

Moved by: **Councillor Dodic**

OFFICIAL BUSINESS MOTION

2025 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

6.2

Section 84 of the *Local Authorities Election Act* - Electronic versus Manual Counting of Ballots in Municipal Elections

Alternative voting equipment prohibited

84 A local jurisdiction shall not provide for the taking or counting of votes by means of voting machines, vote recorders, automated voting systems or tabulators.

Section 85(1) of the *Local Authorities Election Act* - Immediate On-Site Counting of Ballots

Part 3 Post-vote Procedure

Counting of votes

85(1) Immediately after the close of the voting station, the presiding deputy shall in the presence of

- (a) at least one and any additional officers that the deputy considers necessary, and
- (b) the candidates, official agents or scrutineers, if any,

ensure that each ballot box is opened and that the votes are counted.

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has mandated that hand counting of votes be required in all municipalities, whether the electorate comprises of greater than a million citizens or a few dozen; and

WHEREAS the failure to adhere to the changes referred to above can result in severe penalties and potential incarceration or a combination of both; and

WHEREAS City Council has been presented with information that the change from using tabulators to hand counting will result in delays in announcing successful candidates and, in Lethbridge alone will cost at least \$300,000 more, at local taxpayer expense, to run the election; and

WHEREAS in addition to the hand counting of the ballots, the {Province has changed the election rules such that once a voting station has been closed, each ballot box is to be opened, and the votes counted on site; and

WHEREAS in prior municipal elections, the Ballot Boxes were allowed to be moved to a secure location at City Hall and thereafter counted with the results being announced within a few hours of the closing of the voting stations; and

WHEREAS the ballots that were counted by the tabulators were retained as hard copies for at least 6 weeks from election day and were available for recounting in the event that one was needed; and

WHEREAS in response to the mandated change from the City being able to use tabulators to hand counting, City Council did the following and received the following responses:

1. At a City Council Meeting of December 10, 2024, a Resolution was passed that authorized Councillor Rajko Dodic, KC to write a letter to Provincial Government Officials requesting that they essentially provide their rationale in moving from an accurate and tried and true method of ballot counting to one that, by its' nature' will lengthen the process and is more prone to inaccuracies. (Attachment 1 is the Resolution that was adopted by Council with only the Mayor and Councillor Parker in opposition);
2. A letter authored by Council Rajko Dodic, KC was sent to both the Honourable Ric Mclver and Nate Glubish with copies also sent to our local Provincial Representative and the Premier. (Attachment 2 are copies of the two letters referred to.)
3. By letter dated January 20, 2025, the Honorable Ric Mclver responded to the Mayor with respect to Attachment 1. In referencing a portion of a Poll conducted at the request of the Province, the Minister offered the following justification for the change from tabulators to hand counting ballots:

"That means roughly one in three Albertans may not trust election results produced by a tabulator."

(Minister Mclver's letter of January 25, 2025 is marked as attachment 3.)

4. Thus, by necessary implication and using the same logic, the Minister's comment can only mean that roughly two in three Albertans do trust election results that are

produced by a tabulator. That is, a large majority trust tabulators whereas a minority do not.

5. Neither the Honorable Nathan Glubish, Neudorf, or the Premier responded; and

WHEREAS the counting of ballots on site immediately after a voting station has closed will present numerous tactical difficulties in terms of counting votes in separate locations without lack of central co-ordination:

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. City Council send a further letter to the appropriate Provincial Authorities requesting:
 - a. that the City of Lethbridge be given the democratic option to choose whether they can count election ballots manually or by tabulation at the next Municipal Election to be held in October of 2025; and,
 - b. If the option requested in paragraph 1(a) above is denied by the Provincial Authorities, then in that event, that the Province confirm that any and all additional increased Costs that the City of Lethbridge incurs in complying with the Bill 20 amendments as they relate to the conduct of Municipal Elections be borne by the Province.
 - c. the City of Lethbridge be exempted from the strict prohibitions contained in s. 85 of the *Local Authorities Election Act* such that they are able to transfer the Ballot Boxes to a secure location in Lethbridge City Hall and thereafter commence counting of the votes.