



**Edmonton
Elections**

2021 Edmonton Election Report

Edmonton Elections
16304 114 Avenue
Edmonton, AB
T5M 3R8
780-496-8008
edmonton.ca/election



Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Executive Summary	3
Unique Factors in the 2021 Edmonton Election	4
Highlights	5
Lessons Learned and Recommendations	7
Election 2021 - By the Numbers	8



Executive Summary

The Edmonton Election or Edmonton General Election is how eligible voters in the City of Edmonton elect a Mayor, members of City Council, and Trustees for the Edmonton Public School and the Edmonton Catholic Separate School divisions. In 2021, the Edmonton Election was held on Monday, October 18 and it included a provincial ballot, with a Senate Nominee election and two referendum questions.

Within the City of Edmonton administration, the Office of the City Clerk branch and the Elections & Legislative Projects section are responsible for conducting municipal elections. For the 2021 Edmonton Election, planning and decision making was led by five guiding principles:

- **Accessible:** All Edmontonians are able to access the services, supports and information they need to trust and participate in civic processes
- **Inclusive:** All Edmontonians are able to participate in civic processes
- **Equitable:** Barriers to services, supports and information will be removed, enabling all Edmontonians to see themselves represented in the outcome of civic processes
- **Ethical:** Edmonton Elections will maintain the highest standard of ethics at all times, and ethics will be a primary focus for all decisions and activities
- **Safe:** All participants will be able to safely engage with civic processes, following all health and safety protocols, including public health orders

In addition, the *Municipal Government Act (MGA)*, the *Local Authorities Election Act (LAEA)*, the *Alberta Senate Election Act (ASE)*, the *Referendum Act (RA)* and their associated regulations, along with the *City of Edmonton Election Bylaw*, provided the legislated framework that administered the election.



Unique Factors in the 2021 Edmonton Election

New Ward Boundaries and Indigenous Ward Names

Following the January 2019 annexation of land on the southern edge of Edmonton, a Ward Boundary Commission was established to conduct an extensive review of the existing Ward Boundary Bylaw and make recommendations to City Council. In a parallel process, Council directed administration and the Naming Committee of Council to explore Indigenous ward names after Indigenous Elders and community members voiced their desire to rename Edmonton’s wards with Indigenous names.

The committee of Indigenous matriarchs also known as iyiniw iskwewak wihtwawin gifted 12 Indigenous ward names to the City of Edmonton, and on December 7, 2020, Council approved the new boundaries and new Indigenous names for the City’s 12 wards to coincide with the 2021 Edmonton Election. This meant a change from ward numbers to ward names that impacted candidates, voters and workers.

COVID-19

March 2020 saw the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic around the world and affected the planning of the Edmonton Election. As the pandemic evolved, Edmonton Elections adjusted their structure and planned for different Advance Vote and Election Day scenarios.

Edmonton Elections was fortunate to learn from other jurisdictions that conducted elections in late 2020 and early 2021 and incorporated a number of their learnings into their processes, including increased number of Advance Voting stations and a wait time tool for voters. The use of larger spaces, increased signage, new cleaning protocols, personal protective equipment and capacity limits were all implemented at each voting location to ensure the health and safety of everyone who visited a voting station.

Legislative Changes

The Government of Alberta introduced two significant revisions to the LAEA that impacted election processes and campaign financing rules. Nominations were accepted at any time during the Campaign Period between January 1 and 12 pm on September 20, 2021.



This required extensive changes to the nomination processes, as well as staff resources. New rules relating to campaign finances impacting candidates and Third Party Advertisers (TPAs), were also implemented.

Provincial Ballot

In 2021, the Government of Alberta decided the Senate Nominee election and referendum questions were to be administered in conjunction with municipal elections. This created new logistical challenges that included creating additional ballot designs, securing additional warehouse space and updating voting and ballot accounting procedures.

Federal Election

In August of 2021, a Federal Election was called and held on September 20, 2021, one month before the Edmonton Election.

New Council Code of Conduct

There was a new Council Code of Conduct that introduced new rules governing candidates who were also sitting members of City Council.

Highlights

A record number of voters attended the 2021 Election, with 236,488 people casting over 472,000 municipal and provincial ballots. This represented 37.6% of the total number of eligible voters, the highest percentage voter turnout in fifteen years. A significant portion of the increased number of voters were seen during the Advance Voting period, which saw close to 64,000 people vote in 12 locations over 10 days. This is nearly triple the turnout when compared to 2017.

In 2016, Edmonton Elections published the *Understanding Voter Needs Report* seeking input from people who identify as Youth, Seniors, Indigenous, New Canadians, and Persons with Disabilities. Edmonton Elections' goal was to learn more about these audiences, their experiences and perceptions of Edmonton's voting system. This review identified a series of barriers to voting that started to be addressed in the 2017 Edmonton Election. In 2021 Edmonton Elections found ways to address 38 out of 41 identified barriers that were within the scope of its jurisdiction.



