



REPORT

TO: Council
PREPARED BY: Theresa Campbell, Municipal Clerk
DATE: April 4, 2017
SUBJECT: Alternate Voting Methods – 2018 Municipal Election
ATTACHMENTS: 1) List of Municipalities Utilizing Internet Voting – 2014
- Appendix A
2) Voting Methods – Costing Estimates
- Appendix B

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Council of the Township of Perth East receive the Alternate Voting Methods – 2018 Municipal Election Report, prepared by the Clerk, dated April 4, 2017 for information;

AND That Council approve the use of Internet/Telephone or _____ as the alternative voting method for the 2018 Municipal Election being held on Monday October 22, 2018;

AND That a by-law be brought forward to authorize alternative voting for the 2018 municipal election.

COMMENTS:

In accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act*, municipal elections are to be held every fourth year and voting day is to be held on the fourth Monday in October, with the next municipal election to be held on October 22, 2018.

Municipal Clerks must ensure that elections are established which adhere to the following principles:

- the secrecy and confidentiality of the voting process is paramount
- the election shall be fair and non-biased
- the election shall be accessible to the voters
- the integrity of the process shall be maintained throughout the election
- there is to be certainty that the results of the election reflect the votes cast
- voters and candidates shall be treated fairly and consistently; and
- the proper majority vote governs by ensuring that valid votes be counted and invalid votes be rejected so far as reasonably possible.

In 1996, the *Municipal Elections Act* was amended to permit the use of alternative voting methods and tabulation equipment in lieu of, or in addition to the traditional ballot system of voting. This change was viewed by many Ontario municipalities as a positive change to enable greater opportunity and access for both resident and non-resident electors. Alternative voting methods include vote by mail, internet voting and telephone voting. Included in this report is an overview of Traditional and alternative vote methods.

There are several voting methods, or combinations thereof, available with respect to conducting municipal elections. The most common remains a traditional voting place model however the move toward alternative voting methods continues to increase. The *Municipal Elections Act* provides that a municipality may pass a by-law to authorize the use of an alternative voting method. Alternative methods such as telephone, vote-by-mail and Internet voting have all been used by municipalities in Ontario for various reasons. Should Council choose an alternative voting method for the 2018 Municipal Election, the by-law must be passed by May 1st, 2018.

VOTING METHODS

The tables below illustrate Traditional and Alternate vote methods and provides information regarding casting of ballots, location for voting, advance polls, accessibility and counting of votes;

- Traditional Manual Ballot Voting

ALTERNATIVE VOTE METHODS

- Vote by Mail
- Vote by Telephone
- Vote by Internet

Traditional Voting	Casting Ballots	Voters attend a specified voting location to cast their paper ballot on election day (typically until 8pm)
	Location For Voting	Polling stations setup at facilities in the municipality for each ward.
	Advance Polls for Voting	Advance Polling stations setup at facilities in the municipality for each ward (typically one day).
	Recording Votes Cast	The voters name is recorded by the polling clerks - marking a line through the electors name on the voters list to record a vote cast.
	Accessibility	Provisions will be made to accommodate accessibility needs within vote locations.
	Counting of Votes	Votes are counted manually or by use of a tabulator.

ALTERNATIVE VOTE METHODS

Vote By Mail	Casting Ballots	A vote-by-mail election is a paper based alternative voting method in which a package containing instructions, a ballot and a voter declaration form is mailed to every qualified elector on the voters list. A voter will mail back their completed ballot and declaration form, in a separate prepaid postage envelope. On voting day, the municipality will either hand count the returned ballots or tabulate them using a central count scanner.
	Location For Voting	Votes are cast by the elector and mailed to the municipality to record voter and vote is counted on election day.
	Advance Polls for Voting	Votes are cast up to 10 days in advance of the election. Additional advance poll locations - typically the Sat. prior to election if not enough time for the mail to reach the municipality as well as an additional opportunity to cast ballot closer by dropping off a completed package at the municipal office in a specified ballot box (until the close of the election).
	Recording Votes Cast	The voters declaration form is scanned to record a vote cast.
	Accessibility	Individuals are able to vote from the comfort of their home.
	Counting of Votes	Votes are counted manually or by use of a tabulator.

