

Information + Access = Trust in Government

“People who feel they have a say in what the government does are more likely to trust government”.

- Data from a Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public undertaken by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

Do Canadians feel they “have a say in what government does”? Apparently not since recent surveys* indicate about half of Canadians don’t trust their government.**

Vancouver City Councillor Sean Orr wants to change that.

In his recent motion entitled *Prioritizing Accessibility and Public Participation at City Council*, the first term Councillor advances various ways this can be achieved, as it pertains to the Vancouver civic governance.



Councillor Sean Orr

Orr points out, that City Council meetings provide a rare opportunity to speak directly to elected representatives, but many residents face barriers to participation, especially people

with disabilities, those in caretaking roles, newcomers, and people with inflexible work schedules or life commitments.

As anyone who has attempted to speak to a Council meeting knows unpredictability at what time they will be called on is frustrating and has resulted in scheduled speakers not being able to wait it out.

In addition, City Council agendas and reports, frequently total hundreds of pages of reading, are often published for public review less than a week before they are brought to Council, despite, in some cases, being prepared months in advance.

Understanding this material can be challenging especially for those who speak English as a second language. Orr wants improved communication and clarity about the process to help them prepare and fully participate.

According to Councillor Orr, if we want

more citizens to trust their local government, than it should “prioritize making public participation more accessible and effective for working people in Vancouver, accommodating busy families, people with disabilities, and workers.”

Council approved the motion, with amendments, to direct staff to work with the Accessibility Committee and other civic engagement experts to assess and improve official communications related to public participation in Council meetings, and if needed, report back with recommendations or procedural changes including but not limited to:

- Publishing the number of registered speakers for each agenda item to allow members of the public to make an informed assessment of how long proceedings may take;
- Communicating when Council typically breaks for meals or goes in camera, and providing clear updates following a decision of council to recess or go In-Camera;

- Publishing official updates on Council meeting proceedings on third-party platforms that are accessible to people without accounts on those platforms and safe regardless of an individual’s identity, and/or exploring options to embed Council meeting updates on the City of Vancouver’s website;

- Providing detailed, accurate, and plain-language communication on the process of registering to speak at a meeting of Council, requesting additional time for people with disabilities or people using a translator, what to expect when participating in a meeting at city hall or by phone, and the process of submitting written feedback;

- Publishing reports, motions, and official communications about Council

meeting agendas in formats that are accessible for people who use screen readers or other access devices, and when possible, publishing plain-language summaries of reports.

Open and accessible participation in municipal decision-making by members of the public is a cornerstone of Vancouver’s democratic governance,” Orr says.

Councillor Orr was first elected on April 6, 2025 in a byelection in which the voter turnout was 15.09 %

**The OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-*

operation and Development) is a forum and knowledge hub for data, analysis and best practices in public policy.

Visit their website at https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-survey-on-drivers-of-trust-in-public-institutions-2024-results_9a20554b-en.html

***Stats Can*

<https://www.statcan.gc.ca/o1/en/plus/5041-do-canadians-have-confidence-their-public-institutions>

***Democracy Watch*

<https://democracywatch.ca/surveys/>

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***Celebrate and Embrace
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Winter Holidays & Celebrations 2025-26



Hanukkah – Dec. 14 Christmas Day – Dec. 25

Boxing Day – Dec. 26 New Year’s Day – Jan. 1

Isra and Mi’raj – Jan. 16 Family Day – Feb 16

Lunar New Year – Feb. 17 Ramadan – Feb. 18

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