Every Vote Counts

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Report to the Community
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ISCC
IMMIGRANT SECTOR
COUNCIL OF CALGARY

eccc
Ethno-Cultural
Council of Calgary
Bridging Our Communities...
Building Our Collective Voice

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Why do some immigrants vote in civic elections and why do some not vote? How do we encourage more immigrants to vote in local elections?

The Ethno-Cultural Council of Calgary and Immigrant Sector Council of Calgary asked members of Calgary's immigrant communities to answer these questions.

While the project began as a modest attempt to understand voting trends among Calgary's immigrant communities, what resulted was much more powerful. The following tells the story of the incredible realizations and relationships that grew over the course of seven months, five gatherings, and one inspirational municipal election.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to the Project Team and staff of Immigrant Sector Council of Calgary (ISCC) and Ethno-Cultural Council of Calgary (ECCC).

Finally, thank you to the ethno-cultural participants and Ward Leaders, without whom this project would be meaningless, for sharing your experiences and insights. It was an incredible experience to watch you personalize the notion that every vote counts.

Funding provided by:

What We Learned: Highlights

- Major barriers to voter participation amongst immigrants include lack of knowledge about the election process, where and how to vote, the name of their community and Ward number, the role of the municipality, the candidates' positions on issues affecting immigrants, etc.

- In other countries people face consequences for voting for the "wrong" candidate; this can impact immigrants' willingness to vote here in Canada

- Elections in Canada are boring compared to elections in other countries

- Childcare is a major barrier to many women's civic participation - many women would not have been able to participate in the gatherings had childcare not been provided

- It is very important that candidates are seen to be engaging diverse ethno-cultural communities during their campaigns – this remark was often combined with an expression of gratitude for one of the mayoral candidate's efforts to engage with various ethno-cultural communities

- Providing election information in diverse languages and diverse media sources is critical to spreading awareness and knowledge throughout various ethno-cultural communities

- Getting involved in political affairs is challenging due to lack of time, transportation, work, and knowledge

- When immigrants are equipped with knowledge and engaged in the electoral process, they are encouraged to vote

Survey Highlights:

Voted in 2007	Planned to Vote in 2010	Voted in 2010
24%	**54%**	**58%**

Introduction

Calgary is changing. Officially, over 13,000 newcomers make Calgary their home each year. Internationally-born individuals make-up one quarter (24%) of Calgary's total population and this number is projected to increase to 30% by 2031[1].

Regardless of background, voter turnout rates – an indication of our city's level of civic participation – suggest voting is not a high priority for many people. In the past 30 years (1977-2007), voter turnout rates were the lowest in 2004 at 20%. In the 2007 municipal election, the voter turnout rate was 33%[2]. With the growth of the immigrant population in mind and a suspicion that they are even less likely to vote, we need to direct serious effort towards understanding and increasing civic engagement among immigrants in Calgary.

While some research exists on immigrants and voting at the federal and provincial levels, there is limited research on immigrants and voting at the municipal level. However, the relevant research outlines five key reasons for low voter turnout rates among immigrants:

1) Lack of resources and time[3]
2) Not understanding the Canadian political system[4]
3) Lack of trust in the democratic process[5]
4) Poor representation of diversity among elected officials[6]
5) Ineligibility due to not being a Canadian citizen[7]

Relying on participatory action research principles[8], the Ethno-Cultural Council of Calgary (ECCC) and Immigrant Sector Council of Calgary (ISCC) investigated these questions, asking members of the immigrant community to discuss their experiences and understandings of municipal voting, and what would encourage them to vote. Their exchange of ideas led to actions they, themselves, employed in their communities. These actions put immigrant issues on the minds of the candidates and got immigrants, some of whom might otherwise have stayed home, out to the polls.

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[1] Statistics Canada. 2010. Study: Projections of the diversity of the Canadian population, 2006 to 2031. *The Daily*. March 9, 2010.

[2] City of Calgary. *General Election Voter Turnout Statistics, 1977 to 2007*. City of Calgary: Election & Information Services.

[3] Tossutti, L. 2007. *The Electoral Participation of Ethnocultural Communities.* Canada: Chief Electoral Officer of Canada.

[4] Fung, A. and Wright, E.O. 2001. *Deepening Democracy: Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance*. Politics & Society. 29; 5. pp. 5-41

[5] Gill, B. 2005. Final Report. Victoria: Elections BC.

[6] Landa, J. 1995. *Ethnic Voting Patterns: A Case Study of Metropolitan Toronto*. Political Geography. 14; 5. Pp. 435-449.

[7] Munro, D. 2008. Integration Through Participation: Non-Citizen Resident Voting Rights in an Era of Globalization. Int. Migration & Integration. 9. pp. 43-80.

[8] Participatory action research is a "collaborative approach to research that provides people with the means to take systematic action in an effort to resolve specific problems... [it endorses] consensual, democratic, and participatory strategies to encourage people to examine reflectively their problems or particular issues affecting them or their community" Berg, B. 2004. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc. p. 195.

The Build-up: Before the Election

ISCC and ECCC began this project in May 2010 by increasing their understanding of the local context. This required listening to the voices of immigrants in Calgary.

Survey

An online and hard copy survey were designed and distributed to immigrants asking why they vote or do not vote in local elections, whether or not they planned to vote in the 2010 election, and how to engage more immigrants in municipal voting. The survey was launched in May 2010 in order to capture pre-election sentiments.

Forum

In June 2010, ISCC and ECCC hosted a community forum for immigrants. The purpose of this initial forum was to delve deeper into some of the survey responses to the question of why immigrants vote or do not vote in local elections, and to discuss ways to encourage more immigrants to vote. Participants contributed to a vibrant dialogue about their voting practices, beliefs, and opinions with respect to municipal electoral politics.

Survey: Who Participated

174 Total Respondents

Sex	%
Female	71.3
Male	28.7

Age Group	%
18-24	4.6
25-34	32.8
35-44	25.3
45-54	23.6
55-64	9.2
65 or older	4.6

Education Level	%
Less than Grade 12	9.8
High School Diploma	17.2
College Certificate or Diploma	18.4
Bachelor Degree	33.3
Graduate Degree (Masters/PhD)	19.5

Immigration Status	%
Canadian Citizen	45.4
Permanent Resident	50.0
Refugee	1.8
Temporary Foreign Worker	1.7

Year of Arrival	%
Established Immigrants (1955-2005)	51.5
Recent Immigrants (2006-2010)	48.5

Income	%
$0-$19,999	33.9
$20,000-$39,999	21.0
$40,000-$59,999	25.7
$60,000-$79,999	11.5
$80,000-$99,999	4.7
$100,000 or greater	3.4

Ward	%
1	2.9
2	4.0
3	16.1
4	11.5
5	12.6
6	4.6
7	7.2
8	11.8
9	4.0
10	9.8
11	5.7
12	1.7
13	5.7
14	2.3

