

Local Government Elections Task Force Local Election Cycles Discussion Paper

February 2010



Local Election Cycles (Term of Office)

Issue summary

The election cycle, or term of office, refers to the number of years an elected official serves between general elections. In British Columbia, the length of term of office for local government officials is three years. In recent years, there have been some calls for extending that term (i.e., to a four year term).

Across Canada, the term of office length varies from three to four years. Most recently Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island have changed their local government term of office from three to four years. The reasons for moving from three to four years were virtually the same in each of these provinces and yet, change did not occur without consideration and challenges.

Advocates of increasing the term of office length argue that a longer term provides cost savings by reducing the number of elections; allows for a longer planning cycle for local governments; gives more time for new councillors to learn and conduct the duties of their office; and offers consistency with their provincial and federal counterparts.

Opponents of extending the term of office argue that longer terms are a barrier to participation; that longer terms may actually lead to more by-elections, thus eliminating any cost savings achieved by holding fewer general elections; that there would be fewer opportunities to hold referendums in conjunction with general elections, and that a longer time between elections gives electors less opportunity to express their opinions on the performance of their local elected officials.

Evaluating the arguments for and against extending the term of office for local elected officials involves considering principles of efficiency, accessibility and transparency. As well, the concept of flexibility and consistency must also be considered.

With these principles in mind, this paper seeks direction on whether further work is needed on extending the length of term of office for local government from the current three year model.

Background and Context

Legislation

Four Acts govern the length of term of office for local elected officials (municipal councils, regional district electoral area directors and school trustees): the *Local Government Act*; *Community Charter*; *Vancouver Charter*; and *School Act*.

General elections must be held every three years and on the 3rd Saturday of November. Local general elections are administered by a chief election officer, who is appointed by the council or board and is usually a staff member of the local government (most often the corporate administrator or chief administrative officer). Some local governments contract with outside experts to administer their local elections.

The rules governing by-elections in the *Local Government Act* and *Vancouver Charter* state that a by-election must be held when an office becomes vacant due to a resignation, death or disqualification, and must be on a Saturday no later than 80 days after the appointment of the chief election officer. Local governments have the option to defer a by-election if the vacancy occurs in the year of the local general election so long as the vacancy does not involve an official who is elected on a neighborhood constituency basis, or if the vacancy does not affect the quorum of council.

Voting is also held for reasons other than the election of a council or board members. Some issues such as long term borrowing bylaws require elector approval before they can proceed. Elector approval may be obtained by holding a vote (e.g. referendums). Such referendums, referred to as “other voting” under the legislation, are typically held in conjunction with local general elections for cost and administrative reasons, but are not restricted to election-day and may happen at any time.

There are also issues of a non-binding nature that may be the subject of local government referendums (e.g., in 2008 there were four referendums that were non-binding on the extension of term of office length).

Elector approval may also take the form of the Alternate Approval Process (AAP). AAP is used to gauge public opinion on issues that require local governments to obtain the approval of the electors (such as long-term borrowing) rather than going immediately to a referendum.¹

¹ In the AAP, a local government must publish a notice in a newspaper outlining the purposes of a proposed bylaw, agreement, etc. where the approval of the electors is required. After the second of two notices is advertised, electors have 30 days to essentially advise their local government that they believe the matter is of such significance that a referendum should be held. If more than 10% of the electors respond, then the local government cannot proceed with the proposed bylaw, agreement, or other matter without holding a referendum.

Provincial and Federal Election Cycles

The Canadian constitution requires that a provincial legislature or the House of Commons can sit for no longer than 5 years before an election is required. Governments can, however, legislate a shorter election cycle. The Province of BC, some other provinces and the federal government have legislatively-fixed election days, with elections every four years. It is important to note that due to the nature of parliamentary democracy, if a fixed election date exists, it is still possible for an election to occur sooner than the legislated date. Although unlikely with a majority government, a general election for provincial or federal parliament can be called at any time, regardless of the date or even if the four year maximum has not been reached (i.e. based on a vote of non-confidence in the government). Local governments do not have the power to call a local general election in the same manner, or to choose their own election cycle by bylaw – the province legislates local election cycles.

