

November 13, 2020

Mayor Brown, Airdrie
Mayor Stewart, Beaumont
Mayor Morishita, Brooks
Mayor Mayer, Camrose
Mayor Chalmers, Chestermere
Mayor Genung, Cochrane
Mayor Copeland, Cold Lake
Mayor Katchur, Fort Saskatchewan
Mayor Given, Grande Prairie
Mayor Creasey, Lacombe
Mayor Young, Leduc

Mayor Spearman, Lethbridge
Mayor Aalbers, Lloydminster
Mayor Clugston, Medicine Hat
Mayor Veer, Red Deer
Mayor Heron, St. Albert
Mayor Houston, Spruce Grove
Mayor Frank, Strathcona County
Mayor Choy, Stony Plain
Mayor Gandam, Wetaskiwin
Mayor Scott, Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo

Dear Mid-Sized City Mayors:

The Town of Okotoks is seeking support for an emergent resolution to Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) passed at our November 9, 2020 Regular Council Meeting advocating for the removal of the eligibility criteria for electors to request and use special ballots in the 2021 civic election.

Section 77.2(1) of the *Local Authorities Election Act (LAEA)* states that in order for an elector to vote by a mail in ballot, they must be absent from the local jurisdiction during advance voting and on Election Day, have a physical disability, or be an election worker who cannot attend a voting station to vote. Section 160(1)(a) permits a provincial regulation to be passed to modify a voting procedure under the *LAEA*.

COVID-19 is expected to continue to be a factor in 2021 and have an impact on the 2021 civic elections. Election processes should be in place that limit the spread of the virus and support the electoral process for our citizens.

The City of St. Albert has agreed to second this emergent resolution and we now look to all mid-sized community Councils for support.

Sincerely,



Wm. (Bill) B. Robertson
Town of Okotoks

Attachment: Town of Okotoks, Emergent Voting by Special Ballot AUMA Resolution



VOTING BY SPECIAL BALLOT PROVISIONS DURING A PANDEMIC

Sponsored by Town of Okotoks

WHEREAS the spread of the COVID-19 virus is continuing to trend upwards due to “unknown origins” as noted by Dr. Hinshaw, Chief Medical Officer for the province of Alberta and it is anticipated that COVID-19 will be a factor continuing into 2021;

WHEREAS the next general local authorities election is to be held on October 18, 2021;

WHEREAS section 77.1(1) of the *Local Authorities Election Act*, special ballot provisions state that in order for an elector to vote by special ballot they must be unable to vote at an advance vote, or voting station on election day because of physical disability, absence from the local jurisdiction or being a returning officer or election staff working during voting hours;

WHEREAS section 160(1)(a) of the *Local Authorities Election Act* provides the authority for the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make a regulation prescribing a system for the conduct and procedure of an election or vote that is not provided for in this Act or that is a modification of a system under the Act;

WHEREAS in person voting processes encourage activities that may promote the further spread of the COVID-19 virus;

WHEREAS the provision of special ballots by local authorities needs to be planned and budgeted for as an extra voting process;

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT the AUMA advocate the province to pass a regulation under section 160(1)(a) of the *Local Authorities Election Act* to modify the special ballot voting requirements so any eligible elector may request to vote by special ballot in the 2021 election, if so provided by the local authority.

BACKGROUND:

The nomination period for local authorities elections start on January 1, 2021. Municipalities need to be able to plan for and provide timely information to candidates and electors about the processes for the 2021 general election. In addition to conducting an election during a pandemic, it is anticipated that municipalities will be obligated to conduct senatorial election and provincial referendum votes on behalf of the province. The complexity of limiting the spread of COVID-19, and conducting other votes on behalf of the province is creating the need for extra planning, procedures and options to ensure the election is held properly and safely.

In order to limit behaviors that spread the COVID-19 virus by compelling electors to attend voting stations in person, the option of voting by special ballots (mail-in voting) should be provided to all electors or as determined by each municipality according to needs.



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economies
OF SCALE

WE ARE THE
support
YOU NEED

WE ARE THE
experts
IN MUNICIPALITIES

WE ARE YOUR
advocate