Telephone Voting	Casting Ballots	Voters call a dedicated toll-free number and are prompted to authenticate their identity. The voter enters the PIN provided in a Voter information letter using a touch-tone dial pad and the system checks where they have voted. The voter is prompted to select from the candidates and finally to confirm their choices. The voter is optionally issued a receipt and is now blocked from voting a second time.
	Location For Voting	Vote can be cast from anywhere provided the voter has access to a telephone and have a Voter information letter for which they are able to authenticate their identity.
	Advance Polls for Voting	Votes are cast up to 10 days in advance of the election (until the close of the election).
	Recording Votes Cast	The voters list is updated immediately upon casting a telephone vote.
	Accessibility	Individuals are able to vote from the comfort of their home or an alternate location with access to a telephone.
	Counting of Votes	Once the voting has ended the results and audit trails are provided to the Clerk.

Internet Voting	Casting Ballots	Voters login to a specified voting website and enter the PIN provided in their Voter Information Letter. If the voter hasn't yet voted they click on the election site and a tamper-proof electronic ballot will appear. The voter submits their vote choices and the results are encrypted and kept anonymous. The voter is issued a printable receipt and is now blocked from voting for this election again.
	Location For Voting	Vote can be cast anywhere provided the voter has access to internet service and have a Voter information letter for which they are able to authenticate their identity.
	Advance Polls for Voting	Votes are cast up to 10 days in advance of the election (until the close of the election).
	Recording Votes Cast	The voters list is updated immediately upon casting an internet vote.
	Accessibility	Individuals are able to vote from the comfort of their home or an alternate location with access to internet service.
	Counting of Votes	Once the voting has ended the results and audit trails are provided to the Clerk.

Vote Tabulators - Vote tabulators are machines that use optical scanning to read a ballot and tally the voting results. This machine is mostly used in collaboration with Traditional Paper Ballot Voting and Vote by Mail. With the appearance of a large printer, paper ballots are fed through the machine where the vote is recorded. The electronic results are stored either in the machine, or on an external server. A ticker tape, or audit trail is generally kept at the machine. Votes can be counted in batches, or can be tabulated as each individual votes.

VOTE-BY-Mail (VBM)

Some of the benefits experienced by VBM include increased accessibility, increased voter participation, voter convenience, elimination of proxy voting and advance polls, greater accuracy and prompt election results.

Challenges identified with the VBM include the timeframe required from mail out of ballots to return of ballots, reliant on Canada Post to disseminate blank ballot and process completed ballots, errors can also occur as a result of the mail distribution process and the campaign period.

The campaign period is affected by VBM as voters may feel pressured to complete their ballot and mail back as soon as possible to meet the tight timelines. Some individual's may have already voted by the time they have been visited by candidates or participated in all candidates' debates.

Building on the success of VBM, and to address its challenges, the convenience and accessibility inherent in internet/telephone voting can provide enhanced opportunity for all electors to participate in the democratic process.

INTERNET VOTING

In 2014, survey data from the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO) indicates that the use of alternative voting methods by municipalities is growing with the most popular alternative method reported by respondents being vote-by-mail, followed by internet voting and telephone voting.

Internet voting is one part of the trend to modernize elections that has become popular in Europe, Latin America and North America. At the local level municipalities in Canada have deployed online voting in more elections than anywhere else in the world. In 2014, 97 municipalities in Ontario utilized internet voting during the 2014 municipal election (***refer to Appendix A for a list of the municipalities that utilized internet voting in 2014***).

This number has doubled with each election since 2003. Based on current projections and information provided by surveys conducted by the University of Toronto, the number of municipalities that will offer internet voting in Ontario is expected to reach approximately 200 in the 2018 municipal election.

With the advancement of technology, security and the expansion of internet availability, voting by internet (and telephone) is becoming increasingly popular, with the potential of reducing cost in numerous areas, such as training, administration, staffing, and resources.

