



LOWER MAINLAND

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL REPORT AND RESOLUTIONS

**TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE 2021
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

TO BE HELD VIRTUALLY ON THURSDAY, MAY 13th, 2021

ELECTIONS

R5 Local Choice: Tools to Improve Representation in Local Government Elections

City of Vancouver

Whereas local government elections in British Columbia typically see low levels of engagement, and result in inadequate representation of Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour residents, women, and renters;

And whereas there is no one-size-fits-all solution for local elections; recognizing that each local government:

- has unique challenges, history, size and demographics; and
- is best positioned to tailor their local election system and rules to respond to local issues and needs, if provided with the tools and options:

Therefore be it resolved that UBCM request that the Province establish legislation that grants local governments the power to consider, choose and adopt more inclusive voting systems (such as the opt-in provisions for municipal ranked ballot voting described in the Province of Ontario's *Municipal Elections Modernization Act, 2016*) as a means of improving representation and racial diversity on Councils and Boards in future elections.

Comments:

The Resolutions Committee advises that the UBCM membership has not previously considered a resolution asking the Province to create legislation that grants municipalities the power to consider, choose and adopt more inclusive voting systems as a means of improving representation and racial diversity on Council in future elections.

The Committee notes that the membership has supported legislative changes to encourage greater voter engagement by allowing permanent residents to vote (2019-B109); implement online voting opportunities (2019-B14); reducing the voting age to 16 (2019-B108); and enhance mail ballot processes to provide greater voting opportunities (2016-B65).

These previous resolutions all speak to province-wide changes to enhance overall voter engagement and turnout during elections, but this 2021 resolution speaks to local choice in determining what voting system will work best for a specific community. The Committee has concerns that if each local government establishes their own voting system there will be a patchwork of systems across communities, creating confusion for voters and others involved in local elections.

Presently the rules under which local elections are conducted are established in provincial legislation, and are generally uniform across communities. Local governments do not have the ability to vary key elements of the electoral system, but do have some ability to adjust certain administrative or procedural matters. This resolution has suggested a ranked ballot system as one example of a new provision which local governments could choose based on the Ontario model, but it is not clear what the other options are being suggested.

One of the principles underlying the 2010 UBCM - Province Elections Task Force work was consistency in local government election rules with provincial and federal election rules, where practical, recognizing that common rules across orders of government make it easier for citizens to understand the rules for all three types of elections. Different election rules / voting systems in different communities could potentially be confusing and challenging for citizens possibly defeating the purpose of trying to increase and engage citizens to become involved in an election.

Recommendation: Not Endorse