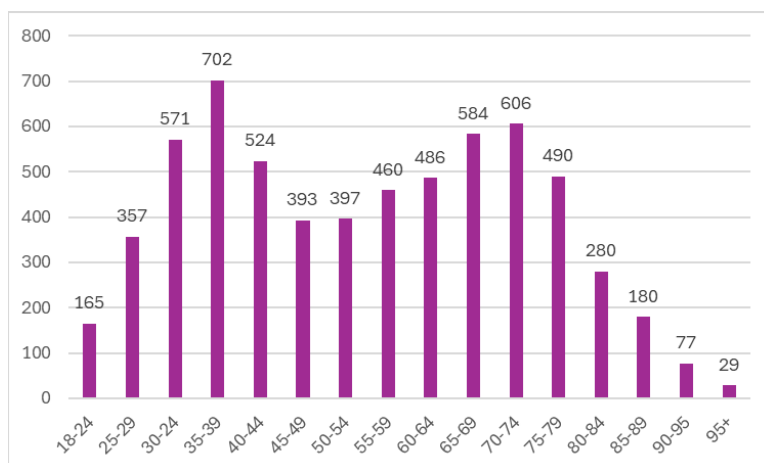
**Figure 2. Vote by Mail: Voters by Local Areas**

Figure 3 below shows the age breakdown of accepted Vote by Mail applicants. As in 2022, voters aged 35–39 (11.1%) and 70–74 (9.6%) were among the top age groups to apply.

**Figure 3. Vote by Mail: Voters by Age**

## 8. Accessibility

### Wheelchair Accessible Voting Places

In past elections, voting took place at community centres, schools, and private facilities. However, some of these sites were older and not fully wheelchair accessible. For this election, voting places used were at community centres and City Hall, allowing all voting places to be wheelchair accessible.

### Where to Vote



Voters were able to review accessibility information for their voting place in advance through our "Where to Vote" tool, which provides details such as the location of the wheelchair-accessible entrance and the availability of curbside voting. In 2022, enhancements were made to the tool by adding more specific information about the accessible entrance, including a photo for clarity. Building on feedback from that election, the 2025 version of the tool was published earlier to give voters more time to research their voting place. Additional improvements included more detailed information about the location of the voting room within the building and the addition of a photo of the curbside voting area.

### Roundhouse Community Arts and Recreation Centre

181 Roundhouse Mews, Vancouver, BC V6Z 2W3

**Voting day:** April 5

**Voting room:** main floor, gymnasium

-  Wheelchair accessible from main entrance
-  Metered street parking and pay parking lot (wheelchair accessible spots: 1)
- Curbside voting: on Roundhouse Mews at loading zone near front entrance



### Priority Access Line

Each voting place had a priority access line for older adults, people with disabilities, those who are immunocompromised or pregnant, individuals with children, and those who require low-stimulation environments due to mental health, anxiety, or developmental and cognitive disabilities.

### Curbside Voting

Curbside voting was offered at all voting places except Carnegie Community Centre due to logistical limitations. It was intended for individuals with physical disabilities, illnesses, or injuries that made it difficult for them to enter the voting place and cast their vote.

### Interpretation Assistance

## American Sign Language (ASL)

## Voter Assistance

## 9. Communications and Social Media Overview

## Language Access

# YOUR CITY. YOUR VOICE. YOUR VOTE.

## Vote for two City Councillors in the Vancouver By-election

Voting locations on the back.

**Eligible voters have three ways to vote:**

- **Vote by mail:** Request a vote-by-mail package online, or by calling 3-1-1.
- **Advance voting:** Vote early on March 26 or April 1 at Vancouver City Hall.
- **Election day:** Vote on April 5, at Vancouver City Hall or any of the 24 community centres.

**投票選出2位市議員，符合資格的選民有三種投票方式：**

- **提前投票：**2025年3月26日或4月1日，於溫哥華市政廳或提前投票。
- **選前日投票：**2025年4月5日，於溫哥華市政廳或24個社區中心中的任何一個投票。
- **舉票當日：**可在溫哥華市政府網站或致電3-1-1申請郵寄票包。

如需要簡便信息，請致電3-1-1或掃描下方的二維碼。

**Burnoto para 2 Cónsajel ng Lungsoḍ. Maaring Bumutang nang maaga sa pamamagitan ng koreo, o sa ika-5 ng Abril. Tumawag sa 3-1-1 o iscan ang QR code para sa pagpapaliang ng nika.**

