

City of Mississauga
Corporate Report



<p>Date: February 3, 2025</p> <p>To: Mayor and Members of General Committee</p>	<p>Originator's files:</p>
<p>From: Diana Rusnov, Director, Legislative Services and City Clerk</p>	<p>Meeting date: February 19, 2025</p>

Subject

2024 Mayoral and Ward 5 By-election Overview

Recommendation

That the Corporate Report dated January 10, 2025, from the Director of Legislative Services and City Clerk, entitled 2024 Mayoral and Ward 5 By-election Overview be received.

Executive Summary

- The 2024 Mayoral and Ward 5 By-election was held on June 10, 2024.
- Advance Poll Days were held on May 24 and 25 and June 1 and 2, 2024.
- Voter turnout was 25.71 per cent for the by-election as compared to 21.84 per cent in 2022 and 26.49 per cent in 2018.
- This report has been compiled in collaboration with the Strategic Communications and Initiatives Division to provide an overview of the 2024 by-election

Background

The 2024 Mayoral and Ward 5 by-election was held on June 10, 2024. The purpose of this report is to provide statistics and general information regarding the by-election, including the campaign contribution rebate program. The report also provides statistics related to past general and by-elections to provide context.

Comments

General and By-election Information and Statistics

The following chart provides information comparing election statistics dating back to 2010. It includes information related to general elections and by-elections.

	2010	2011*	2014	2015*	2018	2022	2024*
Voter turnout	34.5%	27.01%	35.65%	21.02%	26.49%	21.84%	25.71%
Number of advance poll days	4	2	13	3	4	7	4
Total number of voting hours	38	24	101	24	34	60	42
Voting locations on advance poll days	1 location on Oct. 14 and 15. 2 locations per ward on Oct. 16 and 17; voters could vote at one of the two locations in their Ward.	4 locations on Sep. 10 and 11.	1 location on Sep. 29 to Oct. 11. 22 locations on Oct. 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8; voters could vote at any of these locations.	1 location on Apr. 13, 18 and 19.	1 location on Oct. 5 and 6. 22 locations on Oct. 13 and 14; voters could vote at any of these locations.	1 location on Oct. 7, 8 and 9. 22 locations on Oct. 13, 14, 15, and 16; voters could vote at any of these locations.	1 location on May 24 and 25. 22 locations on Jun. 1 and 2; voters could vote at any of these locations.
Number of voting locations on election day	165	18	163	10	166	162	155
Number of candidates	118	27	159	26	154	131	37
Number of candidate information sessions	0	0	0	0	1	2	1

*By-election

Notes on the statistics provided above:

- 2011 was a Ward 5 by-election.
- 2014 was an election where the Mayor seat was open (Hazel McCallion retired).
- 2015 was a Ward 4 by-election.
- 2024 was a Mayoral and Ward 5 by-election.
- The number of voting days includes election day.

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- The number of voting locations includes long term care homes and hospitals. In accordance with section 45(7) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, (MEA) as amended, the Clerk is required to provide a voting place on the premises of:
 - An institution which, on a certain date preceding the election has 20 or more beds occupied by persons who are “disabled, chronically ill or infirm”; and
 - A retirement home which, on a certain date preceding the election has 50 or more beds that are occupied.

Voter Turnout

There was an increase in voter turnout during the 2024 Mayoral and Ward 5 by-election compared to the turnout in 2022. It is possible that increased media attention and the number of debates that groups organized helped increase awareness causing more people to vote.

Voters' List

In January 2024, responsibility for municipal Voters' Lists in Ontario was transferred from the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) to Elections Ontario (EO). It is estimated that during the 2024 by-election, the number of revisions was reduced by 50 per cent. This could be due, in part, to EO taking over responsibility for the list but could also be because school support information was not required to determine ballot type. School support information will be required for the 2026 general election. Staff anticipate that this may impact the number of revisions that voters make to the Voters' List. Using school support information during the 2026 general election may provide more insight into whether the accuracy of the data has improved.

Election Workers

Approximately 1,700 individual election workers were hired to work at voting locations during the 2024 by-election.

The type and amount of training an election worker received was based on their position. They participated in approximately 1 to 3 hours of training which could include:

- Self-directed training through studying manuals
- Self-directed training through an online training module
- In-person instructor led training
- Virtual instructor led training
- Mandatory hands-on training for election workers using election technology
- Training videos

Of the 1,700 election workers, just over 800 were City staff. Due to the importance of having City staff work during elections, it is recommended that election leadership positions be identified as development opportunities by the Corporation. To do this, staff are looking at developing an elections leadership program.