After the 2014 Municipal Election, researchers from the University of Toronto and the Centre for e-Democracy conducted an in-depth study regarding use of internet voting as an alternative voting method. The goal of the project was to better inform governments, stakeholders, and the public of the effects of internet voting on elections. The report studied 47 Ontario municipalities that used internet voting in 2014, which included surveying internet voters, candidates, and election administration officials. Of the 47 Ontario municipalities that were surveyed, the primary rationale for adopting internet voting was to enhance accessibility, improve voter turnout and add convenience for voters. The report, as well as further information obtained from users and canvassing the public, has identified that internet voting is a desirable format for election stakeholders. Conclusions noted that overall users (administrators and electors) found the system to be convenient and accessible.

Users of online voting identified that they found the method to be easy, simple, straight forward, convenient and private. 95 percent of the respondents to the survey identified that they were satisfied with the online voting process.

Internet voting allows an elector to cast an electronic ballot from their personal computer, tablet or smartphone from anywhere there is an internet connection.

With internet voting, voters would still have the option of voting with the assistance of Election Officials, if assistance is deemed to be required by the elector. Similar to the vote-by-mail, the Municipal Office can be established as a voting place. Other locations, such as the Perth East Public Library can be used to provide internet access for individuals that do not have access to a computer device and/or internet services by establishing voting kiosks.

Internet voting is designed to fully verify voter intent by disallowing unintentional spoiled ballots and, provide warning prompts in relation to offices which may be under-voted or left blank.

Completing an online ballot is similar to marking a hard copy ballot: voters click on the check box for the candidate(s) of their choosing for each office appearing on the ballot.

Upon completion, and prior to submission, the voter has an opportunity to review their selections and make changes. When the ballot has been submitted, the voting data is stored in a secure database and is not tabulated until voting has been closed. This database is designed to encrypt the voting data in order to ensure there is no way to link a voter with a ballot after the electronic ballot has been submitted. Permissions also limit administrative access levels to authorized Election Officials.

With internet voting, an eligible elector on the voters list receives a Voter Information Letter in the mail. The Voter Information Letter will include a PIN, and other unique voter identification information (i.e. Voter ID number) that the voter will use to access a website and vote. The voter may also be requested to enter their birth date or other information as an additional security step, as determined by the municipality.

Internet and telephone voting offers even greater enhancements to voter convenience and accessibility over vote-by-mail. After monitoring the experiences of other municipalities across Ontario and in response to the growing trend of internet voting, which is further supported by substantial research and highly sophisticated security systems, staff are recommending the use of internet and telephone voting in the 2018 Municipal Election.

Security of Internet Voting

There are concerns expressed with respect to the security of internet voting, including fraudulent activity, viruses, and other technical threats associated with any system or activity that uses the internet to receive and transmit personal information.

Working in conjunction with internet voting experts (vendors), procedures are established by municipalities to address, mitigate, potential risks by employing both technical and process related security measures designed to support system administration and control user access.

Technological advances in protective measures such as firewalling and requiring user authentication techniques (requiring passwords etc) all decrease the likelihood and effectiveness of these threats.

Internet voting platforms utilize the same stringent access methodologies and encryption principles which protect internet banking sites and Electronic Medical Records (EMR) systems, which are extensive and technologically complex.

There have been concerns raised that internet voting may violate privacy concerns, such as voter coercion, including family members exercising illegitimate and unlawful authority over another compelling them to vote a certain way. This kind of concern is also relevant with all alternative voting methods. The only way to significantly reduce or eliminate these types of concerns would be to return to the traditional voting method.

Only electors on the voters list receive credentials in the mail which will be used to vote online. As with past practices, electors must complete a required form and provide identification to be added to the voters list.

TELEPHONE VOTING

Telephone voting allows voters to complete a ballot using a telephone connection. Electors receive a Voter Information Letter containing instructions on how to dial in to access the system as well as how to navigate the audio ballot. This method can also adopt similar security processes, such as requiring the elector to enter their date of birth, PIN etc.

Most interactive telephone voting systems rely on the voter to interact with the audio ballot by way of dialing on the key pad in relation to response requests, however, the potential exists from some vendors to use voice activated responses to navigate and complete an audio ballots. In addition, voters will have the ability to slow down the instructions, increase the volume, and utilize at home accessibility resources and tools.