**Vote por 2 concejales municipales. Vote por adelantado, por correo, o el 5 de Abril. Llame al 3-1-1 o escanee el código QR para traducciones.**

**Bầu chọn 2 Ủy viên Hội đồng Thành phố. Có thể bầu sớm, qua đường bưu điện ngày 5 tháng 4. Gọi 3-1-1 hoặc quét mã QR để xem bản dịch.**

**2 ਮਹਾਂਨਿਯੋ ਕੌਂਸਲਜ਼ ਚੋਣ ਦੇ ਹਿੱਸੇ। ਆਪਣਾ ਵੋਟ ਹਿੱਸੇ, ਭਰਾਵਾਂ ਤਕ ਜਾਂ 5 ਅਪ੍ਰੈਲ 'ਤੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਘਰ 'ਤੇ। 3-1-1 'ਤੇ ਸਲਾਹ ਦੇਣਾ ਜਾਂ QR ਕੋਡ ਸਕੈਨ ਕਰੋ।**

**2 मजिदो कौन्सलर चोण दे हिस्से। आपणा वोट हिस्से, जरा तक जं 5 अप्रैल 'ते आपणा घर 'ते। 3-1-1 'ते सलाह देणें जं QR कोड स्कैन करे।**



For more information visit  
[vancouver.ca/vote](http://vancouver.ca/vote) or call 3-1-1

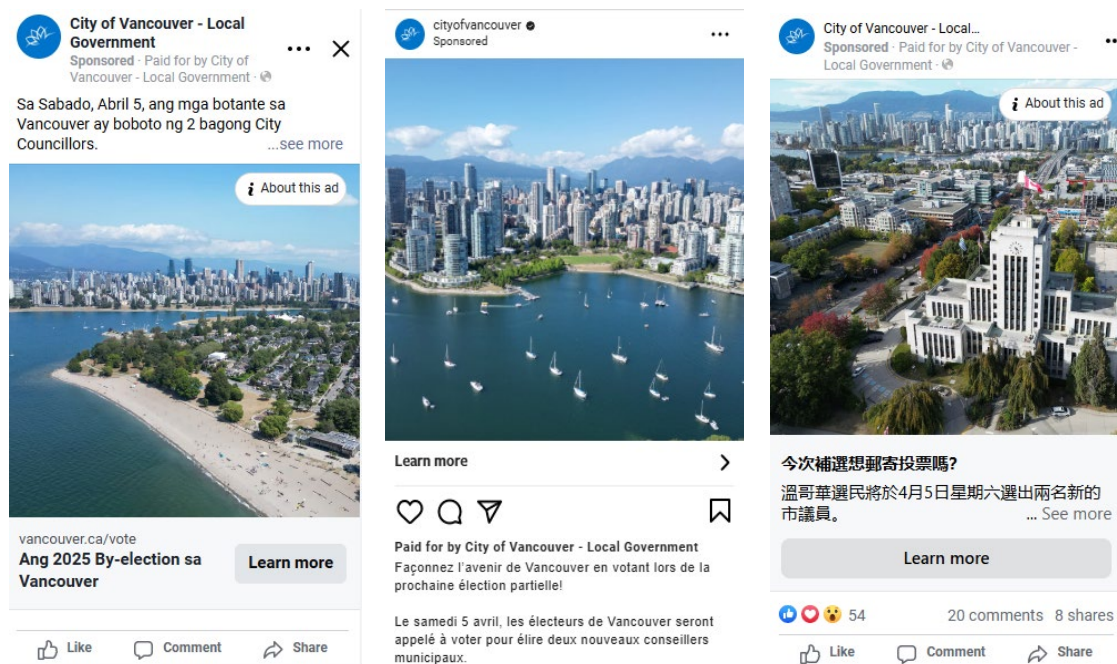




**Multilingual Pamphlets and Resources:** Over 8,700 multilingual pamphlets were distributed to community centres, Vancouver Public Library (VPL) branches, neighbourhood houses, and community partners. These pamphlets were available in English, Traditional Chinese, Simplified Chinese, Tagalog, Spanish, Punjabi, Vietnamese, Farsi, Korean, Portuguese, French and Japanese, and included information on how and where to vote, key deadlines, and eligibility.

