



Municipality of Port Hope
56 Queen Street
Port Hope, ON
L1A 3Z9

REPORT TO: Corporate Services Committee

FROM: Shrishma Davé, Manager, Legislative Services/Deputy Clerk

SUBJECT: 2022 Municipal Elections – Alternative Voting Method

DATE: November 16, 2021

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That a By-law be presented to Council to confirm the use of internet and telephone as alternative voting methods in the 2022 Municipal and School Board Elections; and

That Staff be directed to proceed with the procurement of equipment and service for internet and telephone voting with Intelivote Systems Inc. for the 2022 election.

BACKGROUND:

Staff are commencing preparations for the 2022 Municipal and School Board Elections (“2022 Municipal Elections”), which will occur on October 24, 2022. The Clerk, as Returning Officer, is responsible for preparing for and conducting the municipal election as outlined in Section 11 of the Municipal Elections Act (“the Act”). The Act further provides that the Council of a municipality may pass by-laws authorizing the use of vote counting equipment and an alternative voting method that does not require electors to attend a voting place in order to vote.

If such alternative voting methods and/or the use of vote counting equipment are to be implemented, a by-law is required to be approved by May 1, 2022. However, in order to secure a vendor to provide such services, it is prudent to pass such a by-law as soon as possible so that Staff may begin the process to procure a suitable vendor.

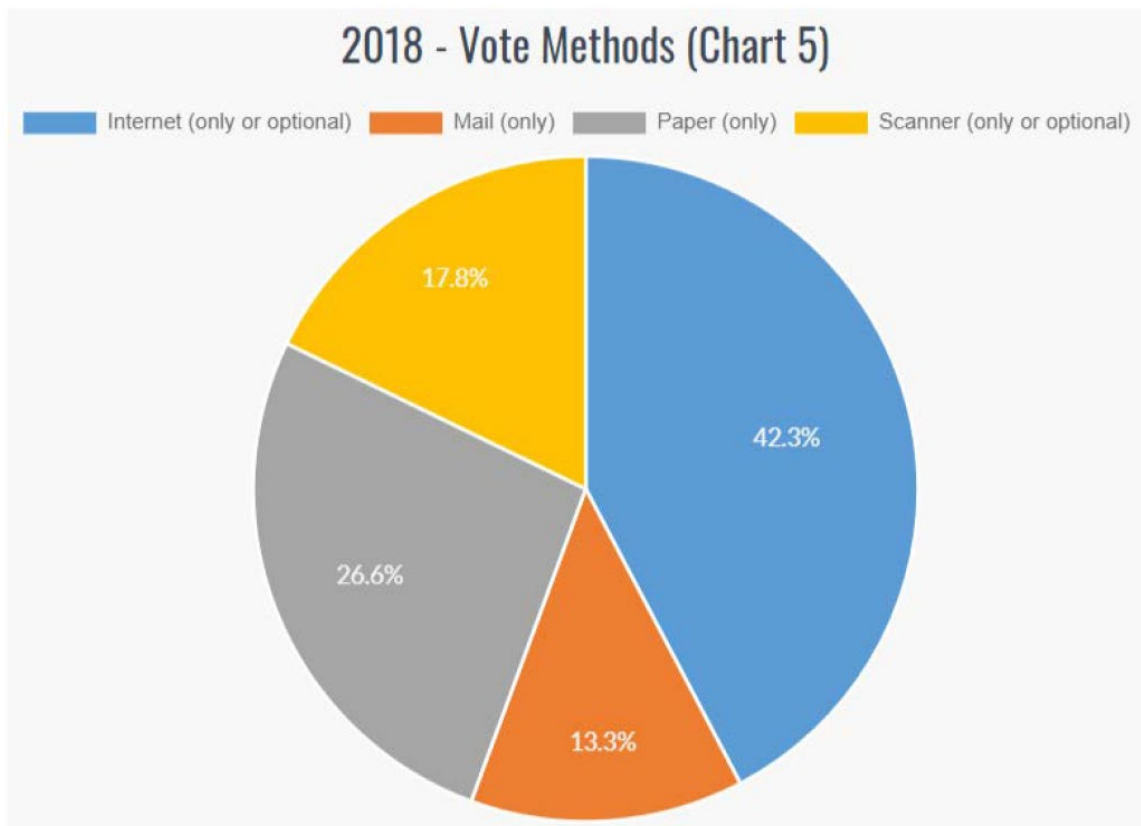
When determining an appropriate method of voting, there are several considerations that must be made. The voting system chosen must facilitate

ease of access to voting at a time and place convenient to the elector. The integrity of a vote and voter confidence are also important to consider when selecting a method of vote. The method of vote selected should accurately register and report the record of each vote cast. It should also be easy to use and easy to understand for election workers and for all voters, regardless of language skills and understanding of the electoral process. The method chosen must also be cost effective and affordable for the municipality.

The four main election methods deployed by municipalities in Ontario are as follows:

- Paper ballot with manual counting
- Paper ballot with vote aggregation by optical scan vote tabulators
- Vote-by-mail
- Internet and telephone voting

The following chart published by the Association of Municipalities Ontario offers perspective on the use of voting methods across the province in the 2018 general municipal elections.



