



March 18, 2021

Honourable Josie Osborne  
Minister of Municipal Affairs  
Email: [MAH.Minister@gov.bc.ca](mailto:MAH.Minister@gov.bc.ca)

Dear Minister ~~Osborne~~, *Josie*

On behalf of Victoria City Council, I am writing to request that the Local Government Act be amended to increase the amount of time between the end of a nomination period and the start of the advance election period, to encourage voter turnout, increase accessibility, and increase municipalities' operational efficiencies in conducting a local election.

As you know, on December 12, 2020, the City of Victoria held a by-election for a vacant Council position. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs worked with local governments to develop best practices for conducting the by-election in accordance with emerging provincial health restrictions, and the City was grateful for the proactive communication with the Ministry and with Elections BC to mitigate the unprecedented challenges the pandemic imposed on this election process.

On November 5, 2020, Ministerial Order 405/2020 changed local election rules to allow anyone to vote by mail. However, the Local Government Act requires the candidate nomination process to be concluded before ballots can be ordered, printed, packaged, and delivered to voters, as candidate names are required to be printed on the ballots. Due to these limitations, the first vote-by-mail packages were not sent until November 23, 2020. Eligible voters were then advised not to return their packages by mail after December 4, 2020 to prevent late-mailed ballots, and instead instructed to pick up and drop off their mail packages. In the end, 1,030 mailed ballots were returned late and could not be counted, because the Local Government Act requires that ballots be received by the close of voting on general voting day.

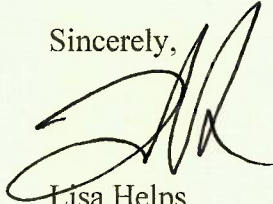
As part of our continuous improvement strategy after completing major projects, the City of Victoria has reviewed the 2020 by-election and it is apparent that to encourage voter turnout and increase both accessibility to the election and the municipalities' operational efficiencies, more time is required between the end of the nomination period and the start of the advance election period.

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This is not only a by-election issue. Victoria City Council advocated for the same change to the Local Government Act in 2015, following a review and lessons learned from the 2014 local general elections. I understand too that the last provincial election resulted in a similar experience with a number of late mailed ballots.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lisa Helps', written over the word 'Sincerely,'.

Lisa Helps  
Victoria Mayor