Telephone voting is commonly employed as part of a multi-channel voting solution in conjunction with internet voting. Telephone voting provides for an enhanced level of convenience as it allows voters to cast a ballot remotely from anywhere they have access to a phone line within the defined voting period.

Concerns with telephone voting may include the time to navigate through and complete an audio ballot (depending on the number of candidates), sound levels and pronunciation of certain candidate names.

Telephone voting is generally regarded as an option to compliment internet voting, rather than offered as a standalone voting method. According to vendors, when telephone voting is offered in conjunction with internet voting, approximately 5-10 percent of voters will utilize the telephone option.

Vendors have been improving their telephone voting methods and based on a recent demonstration, it is recommended that the provision for telephone voting be included to complement and increase accessibility and convenience.

Accessibility

One of the primary benefits of internet voting is increased accessibility. Advocates allege that internet voting is the primary method that allows for some voters with disabilities to completely mark a ballot, in private, without the assistance of a designated friend or Election Official.

Any internet/telephone voting solution would need to fully comply with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*. The amended *Municipal Elections Act (MEA)* requires municipal clerks to prepare accessibility plans to identify, remove and prevent barriers that could affect electors and candidates with disabilities, and make the plan available to the public prior to voting day.

Auditing Internet/Telephone Voting

Internet voting vendors can provide a Voter Verified Audit Trail (VVAT), which is an independent verification system designed to allow voters to verify that their vote was cast correctly, to detect possible election fraud or malfunction, and to provide a means to audit the stored electronic results.

Communications

Perhaps the most significant challenge to implementing a new voting method is developing a communications plan to educate the public and reduce voter confusion. Survey data indicates that the majority of the voters who utilized internet voting learned about how to vote primarily through Voter Information Packages (letters) although other formats including traditional advertising (radio, newspapers etc.) and social media efforts increase results.

As in previous elections, the member municipality Clerks will work closely to share best practices and advertising initiatives to help educate the public regarding the municipal election/voting, as well as changes to the MEA.

The Clerk's Department will make the education/notification of electors a priority in 2017 and 2018 by implementing a Pre-Promotion Program. Current members of Council and 2018 election candidates will play an important role in educating electors, promoting public participation about the process of alternative voting.

The vendors can also provide instruction videos that can be posted on the municipal website and shared through social media to assist voters, as well as providing 24/7 assistance access.

Candidates would have an opportunity to utilize an option of access to view the voter list and status of elector (Candidate Access Portal through DataFix) and potentially increase the voter turnout. Although staff provide various avenues for advertising and work to promote the elections, the candidates certainly promote through campaigning and have a direct impact regarding the voter turnout.

DataFix Candidate Access Portal

The Candidate Access Portal option offers controlled access for candidates to view elector list data that is applicable to their constituency. With the Candidate Access Portal, candidates can view real-time data for eligible electors via a basic search capability. In addition to displaying elector information including name, property address, and mailing address, candidates can also view the strike-off status. For electors that have voted, the Portal can also identify the voting channel (in person/Internet/telephone), the voting location, and the date and time at which the elector was recorded as voted.

This is an advantage as the information is timely and accessible electronically and updated as the voting occurs. Candidates do not need to rely on a printed voters list to be provided. Additionally, previously the ability to provide voter status was not available.

DataFix/Voterview is a list management program currently utilized by the Township of Perth East and is an extremely proven valuable resource for staff managing the election as well.

The system allows election officials with comprehensive tools for managing elector and election-related data. There is the ability for real-time revisions to the elector list, for extracting elector-based counts and reports, and for supporting candidate management. There are internet/telephone voting platforms for which DataFix is fully integrated and enables secure, real-time electronic data transfers for voter's list revisions and for in-person or online voter strike-off activity.

COMMENTS

In 2014 the Township of Perth East election was conducted utilizing vote by mail which ran smoothly. However, staff have conducted extensive research regarding additional vote method options and based on election sessions attended, research completed / information received and discussions with a number of municipalities who have utilized this type of voting method and had successful elections there is an opportunity to provide additional positive options and efficiencies for voting for the upcoming election.

The use of Internet voting within municipalities in Ontario is growing rapidly from 44 using this method in 2010 to 97 in 2014. This trend is expected to increase for the 2018 municipal election.