Elections Participation Rates

Between 2008 and 2009, all three orders of government held general elections. In the 2008 federal election, the participation rate was 59.8%; in the 2009 provincial election, the participation rate was 55.17%; and in the 2008 local elections, the average participation rate was 27.79%.

History of Election Cycle Changes

In 1987, amendments to the *Municipal Act* (predecessor to the *Local Government Act*) required all local elections to be held in 1990 and every three years after that. In the period 1973-1990, the *Municipal Act* required local governments to elect mayors biennially and councils annually; however, local governments were given the power to elect council biennially if they so chose. In the 1960s and up to 1973, all councillors were elected on an annual basis while all mayors were elected biennially. No power was given to local governments to choose otherwise during this period. Annual local elections were held on the same day for every municipality across the province.

The reasons for change in the late 1980s were to reduce costs, help increase voter participation and bring British Columbia in line with other local elections cycles across Canada. Momentum for the change to a three year cycle was initiated through Union of British Columbia Municipalities' (UBCM) resolutions in 1984, and again in 1986.

Interjurisdictional Comparison

The Canadian provinces and territories are roughly split between three and four year terms for municipal councillors. In the past ten years, there has been a trend of various local government associations seeking change from three year to four year terms.

In addition to UBCM, the local government associations of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island have all debated the issue of changing municipal

terms of office through their resolution process. Most of the associations endorsed the idea of increasing the term length. In Alberta, the membership rejected resolutions requesting change. In 2008, the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association (SUMA) as well as the councils of Saskatoon and Regina passed resolutions calling on the provincial government of Saskatchewan to allow urban municipalities to hold elections every four years.

Changes were made in 2006 in Ontario and Prince Edward Island, and in New Brunswick in 2004, all from three to four year terms (PEI is still in transition, see Appendix 1). In February 2010, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Municipal Affairs announced plans to lengthen the term of office for urban municipal, northern municipal and school board officials to four years. Saskatchewan intends to introduce amendments to the *Local Government Election Act* in the fall of 2010 to lengthen the term of office to four years for the 2012 municipal and school board elections.

The stated rationale for changing election terms were universal across the country – improve the efficiency and effectiveness of council by giving them a longer term; realize cost savings to taxpayers; and achieve consistency with provincial and federal counterparts.

There has been no suggestion or movement in other provinces to *reduce* the term length from three to two years (or less).

UBCM Resolution History

Over the past decade, UBCM members have brought the idea forward of changing the term of office from three to four-years, in four resolutions. One was not endorsed, two were not admitted for debate and one was endorsed and received a provincial response. Additionally, a single resolution was brought forward recommending giving municipalities the option to choose from two-year staggered terms or a three-year all-at-once term. This resolution followed ideas included in resolutions from the mid-1980s but was not endorsed.

In 2007, UBCM members endorsed a resolution addressing the extension of term length. This resolution was sponsored by the City of Port Moody and it was their second attempt in as many years to have this issue endorsed by UBCM.

The debate around the 2006 and 2007 resolutions was very similar. The side in favour argued that an extension of term length would provide cost efficiencies, more time for strategic planning and delivery, and consistency with other provinces (notably Ontario). The side against argued that extended terms limit accessibility for candidates and diminish the attractiveness of running for local office as four years is a longer commitment. They noted that small or rural communities have enough difficulty recruiting new people to elected office under the current system, and a longer term may increase the number of by-elections needed.

In response to the endorsement of the 2007 resolution, the then Ministry of Community Services stated that extensive consultation would be required and suggested to those local

governments interested in furthering the issue that they hold a referendum during the 2008 local elections.

