



To: His Worship the Mayor and Members of Council
From: Meaghan Vader, Corporate Initiatives Manager/Clerk
Report Number: CIM-2025-04
Subject: 2026 Municipal Election – Voting Method
Meeting Date: April 2, 2025

Recommendation:

THAT Report CIM-2025-04 be received as information;

AND THAT Council endorse the use of internet and telephone voting for the 2026 Municipal Election;

AND FURTHER THAT staff be directed to develop the 2026 Election Work Plan based on this voting method.

Report:

In accordance with the Municipal Elections Act (MEA), municipal elections are held every fourth year, and voting day is now the fourth Monday in October. The next municipal election will take place on Monday October 26th, 2026.

Pursuant to the MEA, the municipal Clerk is responsible for conducting the municipal election and establishing all procedures, forms and providing for any matters necessary for conducting the election. The MEA also requires that by-laws be passed regarding the use of alternative voting methods and vote counting equipment.

In 1996, the Municipal Elections Act was amended to permit the use of alternative voting methods and tabulation equipment in lieu of, or in addition to, the traditional ballot system of voting. Alternative voting methods include vote-by-mail, internet voting, and telephone voting.

In Ontario, municipalities using internet voting rose from 44 in 2010 to 194 in 2018. In the 2022 municipal election in Ontario, 217 municipalities opted to use internet and/or telephone voting methods.

The Township successfully used internet and telephone voting in the 2018 and 2022 Municipal Elections, partnering with the Township of South-West Oxford, Township of Zorra (2022), and the Town of Tillsonburg. Before this, the Township used the Vote-by-Mail election method for the 2010 and 2014 elections, after using the traditional paper ballot election prior to that time.

In both the 2018 and 2022 Municipal Elections, the Township also provided a physical voting location and Voter Help Centre at the Township Administration Building. Voters could attend the physical location and use tablets or computers to electronically cast their ballot. A telephone was also provided should the voter wish to cast their ballot that way. Election staff were available to assist voters as needed. Staff are proposing the same be done for the 2025 Municipal Election.

Should Council wish to use an alternative voting method again for the 2026 Municipal Election, the by-law must be passed by May 1st, 2026.

Internet and telephone voting has been made available to provide increased convenience and accessibility to accommodate changing lifestyles and demanding work schedules, and to enhance accessibility for persons who may not be available or able to vote in person.

Internet voting allows voters to cast their ballot from any device with an internet connection using a secure PIN and other authentication methods. Voters can review and confirm their selections before submission, and ballots are encrypted and stored securely until tabulation. The system minimizes unintentionally spoiled ballots and enhances accessibility, enabling voters to cast ballots privately and independently.

Telephone voting provides an audio ballot navigated using a telephone keypad or voice commands. It complements internet voting, offering another accessible option for voters. While telephone voting is less widely used, it remains a valuable addition ensuring accessibility for those without internet access.

Concerns regarding internet voting, such as fraud or coercion, are mitigated through robust technical and process-related security measures, including encryption, firewalls, and user authentication. These measures align with security standards used for internet banking and electronic medical records.

While no system is immune to risks, municipalities work closely with vendors to address vulnerabilities and maintain voter confidence.

With Council's support, staff plan to collaborate with other Oxford County municipalities, as it did in 2018 and 2022, for share resources, training and procuring services for internet and telephone voting in the 2026 Municipal Election.

Financial Implications:

For the last number of years, the Township has contributed approximately \$7,000 annually into an Election Reserve to be drawn down during the year of an election for its expenses. The cost of the 2022 election was approximately \$19,500 and staff foresee the costs to be in this same range, with some inflationary increases.

Strategic Plan Linkage:

- Financial Sustainability
- Good Governance
- Infrastructure
- Service Delivery
- Community Vitality
- Environmental Awareness

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	2026 Municipal Election - Voting Method.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Mar 28, 2025

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Karen DePrest