Voting Locations

During the 2024 By-election, 155 voting locations were established. The type of facilities used were as follows:

Facility Type	Number used on Advance Poll Days	Number used on Election Day
City facilities	17	18
School board facilities	0 Dufferin Peel Catholic District School Board facilities. 5 Peel District School Board facilities.	99
Mandatory location (hospitals, long term care and retirement residences)	0 as per the MEA, Mandatory locations must be established for Election Day voting.	37

The Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board could not accommodate voting locations on Advance Poll Days. There was a charge of just under \$10,600 to use the Peel Districts School Board facilities for Advance Polls. This total includes rental and custodial fees.

Staff used two main methods of analysis to identify voting locations as follows:

- Walksheds – staff used GIS mapping tools to look at what communities might lack a voting location and worked toward establishing locations where there were gaps.
- Voter turnout – staff looked at previous voter turnout to determine if additional voting locations were required in a community, or if there were under utilized locations.

Use of Voting Technology

During the 2024 By-election, optical scan vote counting tabulators (tabulators) were used to scan ballots and generate results. This system has been used since 2000.

Staff will report to Council in 2025 regarding the use of election technology for the 2026 general election. Staff will recommend using the same system used in 2024 along with the ExpressVote Universal Voting (ExpressVote) used during the 2022 general election. The ExpressVote system allows voters to electronically and independently mark their ballot using a touch screen

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and a variety of accessible tools. The system also has the capability to print ballots on demand which streamlines the process on Advance Poll Days.

Candidate Financial System

For the second time, the Candidate Financial System, supplied by DataFix, was provided to candidates as a way for them to complete their Financial Statement – Auditor’s Report Candidate – Form 4 (Financial Statement). A major benefit of the system is that candidates can enter and track contributions and expenses. This can help candidates catch mistakes before submitting their Financial Statements.

The system was also used to administer the Campaign Contribution Rebate Program. During the first year of the program, candidates were only able to issue hard copy request forms. At Council’s direction, the ability to issue electronic request forms was implemented for the 2022 and 2024 elections. Staff are considering allowing only the use of electronic rebate request forms for the 2026 general election. This is due to the intense administrative process involved with processing hard copy forms. Using electronic forms also:

- Improves the accuracy of information included on rebate request forms; this is because information is required on the electronic form which cannot be skipped.
- Allows staff to more easily vet rebate requests for legitimacy.
- Eliminates carbon copy request forms which can be difficult to read.

Campaign Contribution Rebate Program

For a third election, the City offered the Campaign Contribution Rebate program. This program provides eligible contributors with a rebate on their campaign contributions to candidates. Eligibility requirements and the rebate formula can be found in the *By-law to authorize the implementation of a City of Mississauga Municipal Election Campaign Contribution Rebate Program for the 2022-2026 Term of Council* attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

The rebate payouts for each election are as follows:

Election Year	Amount paid out in rebates (numbers rounded)
2018 General Election	\$35,900
2022 General Election	\$711,000
2024 Mayoral and Ward 5 by-election	\$903,000*

*This is the amount paid out based on the primary Financial Statement filing. The supplementary Financial Statements are due March 26, 2025 and additional rebates may be paid out if candidates received additional campaign contributions.

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The rebate calculation formula was changed after the 2018 general election which contributed to the increase in rebate payouts. The 2018 formula can be found on the *By-law to authorize the implementation of a City of Mississauga Municipal Election Campaign Contribution Rebate Program for the 2018 Municipal Election* attached as Appendix 2 for comparison.

Use of City Resources during an Election Campaign

Staff are conducting a review of the *Use of City Resources during an Election Campaign Corporate Policy and Procedure* and will be reporting to Governance Committee later in 2025 with recommendations.

Election Communications

The following is an overview of election communication initiatives:

Marketing and communications overview

Marketing and communications efforts for the 2024 by-election were focused on delivering accurate, timely and accessible information to inform eligible Mississauga voters and candidates about the 2024 by-election for Mayor and Ward 5 Councillor.

For this by-election, it was important that candidates and eligible voters were aware that Mississauga Council had two vacancies: Mayor of Mississauga and Ward 5 Councillor – and that was the reason a by-election was taking place so soon after the election in 2022.

The public campaign shared information to help eligible voters and candidates understand why a by-election was happening and how to participate in the by-election. This included:

- Education about the importance of voting and what this by-election means for Mississauga.
- Showcasing the opportunity and requirements to run as a candidate.
- When, where and how to vote.

The marketing and communications campaign leveraged Mississauga residents' increased adoption and reliance on digital and social media, while still providing print materials in order to reach those who prefer them. All information about the election was available on the mississaugavotes.ca website.

Information was tailored according to the election cycle and implemented in the following phases:

- Phase 1: Announcement of the by-election for Mayor and Ward 5 Councillor.
- Phase 2: Recruitment of staff (internally and externally).
- Phase 3: Voter awareness for advance voting days and election day.
- Phase 4: Results of election day.

