



The Corporation of the Town of Tecumseh

Corporate Services & Clerk

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Laura Moy, Director Corporate Services & Clerk

Date to Council: October 26, 2021

Report Number: CS- 2021-27

Subject: 2022 Municipal and School Board Elections Voting Method

Recommendations

It is recommended:

That CS-2021-27 entitled “2022 Municipal and School Board Elections Method of Voting” **be accepted**;

And that Internet and Telephone voting **be approved** for the 2022 Municipal and School Board Elections and that the Clerk prepare a by-law to authorize the alternate voting method in accordance with Section 42(1b) of the *Municipal Elections Act*, 1996, S.O. 1996 c.32.

Background

The next Municipal and School Board Elections (Elections) will take place October 24, 2022. Since the 2018 elections, the Province has made several changes to the *Municipal Elections Act*, 1996, S.O. 1996 c.32 (MEA) relating to the method and timing of the election, including:

- Shorter time between the first day for nominations (May 1, 2022), Nomination Day (August 19, 2022) and Election Day (October 24, 2022)
- Removal of ranked ballot option (Bill 218)
- Requirement to pass by-law to allow for alternate method of voting extended from May 1, 2021 to May 1, 2022.

Municipal Clerks are responsible for conducting the elections in a manner that adheres to the following principles, which the courts may have regard to when making determinations under the Act:

- 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.

There are several voting methods, or combinations thereof, available with respect to conducting municipal elections:

- Traditional paper ballots and polling stations,
- Vote by Mail,
- Internet, and
- Telephone voting.

Appendix 1 provides a summary of the voting process for the alternative voting methods of Vote by Mail, Internet and Telephone Voting.

Alternative voting methods were the most common methods of voting in the Province in 2018. Of the 444 municipalities in the Province, 73.4% used Internet, phone or mail in voting.¹ According to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), 178 municipal governments used Internet/Phone voting methods, which is 84 more than the previous election. The use of mail-in ballots for the election dropped by 46% and likely reflects a move to a method that is safe from a postal strike.²

Since 2003, the Town of Tecumseh has used the alternate methods of Vote by Mail or Internet and Telephone voting. Internet and Telephone voting were used to conduct the 2014 and 2018, as well as the 2016 By-election for Ward 2.

The Table found in **Appendix 2** summarizes the methods of voting and voter participation in the Town following the 1999 amalgamation, along with the Provincial average voter participation.

¹ Association of Municipalities of Ontario [Open Data](#)

² Association of Municipalities of Ontario [Election Stats](#)

Once again, consideration has been given to the method of voting for the 2022 Election in the Town of Tecumseh.

Comments

Legislation

Pursuant to Section 42 of the MEA Council may pass a by-law authorizing electors to use an alternative voting method, such as voting by mail, internet and telephone voting, which do not require electors to attend at a voting place in order to vote. In accordance with recent changes to the Act, a by-law passed under this section applies to a regular election if the by-law is passed on or before May 1, 2022.

The Clerk is responsible for establishing procedures and forms for the use of any alternative voting method, by June 1 in the year of the election.

Special Considerations

While it is important to ensure that the legislative requirements of the MEA are adhered to, the health and safety of voters, candidates, election officials and workers and everyone else during all phases of the election process (planning through to voting) are paramount.

Each election is unique; however, the 2022 Elections will have some special considerations that will make it unlike previous elections. The COVID-19 pandemic has introduced new challenges to the election planning process. Current vaccination rates are showing effectiveness in lowering the number of COVID-19 cases, but contingency plans are required for the safety of the voters and staff, as well as preparing for the possibility of interruptions in the voting process due to the potential for new waves of the virus or other health concerns.

In addition to the health and safety considerations, the Clerk must also ensure that the election process is accessible for all voters and complies with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA). Accessibility must be considered in the procurement process for voting equipment or services, as well as the hiring of election officials. Voting locations must also be physically accessible.

Voter Participation

Election officials strive to achieve a high voter turnout percentage however, there are many factors that affect voter turnout, most of which are outside of the officials' control. Some of these factors include:

- Number of positions to be elected;
- Number of candidates;
- Major controversial issues;
- Accessibility and convenience of voting for electors;
- In the case of polling stations, the weather;

- Other significant events.

