



February 11, 2022

Ref: 268985

Their Worship Mayor Fred Haynes
District of Saanich
770 Vernon Ave
Victoria BC V8X 2W7

Dear Mayor Haynes:

Thank you for your letters of December 13, 2021, addressed to the Honourable John Horgan, Premier, and me, advising of the District of Saanich's resolution endorsing the Vote16BC campaign to lower the voting age to 16 in British Columbia, and requesting consideration of this change.

As you may be aware, this issue was the subject of an endorsed resolution at the 2019 Union of BC Municipalities Convention. I recognize the interest in lowering the voting age to 16 in B.C. and that there may be benefits to lowering the voting age, such as those identified in the council meeting minutes enclosed in your letter. However, there are challenges associated with lowering the voting age, including inconsistency with federal and provincial age requirements set out in statute.

In the context of local elections, careful consideration and analysis is needed to understand the possible implications for the broad range of elections to which the new lowered voting age would apply. For example, the age requirement for local elections in B.C. apply to elections for over 250 local bodies, including elections for school board trustees. The age limit also applies to assent voting.

Government has an interest in encouraging active civic engagement among all British Columbians. In 2021, changes to improve the accessibility of local elections were included in the *Local Elections Statutes Amendment Act, 2021* (which received royal assent on March 25, 2021) to remove the requirement that an individual must have been a resident of a jurisdiction where an election is taking place, for at least 30 days prior to registration. In addition, informed by the circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, new amendments in the *Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2021* (which received royal assent on June 17, 2021) expanded eligibility for mail ballot voting to all electors.

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These changes will remove significant barriers to participation while enabling fair and transparent local elections to continue to take place. We will continue to explore opportunities to encourage greater civic engagement among British Columbians. This work will include further analysis of the possibility of lowering the voting age in municipal elections.

Thank you again for writing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Josie', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Josie Osborne
Minister of Municipal Affairs

pc: Honourable John Horgan, Premier