



April 9, 2019

Ref: 244993

Her Worship Mayor Lisa Helps
City of Victoria
1 Centennial Sq
Victoria BC V8W 1P6

Dear Mayor Helps:

Thank you for your letter of March 7, 2019, addressed to the Honourable John Horgan, Premier, regarding the resolution passed by Victoria City Council requesting that municipal election voting rights be extended to permanent residents. As Minister responsible for the local government system, I am pleased to respond.

I applaud the City of Victoria's commitment to improving the experiences of newcomers to British Columbia, and I understand your interest in permanent residents being eligible to vote in future local government elections.

The *Local Government Act* mirrors the voter eligibility requirements at the federal and provincial level and provides that only Canadian citizens may vote in local elections.

Currently, under the legislation, to be eligible to vote in local elections an individual must:

- be 18 years of age or older on the date of registration;
- be a Canadian citizen;
- have been a resident of British Columbia for six months prior to registration;
- have been a resident of the municipality or jurisdiction for which they are voting at least 30 days prior to registration; and,
- not be disqualified by the *Local Government Act* or any other Act from voting.

I appreciate that there have been calls from some local governments, from some members of the public, and from organizations such as Fresh Voices to allow permanent residents to vote in municipal elections. Any change to voter eligibility in local elections would require careful consideration and analysis of legal and constitutional implications—particularly considering that Canadian citizenship is currently a key requirement for voting in federal, provincial and local elections.

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As voter eligibility rules for local elections are consistent across the province, the City of Victoria may wish to consider using the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) resolutions process to determine if there is widespread local government support to expand voting rights for permanent residents. As you are likely aware, resolutions endorsed by the UBCM membership at its annual convention are communicated to the Province of British Columbia for response.

Upon such a request, the Province would then need to consider the proposed amendments and conduct thorough policy analysis that identifies the implications of those changes to ensure that any such proposed changes would strike a balance between the differing views held on this matter.

Thank you again for writing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Robinson', written in a cursive style.

Selina Robinson
Minister

pc: Honourable John Horgan, Premier