

City of Edmonton Youth Council – Proposed Action Municipal Voting Age

Recommendation:

That Executive Committee recommend to City Council:

That the City of Edmonton Youth Council send a letter to the Province of Alberta outlining the City of Edmonton Youth Council's reasons in favor of amending the *Local Authorities Election Act* to allow 16 and 17 year old citizens the right to vote.

Report Summary

City of Edmonton Youth Council is asking for permission to send a letter calling on the provincial government to lower the municipal voting age.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the August 8, 2016, Agenda Review Committee meeting, the Edmonton Youth Council report CR_3902 was re-routed to the August 16, 2016, Executive Committee meeting.

Report

- The City of Edmonton Youth Council prepared this report to ask that City Council permit the sending of a letter to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Premier of Alberta addressing City of Edmonton Youth Council's position on the municipal voting age.
- The City of Edmonton Youth Council was established as a civic agency to advocate on behalf of Edmonton Youth. City of Edmonton Youth Council's function is to promote initiatives to support the wellbeing of youth and to educate youth on city governance, procedures, and policy making.
- Allowing the City of Edmonton Youth Council to send this letter would be ensuring they can fulfill their mandate.
- The City of Edmonton Youth Council supports lowering the municipal voting age as they believe Youth are ready for this change.
- Through our conversations we have heard that most Youth want this change, and Youth deserve to have a voice in trustee and municipal elections.
- The City of Edmonton Youth Council voted in favour of sending a letter asking for this change at their general assembly meeting on February 3, 2016.

Policy

- City Policy C575 Agencies, Boards, Committees, and Commissions
- Bylaw 14126 City of Edmonton Youth Council Bylaw

Corporate Outcomes

This report supports the following outcomes:

- Edmontonians assessment connected to community (5.2) as it will promote the greater engagement of citizens in municipal governance, and foster a sense of engagement and association with the City of Edmonton and it's residents.
- Recreation facility and library attendance (6.2), as it will promote the use of polling stations for citizens.
- Edmontonians' assessment of a safe city (7.2), as it will ensure a greater population within the city has the opportunity to voice what is potentially endangering them creating greater opportunity to foster a sense of security.

Public Consultation

- Consultation occurred with representatives of 12 Edmonton Public High Schools, representing 16,006 Edmonton Public School Students.
- According to representatives 98.7% of public school students agree with this motion. In addition consultation was held with representatives of every Edmonton Catholic School District high school. Consultation also occurred with chairs of the Edmonton Public School Board and Edmonton Catholic School District, in addition with other board of trustees members.
- Furthermore, consultation occurred with:
 - Members of the Legislative Assembly: Thomas Dang, Chris Nielsen, and Heather Sweet, who all spoke to the validity and effectiveness of a civic agency sending a letter to the provincial government, in addition to the validity in City Council sending a letter
 - Lawyer: Charles Davison, spoke to the validity and effectiveness of sending a letter to the provincial government
 - Academic: Agreed, from a psychological perspective, with the case presented, however wished to remain unnamed

Justification of Recommendation

- Bylaw 14126 (City of Edmonton Youth Council Bylaw) states that: 5 (1) The Committee’s mandate is to provide information and advice to Council in relation to issues involving or affecting Youth, and will perform the following functions: (a) research and write policy proposals for Council’s review; and (k) inform Council of initiatives of other levels of government that could affect Youth and advocate for the City in the manner directed by Council if Council directs.
- This direction supports the mandate and role of City of Edmonton Youth Council to ensure that youth voices are heard.
- Lowering the voting age has been successful in countries such as Norway, Austria, and Scotland to increase voter engagement and turnout.
- Sixteen and seventeen year old citizens are ready to vote in municipal elections, and many want to vote in municipal elections.
- This would be an opportunity to increase voter turnout and voter engagement, while providing students with an opportunity to decide how their city is run.

Attachment:

1. Draft Proposed City of Edmonton Youth Council Letter