

Report to Council



Date: November 14, 2022
To: Council
From: City Manager
Subject: 2022 Election Results and Ballot Account
Department: Office of the City Clerk

Recommendation:

THAT Council receives, for information, the report from the Office of the City Clerk dated November 14, 2022 with respect to the 2022 election results and ballot account.

AND THAT Council directs staff to review Election Sign Bylaw No. 10411, as outlined in the report from the Office of the City Clerk dated November 14, 2022, and report back to Council.

Purpose:

To receive the final results and ballot account for the City of Kelowna 2022 General Local Election.

Background:

The 2022 general local election was held on Saturday October 15, 2022. A total of 34,851 voters cast ballots in the election, representing 30.31% of the estimated 115,000 eligible voters. The attached Declaration of Official Results and Ballot Account lists the votes cast for each candidate and provides the summary of ballot accounts as required under the *Local Government Act*.

Discussion:

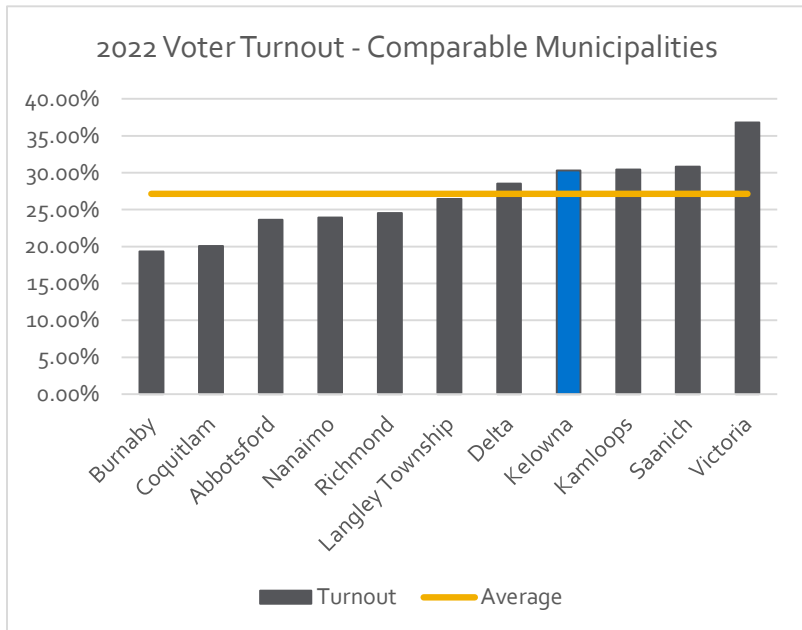
The election follows the principles of fairness, transparency, accessibility, integrity, and awareness. In keeping with these principles, voting opportunities were held across six days along with special and mail ballot voting. Voting locations included public facilities, schools, post-secondary institutions, and community centres. The voter assist terminal was available every voting day at Parkinson Recreation Centre. Special voting was held at nine long-term care homes and Kelowna General Hospital.

To staff the number of voting opportunities, over 380 positions were filled by individuals hired and trained as Presiding Election Officials, Alternate Presiding Election Officials, and Election Officials. Training focuses on the election principles and their role in maintaining the integrity of the election through the registration process and protecting the secrecy of the ballot.

Staff worked with School District No. 23 to involve 18 high school students as volunteer greeters at several locations on general voting day. Students earned credits towards their community service requirements for graduation and gained experience with the civic election process.

A variety of methods were used to inform residents of their opportunity to vote. These included voter information cards mailed to all households in Kelowna; advertising on the radio, in newspapers, at civic facilities, and in BC Transit buses; social media; a video to encourage turnout; displays at public facilities; news releases; and emails via e-subscribe. Detailed information for voters, candidates, and election workers was posted to the City's website and updated regularly.

Among 10 similar sized municipalities in BC, Kelowna's voter turnout is above the average of 27.12% as shown in the figure to the right. Kelowna's turnout remained very steady from 2018 to 2022 with a decrease of 0.12%. The average change in the same group of municipalities was a decrease of 8.42% with those municipalities seeing 0.21% to 16.42% fewer voters in 2022.



While the reasons for these decreases are unknown and likely vary, staff will continue to plan elections based on the principles of making voting accessible and making voters aware of their opportunities to vote.

