
2020 OPERATING BUDGET BRIEFING NOTE

Meeting the Pre-Conditions for Ranked Ballot Elections: Work Plan and Budget

Issue/Background:

The Municipal Elections Act, 1996 (MEA) provides Ontario municipal councils with the option to pass a by-law authorizing the use of ranked ballot elections for the offices of the Mayor and City Councillor if specific statutory pre-conditions are met. Prior to passing a by-law to authorize ranked ballot elections, municipal councils must complete a two-step process that includes: (1) public education and consultation and (2) municipal council consideration. A by-law to authorize ranked ballot elections must be passed no later than May 1, the year before a municipal election. School board trustees are required to be elected using the first-past-the-post system.

Public Education and Consultation

- Municipal councils are required to hold at least one open house and a public meeting to provide the public an opportunity to review information about ranked ballot elections and ask questions.
- The open house must be held at least 15 days before the public meeting and the public must be provided 30 days' notice before the open house and public meeting.
- Information provided to the public must include:
 - A detailed description of how the election would be conducted, including a description of how votes would be distributed to candidates based on the rankings marked on ballots.
 - An estimate of the costs of conducting the election.
 - A description of the vote-counting equipment that is being considered.
 - A description of any alternative voting method being considered.

Municipal Council Consideration

- In making its decision to authorize ranked ballot elections, municipal councils must consider the costs to the municipality, the availability of technology (voting and vote counting) to support ranked ballot elections and the impact on election administration.

Key Points:

- City Council at its meeting on November 26 and 27, 2019 requested the City Clerk, in consultation with the City Manager, to report to the Executive Committee with a work plan and on the resources required to adequately consult and fully investigate Toronto's ability to change election vote counting for the purpose of increasing voter participation and increasing candidacy.
- City Council at the same meeting also initiated the process to pass a by-law allowing for ranked ballot election by directing the appropriate City officials to undertake the steps set out in Ontario Regulation 310/16. In order to implement ranked ballot elections in the 2022 municipal election, City Council must pass a by-law authorizing this vote counting method by May 1, 2021 and completing the two-stage process described above, prior to this date.
- To ensure the process is objective and the neutrality of the City Clerk in administering the 2022 municipal election is safeguarded, an external consulting firm will be retained to undertake the public education and consultation process.
- In collaboration with the external firm, a public education and consultation strategy will be developed including multiple methods of engagement, education, outreach and public meetings to generate meaningful input reflective of Toronto's diversity. Consultation will be designed to ensure there are no barriers to participation.
- Components of this strategy may include:
 - Information mail out to all households and an educational tool kit
 - Various online platforms and digital components – website, social media and surveys
 - Online and traditional advertising
 - Open houses and public meetings
- The City Clerk has included \$1.1M in the 2020 Operating Budget submission to undertake public education and consultation funded through the Election Reserve Fund. A breakdown of the estimated costs is included below.

Budget	
Key Activity	Estimated Cost
Branding and Communications/Education (householder design, web page and video development, development of communications materials, and printing)	\$300,000
Marketing and Advertising (householder printing and mail out, advertising, translation, and sample ballot design)	\$500,000
Public Consultations (public consultation sessions and surveys)	\$200,000

Budget	
Key Activity	Estimated Cost
Outreach and Education (staff information tables and intercepts at community locations and events to distribute information)	\$100,000
Total Cost	\$1,100, 000

- The work will take approximately 10 months and the key activities are summarized below.

Work Plan	
Key Activity	Timeline
2020 Operating Budget approval	February 2020
Secure External Vendors	March to April 2020
Literature Review and Scan of Other Jurisdictions	April to July 2020
Develop brand, communications materials, learning guides, householder and advertising campaign	April to June 2020
Launch information campaign	June to August 2020
Community outreach, information distribution and intercepts	June to August 2020
Public information and consultation sessions	September 2020
Survey or Public Opinion Poll	September 2020
Data Analysis and report development	October 2020
Report to Executive Committee	November 2020

- In addition to the feedback from the public consultation, in making its decision to authorize ranked ballot elections, City Council must also consider: (a) the costs to the municipality, (b) the availability of technology (voting and vote counting) to support ranked ballot elections and (c) the impact on election administration.
- With respect to the City's vote counting equipment, the City Clerk has retained external consultants to undertake a cost benefit and risk analysis of options to replace the City's tabulators as they are 20 years old and at the end of their life cycle. The City Clerk will report to Executive Committee in the spring of 2020 with the results of the cost benefit and risk analysis and recommendations to replace the City's vote counting equipment in time for the 2022 municipal election. Future vote counting equipment must be able to count ballots in ranked ballot elections.
- The City Clerk will report to Executive Committee in late fall of 2020 on the findings from the public education and consultation process and provide the information related to costs,

technology and the impact on election administration that City Council must consider before passing a by-law to move forward with ranked ballot elections in the 2022 municipal election.

Questions & Answers:

Q1. What are ranked ballot elections?

A1. Ranked ballot elections means that electors rank candidates in order of preference (first, second and third for example) and votes are distributed based on the rankings marked on the ballot. A candidate is elected when they meet a minimum threshold of votes.

Q2. How is a ranked ballot election different from the traditional first-past-the-post election?

A2. In ranked ballot elections, electors rank candidates according to their preference (usually one, two, and three) rather than choose one candidate in the traditional first-past-the-post. Votes are counted until a candidate receives 50 percent, plus one of the vote. If no candidate receives 50 percent, plus one of the vote on the first round of counting, then the candidate with the lowest number of votes is eliminated and second choices are used and the votes are counted again. This continues until a candidate receives 50+1 of the votes.

Q3. Has ranked ballot elections been previously considered by Toronto City Council?

A3. Yes, as part of the Changes to the Municipal Elections Act and Related Matters Impacting the 2018 Election, [EX20.5](#) at the December 13-15, 2016 Toronto City Council meeting.

Q4. Are there any municipalities similar in size and scope to the City of Toronto that have implemented ranked ballot elections?

A4. Jurisdictional scans indicate there are no Canadian municipalities similar in size and scope to the City of Toronto that have implemented ranked ballot elections. From a US perspective, San Francisco, with a population of approximately 900,000 has implemented ranked ballot elections. The City of London was the first city in Canada to use ranked ballot elections in the 2018 municipal election.

Prepared by: Fiona Murray, Deputy City Clerk, Toronto Elections, 416-392-8019
fiona.murray@toronto.ca

Further information: Fiona Murray, Deputy City Clerk, Toronto Elections, 416-392-8019
fiona.murray@toronto.ca

Date: January 7, 2020