

Returning Officer's Report to
Priorities and Finance Committee
2020 January 21

ISC: UNRESTRICTED
PFC2020-0094

Civic Census Review

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides recommendations for a biennial civic census based on a recent review conducted with census data users internal and external to the City. The review outcomes, recent direction from the Province and discussions with school boards and Statistics Canada are included in this report.

RETURNING OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Priorities and Finance Committee recommends that Council:

1. Direct the Returning Officer to conduct a civic census in 2020 and 2022;
2. Direct that no civic census be conducted in 2021; and
3. Direct the Returning Officer to report back with an evaluation of discussions with Statistics Canada and the provincial government and the ongoing value of a civic census by Q4 2022.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE PRIORITIES AND FINANCE COMMITTEE, 2020 JANUARY 21:

That Council adopt the Returning Officer's Recommendations contained in Report PFC2020-0094.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY

On 2019 February 14 Council directed Administration to: 1) Conduct a review of the value and benefits of conducting an annual municipal census program and report back in Q4 2019; and 2) Review and provide recommendations to amend the Civic Census Policy CC005 in Q4 2019.

Civic Census Policy CC005 (Attachment 1) outlines the purpose, frequency, data being collected, use of the data, stewardship and confidentiality related to conducting a municipal census.

BACKGROUND

The City of Calgary has conducted an annual Civic Census since 1958 with data available generally within two months of completion. In 1984, 1994, and 2005 extensive reviews of the Civic Census were undertaken. In all three cases Council confirmed the continuation of an annual census.

INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS

Civic Census Review

A review of the value of conducting an annual civic census was completed. The detailed review is included as Attachment 2. Internal and external consultation indicates the primary value of an annual civic census is to provide for current and consistent city-specific data for internal and external users. Uses of the data include:

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- Developing accurate population forecasting
- Developing and monitoring the municipal Growth Strategy
- Determining appropriate levels and timing of infrastructure and services needed in new communities and established areas
- Population forecasts guide and align long-term planning and development goals to the Municipal Development Plan
- Supports determining appropriate land use policies
- Developing the Regional Travel Model
- Calculating impacts on utility networks (i.e., storm, water and sanitary systems)
- Non-profits and businesses analyze demographics within individual communities or regions for program and services planning
- Post-secondary institutions use for research purposes
- Calgary school boards use for planning

In addition to the Civic Census Review, recent direction from the Province and discussions with school boards and Statistics Canada related to the civic census were considered, as outlined below.

Provincial Grants

In 2019 November, a letter was received from the Government of Alberta announcing that provincial grants for The City of Calgary will no longer be tied to the population collected in an annual civic census. In 2021, the methodology used to determine populations will be produced by the Government of Alberta in collaboration with Statistics Canada. The letter also indicated a municipality can continue to conduct a civic census, the results will only be used at the local level for municipal planning purposes.

To date, the Province has not communicated the planned frequency or methodology of the proposed provincial population estimate. Administration is prepared to provide feedback on the Provincial population estimation methodology to align with City data needs.

Administration supports continuing a civic census for city-specific data needs, planning and data based decision making for internal and external users.

Partnerships

The City of Calgary had a long-standing agreement with the Calgary Board of Education and Calgary Catholic School District. Together the Boards contributed to The City's annual civic census budget. The school boards have indicated that they no longer require specific civic census reports and instead will rely on civic census data available through The City's open data platform and other City statistical reports.

The City of Calgary maintains a relationship with Statistics Canada to ensure an alignment of processes. In 2016 Statistics Canada collection was negatively impacted by confusion caused by conducting the municipal and federal census within two months. Statistics Canada has requested the City consider not completing a census in 2021 to avoid this confusion. In support

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of Statistics Canada's request, the Returning Officer recommends that The City not conduct a census in the same year as a Federal Census. The Returning Officer and Statistics Canada are working collaboratively to align their data needs and as much as possible make the federal tools beneficial to Calgary.

Financial Impact

The City receives provincial funding through municipal grants using our most recent population collected from the civic census. The changes being introduced by The Government of Alberta will result in funding amounts based on estimations instead of actual census data. Provincially, most grants had a population component to allocations. We do not know the financial impact of this change in methodology. The federal government uses Statistics Canada data and estimates to calculate grant funding.

The civic census costs \$1.5 million to conduct annually. This expense translates to approximately \$1.00/per person, or \$3.00/per household.

There would be cost-savings of approximately \$800,000 in years when a civic census is not conducted.

Recommendation

It is recommended a civic census be conducted in 2020 and 2022, and use the federal census results in 2021. This will provide the following benefits:

- Supports internal and external partner city-specific data, planning and resources needs;
- Develop with Statistics Canada reasonably accurate estimation models; and
- Financial savings realized in non-census years.

A report evaluating the biennial civic census will be provided for Council's consideration by Q4 2022. The report is an opportunity to determine if the provincial population estimation and partnership opportunities with Statistics Canada change the continued value, methodology and/or frequency of a civic census.

Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication

A number of internal and external partners were consulted as part of the development of this report, including:

1. Internal partners (Calgary Growth Strategies – Geo-demographics, Transportation Planning – Data and Forecasting, Strategy, Finance – Corporate Economics, Calgary Neighbourhoods and internal census survey participants); and,
2. External partners (e.g., Calgary Board of Education, Calgary Catholic School District, external census survey participants, Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance, Statistics Canada).

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Strategic Alignment

This report aligns with Council's priority of a Well-Run City.

Social, Environmental, Economic (External)

Census data is used by many stakeholders for planning and analysis to determine business decisions that impact the citizens of Calgary.

Financial Capacity

Current and Future Operating Budget:

There would be a cost savings of approximately \$800,000 in years when a civic census is not conducted.

Current and Future Capital Budget:

There are no current or future capital budget requirements.

Risk Assessment

If a civic census is not conducted on a regular basis, alternate sources of data will be required for planning purposes, for internal and external data users.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

Not conducting a census in 2021 is recommended to align with the request from Statistics Canada. It would also provide the opportunity for The City to work with the province and Statistics Canada to determine if the provincial population estimation and partnership with Statistics Canada changes the continued value, methodology and/or frequency of a civic census.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Civic Census Policy (CC005)
2. Civic Census Review