**Multilingual Digital Pamphlets:** In addition to printed materials, over 11,700 digital pamphlets were downloaded from the City's website across 12 languages. The English pamphlet accounted for the majority with 10,752 downloads, while the Traditional Chinese version had 304 downloads, Simplified Chinese 133, French 93, Tagalog 73, Spanish 78, Punjabi 21, and other languages—including Vietnamese, Farsi, Japanese, Korean, and Portuguese—collectively contributed to the remaining downloads.

**Social Media in Multiple Languages:** Paid social media content was posted in the aforementioned 12 languages to ensure messages reached a broader and more diverse audience. This contributed to over 3.2 million impressions, increasing visibility and engagement with voters in Vancouver's multilingual communities.



Examples of social media paid advertisements in Tagalog, French and Traditional Chinese.

**Multilingual Advertisement:** In addition to printed materials and social media, multilingual advertisements were placed across key platforms to further ensure access to voting information. A summary of these efforts is provided below in Table 5:

**Table 5. Multilingual Advertisement Used**

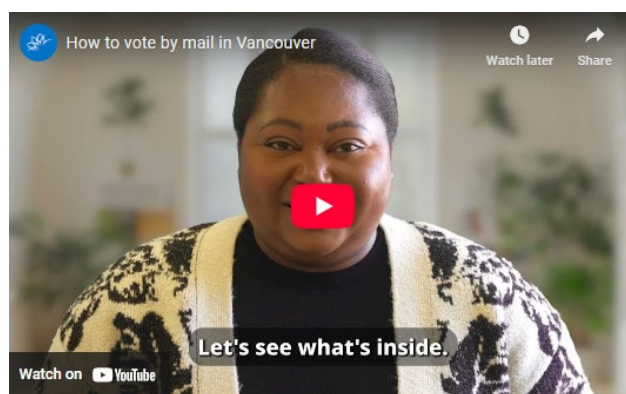
Platform/Media	Languages	Type of Ad	Audience
Ming Pao	Cantonese, Mandarin	Daily print ads, Saturday magazine, Mobile App	High readership among Cantonese and Mandarin-speaking communities
Voice & Awaaz	English, Punjabi	Full-page ads in weekly magazine	Increased engagement within the Punjabi-speaking community
Link (Punjabi)	English, Punjabi	Full-page print ad	Expanded reach in Punjabi-speaking neighborhoods
Fairchild Radio (Cantonese & Mandarin)	Cantonese, Mandarin	30-second radio ads during peak drive-times	Strong radio listenership in Cantonese & Mandarin-speaking communities
Red FM (Punjabi)	Punjabi	30-second radio ads	High engagement from the Punjabi community

### Vote by Mail Campaign

A key component of the communications strategy was the vote by mail campaign, aimed at increasing voter participation by providing voters with accessible options to cast their ballots. Key efforts included:

#### Vote by Mail Explainer Video

A clear and concise explainer video was produced in English to provide information about the vote by mail process, which received 498 views on the City's website. Auto-translations were also available via YouTube in 150+ languages. This video was also modified for social media, where it contributed to the metrics outlined in the following bullet.



### Social Media Campaigns

Paid and multilingual social media posts were used to encourage voters to register for vote by mail. Vote by mail specific content generated approximately 1.2 million impressions and 303,127 unique views, generating 14,000 clicks through to the vote by mail webpage, helping to drive both awareness and participation. Additionally, in totality, social media content – the majority of which referenced vote by mail in some capacity, saw 4.4 million impressions, demonstrating the broad reach of these efforts

## Printed Materials

Posters and multilingual pamphlets including vote by mail information were distributed to 45 community centres and 20 Vancouver Public Library branches. Posters were designed with information in the top seven spoken languages in Vancouver, while the pamphlets were available in English, Traditional Chinese, Simplified Chinese, Tagalog, Spanish, Punjabi, Vietnamese, Farsi, Korean, Portuguese, French and Japanese. These materials promoted vote by mail, and all voting options, to non-digital audiences.



An additional 8000 posters were displayed across Vancouver in high-traffic zones weekly throughout March. Neighbourhoods included: Kitsilano, Main Street, Commercial Drive, South Cambie, South Granville, Downtown Core, West Broadway, Sunrise Hastings.

## Campaign Outcomes

With this campaign there was a 105% increase in ballots cast via vote by mail compared to the 2022 general election, relative to voter turnout, with 5,431 ballots returned reflecting 8% of total voter turnout. While we did not meet the target required to offset the reduction of voting places, this was significant growth and reflects the efficacy of the campaign.