Survey respondents came from all parts of the world: North America and Central America 12.1%, South America 9.1%, Africa 32.7%, Europe 4.9%, Asia 41.2%. The countries with the highest representation in the surveys were China (8.6%), Sudan (8.6%) and India (6.3%).
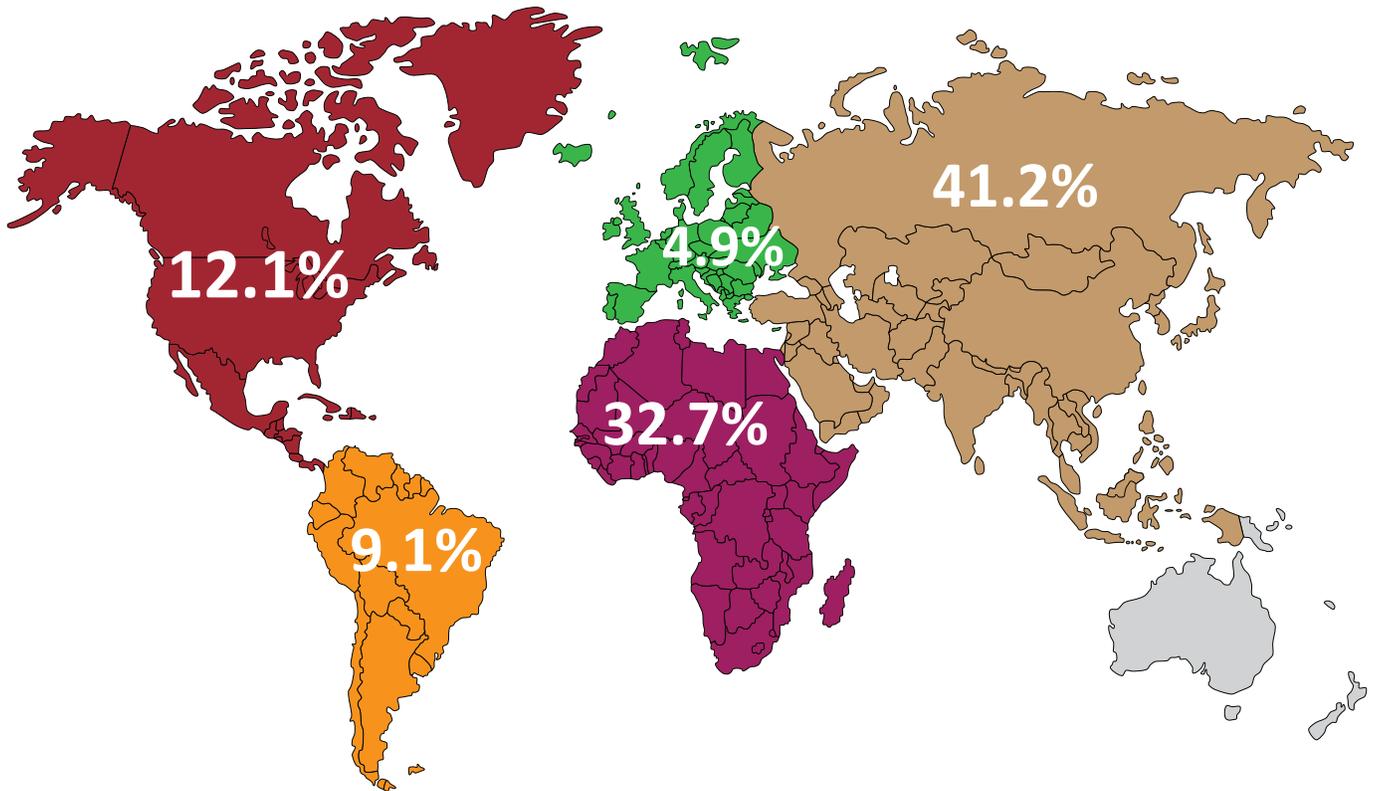
Survey: What You Said

Did you vote in the 2007 local election? Why or why not?

Three quarters (76%) of the respondents stated they *did not* vote in the 2007 municipal elections. The top two reasons offered were:

1. They were not a Canadian Citizen
2. They did not live in Calgary at the time

Forty per cent (40%) of respondents who *did not* vote in the 2007 election were not Canadian Citizens. Not surprisingly then, respondents suggested extending voting rights to Permanent Residents, as has been done in other countries (See Appendix 1 for a list of these countries).

Their written responses are telling, and are included in the following table:

> *"If every legal resident is authorized to vote, that would be great. See the UK for example, if you are both a commonwealth and legal resident, you can vote."*
>
> **- Pre-election survey respondent**

Reason for not voting in the 2007 City of Calgary election	%
Not a Canadian citizen at time	40.0
Did not live in Calgary at time	32.0
Was not informed or aware of the election or candidates	8.0
Did not care	5.6
No time to vote	4.0
Other:	
"Under 18 years old at the time"	
"Don't speak English"	
"Can't change anything"	
"Don't understand politics"	
"Didn't know which candidate was really good"	9.6
"Didn't receive 'vote card'"	
"Don't vote due to my religious belief"	
"Not enough visibility"	
"Didn't have anything felt strongly about"	
"Didn't feel comfortable"	

The reason most of the respondents voted in 2007 was that they felt it was their right and responsibility.

Do You Plan to Vote in the 2010 Municipal Election?

Although a high percentage of respondents did not vote in the 2007 City of Calgary election, at the time of the survey over half (54%) of the respondents said they did plan to vote in the 2010 municipal election. However, 46% of respondents said they did not plan to vote in the 2010 election, for the same reasons they did not vote in 2007.

How can we encourage more immigrants to vote in municipal elections?

The majority of respondents suggested more education is required concerning the voting process, the electoral system, voting rights, candidates and their platforms. They felt they were not informed enough about the various elements of an election, and therefore did not want to go out and vote. Another popular idea put forward was to explain the importance of voting to immigrants.

Respondents frequently suggested that candidates should make a greater effort to connect with immigrant groups either by utilizing diverse media or attending ethnic functions more frequently.

Other respondents felt that if logistical support were provided, such as transportation, translation, childcare, they would have a greater incentive to vote. As it stands, voting is not seen as a top priority for many immigrant communities because of these barriers.

> *"Candidates getting out to the different groups and encouraging them to get out and vote. To be able to see candidates working together for the good of the community and not just looking out for their friends and big corporations that can make them look good. The little man and especially pensioners need to know and see that the politicians are looking out for them."*
>
> **- Pre-election survey respondent**

Forum: Who Participated

Thirty-nine (39) participants attended the June forum in addition to ISCC and ECCC staff and volunteers. An equal number of women and men participated. Immigrants who came to Canada from countries that do not have a tradition of democratically electing governments were hesitant to participate. It required extra effort for organizers and leaders to convince members of these communities to attend and learn about voting in Canada. Nevertheless, the group was diverse; participants had emigrated from various parts of the world. The length of time participants had lived in Canada ranged from 2 weeks to 30 years. The community forum included an ice breaker exercise where participants were asked to share whether or not they voted in the last (2007) municipal election. Only 18% of the participants said they had voted. Notably, nearly 80% of those who said they had not voted were Canadian Citizens and were therefore eligible to vote.