Election Signs

The Election Sign Bylaw regulates the type, size, placement, and timing of election signs. It applies to elections across all levels of government. The Bylaw was established in 2010 and last amended in 2014. During this election, Bylaw Services responded to 73 service requests (SRs) for election sign compliance. This includes issues reported by the public and by Bylaw Enforcement Officers. This is a significant increase from the 19 SRs in 2018, due in part to changes in how complaints and Officer-generated action are reported and tracked.

Maps showing the 100 m area around voting locations where no campaigning or advertising is permitted on voting days were included in the candidate information package and available on the City website. Staff saw fewer infractions of this regulation compared to past elections.

Staff have concerns with safety and property damage resulting from rebar and other structures supporting signs. Rebar in boulevards can damage public infrastructure like irrigation lines or mowing equipment and creates tripping hazards for pedestrians when left in the ground after the election.

Staff recommend Council direct staff to review the Election Sign Bylaw and report back to Council with options to address these concerns through updated regulations and enforcement.

Voting by Mail Ballot

New this year, voting by mail ballot was available to all eligible voters instead of only those who were unable to attend any voting opportunity in-person due to illness, injury, or being out of town. The 2022 General Local Government Election Bylaw establishes procedures for voting by mail ballot.

Staff received 1,995 requests for mail ballot packages and 1,060 mail ballots were accepted. This volume shows a high level of interest in voting by mail ballot, far exceeding that of past elections and higher than estimated. A detailed breakdown of packages is in the table below.

Requested	1,995
Returned – accepted	1,060
Returned – rejected	36
Returned – after Oct. 15 deadline (rejected)	65
Unreturned	751
Other (e.g., not picked up, ineligible, duplicate)	83

Voting by mail ballot can be a convenient and accessible option for those who are unable to go or uncomfortable with going to a voting location in-person. It also presents administrative challenges for both staff and voters, the most significant of which is the time constraint for making ballot packages available after the withdrawal period and testing of ballots. The earliest mail ballot packages can be ready is approximately one week before the first advance voting day, which reduces the value of voting by mail for those who will be out of town during voting opportunities.

Preparing, delivering, and managing a high volume of mail ballots requires specific materials and significant staff resources. The estimated cost was \$14,000, not including staff time during regular office hours.

Based on this year's experience, staff have several recommendations if voting by mail is used in the next election:

- Encourage voters to pick up mail ballot packages instead of receiving them by mail;
- Hire an Election Clerk dedicated to preparing for and managing the mail ballot process, along with support from Office of the City Clerk staff; and
- Update the bylaw to clarify deadlines and procedures for processing mail ballot packages.

Conclusion:

Staff are completing a debrief of the 2022 election plan, including budget, administration, staffing, and communication. This includes documenting challenges, opportunities, and recommendations for future election planning. These recommendations, along with ongoing research and discussion, will explore different ways of informing citizens leading up to elections, election space and staffing needs, and the bylaws that guide election procedures, sign regulations, and voting by mail ballot.

Internal Circulation:

Communications

Considerations applicable to this report:

Legal/Statutory Authority:

Local Government Act, Part 3 Electors and Election

Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements:

Local Government Act, s. 158 Report of election results

Existing Policy:

[2022 General Local Government Election Bylaw No. 12393](#) – establishes election procedures

[Automated Voting Machines Authorization Bylaw No. 10970](#) – establishes use of automated vote counting system and vote tabulating units

[Election Sign Bylaw No. 10411](#) – regulates duration, placement, number, size of election signs

[Elector Registration Bylaw No. 10547](#) – establishes same day voter registration

Financial/Budgetary Considerations:

The 2022 election budget included funding for a 6-month Election Clerk to assist in the preparation and administration of the election, with additional support from staff in the Office of the City Clerk and other departments. Additional staff will be needed to deliver the same level of service in 2026 as the scale and scope of running the election increases.

Final election costs are being processed. Staff anticipate being within the approved budget of \$331,000 for the election, Council orientation, and the Inaugural Meeting of Council.

External Agency/Public Comments:

Communications Comments:

Considerations not applicable to this report:

Submitted by:

L. Bentley, Chief Election Officer / Deputy City Clerk

Approved for inclusion: S. Fleming, City Clerk

Attachments:

Declaration of Official Election Results and Summary of Ballot Accounts

cc:

Province of BC – Queen’s Printer