

City of Mississauga

Corporate Report



Date: 2020/01/13

To: Chair and Members of Governance Committee

From: Diana Rusnov, Director, Legislative Services and City Clerk

Originator's files:
File names

Meeting date:
1/28/2020

Subject

Ranked Ballot Elections - Review of the City of London's Experience

Recommendation

That the Corporate Report dated January 13, 2020, from the Director of Legislative Services and City Clerk, entitled Ranked Ballot Elections - Review of the City of London's Experience be received.

Report Highlights

- This report looks at the City of London's experience with implementing Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) in the 2018 municipal election.
- In the City of London's experience, voter turnout did not increase with the use of RCV.
- The use of RCV did not change the outcome of the election; the winning candidate in all 15 races in the City of London would have been the same winning candidate had the first past the post system of voting been used.

Background

At the November 4, 2019 Governance Committee meeting it was requested that staff report back to the committee regarding RCV. This report looks at the City of London's experience and the outcomes related to implementing RCV.

Comments

Overview

Prior to the 2018 Municipal Election, Bill 181, the *Municipal Elections Modernization Act, 2016*, amended the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, to allow municipal Councils to implement Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) for municipal elections. In accordance with Ontario Regulation 310/16, RCV, if implemented, would apply to races for municipal council only.

In the City of Mississauga's current first-past-the-post method of voting, voters are allowed to

pick one candidate from each race and the candidate with the most votes wins. There is no requirement for the percentage of votes a candidate must get in order to win a race.

Alternatively, in a RCV election, voters are given the option to rank candidates in order of preference for each race. A candidate must obtain 50% + 1 of the vote to win. Initial results are tabulated based on the first choices of voters. If no candidate obtains 50% + 1 of the vote, a runoff occurs.

In a runoff:

- the candidate with the lowest number of votes is eliminated from the contest
- the first choice votes that originally went to the eliminated candidate are set aside
- the second choices on those ballots are counted

Runoffs continue until a candidate receives 50% + 1 of the vote. There is no legislated requirement regarding how many choices a voter can be given.

The intention of RCV is to:

- Provide more choice for voters
- Discourage negative campaigning
- Eliminate vote splitting
- Reduce strategic voting
- Ensure the candidate with the most support wins

Implementation Summary of Outcomes

During the 2018 Municipal Election the only municipality in Ontario to implement RCV was the City of London. The City of London produced a report entitled “2018 Municipal Election” which summarises their experience with implementing RCV.

<https://pub-london.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=59976>

In their report, the City of London notes the following:

- RCV did not increase voter turnout. The historical voter turnout in the City of London is as follows:
 - 2010 turnout = 42.93%
 - 2014 turnout = 43.2%
 - 2018 turnout = 39.46%
- The winning candidate in all 15 races would have been the winning candidate had the election been a first-past-the-post election; RCV did not change the outcome
- For the Mayoral race:
 - 47% of voters made three choices
 - 22% marked their first and second choice
 - 30% ranked one candidate

Challenges Related to RCV Implementation

A summary of the challenges related to the implementation of RCV as reported by the City of London and the City of Kingston, which also produced a report on the City of London's experience with RCV, include:

Vote Counting Technology

- As the City of London was the first municipality to implement RCV, they requested that the Province consider certifying the vote-counting equipment, the Province declined
- The City of London requested funding from the Province to pay for an auditor to monitor a review the RCV process, this request was also declined
- As it was the first year that RCV was permitted, the City of London hired their own independent auditor to review the City's RCV procedures

Results Reporting

- On election night, only the first choice votes were tabulated
- For races requiring a runoff, additional rounds of ballot counting began at 10am the next day and unofficial results were announced by 3pm.
- Generally, it is anticipated that in an RCV election results will take longer to post. On election night, poll by poll results are irrelevant until all results are added since all results must be counted to determine the 50%+1

Voter Education

- The City of London felt that education and communication was vital to ensure that voters were aware of the change in how to vote and how the votes would be calculated
- The City of London spent \$141,000 on community outreach related to RCV to communicate to their 248,000 voters
- In their "2018 Municipal Election" report the City of London notes:

The enhanced communication protocols... was very labour intensive, with all the Elections staff and Managers in the City Clerk's Office working evenings and weekends attending events, including festivals, community meetings and meetings of organizations

- To communicate to voters, City of London staff:
 - held two candidate information sessions
 - attended 160 community events
 - increased communication over social media platforms
 - conducted voting demonstrations for the media
- The City of London's website, billboards and bus shelters were used to help with communication

Expenses

- The additional cost of implementing RCV for the City of London was \$515,446
- A comprehensive breakdown of the expenses related to the City of London's implementation of RCV is included on page 8 of their Report, but highlights include:
 - \$147,752 spent on an independent auditor
 - \$41,000 spent on additional election workers
 - \$82,686 spent on staff resources, including a full time communications staff

City of Kingston

As previously noted the City of Kingston produced a report entitled "*City of London Experiences with Ranked Choice Voting*" which also explores the City of London's experience with implementing RCV.

https://www.cityofkingston.ca/documents/10180/35286121/City-Council_Meeting-17-2019_Report-19-165_City-of-London-Experiences-with-Ranked-Choice-Voting_UPDATED.pdf/a754749e-cb6d-4dcb-95f6-e0bd2bcecacb

The City of Kingston's City Council have directed staff to implement RCV for the 2022 Municipal Election.

Financial Impact

The financial impact of implementing RCV is dependent on:

- If the City of Mississauga determines it necessary to hire an independent auditor
- Communications initiatives employed
- Additional staffing costs required to provide I.T. and administrative support
- Additional election workers required at the voting locations to assist and explain the process

Other possible dependencies include potentially having to upgrade the vote counting equipment and software.

Conclusion

Staff will continue to research and review new technology with the intention of making voting easier and more convenient for voters while upholding the principles of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*.

Governance Committee

2020/01/13

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Originatorsfiles: File names

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