Many of these barriers were addressed in Edmonton Elections first ever Voter Accessibility Plan, but they were also addressed through voter outreach, communications strategies, and operational plans. Edmonton Elections decreased barriers to participation and encouraged voters to cast their ballots at one of 212 Election Day Voting Stations, during the Advance Voting Period or via special ballot. Additional voting opportunities were offered at post-secondary institutions, senior accommodation facilities, hospitals, shelters and correctional institutions. Due to COVID-19, a number of these facilities chose an assisted special ballot process to limit the number of visitors and minimize contact with others.

In addition, special ballots were offered to voters who were not able to vote in-person due to one of three reasons outlined in the legislation. Close to 2,500 ballots were requested to be mailed to voters. This is two and a half times the number of requests received in 2017. From those mailed ballots, a total of 1,613 special ballots were returned and cast.

Voting Technology

Edmonton Elections used voting technology to scan paper ballots through a voting tabulator reading the ballots in real time. Edmonton Elections utilized 312 different pieces of voting hardware, including 288 tabulators for use in the voting stations, 17 voter assist terminals during the Advance Voting period and four high-speed central count tabulators. Each piece of equipment was thoroughly tested before and after being deployed.

Additionally, 475 android tablets were deployed to voting stations to assist workers with confirming voter addresses and submitting hourly status updates.

Once voting closed, vote totals from the individual voting stations as well as the special ballot votes counted in the Count Centre were transmitted to the Results Centre. Incoming results were reviewed and approved prior to being released to the public. Released results were posted to the Open Data portal and to the Election Results web page. All voting stations, representing 99% of results, had reported by midnight on Election night, with just 363 regular and Special Ballot votes to be counted the following day. The final totals were declared official four days after Election Day and once an audit of the ballot accounting and results data was completed.



Lessons Learned and Recommendations

The 2021 Edmonton Election was impacted by several unique factors. Nonetheless, the project was conducted following all legislative requirements. Moving forward, the following recommendations should be taken into consideration when planning the 2025 Edmonton Election:

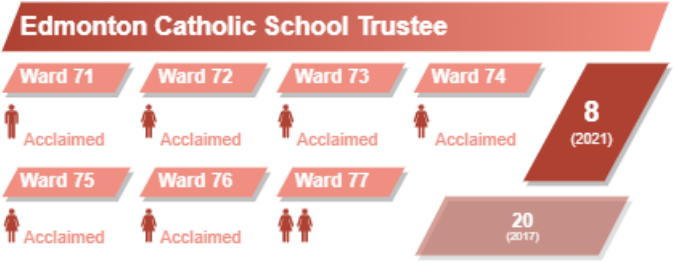
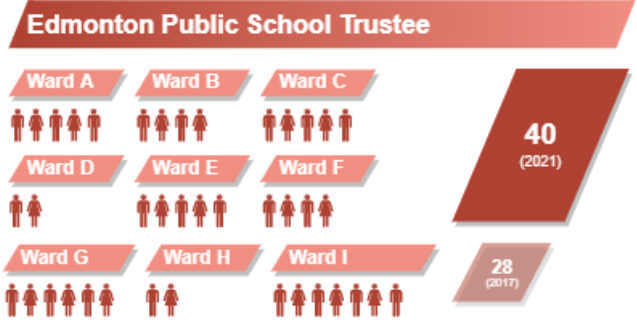
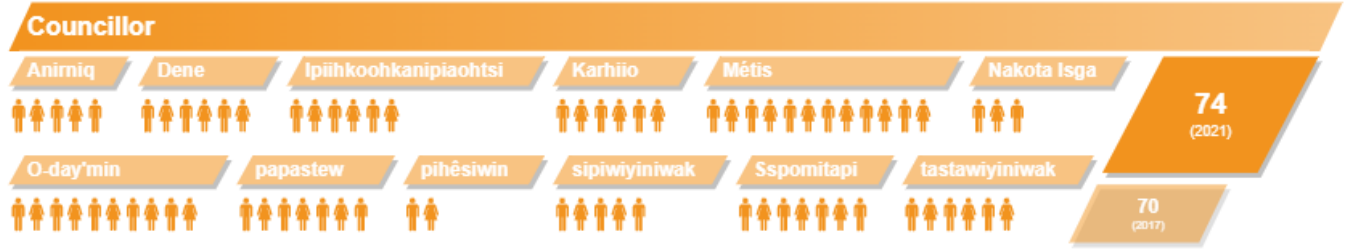
- Formally expand Election Project timelines to a full two-year cycle, with the appropriate changes to the budget and staffing, to reflect the increasing complexity of the project
- Review and update the software and hardware used to manage and administer the Election project, in particular tablets required onsite and the election database management system
- It worked well having a Professional Development (non-instructional) Day on Election Day with EPSB and ECSD, to minimize security and health risks
- Where possible, align Municipal and School Division Ward and Subdivision Boundaries to common geographical features, to minimize the number of subdivisions with multiple ballot styles
- Municipal Elections are fixed dates, other orders of government should limit proximity of their elections
- Streamline warehousing and distribution locations to minimize duplication of effort
- Review and update the Understanding Voter Needs report prior to the start of the Election Project cycle to support a comprehensive voter outreach and engagement strategy