Four local governments went on to hold referendums on the matter in 2008, with three of four referendums passing (in Port Moody, New Westminster and Trail – Merritt being the lone community where the referendum failed). See Appendix 2 for a summary of the various UBCM resolutions.

Discussion

Consideration of the issue of the election cycle means considering the objectives of the local government elections system and the principles that underlie it. Such principles are significant because there appears to be no body of academic literature, or quantitative or qualitative studies, on the effectiveness of term length, either longer or shorter.

Principles of accessibility, transparency, and efficiency are basic to all election systems and should be considered when thinking about extending the election cycle. Local elections provide the electorate access to local governance by voting for candidates, participating in referendums or running for office. Transparent elections are the mechanism by which the electorate holds their local elected officials accountable. Transparency not only includes fair and open elections but also other ways elected officials are held accountable (e.g., the financial accountability framework or ethical standards). However, the efficiency and effectiveness of local government may also be affected by the length of term of office, as well as their ability to operate elections in the most the cost effective manner.

As well, there are a number of other considerations to be evaluated when considering the length of the election cycle – including principles of consistency (i.e. with the term of office for provincial and federal elected officials) and flexibility (i.e. should all types of locally elected office be subject to the same election cycle?).

In the discussion below, the main focus is on municipal councils; however, in the “Other Considerations” section, questions are raised as to the impact of term extension on other elected offices (i.e. electoral area directors and school trustees).

The Case for the Current System (Against Extension)

Accessibility

Local government and federal/provincial governments are different -- There is a certain public familiarity with the current system as it has been in place for 20 years for local government elected officials as well as school trustees. Some might argue that if terms are extended to make local government terms of office the same as provincial and federal terms, it increases

the likelihood of a situation where the electorate is voting every year, every other year or multiple times in a single year for the various government elections -- with this, the potential for voter fatigue increases.

Some say that drawing comparisons between the local government system and the provincial and federal systems is not entirely accurate. The provincial and federal systems are parliamentary democracies where the government functions under the scrutiny of an Opposition and ultimately governs with the confidence of the entire House. A minority provincial or federal government can lose confidence², thus triggering a general election well before the end of the four year term of office.

By contrast, local governments function under a collegial system of corporate governance. A defeated motion in the local council chambers (e.g., a rejected bylaw) does not trigger the collapse of the government and a general election. In effect, the local government has a guaranteed time (i.e., three years) in office while the same is not necessarily true for the provincial and federal governments.

Term length needs to attract candidates -- Some would say that the current three year local government term of office may be a more attractive time commitment for potential candidates than a longer term. In many communities, it is already a challenge to attract potential candidates under the current system. For example, in 2008 local general elections, of the 1209 local government offices available, 1050 were elected and 159 were acclaimed (81 of these acclamations were electoral area directors, 32 were mayors and 46 were municipal councillors)³. These acclamations placed 50% of all electoral area directors, 25% of all mayors and 5% of all municipal councillors in office. Given that challenge, extending the term may result in more by-elections as elected officials leave office early. Therefore, extending the term would require consideration of the rules around by-elections and their timing (i.e. the time period before a general election when a by-election is not required to fill a vacancy)

More frequent opportunity for electors to participate – Some would argue that in the current system of elections every three years, the electorate has more opportunity to express their opinions on the performance of their elected officials as well as participate in referendums (since such votes are generally held at the time of general elections). With an extended term, this view says that the electorate has fewer opportunities to hold their elected officials accountable or to have a say on key issues addressed in referendums. Referendums often involve high profile local issues (such as long-term borrowing for major capital projects) which often attract a high level of public interest. As referendums are typically held in conjunction with general local government elections, some would be concerned that the possibility of fewer referendums (every four years rather than three years) could potentially reduce the visibility of

² Confidence motions are not tied to every vote in the house, only specific votes such as budget measures.

