

**Returning Officer's Report to  
2026 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games Committee  
2018 May 29**

**ISC: UNRESTRICTED  
OPC2018-0655  
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## **Discussion on Vote of the Electors (Plebiscite)**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report presents considerations for the parameters required to create a question around a Vote of the Electors (Plebiscite) in respect to the 2026 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games (OPWG).

### **RETURNING OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The 2026 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games Assessment Council Committee recommends that Council:

1. Ask the Returning Officer to return to Council no later than Q3 2018 with recommendations on a date for the Vote of the Electors, which may include a Saturday, and recommendations for funding; and
2. Approve the following question: "Do you support or do you oppose The City of Calgary's participation in hosting the 2026 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games?"
  - \_ Yes, I support The City of Calgary's participation.
  - \_ No, I oppose The City of Calgary's participation."

OR

### **ALTERNATIVE RECOMMENDATION:**

2. Request that the Returning Officer return to Council no later than Q3 2018 with potential questions and explanations.

### **PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY**

***At the Strategic Council Meeting on March 21, 2018***

***Motion Arising with Respect to Olympic Bid Dialogue Stage Update, C2018-0505***

Moved by Councillor Colley-Urquhart, Seconded by Councillor Jones:

"That with respect to Report C2018-0505, Recommendation 6 be adopted as follows:  
That Council:

6. Endorse in principle a Vote of the Electors (plebiscite) on this issue, and direct Administration to commence work on the plebiscite and return to Council through the 2026 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games Council Committee with details on the question, timing, and funding of the plebiscite no later than June 2018."

### **BACKGROUND**

#### **Legislation**

Rules for a Council-initiated Vote of the Electors are governed by Section 236 of the *Municipal Government Act* ("MGA"). The MGA provides that Council may conduct a Vote of the Electors, however, the legislation specifically indicates that the result of the vote does not bind Council.

A Vote of the Electors is conducted in accordance with the *Local Authorities Election Act* ("LAEA"). Individuals eligible to vote are defined in the LAEA as electors.

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Only Calgaryans who meet the requirements under the Local Authorities Election Act of an "elector" may vote. Electors must:

- Be at least 18 years old;
- Be a Canadian citizen;
- Have resided in Alberta for the six months immediately preceding the date of the vote;
- Be a resident of the city of Calgary on the date of the vote; and
- Provide one of the authorized pieces of identification.

### **Other Olympic Bids**

In 2003, shortly after their 2002 municipal election, the City of Vancouver held a plebiscite in relation to hosting the 2010 Olympics. The vote took place during their bid phase, days before the Evaluation Commission visited and only a few months before the International Olympic Committee (IOC) vote.

The question used in Vancouver's 2003 plebiscite was formed by Vancouver's City Council:

"Do you support or do you oppose the City of Vancouver's participation in hosting the 2010 Olympic Winter Games and Paralympic Winter Games?"

\_ Yes, I support the City of Vancouver's participation.

\_ No, I oppose the City of Vancouver's participation."

During the Vancouver plebiscite, "for" and "against" coalitions were created ad-hoc and were not required to register with the City of Vancouver.

## **INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS**

### **Vote of the Electors**

The Returning Officer will report the result of the Vote of the Electors to the question asked. The result will reflect sentiment at that time. It may not determine ongoing public opinion, which can change.

### **The Vote Question**

The question for the Vote of the Electors must be clear, direct and neutral. Ideally, the question should be capable of being answered with a "yes" or "no". Voters must be able to easily understand the question and response explanations. Parameters surrounding the question need to be defined before exact wording can be determined.

It should be determined if the wording used in the Vancouver Olympic Vote could be re-purposed. If not, parameters to determine the question will need to be defined. For example:

1. What is the outcome (answer) for the vote?
2. Is the question about bidding or hosting the 2026 OPWG, or some other topic?
3. At what point in the process will the vote take place (i.e. what information will the public have available to them before they vote)?

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### **Timing of the Vote**

A Vote of the Electors in 2018 is recommended to take place in early November as holding it in October would provide limited time for planning and preparation and holding it in December faces issues with facility rentals due to holiday events.

Consideration should also be given to understanding what additional information is required in order for citizens to be able to cast their vote and the timing of public engagement and the non-statutory public hearing. Potential dates for the vote could include a Saturday.

### **“For” and “Against” Coalitions**

The difficulty with this type of vote is that there is no formal channel to obtain the additional information. The LAEA limits the number of registrations of scrutineers to only one representative for each side of the vote. These representatives would be the key individuals that the Returning Officer would communicate with on legislated processes (i.e. voting opportunities and scrutineers) and direct the public to obtain more information from.

It is recommended that “for” and “against” coalitions register with the Returning Officer in order to have:

- Official representatives for each side identified publicly;
- The ability for each side to register scrutineers to watch the count of the vote; and
- To provide an official contact for the Election Office should it be required.

### **Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication**

The Returning Officer looked at referenda and plebiscites previously conducted by other cities in relation to Olympic questions. In addition, the Returning Officer reached out to the City of Vancouver to better understand the parameters of their Olympic Question, how their question was formed and what challenges they had with conducting their vote.

Public education, legislated advertising and forms associated with the vote would be limited to providing the wording of the question and related explanations. The Returning Officer and Election Office cannot provide additional commentary, explanations or details either before, during or after the vote. Any additional information, such as economic, social or financial impacts related to the question, are left to the voters to obtain through other channels such as open houses, social media, traditional news outlets or other engagement strategies.

### **Strategic Alignment**

This report aligns with Council's priority of a well-run city: “Calgary's government is open, responsive, accountable and transparent, delivering excellent services at a fair price. We work with our government partners to ensure we have the tools we need” (Action Plan, 2015-2018).

### **Financial Capacity**

#### ***Current and Future Operating Budget:***

The source of funding is currently being investigated and, prior to establishing the date of the vote, will be confirmed.

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To conduct a city-wide election, the anticipated cost would be approximately \$1.96 million. These costs would include the following:

- hiring and training 3,000 workers for the various vote opportunities (\$1,000,000);
- rental of locations (\$80,000);
- purchasing and distributing supplies (\$80,000);
- technology and related support (\$200,000);
- printing ballots and legislated forms (\$100,000);
- advertisements and public education information, household voter card and postage (\$400,000); and
- contingency (consultant to develop a question and explanations in English and other languages) (\$100,000).

### **Risk Assessment**

In order to successfully deliver a Vote of the Electors, it is important that the question is clear, direct and neutral. A lack of clarity around the question may cause confusion and lead to misleading results. Committee and Council must approve the question.

As well, it will be important to have the question developed and explanations available in English and other languages to be used to inform electors of the vote.

Due to the limited time frame, a Vote of the Electors would provide a legislated democratic process with basic voting opportunities.

The cost to run a Vote of the Electors is estimated to be \$1.96 million and expending this amount may be viewed negatively by the public.

### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

In order to successfully deliver a Vote of the Electors, a question that is clear, direct and neutral must be developed and approved. In developing a question, direction must be given to the Returning Officer to facilitate the creation of a question and explanations.