



# Memo

October 24, 2017

**To:** His Worship Mayor Nenshi and Members of Council

**From:** Laura Kennedy, City Clerk and Returning Officer

**Re: 2017 General Election**

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I would like to offer my congratulations on your election to City Council. My team in the City Clerk's Office looks forward to working with you over the next four years. I hope you enjoyed the Swearing-In Ceremony yesterday.

I wanted to provide you with an update of my activities as Returning Officer since the election.

Staff in the Elections Office spent last week verifying results and reviewing statements required from each Deputy Returning Officer present at individual voting stations. These actions resulted in my releasing official election results last Friday.

I am continuing to advance the process review I spoke of when we apologised to Calgarians last Tuesday morning for the wait times they incurred when trying to vote and the technology issues resulting in delays reporting election results. I promised to provide The City's Administrative Leadership Team and Council with a full report on these matters by fourth quarter 2018. My report will include required investments in technology and improved processes to address these matters and other suggestions and feedback received during and after the election. I wanted to share with you some information I have gathered to date.

For the 2017 General Election, the Election Office implemented a number of new initiatives to increase voter turnout and improve access to voting opportunities. The number of advance voting stations was increased, extended hours were offered at some advance voting stations and we provided new and innovative options for voting such as drive-up voting. We expanded public education efforts to share information on how and where to vote, developed a website for candidates to provide them with an opportunity to post a profile, video and information on their campaign platform and offered two free transit tickets in brochures delivered to every household to facilitate access to voting stations on Election Day.

The excitement around the election and these new initiatives contributed to Calgary experiencing its highest voter turnout in over 40 years. 387,583 of 666,663 enumerated electors voted, resulting in a voter turnout of 58.13%. By way of comparison, voter turnout was 39.43% in 2013.

Delays in election night results being available online as votes were being tallied was caused in part by the volume of hits to the election website. 3.2 million hits were received between 8:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. This is the highest number of hits ever for a civic election in Calgary. During the peak time of 9:00 to 10:00 p.m., there were 1.5 million hits to the elections website. This is 417 hits per second. In previous elections, web hits averaged 1 million for the entire evening, with just over 318,000 hits during the peak time of 9:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

In regard to long line ups at election day voting stations and concerns about shortages of ballots, it is clear that our method and pace of distributing ballots to voting stations resulted in frustration for Calgarians and candidates on election day. Staffing at and the location of voting stations will be reviewed to ensure we can properly manage voters at their assigned voting station.

Elections Office staff thought that distributing the percentage of ballots to election day voting stations dispensed in previous elections would be sufficient. The significantly larger turnout than in past elections meant that was not the case. We ordered 105% of the ballots required for all elections. We only delivered a portion of the related ballots to the election day voting station. We had two methods to provide

additional ballots – distribution by a Ward Based Area Supervisor or from the Election Office. Both methods of alternative delivery and our initial distribution will be examined for improvements.

I am also examining how line ups can be reduced through allowing deputy returning officers at election day voting stations to be able to re-distribute ballots better among themselves.

As stated to Calgarians on October 17, we know we have to do better for our citizens and candidates. I will be continuing with the robust review of all processes used for the current election and will begin reporting back to you by the last Council meeting in December 2017 on the results of my initial review. We will be retaining independent expertise to assist in examining and evaluating processes and possible solutions. Here are my initial thoughts on areas that will be reviewed:

1. Ballot supply, demand and distribution;
2. Voting station placement and accessibility;
3. Voting methodologies;
4. Staffing at voting stations;
5. Information sharing capabilities;
6. Methods to expedite publication of election results; and
7. Any process determined to be unresponsive to voter's expectations of a positive voting experience.

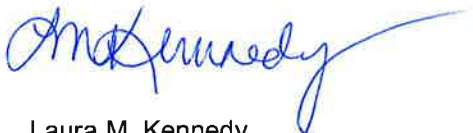
I welcome your thoughts on other areas of review.

In Edmonton, the City Auditor has observed and reported to the Audit Committee on all general elections conducted since 1989. I have engaged with Calgary's City Auditor to discuss establishing a similar work plan during a general election year.

I have also asked the City Auditor to conduct a root-cause analysis audit of the 2017 General Election in early 2018. The City Auditor, subject to resource availability, will provide information on this work to the December 14, 2017 meeting of the Audit Committee.

I am honoured to have been a part of the Swearing-In Ceremony and I look forward to working with you as your City Clerk over the next four years.

Yours truly,



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