Voter Turnout

The 2024 by-election had higher voter turnout (25.71 per cent) compared to the 2022 Election (21.84 per cent). However, it's important to note that voter turnout cannot be directly attributed to communications and marketing efforts alone. Research shows that many factors contribute to voter turnout. Local governments have the responsibility to provide timely and accurate information about the election and promote the act of voting, but they do not control voter turnout. In this by-election, several factors likely contributed to this increase including the fact that it was the only by-election in the Greater Toronto Area at the time and involved electing a new mayor.

Media Coverage

The 2024 by-election received significant media coverage due to the unique circumstances of the election. In a typical election year, municipalities across Ontario hold elections on the same day, competing for media coverage. However, since this by-election was the only one in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), all media was focused on Mississauga. As a result, the City attracted coverage from major broadcast and local outlets across the GTA, including CTV Toronto, CBC Toronto, CP24, The Toronto Star, Global News Toronto, Insauga, The Weekly Voice, and the Mississauga News. There were more than 2,000 stories written about the by-election.

Mayoral Debates

The mayoral debates played a large role in raising awareness about the by-election and each candidate's platform. As the by-election was for Mayor of Mississauga, several organizations and resident groups were eager to host debates and meetings. Throughout May, at least 10 debates took place leading up to the by-election. These debates provided residents with the opportunity to hear from candidates on issues that mattered most to them, such as property tax increases, affordable housing, food insecurity, increased crime and the need for safe and walkable communities.

Key Messages

The communications campaign was divided into four phases, each with its own set of key messages.

Phase 1: Announcement of a by-election for Mayor and Ward 5 Councillor and candidate awareness information

- We're looking for a new Mayor and Ward 5 Councillor to lead Mississauga into the future. The date of the 2024 by-election is Monday, June 10, 2024.
- A by-election is an election that happens during the council or school board term. It occurs when a seat becomes vacant on a council or school board. A by-election is then held to fill the vacancy.
- The nomination period is now open for those interested in applying to become the Mayor of Mississauga or Ward 5 Councillor. To register, you must complete the nomination

package and book an appointment to meet in-person with an Election Official to file your completed package.

- A free candidate information session is being held on Tuesday, March 26 from 6 to 10 p.m. for those interested or just considering running for Ward 5 Councillor or Mayor of Mississauga.

Phase 2: Recruitment of election staff (internally and externally)

- Apply to be an election worker for Mississauga's 2024 By-election. The City is hiring election workers to staff voting locations across Mississauga for the upcoming by-election on Monday, June 10, 2024.
- Make a difference in your community by applying to work in one of the paid positions at a voting location in Mississauga.
- As an election worker, you are required to do up to three-hours of in-person or virtual instruction-led training, depending on the position.

Phase 3: Voter awareness for advance voting and Election Day

- Are you ready to vote? Confirm your information on the voters' list and check the list of official Mayor and Ward 5 Councillor candidates.
- Advance voting locations will be open Friday, May 24 and Saturday, May 25 at Mississauga City Hall, as well as Saturday, June 1 and Sunday, June 2 at 22 advance voting locations across the city. Voters can vote at any advance voting location. Voters in Ward 5 will vote for their Ward 5 Councillor and Mayor. Voters in all other wards will only be voting for Mississauga's Mayor.
- As an eligible voter, it's important to exercise your right and responsibility by participating in the election. Voting has the power to bring change to your community. The people who are elected will make many important decisions including how tax dollars are spent in your community.
- Have your say! Vote for Mississauga Mayor and Ward 5 Councillor on Monday, June 10 from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- You can vote in-person at any location in your ward. You must bring one piece of identification (ID) with you to the voting location like an Ontario driver's licence, Ontario photo card or any other document included on Ontario's acceptable documents for voter identification list.

Phase 4: Results of Election Day

- The City Clerk has certified the results of Mississauga's 2024 By-election and declared them official. Carolyn Parrish was elected as Mayor, receiving 43,494 votes. Natalie Hart was elected as Ward 5 Councillor receiving 3,707 votes.
- The City of Mississauga is holding a Declaration of Office ceremony for Mayor-elect Carolyn Parrish and Councillor-elect Natalie Hart on Monday, June 24, 2024 at 7 p.m. at City Hall in the Council Chamber. The ceremony will see them take their oaths of office for the remainder of the 2022-2026 Council term.

Marketing and communications strategies

Throughout each phase, a variety of tactics and outreach methods were used and targeted a broad, diverse audience across the city which included:

Digital

- Website: The City developed and managed a comprehensive election website (mississaugavotes.ca), serving as the central hub for all by-election information. The site provided timely and relevant resources for voters, candidates, third-party advertisers, election workers and real-time election results. It was continuously updated to align with each phase of the election, offering dynamic features like candidate registration details and live election results to ensure residents had access to the most current information.
- eNewsletter: The City sent out five eNewsletter stories and one eBlast to 29,000 subscribers leading up to the by-election.