Staff recommend that the Municipality of Port Hope implement Internet and telephone voting for the 2022 Municipal Elections, given the additional convenience and accessibility offered to voters. These methods provide for enhanced service delivery, making the voting process easier by eliminating the need for travel, removing time constraints, mitigating the potential for long line-ups at voting stations, and better addressing accessibility issues for persons with disabilities, or people who are ill or away from home. Additional benefits include faster and more accurate election results, and significantly reduced potential for ballot errors.

Internet voting has been employed by many municipalities in Ontario since 2003, with approximately 177 of Ontario's 444 municipalities employing this method in 2018 or in subsequent by-elections. Some municipal clerks, IT professionals and academics have expressed concerns with respect to the security of internet voting. However, these types of security issues have yet to materialize in the context of Ontario municipal elections dating back to 2003 when internet voting was first used by the City of Markham. While there have been some instances of 'technical hiccups' occurring, of the roughly 177 Ontario municipalities to utilize internet voting to date, none have experienced a case of voter fraud, security breach, or other process challenges sufficient to controvert an election.

Since 2014, the Municipality of Port Hope has used telephone and internet voting to successfully administer municipal elections, with a voter turnout rate of 44.9% in 2018. For the 2018 election, Port Hope utilized Intelivote Systems Inc. as a vendor, which resulted in positive results and the services included election personnel and candidate training, exceptional support and site visits as required, set up of Voter Help Line, policies and procedures, clear written and verbal instructions for the implementation of telephone and internet electronic voting. Although some voters reported minor issues with respect to the telephone voting system in Intelivote, discussions with the vendor have indicated that all concerns have been mitigated and the parties previously responsible for delivering this service are no longer subcontracted by the vendor.

After careful consideration of all options, Staff are recommending renewing the contract with Intelivote Systems Inc. for the 2022 Municipal Elections. As per Procurement By-law 20/2018, Section 9.1.3, this purchase meets the exemption for single-sourcing being, "the compatibility of a purchase with existing equipment, facilities or services is a paramount consideration and that purchase must be made from a single source". While Staff have the ability to approve this purchase through the single source exemption in the Procurement Bylaw, it is in advance of the 2022 budget, which is yet to be approved. However, as this vendor is only taking on a limited number of clients for the 2022 Municipal Election, Staff want to ensure that the Municipality is able to include this purchase as a 2022 expense in the budget.

The Municipality has used this vendor in the past and are familiar with the level of service and quality of the platform. Training material and procedures have already been created that incorporate the Intelivote platform, which reduces staff time for training and recreating those documents. Intelivote Systems Inc. is also the leading vendor in internet and telephone voting, and the only vendor with federal government security clearance. They have successfully conducted over 1650 elections for a variety of clients including municipalities, unions, provincial and political leadership elections. Furthermore, they have committed to taking on less clients in 2022 than in the past, so that they may devote considerable resources to ensuring that their clients are appropriately supported.

As such, Staff are recommending as per the Procurement By-law and as approved for the last election, entering into an agreement with Intelivote Systems Inc., a vendor that provides internet and telephone voting options as the sole methods of voting for the 2022 Municipal Elections. As previously outlined, internet and telephone voting provides improved convenience and accessibility for the electorate. Voters who have a computer, laptop, tablet, and cell phone or land line can vote from anywhere, at a time most convenient for them. The voting period would be continuous from the beginning of the advance voting period to the “close of polls” on Voting Day.

Staff are recommending that Council approve that Staff execute an agreement with Intelivote Systems Inc. building upon the successful integrated voting solution experience delivered during the 2018 election. Staff also recommend that any additional or subsidiary agreements with respect to procuring services for internet and telephone voting be delegated to the Clerk.

It should be noted that there was an additional factor that was considered when drafting this report and recommending a method of voting, and this was the consideration of the impact of COVID-19 on the 2022 Municipal Elections. 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 or other impacts which may limit the ability for the public to gather in groups, which further provided the benefit of internet and telephone voting for the 2022 Municipal Elections. Staff will be considering public health measures, continuously monitoring the situation and looking towards the Federal and Provincial elections that come before 2022 in order to provide a successful election in these unpredictable times.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

All election expenses will be funded by general levy and included in the 2022 operating budget. The overall cost of the election is currently anticipated to be between \$60,000 and \$70,000. This represents a significant decrease from years prior and reflects an efficient, sustainable approach to delivering a modern election. For example, the costs of the 2018 Municipal Elections totaled

approximately \$99,000. Through the effective use of technology, eliminating costs of tabulator and equipment rentals, building rentals, staffing costs for voting locations, and backfilling the Election Coordinator position, Staff hope to realize further cost savings in the upcoming election than in previous years.

CONCLUSION:

Internet and telephone voting are once again being recommended for the 2022 municipal election given their capacity to enhance convenience, accessibility and integrity in the voting process, and their overall success in the 2018 election. Pending Council approval, staff will proceed with procuring the necessary equipment, systems, and services to support the use of internet and telephone voting for the 2022 Municipal Elections.

Respectfully submitted.

Shrishma Davé, Manager, Legislative Services/Deputy Clerk