What You Said

Participants were divided into 3 breakout rooms to participate in two facilitated discussions followed by a full group discussion. The first discussion focused on whether or not they voted in the last local election, and why or why not.

Did you vote in the 2007 local election? Why or why not?

Many of the reasons the participants *did not* vote were similar to the reasons uncovered in the survey: they were not living in Calgary at the time, they did not know who to vote for, or did not feel strongly about any of the candidates. Many said they *did* vote because they feel they can affect change by voting, and that voting sets a positive example for their children. Many stated that they feel voting allows them to express their voice and that it is an expression of their rights and responsibilities.

A large part of the discussions revolved around whether or not they planned to vote in the 2010 municipal election. Some participants explained that they would vote, but only if certain conditions were met. For example, they would vote if they knew more about the candidates and what they propose to do for the community, or if they knew where to go to vote. Many participants stated that they would not vote because the candidates have not engaged their communities throughout the campaign process.

> *"I think voting is important. I think everyone needs to be informed and have a voice in terms of the leadership and direction of the city. I value community engagement. I feel that 2010 is an opportunity for change and to support new ideas and new ways of making decisions in our city."*
>
> **- Pre-election survey respondent**

Participants also discussed the factors that inhibit them from voting. These include:

- They do not have Canadian citizenship
- They do not trust the candidates
- They do not identify with the candidates' platforms
- They do not have time to vote because of work, family obligations, and lack of childcare

An apparent barrier to participation is also language. While ISCC and ECCC were able to provide volunteer interpreters during many of the events in order to include the voices of those who do not speak English well, clearly this kind of assistance is not immediately available to voters on Election Day.

How can we encourage more immigrants to vote in municipal elections?

Education & Awareness

Participants expressed the opinion that more immigrants would vote if they were educated about the political process. They feel that leaders in each community should inform community members about where and how to vote, and that the media, including ethnic media, should be actively involved in providing basic information on elections in multiple languages. Some suggested that classes on the democratic process and its importance should be held regularly throughout the city.

Participants suggested community members can play a role in spreading awareness by talking to their neighbours about the election, going door-knocking, calling friends to remind them to vote, and offering their neighbours rides to the polls. They also explained that it is important to address myths, such as:

- Politicians are intimidating to talk to
- They will face consequences if they vote for the "wrong" person
- They are alone in their struggles

Incentives

A few participants suggested voting should be made mandatory. Participants said they would have an incentive to vote if they were confident candidates would follow through on their promises once elected. Otherwise, voters feel as though their vote does not make a difference even if they elect the best candidate.

Engagement Efforts by Candidates

A suggestion raised frequently was that politicians should work harder to address the needs of immigrants, and make a greater effort to connect with these communities, attend community gatherings, and become more culturally aware. Participants said they would be motivated to vote if the candidates engaged them in discussions about issues that affect them, and if candidates presented them with their responses or platform positions relating to those issues. The suggestion that received the strongest support was the recommendation to hold a mayoral candidate town hall for immigrants so they could learn about each candidate, hear the candidates engage in discussions about issues that affect their communities, and help immigrants become more comfortable participating in conversations about local politics.

Immigrant Community Members Taking Action

As a result of the input from survey respondents and forum participants, further activities were organized that put some of their ideas into action. The main activities included, but were not limited to:

- Civic election education workshop
- Community action planning session
- Mayoral candidate town hall for immigrants

Civic election education workshop

There are immigrant serving agencies in Calgary that provide civic participation education for immigrants and newcomers. Calgary Immigrant Women's Association (CIWA), for example, holds classes that teach immigrant women how to become more civically engaged. Immigrant Services Calgary (ISC) holds workshops to help newcomers prepare for the citizenship exam and to learn more about Canada. To address the concern that newcomers do not have enough information about civic elections, ISC partnered with ISCC and ECCC to hold a workshop specifically focused on civic elections. Eighteen (18) participants attended the learning session in July, consisting of participants who had already been engaged in ISC's workshops, CIWA's classes, and the Every Vote Counts forum in June.

Community action planning session

In August, ISCC and ECCC held a session for members of Calgary's immigrant community to develop action plans for the ideas raised in the survey and during the forum. Each participant was invited to become a 'Ward Leader' based on the suggestion that community leaders be trained to increase public awareness and participation in elections. Ward Leaders would encourage immigrants living in their Ward to get involved in the upcoming municipal election. Ward Leaders could put in as little or as much effort as they liked to address the following objectives:

- Spread the word about the upcoming election on October 18
- Raise awareness and invite neighbours to the Mayoral Candidate Town Hall
- Collect questions from their neighbours to ask the mayoral candidates during the Town Hall
- Tell their neighbours why it is important to vote

Each participant used a take-home resource and toolkit prepared by the Project Team to better equip them in their role as Ward Leaders. The toolkit summarized the purpose, goals and role of a Ward Leader (see Appendix 2), as well as basic information about the election process. The package included a map of City of Calgary Wards, information on each mayoral candidate, a list of the candidates running in each Ward, where and how to vote, and some of the key areas the municipal government is responsible for handling (see Appendix 3).

Participants living in the same ward broke into groups to develop action plans, and members took responsibility for one or more action items. Their ideas were organized into the following categories:

Education	Core Group Building	Mobilization
• Invite Ward candidates to an event	• Make use of current networks to build support and to get help	• Hang up posters for the town hall in churches, ethno-cultural associations, stores and bakeries, schools, language schools, event venues, etc.
• Talk to immigrant serving agencies so they can spread the word	• Invite neighbours, friends, family to help bring people together	• Increase women's involvement by providing free child care
• Distribute information in different languages through ethnic newspapers		• Engage the youth in designing and implementing creative ways of educating their peers on the electoral process
• Provide education in the community on how to vote		• Ensure food is served at the event, especially after work, so people stay to participate
• Organize a community discussion on *why* it is important to vote		• Have donated door prizes at the event to show appreciation and incorporate fun activities
• Provide community with a list of candidates, summary of platforms, websites		• Exercise flexibility on time schedules based on availability of target participants
• Have videos in multiple languages on youtube (See: youtube.com/calgarydemocracy)		• Collect questions from family, friends, communities to ask the candidates at the town hall
• Use facebook, twitter to distribute information		• Media blitz – hang up flyers, posters, send emails, use ethnic media
• Inform the community through ethnic radio stations and web pages		

Mayoral Town Hall

Holding a Mayoral Town Hall was one of the most popular recommendations identified during the June forum. Organized by ISCC and ECCC with the help of Ward Leaders, the Town Hall was held in September 2010, three weeks before the election. The event had two objectives:

1. Increase immigrant and ethno-cultural community members' knowledge of the candidates and their platforms
2. Raise the candidates' awareness of issues facing immigrants through dialogue

One hundred and fifty people (150)—mobilized by immigrant serving agencies, ethno-cultural associations and the Ward Leaders—attended the Town Hall. Eleven (11) of the 15 mayoral candidates attended.