³ This number does not include school trustees, community commission representatives, and parks board representatives. The total number of elected offices available in the 2008 Local Government General Election was 1660 - including municipal mayors and councillors, electoral area directors, school trustees, community commissioners, and parks board members.

local issues. With a reduction of visibility of local issues, they would argue, overall public interest may decline, and with that, the potential to further lower participation in local elections.

Transparency

Accountability mechanisms would be affected -- The current financial accountability framework is built around the three year election cycle. Local governments are required to make financial plans for five years – the entirety of their own term and two years into the next. Extension would require consideration of the impact on that financial accountability framework.

As well, extending the term of office may raise questions about other aspects of accountability. With the current three year system, some would argue that the time to the next election is never too far away. With an extended term, the electorate must wait longer before they have the ability to express their views about elected officials' performance. For some, this could raise interest in the basis and the process for disqualifying elected officials once in office, as well as issues such as "recall" of elected officials and "initiative" to put forward issues for referendums. Currently there is some ability to undertake both under the provincial *Recall and Initiative Act*, but not locally.

Efficiency

Overall costs would not be that different -- Under the current system, the cost of elections must be absorbed in three years, rather than a longer term. As well, there are the administrative costs of setting up a new council every three years (which will obviously vary with the number of new council members elected). However, it may be that savings realized by spreading out local general elections over an extended term would be diminished by an increase of by-elections if more elected officials leave office early due to pressures of time commitments.

Where referendums for major projects are necessary, a longer time between local general elections may mean more "one-off" referendums, and with these, increased costs and administrative challenges of the additional referendums.

Staff expertise could be lost -- Local elections are typically administered by local government staff directly or with the assistance of external experts. There may be concerns that longer time spans between elections may result in the potential loss of local expertise on elections due to staff turnover. As well, some would say that less frequent elections may increase the need for education and training for staff (i.e., to re-learn a very detailed technical process which they run only once every four years). This may raise questions as to the availability and frequency of training (i.e. such as is available from the Local Government Management Association) and the need for resources to ensure such training meets such increased demand.

The Case against the Current System (For Extension)

Accessibility

Consistency with federal/provincial election terms is better -- Some would argue that there is more familiarity with, and a greater participation rate, in the four year cycle used by the provincial and federal governments than that of the three year cycle used by local governments. An extended term would bring local governments in line with the more familiar provincial and federal systems. Some argue that this may strengthen citizens' recognition of local government as a government of importance equal to the provincial and federal governments.

Additionally, it is argued that extending the local government election cycle to four years would ultimately reduce the number of elections across all three orders of government, thereby reducing the potential for voter fatigue over time. Since candidates would know when they run for office that the term length is 4 years (as they do for provincial and federal seats), it is argued that there should not be an appreciable increase of elected officials leaving office before the end of the term.

Efficiency

More time to implement local government vision -- It may be argued that when a large turnover in a council occurs, council faces a longer "learning curve." This could mean more time is needed to get the council to the point of being fully educated both on their roles and on the needs and wants of their communities. Unlike the current system where councillors have only three years to prepare and execute their plans before there is the potential for significant turnover, an extended year term provides additional time to council to implement its vision for the community.

Overall costs would be less -- Those in favour of extending the term of office argue that the cost of the election would be spread over four years - holding an election every four years instead of three years would save the costs of one election every 12 years. As well, the cost of administration to set up a new council would only be incurred every four years (varying with the number of new councillors).

Some say that a longer term would ease the general election administration burden on local government staff and could reduce administrative costs. They also argue that, as most long-term borrowing and other issues that require elector approval are already decided by AAP, less opportunity to hold referendums at the time of local general elections would not have a significant impact on citizens' right to have a say on community issues.

If there is turnover of senior local government staff following an election, there can be significant human resource-related costs and loss of continuity. An extended term, it is argued,

may lessen the financial impact of such costs, but may also give council and senior staff more time to build good working relationships.