In 2014 Internet/telephone voting was utilized by the Municipality of West Perth, City of Stratford, North Huron and Central Huron. For the upcoming 2018 election the Municipality of West Perth, City of Stratford, Township of Woolwich and all member municipalities within Huron County will be utilizing the internet/telephone method of voting.

Internet and telephone voting has been made available to provide for convenience, to accommodate changing lifestyles and demanding work schedules and to enhance accessibility for persons who may not be available or able to vote in person. For rural areas, Internet/telephone voting offers enhanced accessibility to reach electors who are geographically disconnected. For others, it offers a potential means to further engage those who may be more inclined to vote from the comfort of their own home or office rather than travelling to a physical voting place.

Voter Turnout

In 2014, Perth East had 2353 votes cast, equating to a 27.48% voter turnout. The Township of Perth East utilized vote-by-mail for the 2010 as well and the voter turnout was 26.51 percent.

By comparison in 2003 and 2006 the Township of Perth East utilized traditional voting for the municipal elections and the voter turnout was 27.5 percent in 2003 and 27.2 percent in 2006.

There are a number of factors that impact voter turnout including age, the weather, political interest, candidate acclamations etc. Notwithstanding the potential drawbacks, municipalities are continuing to lead the way in the use of alternative voting methods.

Proposed Election Model – 2018 Election

The foregoing is intended to provide Council with balanced information on possible voting methods. The last decade with technology advancements has brought opportunities to make the election process smoother for both the public as well as administration.

In addition to the information provided, staff are recommending the implement for the 2018 municipal election a combination of internet and telephone voting, including a voting place for the following reasons;

Demographics / Engagement

Perth East consists of both individuals who are receptive to new technology as well as individuals who value tradition. The proposed voting methods would allow for both of these groups options to choose a method that suits their principles. Individuals who would prefer to vote by either telephone or online could do so at their convenience during the prescribed voting time. Individuals who would prefer a more traditional method could come to a prescribed location on Election Day and “place” their vote through a kiosk or by phone. This way, the principle of “going to vote” is still satisfied.

Subject to approval of the recommendation in this report to proceed with Internet and telephone voting, combined with a voting place, the Clerk would deliver the election as follows:

- Online voting and telephone voting offered during the advanced polling period as well as on Election Day;
- Online voting and telephone voting available at specified locations during the advanced polling period and on Election Day.

Budgetary Estimates

Preliminary quotes for the 2018 municipal election from service providers estimate the cost of the election (***Attached as Appendix B***). With an internet/telephone service, it is noted that the expense of Election Workers would decrease, with the municipal staff taking on the duties on Election Day.

Reserved for the 2018 municipal election to date is \$34,195.75. Any additional amounts would be budgeted for in the 2018 budget.

BUDGETARY IMPACT

Approval of the recommendation as outlined in this report will be incorporated into the approved Annual Corporate Budget.

CORPORATE VISION, MISSION, AND CORE VALUES

The information and responses provided in this report are consistent with and in keeping with the Municipality’s stated Corporate Vision, Mission, and Core Values.

CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN

The information and responses provided in this report are consistent with and in keeping with the Municipality’s approved Strategic Plan.

Prepared by: *Theresa Campbell, Clerk*
Reviewed by: *Glenn Schwendinger, CAO*

APPENDIX "A"

List of Municipalities that Utilized Internet Voting for the 2014 Municipal Election

Note: 59 of the 97 municipalities listed below ran fully electronic elections, offering electors either internet voting only or a combination of internet and telephone voting.