ISCC and ECCC developed questions for the candidates based on the ideas submitted by Ward Leaders and other ethno-cultural community members. The questions addressed the following topics:

- Accessibility of services
- Affordable housing
- Affordable transportation
- Immigrant seniors' issues
- A Municipal Immigration Policy
- Immigrant youth
- Diversity and racial discrimination
- Civic participation of ethno-cultural communities

The event moderators, Alicia Backman-Beharry and Cesar Cala, presented the candidates with the questions that had been prepared. Throughout the evening, audience members also wrote down and submitted questions to the moderators. Multiple questions were submitted, indicating an engaged audience that desired to learn what the candidates believed they could do to address issues facing their communities. See Appendix 4 for a list of the questions the audience submitted to the candidates, as well as the questions the moderators presented.

The event was kicked off by an inspirational performance by Melissa D'Souza, who sang about the importance of speaking out and making your voice heard through voting.

Rise Up Calgary

Can you feel it in the air,
Long ago it wasn't there.
Everything I thought I knew
Now it's gotten me confused,
Seems like I've been left nowhere,
I've been told all my life,
Not to question, not to fight
That the way it is, it is
I won't choose to accept this
See I've got to find my way

Chorus*:*

Rise up, don't be afraid
Sing out, you know the way
You can be the change,
To see in this world
So rise up, rise up
I was blind but now I see
See the truth it lies in me
Found a strength I've never known
It's become the voice I own
So I've made the choice today

Bridge*:*

Don't let your fear hold you back
Not today, not today
Just remember the power you have
It's within you, it begins with you …
Rise Up.

ELECTION DAY

October 18th, 2010

On October 18th, The City of Calgary held its 2010 municipal election. After years of minimal change to Council's make up, the weeks leading up to the election were filled with excitement. Many Calgarians experienced renewed interest in municipal politics–you could frequently hear colleagues, neighbours, and family members discussing the candidates in anticipation of the change they hoped this election would bring. The numerous mayoral and Ward candidate forums hosted by businesses and organizations throughout the city added to the sense that Calgarians cared strongly about this election.
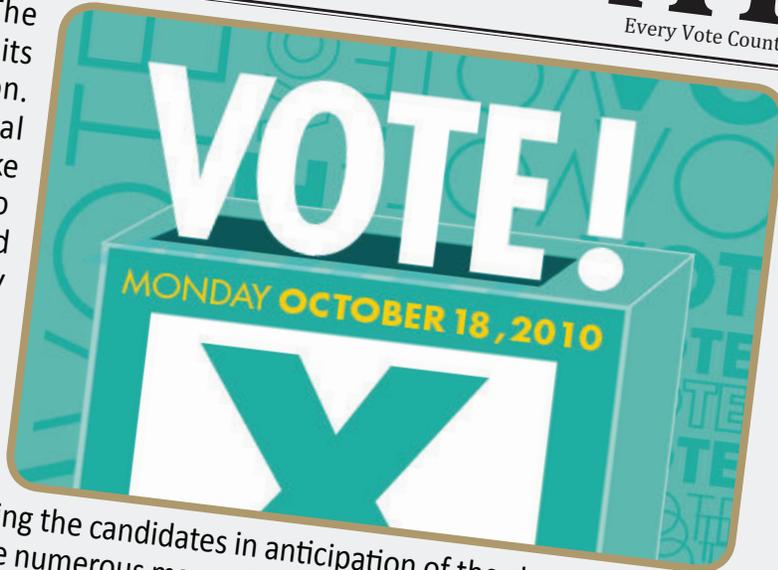
And finally, despite a voter turnout rate of 32.9% in the 2007 election, 53.2% of Calgary's eligible population expressed their voice by voting in 2010. This is the highest voter turnout rate out of 6 major cities that held municipal elections in 2010, including Toronto, a major metropolis, and Ottawa, a city populated by huge numbers of government workers. Perhaps it is because there were several new candidates running for office, including the mayor's position, and the interest of Calgarians was piqued by what they might offer. Perhaps the ideas many of the candidates were proposing on how to build a better city got people talking. Perhaps Calgarians were realizing that they too could play a role by marking a ballot that day.

The Results: After the Election

Did members of Calgary's immigrant community vote on October 18th? ISCC and ECCC were determined to find out.

Survey

An online and hard copy survey was designed and distributed to immigrants asking whether or not they voted in the 2010 municipal election, why or why not, as well as their feedback about the elections. The survey was launched in November in order to capture post-election sentiments.

Forum

In December 2010, ISCC and ECCC hosted a follow-up community forum for immigrants to identify reasons why the forum participants voted or did not vote in the 2010 election, to capture their experiences of the process, and to discover how they had engaged more immigrants to vote in their Wards or ethno-cultural communities.

> *"I want to contribute to what is happening in my town and choose who I think represents minorities better."*
>
> **- Post-election survey respondent**

Survey: Who Participated

Sex	%
Female	59.6
Male	40.4

Age Group	%
18-24	13.4
25-34	22.3
35-44	26.8
45-54	19.6
55-64	12.5
65 or older	3.6

Education Level	%
Less than Grade 12	2.8
High School Diploma	19.3
College Certificate or Diploma	22.9
Bachelor Degree	37.6
Graduate Degree (Masters/PhD)	17.4

Immigration Status	%
Canadian Citizen	77.7
Permanent Resident	18.8
Refugee	1.8

Year of Arrival	%
Established Immigrants (1957-2005)	80.0
Recent Immigrants (2006-2010)	20.4

Income	%
$0-$19,999	13.2
$20,000-$39,999	31.9
$40,000-$59,999	24.2
$60,000-$79,999	20.9
$80,000-$99,999	6.6
$100,000 or greater	3.3

112 Total Respondents

Ward	%
1	2.8
2	6.5
3	7.5
4	14.0
5	18.7
6	0
7	16.8
8	5.6
9	0.9
10	14.0
11	3.7
12	1.9
13	5.6
14	1.9

Post-election survey respondents represented various parts of the world: North America and Central America 9.3%, South America 8.3%, Africa 44.8%, Europe 4.2%, Asia 33.3%. The countries with the highest representation in the surveys were Sudan (15.2%), Philippines (8.0%) and India (6.3%).