Transparency

More frequent opportunity for electors to participate -- Referendums often involve issues that are high profile (e.g., long-term borrowing for major capital projects) but are typically tied to local government general elections for the sake of efficiency and cost savings. It is possible that with a longer election cycle, local governments may in fact choose to hold referendums more often. Some say that could heighten interest in local government issues by engaging the electorate more frequently on key issues for the community.

Accountability mechanisms could improve – As noted, the current financial accountability framework requires local governments to plan for five years. It could be argued that an extended term length may require an extension to that framework, but that in turn may actually provide more certainty for longer term planning on such things as capital projects. As well, longer terms could allow local governments to build reserve funds for projects, thus potentially reducing the amount needed for borrowing and thereby reducing the burden on the local taxpayer.

Some also argue that reviewing other aspects of the accountability framework – such as the process and basis for disqualifications from office, or other mechanisms not currently applicable to local government, would be seen a positive trade-off: less frequent local elections in exchange for strong accountability while in office.

Other Considerations

Beyond the case for and against extending the local election cycle, there are a number of linkages, design and administration issues to be examined if term length extension is considered. These include board of education elections, the disqualification framework, local flexibility and additional issues.

Board of Education Elections

School trustee elections are held at the same time as local government elections and in many places are typically administered by local governments on behalf of boards of education. Consultation would be needed to determine views on an extended term for these elected offices.

The question of extending terms has not been debated by the British Columbia School Trustees Association. If there were no interest in changing the term of office for boards of education, would it be practical for local government officials to continue administering board of

education elections? What rules would apply to such elections, how would they be managed, and what could be the costs to the boards of education?⁴

Disqualification

In addition to the local government financial reporting framework, how would other aspects of the accountability framework be impacted by an extension in the term office – notably the conflict of interest rules and ethical standards that apply to elected officials? Would there be a need to review the basis for disqualification (removal from office) for elected officials to address concerns about the length of time between elections?

Local Flexibility

Is there a place for local flexibility in the debate on term extensions? Does an extended term work for all local elected offices or only some -- for example, what impact would it have on a single electoral area director? Does it have a different impact in a small rural community than in an urban centre?

How would local flexibility affect certainty for electors? Would different rules in different jurisdictions work with the rest of local government system -- for example, municipal appointments to regional district boards?

Additional Issues

How would changing the term of office length impact the rules around by-elections for local governments and boards of education? Are there alternative mechanisms to by-elections and what would be their impact on different local elected offices (e.g., Minister's Orders to fill vacancies upon request)?

Would term of office changes raise interest in other aspects of the election cycle (i.e. the day of the general election)?

⁴ Currently boards of education are responsible for incremental costs only where trustees are elected from municipal areas; in electoral areas, costs are often shared by agreement between the board of education and the Regional District.

Direction questions

The following questions are intended to assist in Task Force discussion on whether further work is needed to assist in its consideration of extending the term of office, and if so, the key issues for further investigation.

Objectives

- What objectives for the local government elections system are gained by extending the term of office and what are lost?

Principles

- Does extending the term of office serve or hinder the principles of transparency, efficiency and accountability?

Practical considerations

- On what basis could practical challenges be addressed? E.g. should overlap with provincial and federal elections be avoided, and if so how would this be achieved?
- Is there is room for local flexibility, or is consistency and certainty for electors paramount?