New for 2025: Updated Future Voter and I Voted stickers.

## Media Relations

Media engagement had a significant increase compared to the 2017 by-election. The 2025 campaign resulted in 169 articles across major outlets such as CBC, Global, Vancouver Sun, and Daily Hive—up from just 41 in 2017, marking a 312% increase in media coverage.

Staff responded to 52 media inquiries, a 49% increase from the previous by-election, ensuring accurate and timely information reached the public.

Seven information bulletins were issued during the campaign, keeping media informed of key dates and developments and contributing to consistent, informed coverage city-wide.

### Website Engagement and Digital Reach

Between March 3 and April 5, the City's election webpages recorded over 141,000 visits. Top referral sources were Google and social media. High-traffic pages included "Where to Vote" (71,486 views) and "Candidate Information" (88,870 views), with the results page receiving over 132,000 views within six hours of polls closing. This level of digital engagement highlights the success of the digital-first approach.

### Candidate Information Approach

To protect the neutrality of the Election Office and avoid publishing unverified or harmful content on the City's website, the Election Office now lists candidates' names on the City website, with links to their own webpages, social media and contact information. This aligns with other levels of government and ensures voters can access candidate information without compromising the integrity of the Election Office

## 10. Public Feedback

### Phone and Email Inquiries

During the election period, calls were directed to the Election Office during business hours. Outside of business hours, or when no election was underway, calls were routed to 3-1-1. To support accurate public responses, Election Office staff provided 3-1-1 agents with up-to-date election-related scripts.

The following summary in Table 5 outlines the volume and nature of inquiries and concerns related to the 2025 by-election. It includes data collected from February 3, 2025 (when the Election Office opened) through April 29, 2025. Specific topics raised by voters included questions and feedback around voter eligibility, employment opportunities, address changes, voter information cards, election results, and the potential implementation of a ward system instead of the at-large voting system. Voters also provided positive feedback about the priority line, though suggestions for improvement were received. Additionally, common areas of concern included wait times, election signs, the vote by mail process, and the absence of French language on voter information cards, which are summarized below.

**Table 5. Inquiries and Concerns for the 2025 By-Election (Feb 3 to Apr 29)**

General Category	311	Election Office
Candidate Q & A Session		2
Candidates & Elector Orgs	7	52
Election Employment	27	33
General Election Inquiry	1,171	333
Election Results	6	4



<b>Election Sign Concern</b>	104	16
<b>Media Inquiry</b>		5
<b>Non-Resident Property Elector</b>	5	25
<b>Vote by Mail</b>	742	260
<b>Voter Registration</b>	121	
<b>Voting Places</b>	141	
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,327</b>	<b>730</b>

### ***Common Areas of Concern***

#### **1. Wait Time**

Total feedback received: ~255 (140 via 3-1-1; 115 via the Election Office)

Many inquiries cited extended wait times, staffing limitations, and an insufficient number of voting places. Voters also reported the absence of real-time wait time updates, leading to concerns around access—particularly for seniors and individuals with disabilities—and potential voter disenfranchisement. While the Election Office does not have data on how many individuals may have left without voting, reports indicated that wait times on election day ranged from 15 minutes to as long as 3.5 hours, varying significantly by voting place and time of day.

#### **2. Campaign Materials and Election Signs**

Total feedback received: ~120 (104 via 3-1-1; 16 via the Election Office)

Residents submitted multiple reports of campaign signs placed on public property, signs exceeding permitted size limits, and signage positioned near voting places. Additionally, the Election Office received complaints regarding voters wearing or bringing campaign materials into voting places, raising concerns about potential violations of rules prohibiting campaigning in or near voting places. Requests were made for increased enforcement and removal of non-compliant signage. The Vancouver Police Department also received two reports of stolen campaign signs.

To address these concerns, staff can take the following actions:

- **Campaign Materials at Voting Places:** While election staff do not have the authority to enforce penalties at the time of voting, they can request that voters remove or conceal campaign materials when entering a voting place, in accordance with rules prohibiting campaigning within or near voting places.
- **Enforcement of Election Sign Regulations:** Complaints regarding election sign violations—such as improper placement or exceeding size limits—can be reported by the public. Upon receipt, by-law enforcement officers may be dispatched to investigate and remove non-compliant signs.
- **Signage on Private Property:** If a campaign sign is placed on private property without the owner's consent, the property owner has the right to remove it or request its removal. The sign may be taken down either by the City or the organization responsible for erecting it.