9.3%

8.3%

4.2%

44.8%

33.3%
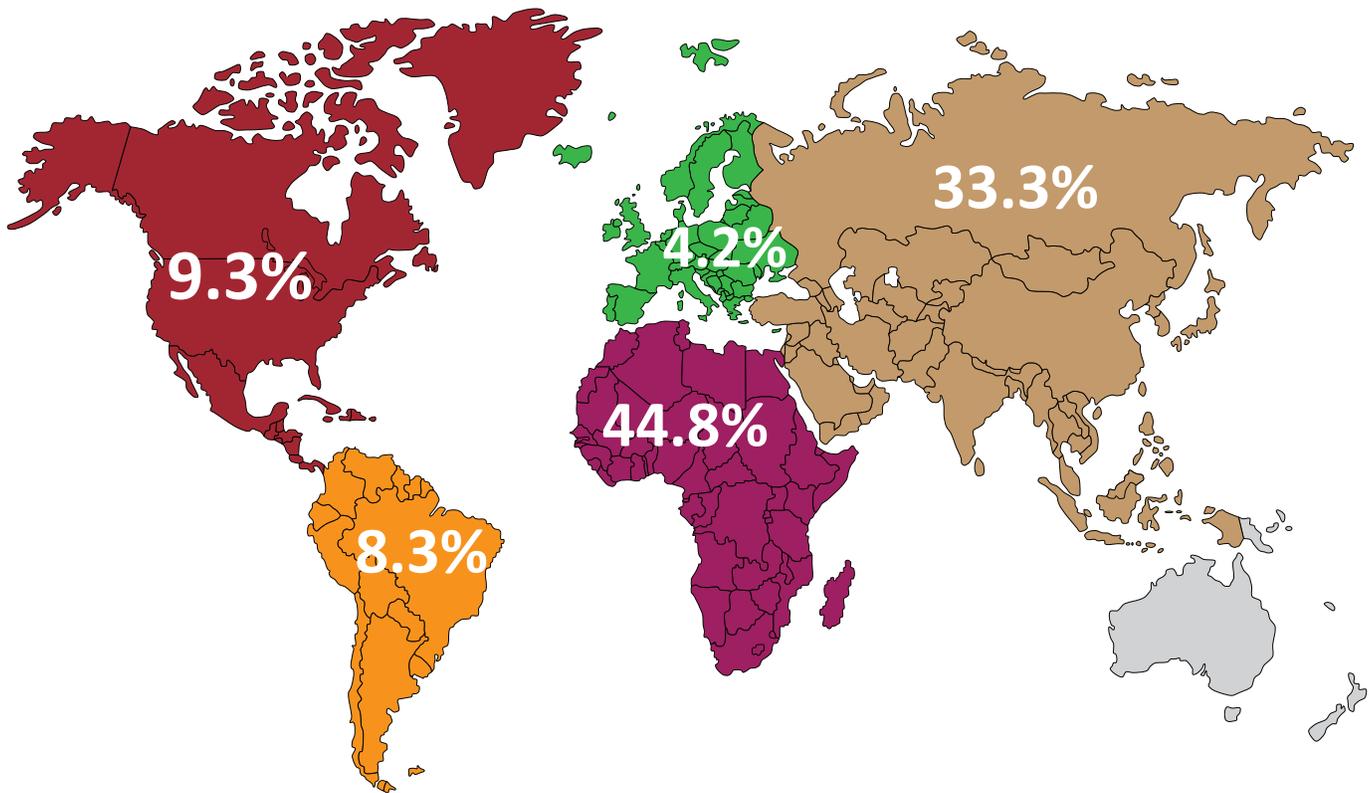
Survey: What You Said

Did you vote in the 2010 local election? Why or why not?

A majority (58%) of the respondents stated they voted in the 2010 municipal elections. This is significantly higher than the percentage of survey respondents who stated they had voted in the 2007 election (24%). The top three reasons why respondents did vote in the 2010 City of Calgary election were:

1. They felt it was their right and responsibility
2. They wanted their voice to be heard
3. They believed one candidate would do a better job addressing immigrant issues

Almost one-third (28%) of survey respondents were involved in the Every Vote Counts initiative at some point between May and December 2010.

Forty-one percent (41%) of the respondents did not vote in 2010. The reasons most often cited were:

1. They were not a Canadian citizen
2. They did not have time to vote
3. They did not feel strongly about any one of the candidates

> *"I did not have much time to attend all the mayoral forums/discussions but was able to identify the best candidate through the internet (websites). Attending Every Vote Counts helped encourage me to vote."*
>
> **- Post-election survey respondent**

Of those who did not vote in 2010, 17.0% did not do so because they were not Canadian citizens. However, the majority stated that they hope to have their citizenship in time to vote in the next election.

Forum: Who Participated

Twenty-four (24) participants attended the forum in addition to ISCC and ECCC staff and volunteers. There were an equal number of women and men who participated. The amount of time participants had lived in Canada ranged from 3 months to 52 years. Again, representatives came from various parts of the world. The community forum included an ice breaker exercise similar to the one used in the June forum where participants were asked to share whether or not they voted in the 2010 municipal election. The first (June) forum indicated that 82% of participants *did not* vote in 2007 whereas in the post-election (December) forum around 10% of participants indicated they *did not* vote in 2010.

What You Said

Participants were divided into 3 breakout rooms to participate in two facilitated discussions, followed by a full group discussion. The first discussion focused on whether or not participants voted in the 2010 local election, and why or why not.

**Did you vote in the 2010 local election? Why or why not?**

Compared to the June forum, the results of the opening exercise showed a considerable increase in the number of people who voted in the last election. In December, 90% voted in the previous (2010) election, whereas in June only 18% voted in the previous (2007) election. At the December forum, those who did not vote were either not in the city during the election, not a Canadian citizen, or unable to vote due to work obligations. The majority of participants had been involved in the Every Vote Counts project throughout the summer, and as a result of engaging in conversations, learning about the election process, and hearing from the candidates at the Mayoral Town Hall, they felt confident enough to mark their ballot on October 18th. Participants agreed they would not feel right complaining about issues affecting them unless they voted, in the sense that voting represents their attempt to affect change. Again, many participants expressed the opinion that it is their right and responsibility to vote. As we will see in the next section, not only were participants personally inspired to vote, but they inspired other members of their community to vote as well.

How did you encourage more immigrants to vote in 2010?

- Participants representing ethnic media promoted the Mayoral Town Hall and election details in various languages in their newspapers as well as through diverse news programs

- Many participants held meetings with candidates to talk about the needs of their communities and invited candidates to their cultural events

- A few participants became involved in campaigning for particular candidates

- Sudanese women who had never voted before came to Every Vote Counts events and shared the difficulties they face as working mothers

- Many participants who do not usually get involved in community activities informed their community members about the importance of voting and encouraged other people to vote

- Individuals who were not eligible to vote in this election because they were not yet Canadian citizens participated in the forums and Mayoral Town Hall because they wanted to learn about the municipal electoral process and prepare themselves to become Canadian citizens at an early stage

- One Latin American youth used social media to raise awareness of the municipal election

- One Ward Leader gave 15 members of her community rides to the polls on election day

- Participants connected with one another to work on common strategies, while others strengthened relationships or formed new ones with members of their community

- Participants engaged community members beyond their ethno-specific communities; there was a lot of cross-cultural community collaboration at the local level

Beyond Voting: Calgary Taking Action

The ImagineCalgary Plan is a 100-year vision developed in 2005 with input from over 18,000 Calgarians. With respect to voter turnout rates in municipal elections, the Plan targets a 75% turnout rate by 2026[9]. If we are serious about achieving this target, we need to be sure our strategies are inclusive of Calgary's immigrant and ethno-cultural communities.

In this project, ISCC and ECCC found there were important benefits aside from increasing the voter turnout rate. Engaging in dialogue about the election, participating in campaigns, and volunteering time in the community contributed to participants' ongoing process of integration. Members of Calgary's immigrant communities took time to discuss their understandings and experiences through the forums and surveys. While this allowed ISCC and ECCC to learn more about voting trends amongst immigrants, it also gave participants an opportunity to learn from one another, to reflect on their level of engagement, and to evaluate their role in civic society. Participants of the first forum felt it increased their understanding of why immigrants vote or do not vote in municipal elections, and that they learned ways to involve more immigrants in voting. Throughout the project, we saw participants realize the importance of voting and how municipal politics can impact their lives in profound ways.