Appendix 1: Terms of Office Across Canada

PROVINCE/TERRITORY	ELECTION TERM	DATE FOR ELECTION
BRITISH COLUMBIA	3 years	3rd Saturday of November
ALBERTA	3 years	3rd Monday in October or if by-law, Saturday immediately preceding the 3 rd Monday in October
SASKATCHEWAN	2 years for rural municipalities 4 years for urban & northern municipalities and school boards. (Change to take effect for 2010 elections)	4th Wednesday of October In resort villages – July 23 and thereafter, on the fourth Saturday following the nomination day In northern municipality, either: The 2nd last Wednesday in September, the last Wednesday in September or the 1st Wednesday in October
MANITOBA	4 years	4th Wednesday of October
ONTARIO	4 years (changed from 3 year term in 2006)	2nd Monday in November
QUÉBEC	4 years	1st Sunday in November
NEW BRUNSWICK	4 years	2th Monday in May
NOVA SCOTIA	4 years	3rd Saturday in October
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND	4 years for Charlottetown, Summerside, Stratford, and Cornwall All others are 3 years until 2012 (see below)	1st Monday in November
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR	4 years	Last Tuesday in September
NUNAVUT	2 or 3 years Term for 4 council members with the least votes may be reduced to 2 years, by local by-law	City, town, village and municipal taxing authority: 3rd Monday in October Hamlet, other than a municipal taxing authority: 2nd Monday in December Charter Communities and Settlement Corporations: date as fixed in the charter or order
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES	2 or 3 years Term for 4 council members with the least votes may be reduced to 2 years, by local by-law	City, town, village and municipal taxing authority: 3rd Monday in October Hamlet, other than a municipal taxing authority: 2nd Monday in December Charter Communities and Settlement Corporations:

		date as fixed in the charter or order
YUKON	3 years	3 rd Thursday of October

Ontario

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) supported a change from three to four-year terms as far back as 2004, stemming from a resolution forwarded by Toronto and Brampton. AMO went out to survey their membership with the following results:

1. Lengthening the term of municipal council from three to four years was supported by 61% of respondents. The vast majority (91%) of proponents believed this change should be implemented across the province.
2. Almost all members (98%) preferred that board of education elections continue to take place at the same time as municipal elections.
3. 59% of respondents favoured maintaining the current date for elections on the second Monday in November.
4. The members (88%) also wanted municipal elections to occur in a different year than provincial elections

In addition to the aggregated response, members were also categorized by tier and whether they were urban or rural communities. There was no noticeable split between urban and rural, or lower and upper tier municipalities on any of the questions.

From these results, the AOM made the recommendation the Government of Ontario to change the length of term for municipal councils from three to four years. Similar to the rationale provided by UBCM for extending the length of term, the AMO's position for change was to enhance the ability of municipal councils to "undertake long-term strategic planning and implementation..." as well as acknowledge them as equals to their colleagues in the provincial and federal governments.

Prince Edward Island

At the 1995 Federation of Prince Edward Island Municipalities (FPEIM) convention, FPEIM adopted a resolution calling upon the provincial government to extend the term of office of municipal officials to be elected in 1996, to enable all municipal elections to take place concurrently. Beginning in the year 2000, all municipal elections in PEI were held at the same time, the first Monday in November, except the Resort Municipality, which holds its election in the summer of the election year when the population is at its peak. Councils served a three year term, and elections were held again in 2003 for another three year term.

In 2006, the Government of Prince Edward Island adopted legislation which creates a four year term of office for Charlottetown, Summerside, Stratford, and Cornwall. The term of office continues to be three years for all other municipalities.

As of 2007, the FPEIM has endorsed a resolution that the Government of PEI establish a term of four years for all municipalities.

By extending the terms for those elected in 1996 so all elections would be held on the same day in 2000, it seemed to have the opposite affect from which it intended. Under this

system, municipal elections in PEI would only coincide every 12 years. In order to achieve concurrent elections, PEI made a further change to their *Municipalities Act*:

- 2009 elections: municipal councils other than the cities mentioned above were elected for three years
- 2012 elections: municipal councils will be elected for two years
- 2014 elections: all municipal councils (cities mentioned above and all others) will be elected for four year terms and henceforth, all local elections will be held on the same day

Saskatchewan

The Province announced in February 2010 that the *Local Government Elections Act* will be changed to extend the term of office for urban municipalities, northern municipalities and school boards to four years. The rural municipalities will remain at 3 years.

The Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association (SUMA) convention passed a resolution in 2008 to extend the term of office from three to four years. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs consulted with the education sector as school board elections are held concurrent with municipal elections.

The move would not affect rural municipalities. Rural municipalities prefer the two-year term of office under which they currently operate, but do not object to a four year term for other local governments.

In Saskatchewan, municipalities are represented by two associations – one for rural municipalities and one for urban municipalities.

Manitoba

Manitoba lengthened its municipal term of office from three to four years in 1998, supported by a resolution from the Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM). The rationale for this change was it would give municipal councils more time to plan and implement their agenda in a similar fashion as both the provincial and federal governments enjoy.

While some AMM members have proposed resolutions to return to a three-year term, the resolutions have not succeeded

Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia lengthened the term of its municipal councils at the request of the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities in 2000 because of projected cost savings and the enhanced ability of municipalities to plan for the future.

New Brunswick

New Brunswick changed its municipal term of office from three to four years in 2004. In this case, the Province was consolidating the *Elections Act* and the *Municipal Elections Act* and developing a continuous Registry of Electors. Cost-savings were a major factor behind the consolidation.

Coinciding with a move to establish a fixed election date for the Provincial election, the Department of Local Government asked for municipal input on a four year terms. Sensing

that the majority of municipal councillors were in favour of the change, the Province made the change before consultation was completed.

Appendix 2: UBCM Resolution History

Summary of Resolutions

2003 - B52: Choice in local election terms

Sponsor: Port Clements

Status: Not Endorsed

WHEREAS some municipalities would be better served by using a staggered election term for the following reasons:

- More efficient decision making in the early stage of council terms by introducing continuity from one council to another;
- An improved opportunity to attract competent candidates who cannot commit to a three-year term;
- Improved opportunities for new council members to receive training from experienced councillors:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Union of BC Municipalities request the Minister of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services to amend the Local Government Act so that municipalities can choose between a two-year staggered and a three-year all-at-once term.

2005 - LR20: Civic election term length in BC

Sponsor: Port Moody

Status: Not admitted for debate

BE IT RESOLVED that the provincial government increase the interval between local government elections from three years to four years.

2006 - A9: Civic Election Term Length in BC

Sponsor: Port Moody

Status: Not Endorsed

WHEREAS many provinces, including Manitoba, Quebec, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and New Brunswick, have four-year civic election terms, a term length which reflects the accepted period between elections in the provincial and federal contexts;

AND WHEREAS four-year election terms would likely be more productive for councils and staff and would save taxpayers money:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Union of BC Municipalities ask the provincial government to increase the interval between civic elections from three years to four years.

2007 - C14: length of term for civic office

Sponsor: New Westminster

Status: Not admitted for debate

WHEREAS costs for elections are high for both individuals and local governments;

AND WHEREAS most other provinces are adopting a four-year term of office for local government councils:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Union of BC Municipalities request that the provincial government of British Columbia extend the term of civic office for local government councils and regional district boards to four years.

2007 - B95: civic election term length in BC

Sponsor: Port Moody

Status: Endorsed

WHEREAS many provinces, including Manitoba, Quebec, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and New Brunswick, have four-year civic election terms, a term length which reflects the accepted period between elections in the provincial and federal contexts;

AND WHEREAS four-year election terms would likely be more productive for councils and staff and would save taxpayer money:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Union of BC Municipalities ask the provincial government to increase the interval between civic elections from three years to four years.

Provincial Response: MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

Increasing the length of the term of office for local government elected officials would be a significant change to the election process. Among other things, it would affect the commitment that people must make to a position that may on occasion come into conflict with their jobs, families and other responsibilities. The requested change may result in an increase in the number of local government by-elections. Therefore, it is recommended that all of the implications of this proposal be fully investigated. Broad public consultation would be required before any commitment could be given to consider legislative changes. Individual local governments may wish to consider holding a referendum on this issue at the 2008 general local election.