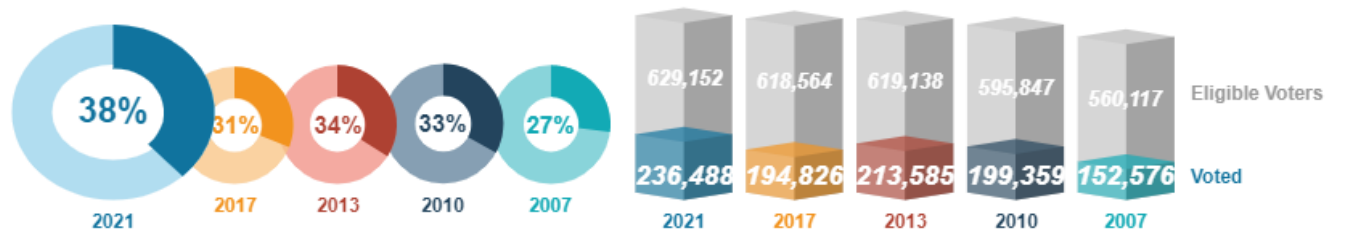
**Edmonton
Elections**

Election 2021 - By the Numbers

1 Official Candidates



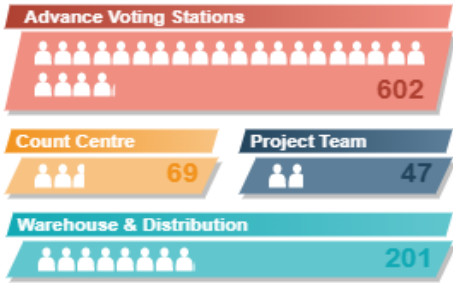
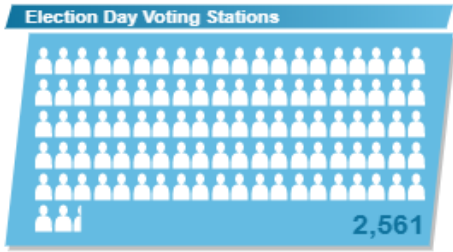
2 Voter Turnout



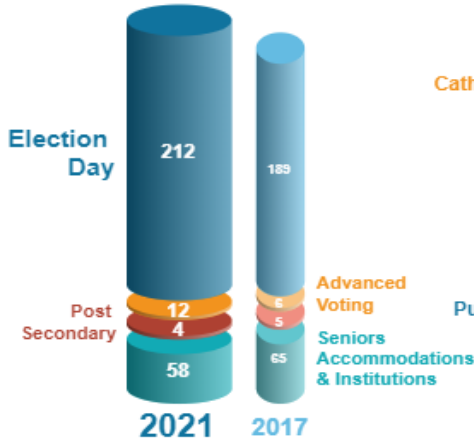


3 Election Workers

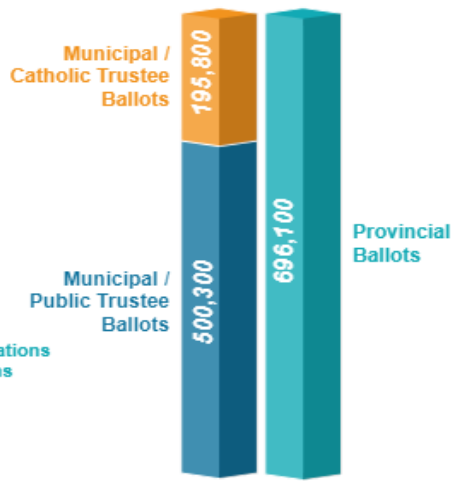
👤 = 25 Workers



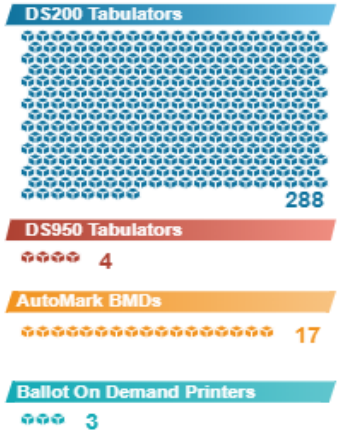
4 Voting Locations



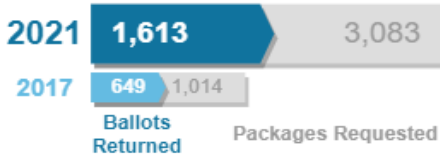
5 Ballots Printed



6 Voting Technology



7 Special Ballots



8 Media Campaigns



9 Web Views