Township of Addington Highlands	Township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands	City of Stratford
The Township of Adelaide Metcalfe	Loyalist Township	Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc
Town of Ajax	Township of Lucan Biddulph	City of Greater Sudbury
Township of The Archipelago	Town of Markham	Township of Tay Valley
Town of Arnprior	Municipality of McDougall	Town of Tecumseh
Township of Augusta	Township of McKellar	Municipality of Thames Centre
City of Belleville	Town of McNab/Braeside	City of Timmins
City of Brantford	Town of Meaford	Town of Wasaga Beach
Municipality of Brockton	Village of Merrickville – Wolford	Municipality of West Elgin
City of Brockville	Municipality of Middlesex Centre	Municipality of West Perth
City of Burlington	Township of Minden Hills	Municipality of Whitestone
City of Cambridge	Town of Mississippi Mills	Township of Whitewater Region
Township of Carling	Township of Montague	
Village of Casselman	Township of Mulmar	
Town of Cavan Monaghan	The Nation Municipality	
Central Frontenac Township	Township of North Dundas	
Municipality of Central Huron	Township of North Frontenac	
Township of Champlain	Township of North Glengarry	
Municipality of Chatham-Kent	Township of North Grenville	
City of Clarence-Rockland	The Municipality of North Middlesex	
Township of Clearview	Township of North Stormont	
Town of Cobourg	Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula	
Town of Deep River	Town of Parry Sound	
Township of East-Hawkesbury	City of Pembroke	
Township of Edwardsburgh/Cardinal	Town of Penetanguishene	
Township of Elizabethtown – Kitley	Town of Perth	
Township of Frontenac Islands	Town of Peterborough	
Town of Gananoque	Town of Port Hope	
Town of Greater Napanee	Town of Prescott	
Municipality of Greenstone	County of Prince Edward	
Town of Grimsby	City of Quinte West	
City of Guelph	Town of Renfrew	
Hamilton Township	Township of Russell	
Town of Hawkesbury	Township of Seguin	
Municipality of Huron East	Township of Shuniah	
Township of Huron-Kinloss	Municipality of South Bruce	
Town of Innisfil	Township of South Dundas	
City of Kenora	Township of South Frontenac	
City of Kingston	Township of South Glengarry	
Town of Kingsville	Township of South Stormont	
Township of Laurentian Valley	The Municipality of Southwest Middlesex	
Municipality of Leamington	Township of Springwater	
	Town of Stone Mills	

APPENDIX B

2018 Municipal Election - Alternate Voting - Costing Estimates

Based on an estimated 8400 Electors

Vote Method	DataFix/VoterView	Candidate Access Portal (Electors List Lookup)	Integrated Project Costing	Mailing Voter Ballots Package	Staffing	Training	Advanced Poll Staffing	Tabulators for Vote Counting	Total Estimates
Traditional Manual Count	\$ 4,700	n/a	\$ -	\$ 8,400.00	\$ 5,000	\$ 1,200	\$ 3,600	n/a	\$ 22,900
Traditional Tabulator Count	\$ 4,700	n/a	\$ -	\$ 8,400.00	\$ 5,000	\$ 1,200	\$ 3,600	\$ 18,000.00	\$ 40,900
	Voter Notices (card or letter) plus setup fee of 500. for ballots.	Feature is not applicable for Traditional Voting		Mailing of voter notices.	Staffing is based on election day with 3 staff per ward		Staffing is based on an advance poll day (8 hours)		

Vote By Mail Manual Count	\$ 12,264	n/a	\$ -	\$ 16,800	\$ 1,200	\$ 500	\$ 3,600	n/a	\$ 34,364
Vote By Mail Tabulator Count	\$ 12,264	n/a	\$ -	\$ 16,800	\$ 1,200	\$ 500	\$ 3,600	\$ 18,000	\$ 52,364
	Preparing and mailing of ballot packages 1.46 per elector	Feature is not applicable for Vote by Mail Voting		Mailing of packages and return completed ballots	Staffing for voting period/receiving of ballots/recording electors casting votes				

Internet/Telephone	\$ 1,596	\$ 1,500	\$ 15,060	\$ 8,400	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	n/a	\$ 26,556
	500 setup fee (ballot information & .19 per elector)	Candidate lookup electors list - reflects electors and status of voting	Fully managed services - 24/7 Voter help line. Cost is based on average estimate of 1.45-1.85 per elector plus 1200 onsite training	Mailing of election Voter Identification.	No staffing required as the service is fully managed by provider		Advance voting with in house staff during regular hours of operation (up to 10 days in advance of the election). Note - If advance polls were held after hours or on weekends a cost would need to be allocated.		

Note: Advertising/Promotion is not included in the above costing estimates.