We saw participants connecting with one another over shared struggles, and working together to mobilize their communities. The Town Hall allowed members of Calgary's immigrant communities to learn about the candidates and their perspectives on some of the issues they face. It gave them the sense that their concerns mattered, and empowered them to recognize themselves as valued members of society. Certainly we saw immigrants, including recent newcomers, aiming to be full members of the political community by engaging in civic activities.

> *"The citizens and community need to be part of the change we want. Involvement should continue beyond the electoral process."*
>
> **- Post-election survey respondent**

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[9] City of Calgary. 2006. ImagineCalgary Plan for Long Range Urban Sustainability. City of Calgary: City Manager's Office.

However, to facilitate this integration process, participants suggested that non-immigrant communities and institutions also need to play a role. The following summarizes participants' short-term recommendations towards greater political integration:

- Members of ethno-cultural communities continue, or increase, civic involvement
- The municipality spreads awareness of the election process in multiple languages
- Ethnic and mainstream media take responsibility for educating voters in diverse formats
- Elected officials continue, or increase, efforts to engage ethno-cultural communities
- The community as a whole works toward eliminating barriers to civic participation, such as lack of affordable childcare and transportation

At the final community forum, participants concluded the discussion with a long-term recommendation: we must all take responsibility for ensuring elected officials are held accountable to their promises. By achieving change, we create examples for ourselves and others that encourage further involvement, and instil a sense of accomplishment.

Finally, participants strongly recommended that the right to vote be extended to Permanent Residents. In a multicultural society, many immigrants maintain important relationships outside of the country. For some, acquiring Canadian citizenship would mean losing the right to return to their country of origin. Yet these residents pay taxes, operate businesses, contribute to their communities, and are affected by the municipality's decisions.

And yet we must keep in mind that voting is only one expression of civic participation. Working as a community to increase all types of civic participation will help us enhance the effectiveness of our democracy, and speed our evolution towards becoming a greater city for all.

Naheed Nenshi

Oscar Fech
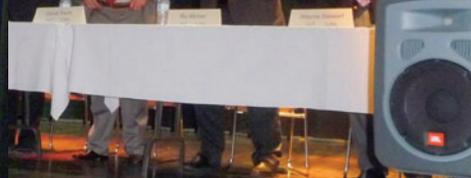
Appendix 1: Countries Allowing Non-Citizen Residents to Vote

Source: The Immigrant Voting Project

Australia (1947):	national and local voting rights for British nationals; in 1984, repealed 1947 legislation but grandfathered those registered before 1984
Austria (2002):	local voting rights in Vienna
Barbados (1990):	national voting rights for citizens of British Commonwealth
Belgium (2004):	local voting rights
Belize (nd):	national and local voting rights for three-year residents
Bolivia (1994):	changed constitution to allow non-citizens local voting rights (not yet implemented)
Bulgaria (2005):	local voting rights for EU nationals
Chile (1989):	local and national voting rights
Colombia (1991):	changed constitution to allow non-citizens local voting rights (not yet implemented)
Czech Republic (2001):	local voting rights approved for EU nationals
Denmark (1977):	local voting rights for Nordic Union citizens (expanded in 1981 for all foreign residents)
European Union (1992):	reciprocal local and European Parliament voting rights for all member nations
Estonia (2004):	local voting rights for Russian-speaking minorities with permanent resident status
Finland (1981):	local voting rights for Nordic Union citizens (expanded in 1991 to all 4-year residents)
Hong Kong (nd):	local voting rights
Hungary (1990):	local voting rights for permanent residents (revised in 2004 to limit to EU nationals)
Iceland (1986):	local voting rights for 3-year residents who are Nordic Union citizens
Ireland (1963):	local voting rights (expanded 1984 to remove 6-month residency requirement and to allow British citizens to vote at the national level)
Israel (1950):	local voting rights for Jewish residents only

Italy (2004):	voting rights for four non-voting members of Rome city council and one non-voting seat at each of 19 district councils
Lithuania (2002):	local voting rights for EU nationals
Luxembourg (2003):	local voting rights passed. No nationality restrictions
Netherlands (1979):	local voting rights in Rotterdam (expanded nationwide in 1985)
New Zealand (1975):	local and national voting rights
Nordic Union (1970s):	local voting rights
Norway (1978):	local voting rights for Nordic Union citizens (expanded in 1995 for 3-year residents)
Portugal (1976):	national and local voting rights (expanded 1997 to all 3-year residents)
Slovakia (2002):	local voting rights for 3-year residents
Slovenia (2002):	local voting rights for 3-year residents
Spain (1985):	local voting rights
Sweden (1975):	local and regional voting rights, plus some national referenda
Switzerland (1849):	voting rights for 5-year residents in Neuchatel canton (expanded in 1979 for 10-year residents in Jura canton)
United Kingdom (1948):	national voting rights for Commonwealth and Irish citizens
Uruguay (1952):	national voting rights for 15-year residents
Venezuela (1983):	local and state voting rights for 10-year residents

Appendix 2: Guidelines for Ward Leaders

Document included in the toolkit for the Action Planning Session in August.

The next Municipal election in Calgary will be held on October 18, 2010. Immigrant Sector Council of Calgary (ISCC) and Ethno-Cultural Council of Calgary (ECCC) want more immigrants to vote in this election. This will not happen without dedication and action by community members like you. By recruiting leaders from each Ward, we will reach immigrants across the city!

Purpose of Ward Leaders: Encourage immigrants that are living in your Ward to get involved in the upcoming Municipal election.

Goals for Ward Leaders:

- Spread the word about the upcoming election on October 18
- Raise awareness and invite neighbours to the Mayoral Candidate Town Hall on Monday, September 27th
- Collect questions from your neighbours to ask the Mayoral Candidates at the Town Hall (Remember: submit questions to ISCC/ ECCC by September 15)
- Tell your neighbours why it is important to vote

Examples of Activities:

- Hang up posters for the Mayoral Candidate Town Hall at businesses in your neighborhood
- Contact your Community Association to hold a Town Hall with your Ward Candidates (if you would like to do this activity, please feel free to ask ISCC/ ECCC for help)
- Talk to ethnic business owners in your community about the upcoming election and invite them to the Mayoral Candidate Town Hall on September 27th
- Encourage anyone who holds Canadian citizenship and is over the age of 18, including youth, to vote in the upcoming election
- Ask your neighbours, family or friends what they would like to see changed or improved in their community (neighbourhoods) or in Calgary as a whole. Find out what questions they would like the Mayoral Candidates to address at the Town Hall

Remember:

- We want to encourage immigrants to vote, NOT to vote for a specific candidate
- Do not be afraid to ask ISCC, ECCC, your friends, family, other Ward Leaders for help
- You do NOT need to know everything about municipal elections and voting
- Do not make any promises you cannot keep
- If someone asks who you are working for or representing, let them know you are simply an interested Calgary resident who would like to increase voting in the upcoming Municipal election
- If someone seems hostile or upset, feel free to remove yourself from the situation
- Be polite and thank those who help you or take time to listen to you
- Have fun!

