Staff Recommendation Report

To:	**Mayor and Council**
From:	**Jennifer Marshall, Clerk**
Date:	**September 3, 2025**
Subject:	**2026 Municipal and School Board Election – Alternative Voting Methods**

Report Highlights

- The 2026 Municipal and School Board Election will be held on Monday, October 26, 2026.
- In-person Electronic and Remote Internet/Telephone Voting were utilized during the 2022 municipal elections.
- The deadline to pass by-laws authorizing the use of alternative voting and vote counting equipment for the 2026 election is May 1, 2026.

Recommendation

That the report from the Clerk regarding 2026 Municipal and School Board Election – Alternative Voting Methods dated September 3, 2025, be received; and

That Council hereby authorize the use of In-person Electronic and Remote Internet/Telephone Voting, utilizing a multiple verification process, for the 2026 Municipal & School Board Election; and

That a by-law authorizing the Alternative Voting Method be presented for consideration at the September 17, 2025 Regular Meeting of Council.

Background

Municipal elections occur every four years in the Province of Ontario; the most recent Municipal Election was Monday, October 24, 2022. The next Municipal Election is scheduled for Monday, October 26, 2026.

Alternative voting methods and the use of vote-counting equipment are authorized by subsections 42(1) and (2) of the Municipal Elections Act:

> "The council of a local municipality may pass by-laws,
>
> a) Authorizing the use of voting and vote-counting equipment such as voting machines, vote recorders or optical scanning vote tabulators;

b) Authorizing electors to use an alternative voting method, such as voting by mail or by telephone, that does not require electors to attend at a voting place in order to vote."

If an alternative voting method or the use of vote-counting equipment is contemplated, each must be approved by by-law before May 1, 2026. Procedures and forms for the use of any alternative voting method and vote-counting equipment, or alternative voting methods must be established by June 1, 2026. The establishment of voting methods is the responsibility of Council, while the procedures and forms for the use of alternative voting methods and vote-counting equipment is the responsibility of the Clerk.

There are a variety of voting methods available to municipalities including in-person traditional voting, vote-by-mail, internet, telephone, or a combination of these methods. While the deadline to establish voting methods is May 1, 2026, it is important that municipalities determine their voting methods early to ensure that vendors are available to provide the required services. Many vendors place a cap on the number of municipalities or electors they can provide services for each election. As such, to ensure that the Township has various vendors to choose from, it is recommended that Council finalize the voting methods in September 2025 to ensure successful procurement.

Legislative Requirements – Upholding the Principles of the Act

When considering an alternative voting method for a municipal election it is important to keep in mind the Principles of the Act:

- Maintaining the secrecy and confidentiality of the voting process and individual votes,
- Providing an election that is accessible to the electors,
- Providing an election that is fair and non-biased,
- Ensuring the integrity of the process is maintained throughout the election,
- Ensuring the results of the election reflect the votes cast, and that valid votes be counted, and invalid votes be rejected so far as reasonably possible, and
- Ensuring voters and candidates are treated fairly and consistently.

All voting methods outlined in this report uphold the Principles of the Act outlined above.

Recommended – In-Person Electronic and Remote Internet/Telephone Voting

For a detailed overview of how this voting method works, please review “Appendix “A” - Voting Methods Review – How each voting method works”.

Internet/telephone voting was used by the Township in the last election and has been used by various municipalities in order to enhance the convenience of voting, 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.

For rural areas, internet voting offers a means by which to reach electors who are geographically disconnected. For others, it offers a potential means to further engage those who may be more inclined to vote from the comfort of their own home or office rather than travelling to a physical voting location. It also presents a viable method to replace voting by way of proxy for those electors who may be out of the Township either on vacation or at school, during election time. Some claim that online voting is more environmentally sustainable as it results in decreased paper production and an overall lower carbon footprint when compared to the resource requirements of a traditional in-person election.

Various methods of internet/telephone voting are gaining popularity with Ontario municipalities since its introduction in 2003. In 2014, a total of 97 Ontario municipalities used internet/telephone voting. In 2018, that number increased to 194 Ontario municipalities. According to the Association of Ontario Municipalities, in the 2022 municipal election in Ontario, 217 out of 444 municipalities used internet voting, either as a standalone method or in combination with other voting methods. This represents nearly half of all municipalities in Ontario.

Many municipalities in the County of Simcoe are recommending or have selected Internet/Telephone as a method of voting. A review of other municipalities reports, 9 have recommended and/or will be using Internet/Telephone while 3 will be using internet voting only. A listing of these municipalities can be found as Appendix “B” - Voting Methods Across Simcoe County Municipalities.

Proposed Structure of Voting Method: How it will work on Election Day and Advanced Vote

Staff recognize the history and tradition behind attending a voting location on Election Day to cast a ballot. This way of voting has been in place since democracy was born. While ensuring this tradition is upheld, Council should keep in mind that the world has changed and has quickly evolved into a fast-paced, convenience driven society. With this in mind, staff are proposing a voting method that will uphold the in-person tradition as well

as ensure the electors have access to a quick, secure and convenient method of voting by offering in-person electronic voting as well as remote internet and telephone voting.

