Council Direction:

At the Emergency and Committee Services meeting of December 9, 2013 the committee asked that Clerk’s staff report back to committee with information respecting what Council can and cannot do with respect to the Elections, particularly if it is feasible to approve the costs to allow the establishment of a polling station in a rental building.

Information:

Section 45(1) of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, (MEA) states that the Clerk shall establish the number and location of voting places for an election as he or she considers most convenient for the electors. The MEA does not assign the decision of number and location of polling locations to any other body or group.

The issue regarding the reason for not installing polling locations in high rise apartments has been misunderstood. The Manager of Elections spoke with the Tenant Advisory Committee last summer and explained that there are a number of reasons for not placing voting places in apartment buildings. There are concerns over the size of polling rooms, accessibility, access from non-residents and parking at apartment buildings.

When considering voting places we always look at all alternatives whether it is an apartment, condominium, townhouse development, municipal building, etc. We consider the needs of all electors within a polling subdivision. Some of the criteria considered are familiarity of the residents with a location (i.e. school, community centre, church, etc.), accessibility for all, the size and availability of a room within the location, parking and access to public transportation.
Each election year the election office receives numerous requests, from our urban and rural voters, for voting places in a variety of buildings. Election staff visits each of these locations and make a determination based upon the needs of all residents within that polling subdivision.

In 2010, 20 apartment buildings were used as polling locations throughout the city.

There are decisions City Council can make under the MEA, such as the dates and hours for advance voting, and the use of alternative voting methods. However, the number and location of voting places is not one of them. Staff will be bringing a future report on these items for Council to give direction prior to the summer.