Appendix 3:
The City of Calgary – Municipal Areas of Responsibility

Document included in the toolkit for the Action Planning Session in August.

Some of the following areas of responsibility may specifically or differently affect immigrants:

Municipal Immigration Policy The City is in the process of developing a policy that will make settlement and immigration a priority for The City (*Update: adopted in January 2011 as the Welcoming Community Policy*).

Settlement services The City funds many organizations that provide services to immigrants. Many of The City's services are available in multiple languages.

Housing The City provides, operates and maintains affordable housing and accommodation in Calgary.

Transportation The City operates Calgary's transportation system, street cleaning, snow control, noise control, traffic signals, road and infrastructure maintenance.

Recreation The City provides low-cost recreation facilities and services to Calgarians. The City subsidizes recreation fees for people who need financial assistance.

Health & Safety The City offers information and operates programs to improve health and safety, including the Calgary Fire Department and the Calgary Police Service.

Welcoming Communities The City plays a role in making communities welcoming for newcomers by providing affordable services that respect cultural differences, speak out against discrimination, promote diversity, and support overall well-being.

Appendix 4: Questions Submitted by the Community For the Mayoral Town Hall

The following questions were submitted by audience members during the Town Hall:

1. With post-secondary education costs continually increasing, families, especially immigrant families with many children find it very difficult to send their children to post-secondary. As mayor, what will you do to make post-secondary education more affordable?

2. Edmonton is working very hard and efficiently to promote their city in their bid for the 2017 Energy Expo. How do you plan to promote Calgary in the next 3 years?

3. Name 3 concrete actions that you will take to operationalize the City of Calgary's commitment to the Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism?

4. What can you do for the immigrant youth who have nowhere to turn except to drugs, alcohol and crime?

5. Aging population is a major concern to the city. In fact, 40% of seniors in Alberta are immigrant seniors. What are your plans to address issues facing immigrant seniors such as: social isolation and affordable housing?

6. Would you consider encouraging volunteerism among seniors by offering free parking for volunteer seniors in downtown?

7. Our city has one of the highest levels of volunteer engagement. There is also a growing need for volunteers to support volunteer organizations:

    a) How do you plan to bridge this gap in our city with more baby boomers retiring every year;
    b) With the "economic health" not being so bright, have you considered offering free parking to volunteers especially if they carpool into downtown;
    c) How else do you plan to reward our volunteers?

8. Due to the many challenges immigrants face in finding affordable housing and meaningful employment, some immigrants are leaving Calgary. What can we do to retain immigrants?

9. The Calgary Police Service is engaged in proactive outreach and recruitment activities with immigrant communities. They are doing so despite tight budgetary constraints. How do you plan to support these initiatives?

10. Not all ethno-cultural communities are at the same level of development. For example, Black communities are left behind. What will you do with regard to requests for establishing physical centres for various groups such as a Black community centre? On the other hand, what will you do to ensure Chinatown, established 100 years ago, continues to thrive?

11. As our next mayor, how will you limit the incidence of ethnic enclaves (such as in other large cities) that segregate, isolate and alienate immigrants?

12. What are three key issues affecting immigrants?

13. Many immigrant youth are facing challenges within the public school system. One of the primary obstacles is achieving success while facing challenges with English as a Second Language. These students are unable to keep up with their peers and face additional challenges including poverty. How can we support these students?

14. How will you bridge the gap about "eligibility to practice" professions of immigrants who acquired their certificates/ diplomas outside Canada?

15. How are you going to make daycare affordable for immigrant parents?

16. How can you help immigrant families through affordable child care to help them integrate and find work or even volunteer?

17. Immigrant serving agencies that provide FCSS funded services are now required to ask clients intrusive questions that verge on the illegal invasion of privacy. Will you change this?

18. Outline the steps necessary to reduce unnecessary expenditures and especially red tape.

19. With the oil sands under attack and our city's economy depending on the oil sands Calgarians need to create another source of income. What plans do you have to ensure Calgary's economic growth and success?

20. How do you propose "investing" in social inclusion in the City of Calgary?

21. What issues are you aware of facing immigrants in Calgary?

22. What is your biggest contribution to our immigrant community?

23. What specific results have you achieved in building our city and what have you done for immigrants in the past?

24 I read in the newspaper that [one candidate] has raised $750,000. Is this fair? He started raising money 4 years ago. Is this fair for all the other candidates?

25. Have you ever been to a council meeting?

26. When are we going to remove fluoridation in the city water?

27. How can you help professional immigrants to upgrade their education in a short period in order to find a job to support their families?

28. Many Calgarians live in isolation, especially immigrant seniors. What strategies will you implement to reach those individuals and communities that are socially isolated?

29. How will you respond to the problem of racial profiling in some of our night clubs/bars?

30. ESL is not always available or adequately taught and many immigrants especially Blacks face a lot of discrimination. What will you do to help with this issue?

31. If you are elected Mayor will you please abolish the $3 parking fee on LRT stations?

32. I represent the North Calgary Cultural Association (NCCA). Canada requires skilled and professional immigrants to help the Canada building process. But unfortunately their talents and skills are not appropriately used on the basis that they have to upgrade their education/skills. It is frustrating and discouraging. What are the remedies?

33. How can the municipal government play a role in addressing affordable child care services in Calgary?

The following questions were prepared prior to the event based on input from the community, and were asked at the Mayoral Town Hall:

1. If elected, how will you respond to hate incidents such as those committed by members of the Aryan Guard last Fall, and what strategies will you put in place to ensure Calgary is a welcoming city for everyone, free of hate incidents and racial profiling?

2. What solutions will you offer to immigrant families struggling to find affordable housing that will accommodate their large families?

3. What will you do to ensure relevant business units within The City of Calgary fully adopt and implement the CARE Strategy?

4. What local strategies will The City of Calgary invest in to ensure Calgary's economy is not losing out because skilled immigrants are under or un-employed?

5. What communication strategies will you put in place to ensure immigrants are aware of City programs and services?

6. What will you do to ensure Calgary Transit is affordable for new Canadians?

7. What changes do you feel are necessary to ensure all newcomers are engaged and active participants in civic life, including those who are not eligible to vote or run for office?

8. If elected Mayor, what strategies will you undertake to ensure that the City of Calgary represents and champions the needs of its immigrant population?

