

# BRIEFING

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Item # 7.2.1

Returning Officer Briefing to  
Combined Meeting of Council  
2021 September 13

ISC: UNRESTRICTED  
C2021-1335

## Returning Officer's Response to 2021 June 21 Request from Council

### PURPOSE OF BRIEFING

At the 2021 June 21 Combined Meeting of Council, Council passed the following Motion:

That with respect to Report C2021-0504, the following Motion Arising be adopted:

That Council request Elections Calgary to consider implementing "vote anywhere" advance polls at a minimum at City Hall and on post-secondary campuses for the 2021 election.

The purpose of this Briefing is to provide a response to Council's request and a summary of available voting opportunities for the 2021 October 18 General Election.

### SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The October 18, 2021 General Election has been planned differently than previous General Elections due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Elections Canada recently shared similar messages about the differences that the 2021 September 20 Federal Election brings, in particular due to COVID-19. Elections Calgary's 2021 community-wide voting opportunities have been designed to ensure, among other things:

- Reasonable management over the number of voters, candidates, scrutineers and election officials in each voting space. To date, there are 157 candidates in the municipal election and 6 in the senate election. Candidates and scrutineers from all campaigns are legally entitled to remain in the voting station to observe the voting process in all voting stations. With reduced capacity and distancing protocols in facilities used by Elections Calgary, overall capacity can be reached quickly, resulting in inefficiencies and at worst, voters choosing not to vote due to crowding.
- Election officials' ability to sanitize surfaces, ballot privacy sleeves and vote tabulators between electors without compromising the efficiency of the process.
- Election officials' maintenance of ballot allocation and control, which is especially critical given the complexity of ballots in this election.
- Spaces are larger and accessible to electors with disabilities.
- Reasonable efforts can be made to communicate with voting station attendees, should contact tracing be required.

Elections Calgary carefully considered the feedback of Council, the Calgary Student Alliance (CSA), candidates and consulted with post-secondary institution administrators to determine options on how to deliver a safe and efficient campus vote. As indicated on 2021 June 21, a "vote anywhere" model will not be instituted in this General Election. Advance voting is

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community-based, with additional advance voting stations and available hours located in close proximity to electors' residences.

With the August release of campus COVID-19 protocols for visitors, campus voting opportunities have now been finalized with Bow Valley College, Mount Royal University, SAIT and the University of Calgary. In support of COVID-19 safety protocols and efficiency, while "vote anywhere" will not be implemented, Elections Calgary will offer two assigned voting stations in each post-secondary institution. One will offer ballots for electors from Wards 1-7 and the other for Wards 8-14. The two stations will be located close to each other and will be open over two days, with extended hours. Details are provided for in Attachment 1. It should be noted that public access at some campuses may be restricted and require proof of vaccination or completion of a rapid response test prior to entry. All campus voting opportunities are subject to change, should post-secondary institutions implement further COVID-19-related access restrictions.

In addition to community-based advance voting and post-secondary voting opportunities, in light of the entry restrictions being lifted for The City of Calgary Municipal Complex in July, a downtown voting opportunity will be established at City Hall between October 4 and 8, 8 am to 7 pm daily. Like the post-secondary vote, two assigned voting spaces separated by wards will be established in City Hall and may be subject to change, should The City implement further COVID-19-related access restrictions.

To ensure accessibility for all Calgarians, Elections Calgary has partnered with Calgary Transit to offer two free transit tickets for voters, similar to the program established for the Telus Convention Centre vaccination clinic. As well, Elections Calgary has partnered with the Calgary Public Library to offer a "Plan My Vote" tool, which will help those new to the voting process to make their plan for voting. Details will be shared on the Elections Calgary website, when available.

In August, these voting opportunity arrangements were shared with the CSA and candidates. In September, Elections Calgary will be sending each residence in Calgary information about all city voting opportunities.

## **Next Steps**

Elections Calgary will continue to closely monitor the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as Elections Canada's plans for the September 20, 2021 Federal Election. Elections Calgary continues to partner with our stakeholders and post-secondary institutions to ensure all electors are provided with clear and consistent information about their voting opportunities.

## **ATTACHMENT**

1. 2021 October 18 Voting Opportunities Infographics