



REPORT

TO: Members of Council

FROM: Pat Pilgrim, CAO/Clerk
Suzanne Huschilt, Acting Deputy Clerk

DATE: March 22, 2017, Regular Meeting of Council, Operations

Re: Alternative Method of Voting – Elections 2018

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council accepts this Report “Alternative Method of Voting – Elections 2018,” as submitted by the CAO/Clerk and the Acting Deputy Clerk as information; and

THAT Council approves a bylaw be prepared to authorize the use of Internet/Telephone voting for the 2018 Municipal Election.

ORIGIN/BACKGROUND:

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

Under the *Municipal Elections Act*, Clerks of local municipalities are responsible for preparing and conducting elections. It is the Clerk’s responsibility to ensure that all members of the electorate are given every opportunity to vote and that the voting process is as accessible and accountable as possible.

The deadline to pass a bylaw to authorize an alternative voting method was moved forward to May 1, **2017** from June 1, 2018.

In an effort to further modernize municipal elections the Hastings County Clerks have collaborated and explored the market for internet and telephone voting systems for use in the 2018 Municipal Election. An internet/telephone voting solution would provide convenient and accessible voting in addition to fast and accurate election results, while utilizing the latest technological and security advances, in a manner that ensures confidence in the integrity of the voting process.

The Hastings County Clerks will work collaboratively to secure a common provider for the telephone/internet voting service, thus being able to secure the service at the best possible price. In preliminary discussions with the providers of this service, the price is per elector and

the providers are willing to quote on an accumulated number of electors for all the municipalities within the County.

Vote-by-Internet

Voting via the internet is the most recent alternative method of voting available, although it has been used in Ontario for more than 10 years. Ninety-Seven Municipalities in Ontario utilized internet voting during the 2014 municipal election. 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 for the 2018 municipal election. Users of online voting identified that they found the method to be easy, simple, straight forward, convenient and private. Ninety-Five percent of respondents to the survey identified that they were satisfied with the online voting process.

As with voting by phone, voting via the internet allows the voter to access the system from virtually anywhere in the world through the use of a personal computer, mobile phone or tablet. All eligible voters receive their Voter's Information Package (VIP) by mail and included is a unique Personal Numeric Passcode (PIN). Voters log on to the election website, enter their PIN and a security question and then proceed to mark their ballots electronically. The voter is allowed to review and reconsider their votes before confirming.

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 vote-by-mail, the Municipal Office can be established as a voting place. Offering internet kiosks in such places as the public library and municipal office is one method to provide access for individuals that do not have access to a computer device and/or internet services.

Vote-by-Phone

In using vote-by-phone, voters dial into a toll free number, enter an individual security code (PIN) and then follow a touch tone menu to enter their votes. As discussed above, the Municipal Office can be established as a voting place if a touch tone telephone is not available.

Benefits of Internet / telephone voting

- Voter choice, flexibility and convenience
- Immediate, auditable accurate results
- Voter intent clear – no spoiled ballot issues, positive ballot confirmation
- Increased participation of voters – opportunity to engage younger voters
- Environmentally positive, reduction in carbon emissions and use of paper
- Addresses provincial accessibility requirements
- Cost effective
- Reduction in staffing required/ training of staff
- 24/7 Tech Support-toll free Voter Help Desk made available on voting website
- Candidate's module for up-to-date reports for campaigning purposes

Vote-by-Mail

The municipality has used vote by mail for a number of elections. Some concerns for the 2018 election with this method are the rising costs, stability of the service, the flexibility it provides to voters and the concerns surrounding convenience. The vote-by-mail method is subject to risks that could possibly arise from postal service disruptions.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There will be costs associated with the advertising; preparation of the Voters' List; preparing procedures and policies for Candidates and electors; etc. regardless of the voting method used.

The cost for the 2014 Election, including vote by mail method, was over \$40,000. The cost for internet/telephone voting service is estimated to be \$17,000.

There will also be additional costs for staff to be available on October 22, 2018 as the Municipal Office will be open until 8:00 p.m. for any electors to use the Voting kiosk.

ATTACHMENTS:

n/a

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "S. Hirschilt".

Suzanne Hirschilt