### 3. No French Language on Voter Information Cards

Total feedback received: ~45 (19 via 3-1-1; 26 via the Election Office)

Concerns were raised about the absence of French on Voter Information Cards. While French was included in the translated pamphlets—available online and at public locations—and in paid social media advertising, it was not included on the voter information postcard. This was an operational decision based on layout constraints: Staff prioritised the seven most widely spoken languages in Vancouver while ensuring font size and design remained accessible.

In British Columbia, English is the only official language. However, under the City's Language Access Policy, translation decisions are guided by local demographics and community needs. French remains an important consideration where appropriate.

## 11. Budget Methodology

The 2025 by-election was an unanticipated expense for the City, as by-elections are a relatively rare occurrence in Vancouver. Local by-elections are funded through the City's tax-supported Election Reserve. As part of the City's annual operating budget process, funds must be set aside each year to cover the costs of general local elections. Since by-elections are not included in the regular election budget, additional planned allocations are necessary to ensure the Election Reserve has sufficient funds for the 2026 General Local Election.

The estimated budget for the 2025 by-election was \$2 million. This estimate was based on the following:

- The "Vote Anywhere" model that was originally implemented for the 2014 local general election would be used for the by-election. Under the Vote Anywhere model, eligible voters can vote at any voting place set up in the municipality. The model is designed to make voting convenient and easy for voters to vote. It is made possible using real-time electronic voters' list strike off technology.
- There would be 25 voting places on general voting day on Saturday, April 5, 2025, from 8am – 8pm.
- Advance voting would take place at City Hall on two days as required by the Vancouver Charter and section 3.2 of the City's Election By-law No. 9070.
- Mail ballot voting (vote by mail) would be available for all eligible voters for the by-election.
- Technology costs would be modeled after the approach used in 2022. Instead of leasing short-term refurbished devices, the City's Technology Services would purchase new laptops, which were intended for long-term redeployment within the organization. Tabulators would be lease, while laptop bags and accessories would be purchase outright.
- There would be approximately 250 election workers recruited and trained for voting days.
- Due to the tight timeline between the by-election being called and voting days, the communications and digital campaign would be limited and focused. The budget included each household receiving an unaddressed voter information postcard through Canada Post. Notably, election materials are not considered junk mail and, therefore all households, whether they were registered voters or not, received the postcard.
- The estimate also included a contingency of \$175,000.

Unlike the 2017 by-election budget which was presented on an incremental cost basis, the 2025 budget included the full gross estimated costs, including amounts anticipated to be absorbed from within existing departmental budgets. This approach was taken because incremental costs can vary significantly from one election to another, depending on departmental capacity and if the staff member hired on to fill the position is internal or external. The incremental actual costs for 2025 are estimated at \$1.2 million, in-line with 2017 incremental costs. Remaining costs were absorbed within existing departmental budgets. A breakdown of the 2025 local by-election budget and preliminary actuals is shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1. 2025 By-Election Budget**

Category	2025 Budgeted Cost	2025 Actual Cost <sup>1</sup>	Notes
Election Office	\$740,000	\$715,000	Salaries for core Election Office staff, office and meeting supplies, and other miscellaneous administrative costs
Election Workers	\$150,000	\$200,000	Election worker salaries and training supplies and materials
Voting Places & Supplies	\$55,000	\$21,000	Voting place supplies, delivery costs, voting place security, rental vehicles for field support staff, and the destruction of election materials
Vote by Mail	\$40,000	\$31,000	Printing of vote-by-mail packages, labels, postage, and other miscellaneous supplies
Communications & Digital	\$240,000	\$186,000	Printed marketing materials, signage, translations, newspaper advertising, digital and social media ads, postering, voter information postcards and mail-outs, and digital resources
Voting Equipment/ Technology	\$600,000	\$449,000	Electronic voters list, vote-by-mail management tool, imaging of laptops, tabulators, data plans for Wi-Fi pucks, a project management tool, and other miscellaneous technology-related costs
Contingency	\$175,000		
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,000,000</b>	<b>\$1,602,000</b>	

<sup>1</sup>Actual costs are preliminary as not all invoices have been received and some staff are continuing to work on by-election-related tasks through the end of May. Actual costs represent gross costs and are not netted for costs absorbed from within existing departmental budgets.



