



## Council report

<b>Meeting date:</b>	March 2, 2021
<b>Title:</b>	Alternative Voting Methods
<b>Prepared by:</b>	G. Scharback, Clerk
<b>Reviewed by:</b>	L. Johnston, CAO

### Recommendation

That council receives the report Alternative Voting Methods; and

That council approves using internet and telephone voting as alternative voting methods in the 2022 municipal elections.

### Executive summary

The Municipal Elections Act, 1996, as amended, requires that a council must pass a bylaw to allow alternative voting methods in a municipal election. The Act has been amended by the Supporting Ontario's Recovery Act, 2020, by changing the deadline for this bylaw from May 1 in the year prior to the election to on or before May 1 in the year of the election; however, it is imperative for election planning purposes to determine alternate voting methods as soon as possible.

### Background and discussion

Several voting method options are available for conducting the 2022 municipal and school board elections. Council may choose to offer voters a paper ballot system using optical scan vote tabulating devices, an internet and telephone voting system, or a hybrid approach using both systems.

It is important to consider the impact of COVID-19 and the impact on the municipal elections and it is still unknown how long the safety and emergency measures which have been implemented will be in place. It is possible that there may be another wave of COVID-19 which may limit the ability for the public to gather in groups, impacting the method of voting selected for the 2022 municipal elections.

Only Internet and telephone voting provides the opportunity for voters to vote from wherever they wish, using an authentication security system from almost any device. Advance Voting and Voting Day locations would be made available to allow voters to go in person to cast their votes using electronic equipment at Voter Assistance Centres (VAC) for voters in need of



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assistance or who do not have access to technology. Voting equipment and staff trained to assist voters to use the electronic voting process would be staffed at each location. This system would also use a vote anywhere system, where voters would not be required to go to a specific voting place to receive the correct ballot; they can choose any of the VAC's that would be made available throughout the municipality. Staff recommend internet/telephone voting methods for the 2022 municipal elections for the following reasons:

- it provides for a more accessible election method;
- it allows voters to vote from anywhere;
- it allows the elections to proceed as planned regardless of weather or any COVID 19 impacts;
- internet/telephone voting methods were used in 2018, voter turn-out increased by 13.4% over 2014;
- it is a cost effective method;
- it has less impact on the environment as less people will have to travel to vote and there is a significant reduction in the use of paper;
- election results are available very quickly after the polls close.

Grey County Clerks discussed preparations for the 2022 municipal elections at our February 2021 meeting. Clerks from neighbouring municipalities that used internet and telephone voting methods in the 2018 municipal elections noted that they expect to continue using those alternative voting methods for the 2022 municipal elections. When each council has confirmed by bylaw what voting methods shall be used there is an opportunity to collaborate on preparing a request for proposals for the provision of alternative voting method service and the possibility of cost sharing for those municipalities that are using the same voting methods.

## Legal and legislated requirements

Municipal Elections Act, 1996, as amended.

## Financial and resource implications

2022 election cost estimate is \$50,000.

The 2018 election using internet/telephone voting cost \$44,214.69 overall, with a by-election for school board costing an additional \$23,413.72 overall. \$12,500 is transferred into the election reserve each year, by 2022 there will be \$70,000 in the election reserve.

## Staffing implications

Staff requirements are significantly less for an election using internet/telephone voting



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methods, requiring one temporary election assistant for approximately one (1) month.

## Consultation

Grey County Clerks

Municipal Elections Act

## Alignment to strategic vision plan

Pillar: Work together

Goal: Build partnerships and Clear communication

Strategy: Leverage partnerships with neighbouring municipalities and Implement online services

## Attachments

None.

## Next steps

Investigate options for shared RFP process with Grey County lower tier municipalities for the provision of internet/telephone voting services.

Begin Election 2022 education campaign.

Respectfully submitted:

Genevieve Scharback