



14 Options to Explore

Proposal	Description	Possible Benefits	Possible Concerns	Currently Used
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Who Votes, When & Where?

Extending the vote to permanent residents	Allowing permanent residents who live in Toronto to vote in municipal elections.	Could promote immigrant integration and increase accountability in neighbourhoods with high concentrations of newcomers.	Could reduce incentive to become a citizen or devalue the benefits of citizenship.	London (UK), Berlin, Madrid
Voting on weekends	Moving election day from a Monday to a Saturday and/or Sunday.	Could increase turnout by making voting more convenient.	Could be religious objections and concerns about increased costs.	Montreal (Sun) Halifax, Vancouver (Sat)
Online & phone voting	Allowing people to vote in municipal elections by phone or online.	Could increase turnout by making voting more convenient.	Could be concerns about security, fraud and cost of implementation.	Markham, Peterborough, Stratford, Cobourg
Lowering the voting age	Reducing voting age from 18 to 16 municipally.	Could increase the relevance of political issues for youth and encourage engagement. Councillors may be more likely to address issues that directly affect youth.	Some believe that at 16, youth are not mature or informed enough to vote.	Brazil, Austria, Ecuador

Parties & Terms

Municipal parties	The creation of political parties operating at the municipal level.	May increase engagement and turnout and clarify candidates' positions on key issues. Parties can pursue broad, city-wide visions. Parties could create transparent nomination meetings and a participatory policy-making process. Would regulate existing party influence at Council.	Could reduce independence of councillors. Provincially and federally, parties do not tend to attract a high level of participation. Could reduce the ability for independent candidates to win a seat.	Montreal, Quebec City, Vancouver, Victoria
Term limits	Councillors would be limited to a designated number of consecutive terms.	Increases turnover, which introduces new faces and ideas to Council. Could increase diversity.	Forces popular politicians to leave office. Discourages politicians from developing long-term plans. Reduces electoral accountability in the final term.	Los Angeles, New York City

Ballot Structure & Districts

At-large council	Replacing ward system with councillors who run city-wide.	Allows councillors to focus on city-wide issues. Allows for proportional results.	Could dilute sense of local neighbourhood-based representation, including geographically concentrated communities.	Vancouver, Cambridge MA, many municipalities in Ontario
Ranked ballots / Instant runoff voting (IRV)	Using a ranked/preferential ballot to elect the councillor in each ward using the current ward boundaries.	Reduces vote-splitting & strategic voting. Could increase turnover & diversity. Ensures majority support. Could discourage negative campaigning.	Results are not proportional. Perpetuates 'winner take all' system. Could encourage IRV at federal and provincial level, which is less desirable.	San Francisco, Minneapolis
Ranked ballots in multi-member wards	Using a ranked/preferential ballot to elect multiple councillors in larger wards (e.g. Nine wards with five councillors each).	Reduces vote-splitting & strategic voting. Could increase turnover & discourage negative campaigning. Provides proportional results enabling more diverse representation.	Ward sizes increase. Larger wards could increase campaign costs for candidates, particularly in the absence of parties.	Glasgow, Dublin, Wellington (NZ)
Hybrid: At-large and wards	In addition to wards, creating some proportionally elected at large seats.	Allows some councillors to focus on city-wide issues. Allows for some proportionality.	Ward sizes may increase, which could reduce neighbourhood-based representation.	Boston, Washington DC
Borough councils	Creating elected neighbourhood councils to increase local representation.	Provides a local access point to the democratic process. Could increase contact between politicians and voters. Allows for localised decision making.	Could create jurisdictional disputes or confusion between the city council and borough councils.	Montreal, Los Angeles, New York City

Finance Reforms

Prohibit paid "volunteers"	Prohibit a company or union from paying the salary of an employee who "volunteers" to work on a campaign.	Stop employers from violating contribution limits. End large sums of undisclosed campaign financing.	May be difficult to enforce.	New York City and elsewhere
Pre-election contribution disclosure	Require all candidates to disclose the names of contributors and the amounts of contributions received prior to election day.	The city can post contributions on their website, which allows voters to know who is financing a candidate.	Candidates could delay receipt of money until after the disclosure deadline.	New York City and elsewhere
Prohibit self-financing of campaigns	Limit what candidates can contribute to their own campaigns to the same amount as other contributors.	Limits the advantages of wealthier candidates and forces candidates to seek a broad base of support.	Some candidates try to avoid perceptions of influence by financing their entire campaign themselves.	Federal and Ontario campaigns

All of these changes would have to be made by the provincial government except for online voting, at-large councillors or multi-member districts (without a ranked ballot).