Appendix 5: Communities by Ward

Ward 1: Bowness, Canada Olympic Park, Crestmont, Greenwood Village/Green Briar, Montgomery, Rocky Ridge, Scenic Acres, Silver Springs, Tuscany, University of Calgary, University Heights, Valley Ridge, Varsity

Ward 2: Arbour Lake, Citadel, Evanston, Hamptons, Hawkwood, Kincora, Ranchlands, Royal Oak, Royal Vista, Sherwood, Symons Valley

Ward 3: Coventry Hills, Harvest Hills, Martindale, Panorama Hills, Saddle Ridge, Taradale

Ward 4: Beddington Heights, Country Hills, Edgemont, Greenview, Hidden Valley, Highland Park, Huntington Hills, MacEwan, North Haven, Nose Hill Park, Sandstone Valley, Thorncliffe

Ward 5: Castleridge, Coral Springs, Falconridge, Monterey Park, Parkridge Estates, Pineridge, Rundle, Sunridge/Horizon Industrial Park, Temple, Vista Heights, Whitehorn

Ward 6: Aspen Woods, Christie Park, Coach Hill, Cougar Ridge, Discovery Ridge, East Springbank, Glamorgan, Glenbrook, Glendale, Glendale Meadows, New Discovery, Patterson, Prominence Point, Richmond, Richmond Hill/Park, Signal Hill, Springbank Hill, Strathcona Park, Westhills, Westsprings

Ward 7: Banff Trail, Brentwood, Briar Hill, Cambrian Heights, Capitol Hill, Charleswood, Chinatown, Collingwood, Crescent Heights, Dalhousie, Downtown (North), East Village, Eau Claire, Highwood, Hillhurst, Hounsfield Heights, Kensington, Mount Pleasant, Parkdale, Point McKay, Queens Park Village, Rosedale, Rosemont, St. Andrews Heights, Sunnyside, West Hillhurst

The City of Calgary
Ward Boundaries
BYLAW 45M2009
(AMENDS BYLAW 19M91)
EFFECTIVE October 18, 2010
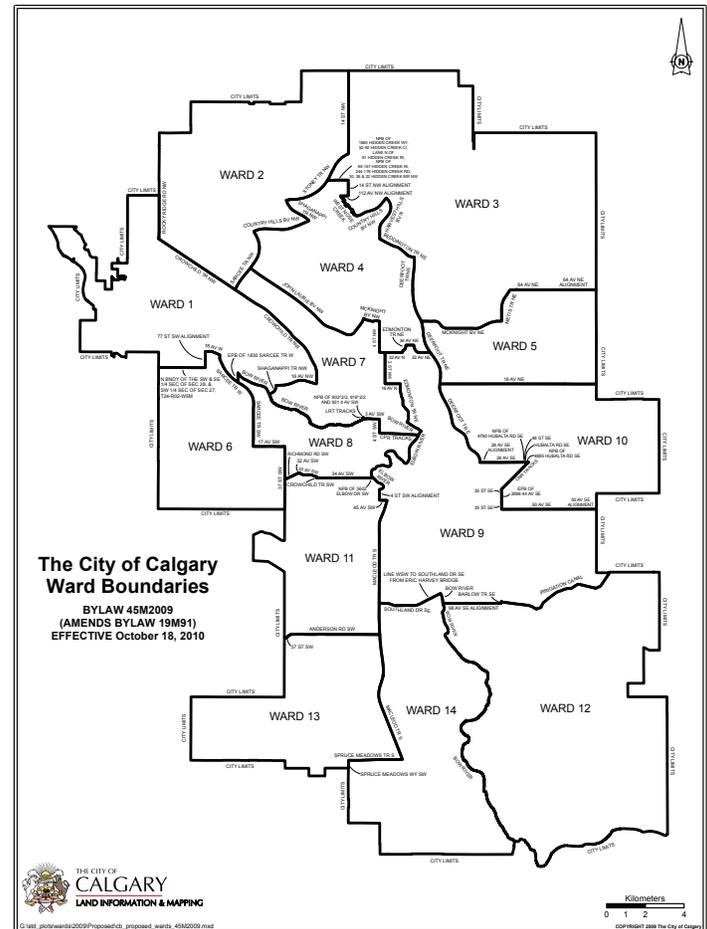
Ward 8: Bankview, Beltline Communities of Connaught & Victoria Park, Cliff Bungalow, Downtown West, Eau Claire, Elbow Park, Killarney/Glengarry, Mission, Mount Royal, Richmond-Knob Hill, Rosscarrock, Scarboro, Shaganappi, South Calgary, Spruce Cliff, Sunalta, Westgate, Wildwood

Ward 9: Acadia, Alyth/Bonnybrook Industrial Park, Bridgeland, Burns Industrial Park, Dover, Dover Glen, Eastfield Industrial Park, Erlton, Fairview, Fairview Industrial Park, Foothills Industrial, Glendeer Business Park, Golden Triangle, Great Plains Industrial Park, Highfield Industrial Park, Inglewood, Lynnwood, Lynnwood Ridge, Manchester, Millican, Mills Estates, Ogden, Ogden Shops, Parkhill, Ramsay, Renfrew, Rideau Park, Riverbend, Riverside, Roxboro, South Foothills, Shepard Industrial Park, Stanley Park, Starfield Industrial Park, Tuxedo Park, Valleyfield Industrial Park, West Dover, Wigmore Industrial Park, Winston Heights/Mountview

Ward 10: Abbeydale (including Chateau Estates), Albert Park, Applewood, Belfast, Erin Woods, Forest Heights, Forest Lawn, Franklin, Marlborough Park, Mayland Heights, McCall Industrial, Meridian Industrial, North and South Airways, Southview, Penbrooke Meadows (including Red Carpet), Radisson Heights

Ward 11: Altadore, Bayview, Bel-Aire, Braeside, Britannia, Cedarbrae, Chinook Park, Currie Barracks, Eagle Ridge, Elbow Park, Elboya, Garrison Woods, Haysboro, Heritage Park, Kelvin Grove, Kingsland, Lakeview, Lincoln Park, Mayfair, Meadowlark Park, Mount Royal College, North Glenmore Park, Oakridge, Palliser, Pumphill, Riverdale Park, Rutland Park, Southwood, Windsor Park

Ward 12: Auburn Bay, Copperfield, Cranston, Douglasdale Estates, Douglas Glen, Mahogany, McKenzie Lake, McKenzie Towne, New Brighton, Seton, Shepard

Ward 13: Bridlewood, Canyon Meadows, Evergreen, Millrise, Shawnee Slopes, Shawnessy, Somerset, Woodbine, Woodlands

Ward 14: Bonavista Downs, Chaparral, Deer Ridge, Deer Run, Diamond Cove, Lake Bonavista, Legacy, Maple Ridge, Midnapore, Parkland, Queensland, Silverado, Sundance, Walden and Willow Park

Immigrant Sector Council of Calgary is made up of representatives from immigrant serving agencies, public institutions, funders and ethno-cultural/multicultural bodies. ISCC works to provide leadership and resources to influence public attitudes and knowledge and support capacity of service providers in the immigrant sector.

The Ethno-Cultural Council of Calgary is a community-based organization that facilitates the collective voice of Calgary's ethno-cultural communities towards full civic participation and integration through collaborative action. ECCC was founded in 2002 and has a current membership of more than 30 ethno-cultural organizations and 30 individuals. ECCC strengthens the leadership capacity of ethno-cultural groups and individuals towards community action, engages communities in research and policy analysis, fosters collaboration, and promotes public awareness and respect of culturally diverse groups towards building a more welcoming society for all.