

## **CITY OF VAUGHAN**

### **EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF DECEMBER 11, 2017**

Item 3, Report No. 46, of the Committee of the Whole (Working Session), which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on December 11, 2017.

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#### **ELECTION INFORMATION IN OTHER LANGUAGES**

The Committee of the Whole (Working Session) recommends approval of the recommendation contained in the following report of the City Clerk/Returning Officer, dated December 6, 2017:

##### **Recommendation**

The City Clerk/Returning Officer recommends:

1. That the City Clerk/Returning Officer be authorized to provide election notices, forms and information that relate to the manner or place of voting in languages other than English and French;
2. That the languages identified for this purpose shall be those for which at least 1% of the City's total population speak at home, as identified in the most recently available census provided by Statistics Canada for the City of Vaughan; and
3. That the necessary by-law be passed by Council.

##### **Contribution to Sustainability**

The administration of fair elections in an impartial manner is a fundamental statutory responsibility of Municipal Clerks in Ontario. The highest priority for a municipal clerk, who is the returning officer for municipal and school board elections within the municipality, is to carry out their duties in accordance with the provisions of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, as amended ("the *Act*") and within an established set of judicially endorsed principles. It is also the responsibility of election administrators to manage expenditures and other resources in a manner which contributes to the financial and operational sustainability of the municipality.

##### **Economic Impact**

An election reserve has been established to fund elections, recounts and by-elections. The costs associated with translation services for the provision of election information that relates to the manner or place of voting in languages other than English and French is funded from this reserve.

##### **Communications Plan**

The availability of election information in other languages will be publicized on the election website and in statutory election advertising.

##### **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval for the provision of information to voters in languages other than English and French for elections and by-elections in accordance with the requirements of the *Act*.

##### **Background – Analysis and Options**

Section 9 of the *Act* provides that notices, forms and other information provided under the *Act* must be provided in English, and in French in respect of French-language district school boards, unless the municipality has passed a by-law authorizing the use of other languages.

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In previous election years, the City has provided signage and notices in languages other than English and French for the purposes of identifying the process by which an elector marks their ballot. The languages identified for that purpose are provided by the most recently available census release for the City of Vaughan, as reported by Statistics Canada. In 2014, the six (6) languages most commonly spoken at home, as identified in the census, were incorporated into the by-law for election information. These languages included Italian, Russian, Spanish, Chinese, Persian (Farsi), and Panjabi (Punjabi).

Staff recommend that a threshold be established to determine these languages going forward, with each language spoken at home by a minimum of 1% of the total population be adopted for this purpose. This formula for determining languages used for limited purposes in respect to election information is consistent with the approach taken by the cities of Brampton and Toronto which use 0.5% and 2% respectively.

Historically, the City has passed a new by-law prior to each election authorizing the inclusion of specific languages other than English and French to provide election notices, forms and information that relate to the manner or place of voting for members of the public. This report recommends that the process for identifying these languages be codified in a by-law which will not need to be redrafted for each subsequent election, eliminating an administrative burden on Council and staff. The City Clerk will refer to the census release to identify those languages which meet the 1% threshold, and incorporate them into the appropriate signage or information materials, and review this data to update the languages as required prior to each municipal election. For the 2018 municipal election, the languages to be incorporated using this threshold would be Russian, Italian, Chinese, Persian (Farsi), Spanish and Urdu.

It should also be noted that staff make a conscious effort to place election officials with fluency in other languages at voting locations where those linguistic communities are concentrated. Telephone based translation services are also available where required, to facilitate the electoral process for residents who are not fluent in English.

#### **Relationship to Term of Council Service Excellence Strategy Map (2014-2018)**

This report supports the Term of Council Priority: *Continue to advance a culture of excellence in governance*, by making the democratic process more accessible to voters through access to election information in additional languages.

#### **Regional Implications**

There are no regional implications associated with this report.

#### **Conclusion**

The provision of election information in additional languages, provides enhanced service to voters which will enable them to fully participate and engage in the electoral process.

#### **Attachment**

None.

#### **Report prepared by:**

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