

COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

*For consideration at the Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities meeting on
October 29, 2025*

3. Youth Voices: Amend the Charter for Age Sixteen Starter

Submitted by Councillor Fry

WHEREAS

1. The right to vote is a cornerstone of democracy;
2. Youth aged 16 and 17 are increasingly engaged in civic issues, demonstrating informed perspectives and active participation in community and political life. Many political decisions—education, employment, housing, climate change, transportation and public transit—directly affect youth;
3. At 16, individuals can work, pay taxes, drive, and in some cases, be tried as adults. Voting aligns with these responsibilities;
4. Research indicates that voting at a younger age fosters lifelong civic engagement and strengthens democratic participation;
5. Across the world, Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Cuba, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Malta, Scotland, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States, all variously allow a voter age of 16 for at least one level of government, primarily for municipal and school board elections;
6. In this province, The BC Teachers' Federation, BCGEU, BCNDP, BC Greens, and other civic organizations have all expressed support for lowering the voting age to 16;
7. In 2019, the Union of BC Municipalities endorsed the City of Victoria's resolution: *Youth Voting in Local Government Elections*¹, expressing support for lowering the voting age in municipal elections across British Columbia. In 2021, led by then-Councillor Christine Boyle, the City of Vancouver unanimously endorsed the Vote16BC campaign joining Victoria, Burnaby, Penticton, Vernon, Saanich, and other municipalities² calling for lowering the voting age to 16;
8. The *Vancouver Charter*, which governs the City of Vancouver uniquely compared to other municipalities in BC, outlines voting eligibility in Part I — Electors and Elections, specifically in Division (4) — Electors.³

¹ <https://www.ubcm.ca/convention-resolutions/resolutions/resolutions-database/youth-voting-local-government-elections>

² <https://council.vancouver.ca/20210608/documents/b3.pdf>

³ https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/vanch_02#division_d2e2325

Section 22 of the Charter states: "A person is entitled to vote at an election if the person is qualified as an elector under this Part." Section 23 defines resident electors, and Section 26 specifies that a person may register as an elector if they:

- Are 18 years of age or older on general voting day.
 - Are a Canadian citizen.
 - Have resided in BC for at least six months.
 - Have resided in Vancouver for at least 30 days.
 - Are not disqualified by law.
9. The City Clerk is the official responsible for maintaining the register of electors. The register of electors must separately record resident electors and The *Vancouver Charter* allows the City of Vancouver to, by by-law opt into using the Provincial register of electors, which by default does not include British Columbians under the age of 18. The law ensures that electors can vote even if they are not on the register, including if they are non-resident property electors, of no fixed address, and/or swear an oath; and
10. The Province of British Columbia holds the legislative authority to amend the *Vancouver Charter* to enable the City of Vancouver to lower the voting age.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT The City of Vancouver reaffirms its support for lowering the voting age to 16 in municipal elections in BC and specifically in the City of Vancouver;
- B. THAT Council requests that the Mayor write a formal letter to the Premier of British Columbia and the Minister of Municipal Affairs urging the Province to amend the *Vancouver Charter* to set the voting age at 16; and
- C. THAT Council directs staff to report back on opportunities for youth engagement in civic processes both as part of planned reporting for the 2026 General Elections and in general, including any necessary by-law changes to enter Vancouverites under the age of 18 into the register of electors.

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