

CITY OF FORT SASKATCHEWAN

Heritage Centre Plebiscite

Motions:

1. That the Director, Legislative Services be appointed Returning Officer for the Heritage Centre Plebiscite.
2. That voting for the Heritage Centre plebiscite be scheduled for February 23, 2015; and that advance votes be held on February 14, 2015 and February 18, 2015.
3. That the Returning Officer be authorized to divide the City of Fort Saskatchewan into voting subdivisions for the Heritage Centre Plebiscite.
4. That Special Ballots be provided for in the Heritage Centre Plebiscite.
5. That application for Special Ballots, for the Heritage Centre Plebiscite, may be made by any of the following methods:
 - (a) in writing;
 - (b) by telephone;
 - (c) by telecopier;
 - (d) in person;
 - (e) by e-mail
6. That the Returning Officer be authorized to designate the location of one or more institutional voting stations for the Heritage Centre Plebiscite.
7. That Council approve the following question, with associated preamble, for the Heritage Centre Plebiscite:

Council is seeking voter input on the following project:

Fort Saskatchewan Heritage Centre

The Fort Saskatchewan Heritage Centre is a building designed to be located in Legacy Park to showcase and preserve Fort Saskatchewan's unique history and support special events in the downtown area. The Heritage Centre includes a new parking lot, a reception area and gift shop, exhibit galleries, artifact storage and preparation area, archives space, program and multi-purpose rooms and office space. The total construction cost is budgeted at \$7,957,000. The total net operating cost (after revenue) for basic operation is budgeted at \$310,000 per year.

Do you support the construction of a Heritage Centre in the City of Fort Saskatchewan?

_____ YES
_____ NO

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to present Council with information and recommendations relating to the holding of a plebiscite on the construction and operation of the Heritage Centre.

Background:

During the December 3, 2014 Council Budget Meeting, a motion was passed to undertake a plebiscite to determine whether residents are in support of construction and annual operating costs of the Heritage Centre. Administration was directed to hold the plebiscite prior to March 31, 2015.

The *Municipal Government Act* (MGA), as well as the *Local Authorities Election Act* (LAEA) require Council to make decisions for items associated with conducting a plebiscite, similar to those for a municipal election.

The recommendations noted below are presented for Council's consideration, and resolution:

1. Appointment of Returning Officer

Section 13 of the LAEA provides for Council to appoint, by resolution, a Returning Officer for the purposes of conducting an election or plebiscite under this Act. This is consistent with practices for previous elections and plebiscites.

2. Plebiscite Voting Day & Advance Voting

Based on the timing for plebiscite advertising and venue availability, Administration is recommending to hold the plebiscite on Monday, February 23, 2015.

Section 73 of the LAEA provides that Council may, by resolution, provide for holding an advance vote on any vote to be held in an election or plebiscite. If Council passes a resolution, the Returning Officer must determine the days and hours when the advance vote is to be held.

Having two advance votes scheduled is consistent with practices for previous elections and plebiscites. If Council is supportive of holding advance votes, the following dates, times and locations will be designated:

Saturday, February 14th, 2015
11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Dow Centennial Centre (8700 - 84 Street)
Scotiabank Meeting Room

Wednesday, February 18th, 2015
6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
City Hall (10005-102nd Street)
Lang Room

3. Voting Subdivisions

Section 36(1) of the LAEA provides Council the authority, by resolution, to divide the City into voting subdivisions and may from time to time alter their boundaries or authorize the Returning Officer to do so.

For the 2013 municipal election, the number of voting subdivisions was reduced from 7 to 3. Based on the lack of feedback received by Administration, we can confidently endorse that this change led to less confusion for voters. In prior years, having 7 voting subdivisions and some across the street from one another, caused numerous complaints from the public.

At the time of printing this report, locations of the voting stations are being determined.

4. Special Ballots

Special Ballots provide yet another avenue for voters to exercise their right in the democratic process. The City of Fort Saskatchewan has been providing this option for elections and plebiscites since 2004, when it was first legislated.

Section 77.1(1) of the LAEA states that an elector who is unable to vote at an advance vote or at the voting station on the day of the plebiscite because of:

- (a) physical incapacity,
- (b) absence from the local jurisdiction, or
- (c) being a Returning Officer, deputy Returning Officer, constable, candidate, official agent or scrutineer who may be located on election day at a voting station other than that for the elector's place of residence

may apply to vote by Special Ballot.

Section 77.1(2) states that in order to vote by Special Ballot, the elector must make application to the Returning Officer at any time between the day after the day the resolution is passed to provide for Special Ballots, and the closing of voting stations on the plebiscite voting date. Application for a Special Ballot may be made in writing, by telephone, by telecopier, in person or by e-mail. Council, by resolution, may provide that application may be made by any one or more of those methods.

5. Institutional Voting Stations

Section 80 of the LAEA provides for Council, by resolution, to designate locations for institutional voting stations or to authorize the Returning Officer to designate such locations. In previous municipal elections three institutional voting stations were offered and proved to be sufficient. If Council is supportive of designating Institutional Voting Stations, they will be located at the following locations:

Fort Saskatchewan Health Centre	9401 - 86 Avenue
Dr. Turner Lodge	9711 - 101 Street
Rivercrest Lodge Nursing Home	10104 - 101 Avenue

6. Plebiscite Ballot Question

Based on the information included in the resolution requesting to hold the plebiscite and Section 236 of the MGA, the question, along with preamble, will be as follows:

Council is seeking voter input on the following project:

Fort Saskatchewan Heritage Centre

The Fort Saskatchewan Heritage Centre is a building designed to showcase and preserve Fort Saskatchewan's unique history. It's location in Legacy Park will support special events in the Downtown. The Heritage Centre includes a new parking lot, a reception area and gift shop, exhibit galleries, artifact storage and preparation area, archives space, program and multi-purpose rooms and office space. The total construction cost is budgeted at \$7,957,000. The total net operating cost (after revenue) for basic operation is budgeted at \$310,000 per year.

Do you support the construction of a Heritage Centre in the City of Fort Saskatchewan?

_____ YES
_____ NO

Advertising on the details of the plebiscite dates, times, and locations will be conducted as required by legislation. In order for voters to make an informed decision when they go to the polls, an educational marketing campaign for the Heritage Centre project is being developed. In addition to newspaper advertising, social media, the City's website, household distribution, information stations and the local radio station will be utilized.

Plans/Standards/Legislation:

- *Local Authorities Elections Act*, R.S.A, 2000, c.L-21
- *Municipal Government Act*, R.S.A.,2000, c.M-26
- Community Sustainability Plan - Governance. An active citizenry is a critical element of a sustainable community. Local governments have a responsibility to lead by example and encourage the public to get involved by providing useful information and tools.

Financial Implications:

Following the 2013 Municipal Election, it was Administration's intention to move forward with the use of automated tabulators for future elections. However, as this vote is straight forward, the votes will be counted manually, unless otherwise directed by Council.

Council has approved \$40,000 in the 2015 budget for conducting the plebiscite.

Enclosure:

Appendix A - Fort Saskatchewan Heritage Centre Plebiscite Project Information

File No.: 1530-01

Prepared by: Brenda Molter
Director, Legislative Services

Date: January 8, 2015

Approved by: Brenda Rauckman
General Manager, Corporate Services

Date: January 8, 2015

Reviewed by: Kelly Kloss
City Manager

Date: January 8, 2015

Submitted to: City Council

Date: January 13, 2015