**Table 2. Budget Comparison Between 2017 and 2025**

Category	2017 Incremental Cost	2025 Incremental Cost <sup>1</sup>	Notes
Election Office	\$251,000	\$332,000	- See Election Office Staffing section below
Election Workers	\$248,000	\$200,000	- Reduction in election workers (631 to 265) due to decrease in voting places - 56.1% increase in wages to stay competitive with market rates - Additional \$50K for overtime and extra election workers
Voting Places & Supplies	\$31,000	\$12,000	- Reduction in voting places from 51 to 25
Vote by Mail	\$3,000	\$31,000	- Increase in approved applications from 646 to 6,301
Communications & Digital	\$105,000	\$179,000	- Digital support costs previously covered by the Digital team in 2017, but in 2025, they were unable to absorb the \$32K cost
Voting Equipment/ Technology	\$562,000	\$436,000	- Anticipated Vote by Mail turnout required additional tech support: \$15k for module and \$27k for high-speed tabulators
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,200,000</b>	<b>\$1,190,000</b>	

<sup>1</sup>2025 costs are preliminary as not all invoices have been received and some staff are continuing to work on by-election-related tasks through the end of May.

### Cost Per Voter

The total estimated cost of conducting the 2025 by-election was \$1,602,000. With 67,962 votes cast, this results in an approximate cost of \$23.57 per voter. This figure reflects all operational, logistical, and administrative expenses associated with running the by-election.

### Election Office Staffing

Staffing for any project can be challenging, especially for unanticipated projects with tight timelines, such as a by-election. Hiring external staff presents significant risks, as they must quickly familiarize themselves with complex project details (including the Vancouver Charter and Election By-law), as well as city standards, processes, procedures, personnel, and technology. Seconding staff from within the organization, particularly from the City Clerk's Office, tends to be more effective. Internal staff already have a strong understanding of organizational standards and some knowledge of the election process, which reduces risk and often results in no net cost, provided the position does not require backfill. However, this approach leads to strain within departments to manage existing responsibilities, as ongoing projects may need to be put on hold, and positions are frequently left vacant due to the time and resources needed for recruitment and training.

For the 2025 by-election, thanks to the support of various City departments, the Election Office was able to fill many roles internally. In some cases, departments shared responsibilities among

existing employees, which enabled the Election Office to forgo filling several planned roles entirely. This collaborative approach resulted in considerable cost savings and helped ensure work was completed to City standards with less onboarding and coordination. While this model proved effective and efficient for the short-term nature of the by-election, it would not be feasible for a general election due to its larger scale, longer time frame, and greater operational impact. The 2025 by-election took place over a condensed 80-day period, whereas planning and staffing for a general election typically begins 18 to 24 months in advance, making it far more disruptive to second staff from other departments over such an extended duration.

The expenses for the 2025 by-election primarily consist of salaries for core Election Office staff, which account for \$710k of the total \$715k budget, along with costs for office and meeting supplies, and other miscellaneous administrative expenses. Between 2017 and 2025, salaries for City staff have increased by approximately 20%. In 2024, a regular full-time position, Business Analyst, was added to the Office of the City Clerk to provide dedicated support to the elections team both during and in preparation for municipal elections. Given the fast-evolving technological landscape, increasing concerns around foreign interference, and the growing utilization of technology solutions in elections, this position will help ensure a seamless voter experience and mitigate new and emerging technology-related election risks. The position was previously a temporary full-time (TFT) role and had been included as incremental costs in prior elections. For the by-election, the position would have cost approximately \$64k. Additionally, several key positions are part of the City's permanent staffing structure and are not considered incremental costs. These include the Chief Election Officer (CEO), the Manager of Business & Election Services/Deputy Chief Election Officer (DCEO), the Manager of Communications and Outreach, and the Technology Services Lead, which together represent an additional \$371k in staffing expenses.

Compared to the 2017 by-election, several new roles were introduced for 2025, including a second Deputy Chief Election Officer (DCEO), an Assistant Election Manager (AEM), and a Vote by Mail Assistant, adding \$103k to the staffing budget. The second DCEO was added to provide extra support during the by-election and assist in planning for the 2026 general election, as one DCEO will be on leave in the year prior. This position also resulted in the elimination of the Warehouse Coordinator position, resulting in a \$25k savings. The AEM position was created to improve online accessibility, strengthen occupational health and safety practices, and provide training with the goal of building internal leadership capacity for 2026. Furthermore, in 2017, the City received 672 vote-by-mail applications, whereas in 2025, with the process expanded to all eligible voters and an expected 8,600 applications, an additional staff member was hired to manage and process this significant increase in demand. Overall, the incremental cost for the Election Office in 2017 was \$251k, whereas in 2025, it increased to \$332k, representing a 32% increase.