Internal communications and Council

- Internal communications: efforts were made to keep City staff aware of the by-election. There were stories posted to the City's intranet (Inside Mississauga) about the upcoming by-election and how to vote. There were also messages sent from the City Manager's Office about the announcement of the by-election as well as encouragement from leadership for staff to volunteer at a polling station during advance voting days and election day.
- Newsletter: the City developed newsletter stories (Council Corner) for Councillors to share in their newsletters to residents about the announcement of the by-election as well as how to vote.
- 311 Knowledge Base (KB) updates: The City's 311 Citizen Contact Centre was kept up-to-date with key messages about the by-election and were able to update residents who had questions.

Media relations, organic social media and community engagement

- News release and media advisories: the City issued 10 news releases and media advisories leading up to the by-election to continue to keep media and residents informed. These were shared with local media, GTA media and diverse media publications.
- Translations: news release and media advisories were translated into the top five languages (Arabic, Polish, Punjabi, Traditional Chinese and Urdu) commonly spoken at home in Mississauga along with French. It is important that all residents were aware that a by-election was taking place, and that they had a voice and the opportunity to participate.
- Organic social media: the City posted organic social media messages on its X, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram accounts to inform residents about the by-election, how to apply to be an election worker, how to nominate yourself as a candidate, how to vote and when to vote.

- Community: the City reached out to various community groups to help share messaging about the by-election and encourage residents to vote.

Marketing and advertising

- Voter Notification Cards: Eligible voters who were on the Voters' List were mailed their voter notification card ahead of the by-election. It shared information about where to vote on advance voting days and election day.
- Mobile road signs and exterior bus boards on MiWay buses: roadside signage was used in all wards in Mississauga to let road users know about the by-election and to get out and vote. Advertising on exterior bus boards was also implemented to share information with transit and road users.
- Digital signage: digital signage was used on Mississauga Celebration Square, community centre, libraries and the overpass signage to let residents know about the by-election and to vote.
- Print and diverse communities advertising: print advertising about the by-election and how to vote was placed in the Toronto Star along with 11 diverse media outlets. The City targeted outlets in the top 11 languages across Mississauga including Arabic, Chinese, French, Hindi, Polish, Punjabi, Spanish, Tagalog, Tamil, Urdu and Vietnamese.
- Programmatic and social media ads: the City placed programmatic advertisements on various websites and social media advertisements on Facebook and Instagram to target residents, eligible voters and candidates to let them know about the by-election, to nominate themselves as a candidate or to get out and vote.

Creative

- Visual assets were developed for use throughout the campaign, some of which are highlighted below. The design aimed to ensure all Mississauga voters felt they were included. The creative look and feel was similar to that of the 2022 election.



Statistics related to communications initiatives

Evaluation of marketing and communication efforts noted the following:

- There were more than 263,000 impressions (the number of times the content was displayed), more than 1,600 engagements (user interactions with a post) and more than 58,400 video views on organic social media posts on the City's corporate channels including X, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram.
- There were more than 4,350 unique clicks on eNewsletter stories and the eBlast.
- There were 1.3 billion impressions through the City's media releases. More than 90 per cent of media articles (online and print) about Mississauga's by-election were positive or neutral. These figures are based on the media outlet's circulation numbers.
- There were more than 550,000 visits to the Mississauga Votes website by more than 329,000 unique viewers. Strong organic search performance brought in more than 129,000 of those visits.

- There were more than eight million impressions on paid advertising efforts including programmatic, multicultural, social media and print advertising. All efforts drove to the dedicated Mississauga Votes website (mississaugavotes.ca).

Financial Impact

The cost of the 2024 by-election was approximately \$2,800,000, which was funded through the Elections reserve. This does not include the amount related to Election Campaign Contribution Rebate Program payouts, which, to date, totals approximately \$903,000.

Conclusion

This report is intended to provide Council with a post election overview of the 2024 by-election. In 2025, staff will report to Governance Committee regarding the *Use of City Resources During an Election Campaign Corporate Policy and Procedure*. Additionally, ahead of the 2026 General Election, staff will report to Council regarding recommended elections technology.

Attachments

Appendix 1: By-law 0205-2021: A by-law to authorize the implementation of a City of Mississauga Municipal Election Campaign Contribution Rebate Program for the 2022-2026 Term of Council

Appendix 2: By-law to authorize the implementation of a City of Mississauga Municipal Election Campaign Contribution Rebate Program for the 2018 Municipal Election



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