While there are a number of reasons that Tecumseh Council decided to first introduce Internet and Telephone Voting in the 2014 elections, one of those reasons was to increase voter turnout, while offering electors greater convenience and accessibility when voting.

Benefits of Internet and Telephone Voting Methods

Internet and Telephone voting are convenient for voters and voters can cast their ballot privately and independently during the 10-day voting period 24 hours a day up until 8:00 pm on Election Day. These methods are designed to encourage voter participation as voters don't have to go to a physical location to cast their ballot and provide additional voter opportunities for students and those unable to visit a voting place (i.e. out of country voters). They also support changing demographics and lifestyles.

Both methods are accessible as they are compatible with assistive devices and offer privacy for disabled voters and enable voters to vote independently. Proxy voting is also eliminated.

Telephone voting can be configured to meet existing telephone accessibility standards and increases opportunity for voters who are elderly or disabled to vote. It is most commonly used with Internet voting and offers access to voters who do not have internet access.

Either method provides electors flexibility and convenience, along with the ability to cast their ballot anytime, anywhere with an internet connection or landline or mobile device. Long line-ups at the poll are mitigated.

Election results are faster and more accurate due to electronically automated tabulation and there is reduced potential for ballot error.

The number of staff and staff costs are also reduced in comparison to the traditional voting method and Vote by Mail.

A summary of the advantages and disadvantages of the varying alternative voting methods is offered in [Appendix 3](#).

The Voters' List

The Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) provides all municipalities with a Preliminary List of Electors (PLE). MPAC develops the PLE from the assessment rolls and other information collected. It is then the Clerk's responsibility to add, amend or delete names based upon information provided by the public. MPAC Officials indicate they have implemented procedures and more financial resources toward producing improved PLEs for municipalities.

The Town entered into an Agreement with DataFix for use of Municipal VoterView (MVV) an Internet-based application designed to provide municipal election officials with an electronic view of their electoral information, including the ability to make corrections to the list, to access

and generate voter reports for electoral planning, and the capability to provide an electronic copy of all changes to MPAC at the end of the electoral event.

Voter Information Centres

Voter Information Centres have been provided at the Brouillette Manor, Extendicare Nursing Home and St. Clair Retirement facilities, when utilizing the alternative voting methods.

A Voter Information Centre is also established at the Town Hall to assist electors with being added to the Voters' List, address any questions or to assist them with the voting process. Computers, iPads and telephones are made available to those who need assistance. The Town Hall hours are also extended to accommodate those that cannot attend during regular business hours.

Consultations

Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks & Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO)
Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)

Financial Implications

The 2022 budget and lifecycle provide funding in the amount of \$64,000 for the municipal election. The current annual allocation in Lifecycle for the election is \$16,000.

Following the direction of Council, a Request for Proposal for Internet and Telephone voting will be prepared. Opportunities for a joint RFP with area municipalities will be explored for potential efficiencies.

Further information will be provided to Council as part of the 2022 Budget process.

Link to Strategic Priorities

Applicable	2019-22 Strategic Priorities
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Make the Town of Tecumseh an even better place to live, work and invest through a shared vision for our residents and newcomers.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ensure that Tecumseh's current and future growth is built upon the principles of sustainability and strategic decision-making.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Integrate the principles of health and wellness into all of Tecumseh's plans and priorities.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Steward the Town's "continuous improvement" approach to municipal service delivery to residents and businesses.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Demonstrate the Town's leadership role in the community by promoting good governance and community engagement, by bringing together organizations serving the Town and the region to pursue common goals.

Communications

Not applicable ☒

Website ☐

Social Media ☐

News Release ☐

Local Newspaper ☐

This report has been reviewed by Senior Administration as indicated below and recommended for submission by the Chief Administrative Officer.

Prepared by:

Laura Moy, Dipl. M.M.
Director Corporate Services & Clerk

Recommended by:

Margaret Misek-Evans, MCIP, RPP
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment Number	Attachment Name
1	Alternate Voting Methods
2	Town of Tecumseh Voter Turnout