Committee of the Whole Report

Report Number:	**CLK2021-001**
Meeting Date:	January 12, 2021
Title:	Municipal Election 2022 – Voting Method
Description:	Internet/Telephone Voting
Author and Title:	Cathie Ritchie, City Clerk

Recommendation(s):

That Report CLK2020-009 Municipal Elections 2022 – Voting Method, be received;

That the voting method of internet/telephone for the 2022 municipal election be approved; and

That a by-law be brought forward to Council authorizing the alternative voting method as required by the Municipal Elections Act as amended Section 42(1b).

Department Head: _____

Financial/Legal/HR/Other:_____

Chief Administrative Officer:_____

Background:

The Municipal Elections Act (MEA) states that municipal elections are to be held every four years with the next voting day being Monday, October 24, 2022.

In 2016, the Municipal Elections Act was amended. Section 42(1) sets out that council may pass a by-law authorizing an alternative voting method as long as a by-law is passed before May 1 in the year prior to the election. On January 24, 2017 Council adopted the following resolution along with the accompanying By-law 2007-013:

> **CR2017-059**
> **Moved By** Councillor James
> **Seconded By** Councillor Strangway
>
> **Resolved That** the alternative voting method of telephone/internet for the 2018 municipal election, be approved;
> **That** a by-law be presented to authorize the telephone/internet voting method for the 2018 municipal election.

The 2018 Election was the first for the City of Kawartha Lakes to provide Online/Telephone Voting. In Ontario 178 municipalities out of 417 utilized Online/Telephone Voting which is 84 more than the previous election. The use of mail in ballots dropped by 46%.

In 2018 voter turnout was marginally higher than the provincial average where in 2014 the voter turnout was below the provincial average.

The following tables provide the voter data from the 2018 Municipal Election.

2014 to 2018 Total Voter Turnout Comparison:

	Kawartha Lakes	Ontario-Wide Estimate (source: AMO):
2018	38.05%	37.59%
2014	41.49%	43.00%

Voting Method Comparison:

	Count	Percentage
Internet	19,730	78%
Telephone	4,005	16%
Kiosk/Long Term Care	1,545	6%
Totals	25,280	

Turnout by Age

	Total Electors	Voted	Turnout
18-29	5854	1292	22.07%
30-39	7307	1734	23.73%
40-49	7781	2306	29.64%
50-59	13208	5024	38.04%
60-69	14893	7394	49.65%
70-79	9903	5310	53.62%
80-89	4478	1852	41.36%
90+	1125	306	27.20%
Unknown	1469	62	4.22%

Turnout by Ward

Ward	Total Electors	Voted	Turnout
01	9,628	2,593	26.93%
02	7,547	3,198	42.37%
03	8,125	3,298	40.59%
04	7,598	2,548	33.54%
05	8,959	4,102	45.79%
06	7,899	3,274	41.45%
07	9,421	3,991	42.36%
08	7,264	2,276	31.33%
Total	66,441	25,280	38.05%

Turnout by Residency

	Total Electors	Voted	Turnout
Resident	53,361	22,674	42.49%
Not Resident in Municipality	13,062	2,590	19.83%
Other/Unknown	18	16	88.89%
Total	66,441	25,280	38.05%

This report is being presented in advance of May 1st, 2021 to obtain Council's confirmation to maintain internet/telephone voting for the 2022 Municipal Election.

Rationale:

The City Clerk/Returning Officer 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.

The City utilizes Municipal VoterView (MVV), a software program that:

- assists with elector, candidate and worker management;
- assists with data cleansing by identifying duplicates and problems with elector information; and
- generates election reports and provides an electronic format of change information so it can easily be provided to MPAC at the end of the election.

Internet and/or Telephone Voting

Benefits of online voting relate to voter convenience and improved accessibility, enhanced voter privacy, modest increases in voter turnout, reduction in ballot errors and spoiled ballots and improvements to the efficiency of elections.

In addition:

- Extends the voting period for electors to cast their votes
- Reduces cost and the number of staff required
- Ensures persons with disabilities are not disenfranchised from voting and have the same convenience as all other electors
- Increased accessibility for residents abroad and for persons with difficulties in travelling or reduced mobility
- The electronic vote eliminates errors in manual count, which brings with it an accurate and quick publication of results, with receipt of vote for each vote cast.

Improvements for 2022 have been identified to build on user satisfaction and confidence in the system.

- Vote Cast Confirmation - the system will provide a confirmation number to the elector to verify that the vote has been cast and recorded in the system
- Improve script for telephone voting for clarity and vote cast confirmation
- The RFP to select the Online/Telephone Vendor will ensure that all risks are addressed including cyber security and more than sufficient connectivity and server capacity.

Other Alternatives Considered:

Other methods have been considered, including a hybrid solution which is more costly for equipment, supplies and labour.

Further limitations were identified with a paper based system of voting which are subject to human error, tabulator malfunction and the risks associated with seasonal and public health conditions.

To maintain and build on the advancements achieved through internet/telephone voting, no other alternatives are proposed.

Should Council wish to direct other options, it is recommended that consultation with staff occur.

Alignment to Strategic Priorities

The selection of a voting method has the potential to support many of the goals or enablers within the adopted Strategic Plan 2020-2023. Internet/telephone voting:

- Healthy Environment
  - Reduces paper usage and therefore supports the Integrated Waste Management Strategy
  - Reduces transportation needs and therefore reduces greenhouse gas emissions
- An Exceptional Quality of Life
  - Will provide greater opportunity to those with physical disabilities or other restrictions the ability to cast their votes reducing the number of those possibly disenfranchised from carrying out their civic rights.
- Good Government
  - Increase efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery
  - Promote continuous improvement to Make It Better
  - Improves accessibility for those with disabilities or location challenges on election day
  - Shows fiscal responsible service delivery
  - Provides excellent customer service

Financial/Operation Impacts:

The City currently budgets $70,000.00 annually to reserves for the four-year term for election purposes.

Budget to Actual

2014		2018	
Budget	**Actual**	**Budget**	**Actual**
$359,000	$257,000	280,000	$204,000

Servicing Implications:

Of all election voting methods, internet/telephone voting provides the best and most efficient way for persons with disabilities and/or those who are seasonal electors not in the City during the voting period to participate in the election process.

The 10-day voting period and multiple voting locations throughout the City (City Hall, Municipal Services Centres, Libraries) where tablets and computers are made available to the public accommodates those who may not have the technology or connectivity needed to cast their votes. Staff are present to assist and there is an Elections Help Line that will support those who need assistance. Staff will attend 14 Long Term Care and Retirement Facilities prior to and on Election Day with tablets to offer voting to all qualified residents. Alternatively telephone voting is also available for those who do not wish to utilize online voting.

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