## **12. Lessons Learned**

As preparations get underway for the 2026 General Election, staff are prioritizing key areas of improvement aimed at enhancing the voter experience by reducing barriers, delivering accessible and timely election information and services, and strengthening engagement with communities and demographics that have historically had lower voter turnout. Several measures that are being considered for the 2026 election include:

### **Reducing Wait Times**

Building on feedback from the 2025 by-election, staff will review election delivery, including advance and election day voting places and staffing. For 2026, the Election Office plans to increase the number of voting places and reintroduce the expanded 2022 "supercentre" model with larger rooms, more staff, and enhanced voting technology with additional voting technology devices. This is also in response to the upward trend in voter turnout, particularly for advance voting. Staff will also model a range of voter turnout scenarios to identify the potential implications for queuing and wait times, ensuring adequate planning and resources. Additionally, staff are exploring a real-time wait time tool, dedicated line management staff, improved signage, and enhanced awareness of the priority access line for eligible voters.

### **Voting Place Accessibility**

A further comprehensive review of all voting places will be conducted to verify that they meet accessibility standards, including evaluating entrances, exits, pathways, hallways, doors, elevators, lighting, washrooms, parking, and other critical facilities. Staff acknowledge that the priority access line did not function as intended at certain times and locations due to the overall volume of voters. The length of line also contributed to challenges with identifying the location of the priority access line. Management of the priority access line is a factor in the wait times for voters in the regular queue. As mentioned above, staff will explore options to improve management of priority access lines. Staff will also assess the feasibility of implementing braille ballots and braille templates to enhance accessibility for voters with visual impairments. Additionally, the Election Office will endeavor to recruit more multilingual staff to assist voters who may be waiting outside the voting place, offering language support and answering questions while voters are in line.

### **Enhanced On-Site Staffing**

Additional staff will be deployed at voting places and in the surrounding areas to monitor compliance with election rules and provide on-the-ground support to voters and election workers. Staff are also exploring how security can be dispatched to voting places as needed to support a safe and efficient voting process.

### **Improved Signage**

To improve accessibility, staff will enhance signage for priority access and curbside voting. A comprehensive review of all voting place signage will be conducted to update wording, improve visibility, and ensure accessibility for all voters.

### **Accessibility Information in Pamphlets**

While accessibility details were shared on social media and the website, they were not included in translated voter pamphlets due to space limitations. For 2025 elections, key accessibility information—such as the priority access line—will be added to pamphlets to ensure more voters are aware of available supports before arriving at the voting place.

### **Increase Paid Advertising Campaigns**

For the 2026 General Election, the Election Office will explore opportunities to increase the frequency and duration of paid advertising campaigns, particularly in culturally relevant media. This includes assessing additional platforms and languages to ensure broader and more inclusive reach across Vancouver's diverse communities.

### **Explore Opportunities to include French on Voter Information Mailouts**

While French-language resources were available online and in pamphlets, some residents expressed concern about its absence on the voter information postcard. This was due to layout constraints and the prioritization of the most widely spoken languages as defined in the City's Language Access Policy. For future elections, the Election Office will explore expanding the format of mailouts to include more languages, including French, while maintaining accessibility and clear design.

### **Vote by Mail: Confidence and Process Improvements**

Despite a strong and effective campaign—resulting in a 105% increase in returned ballots and the highest vote-by-mail share in any Vancouver election to date—uptake was still lower than needed to offset the reduction in voting places. Behaviour change takes time, and many voters remain more comfortable voting in person and planning for capacity at in-person voting places will reflect that preference. For 2026, targeted communications will focus on building trust in the convenience and security of vote by mail. In parallel, staff are working with Digital Strategy to explore a custom in-house application that would simplify the process for all voters, improve accessibility, and reduce manual processing.

### **Election Worker Training**

For the 2026 general election, staff plan to enhance the election worker training program with a stronger focus on line management—particularly the priority access line—and on assisting voters with accessibility needs. The training will also promote inclusive care and expand learning modules to better equip staff to support voters with diverse needs, such as vision loss, hearing impairments, and mobility challenges. In addition, improvements will be made to occupational health and safety training to ensure a safer working environment for all election workers.