

Priorities Committee Meeting_Mar14_2017

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE AND UPDATE

2017 Municipal Election – Voter Engagement

Report Purpose

To provide the Priorities Committee with an overview of the plans to enhance voter engagement for the October 16, 2017 General Municipal Election.

Strategic Plan Priority Areas

Economy: Conducting the municipal election provides temporary employment opportunities.

Governance: Strathcona County conducts the municipal election in conjunction with the Elk Island Public and Elk Island Separate School Boards. Voter engagement supports our strategic goal: Increase public involvement and communicate with the community on issues affecting the County's future.

Social: n/a

Culture: n/a

Environment: n/a

Other Impacts

Policy: GOV-001-031, Election Campaigns

Legislative/Legal: *Local Authorities Election Act (LAEA), School Act*

Interdepartmental: Legislative and Legal Services, Communications, Facility Services, Planning and Development Services, Information Technology Services, Transit

Summary

Legislative and Legal Services is responsible for planning and delivering the General Municipal Election that will be held on Monday, October 16, 2017. Nationwide research has found that fewer people are voting over time, with the most significant drop in municipal elections. Engaging voters and increasing voter turnout is challenging in any electoral context.

Strathcona County's voter turnout from 2004 – 2013 has consistently ranged between 33 – 37%, ranking in the top five Alberta municipalities with eligible voting populations greater than 40,000 (see Enclosure 1 – Historical Voter Turnout Comparison). There are many factors that influence voter turnout. Research indicates that encouraging residents to make a plan to get out and vote increases the likelihood of voting. Controversial issues and competitive races, particularly at the mayoralty level, tend to drive higher turnout.

Administration is committed to promoting the Municipal Election through as many avenues as possible to encourage residents to exercise their democratic right to vote. Enclosure 2, Voter Engagement Communications Summary, includes both strategies used in past elections, and incorporates new initiatives based on research and best practices identified in other municipalities.

The County also provides support to potential candidates. A candidate information guide will be available on the website by April 2017. Candidates are encouraged to frequently check the website for any updates.

Communication Plan

Voter engagement and communications for the 2017 Municipal Election will include various activities and tools to inform citizens and candidates about the election. Enclosure 2 contains a listing of mediums and strategies that have been planned for 2017.

Enclosure

1. Historical Voter Turnout Comparison
2. Voter Engagement Communications Summary, 2017 Municipal Election
3. Voter Engagement Presentation