Similar to any other elections, eligible electors will receive a Voter Information Letter in the mail, advising them of voting dates, times and voting locations. Included in the Voter Information Letter will be credentials for persons wishing to cast their ballot electronically from their home or work using a computer, tablet or smartphone that has internet access or via telephone using their home phone or cellular device. Remote voting options will open 10 days prior to Election Day.

An additional option will be provided in the Voter Information Letter for eligible electors to cast their ballot in-person from an advanced voting location or from a voting location on Election Day. Those who wish to use this option will be presented with an electronic ballot upon arrival at the voting location and will cast their ballot by marking their selections on an electronic device, as opposed to a paper ballot. Branded stylus pens, provided to the elector as a takeaway after the vote, will be used to mark the ballot. Electors will review their selections and submit their ballot on a user-friendly interface. Election staff will be available to provide any assistance needed and accessibility devices will be available. Electors who do not have their Voter Information Letter with them will be able to receive a replacement when attending the voting location and those who are not on the voters list will be able to register to vote. In-person voting locations will be set up with 20 voting booths. This will help to alleviate lines and help move electors through the process with minimal wait times.

Staff are anticipating hosting various advanced voting locations throughout the Township prior to Election Day. These will be scheduled with evening and weekend openings to ensure ample opportunity for electors to vote. On Election Day, the Township Administration Centre and Elmvale Arena will be open as a voting location. No additional voting locations are anticipated on Election Day due to the increase in advanced voting locations.

Advantages of In-Person Electronic Voting and Remote Internet/Telephone Voting

Multiple Ways to Vote: Electors can choose to vote in the following ways:

- ✓ At home or work using the credentials sent in the Voter Information Letter.
- ✓ At a Township library, or any location that has access to Wi-Fi or Internet Services.
- ✓ In-Person at an Advanced Voting Location across the Township.
- ✓ In-Person at the Administration Centre on Election Day.

Convenient: Electors are provided with a quick, simple, secure and convenient method of voting, while keeping the tradition of in-person voting as an option for those who prefer to visit a voting location during advanced voting or on Election Day.

Accessible: Electors can vote from the comfort of their home or workplace, while using any accessibility device they require. Those who are unable to easily leave their home due to mobility issues, transportation issues or simply due to work/life schedules can exercise their right to vote quickly, efficiently and at a time when is most convenient for them.

Faster Results: Results would be available shortly after the close of voting on Election Day. The voting location would have to allow those in-line prior to the close of voting to cast their ballots, however delays would be minimal. The Clerk, in conjunction with the voting methods vendor would be able to register the on-site devices to stay open past the close of voting to accommodate anyone still in line. These devices would then be manually closed by the Clerk or designate prior to retrieving election results.

Staffing Resources: This voting method requires minimal additional staffing resources compared to a traditional paper ballot election. While the days leading up to the election are historically organized by existing Clerks staff, Election Day with a paper ballot election requires the hiring and training of up to 40 additional election workers. Approximately 6-8 of the election workers are existing Township staff, the remainder are hired on a temporary contract for training days and Election Day. With this method, approximately 8 staff will be needed to run a voting location. As only one voting location will be operating at once, no additional staff would be required as existing staff compliment would be sufficient. Costs associated with staffing a paper ballot election are estimated to be $29,700.00 as compared to $10,000.00 for In-Person Electronic and Remote Internet/Telephone Voting.

Enhanced Focus on the Voters List: In the past, the voters list has been provided by MPAC. As of January 1, 2024, Elections Ontario now provides all municipalities with the voter's list. Elections Ontario gets elector data from Elections Canada, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Transportation, MPAC, Ontario's Registrar General and direct updates from electors.

With less preparation and planning required for this voting method, staff would be able to spend time and resources reviewing, maintaining, and correcting the preliminary voters list received by Elections Ontario. The voter's list is received in early August of the election year and staff must ensure that the list is ready to be finalised and provided to candidates by early September. The final voters list is also used to create the mail list for the Voter Information Letters. It is important that the data in the list is accurate. The preliminary list of electors is estimated to have approximately 19,000 eligible electors for the 2026 election. As such, the following review takes place:

- Review and removal of duplicates.
- Review of all street names for consistency (Flos Rd 4 vs Flos Road 4 vs Flos Road Four). These inconsistencies create difficulty for candidates when using the list for campaign purposes.

- Additions and changes based on notices of ownership change through sales from the time the list is sent to the Township from MPAC to the time the list is finalized.
- Review and removal of deceased persons.
- Comparison to changes made during the past election to ensure they were captured by MPAC correctly.

Campaigning for Candidates: With electronic voting, candidates have access to an electronic voters list which advises them of who has and hasn't voted, in real-time. As voters cast their ballot, candidates will see their name stricken from the voters list. This provides candidates with an opportunity to target electors who haven't voted and focus their attention to this group. Candidates for the 2022 election used this method and much positive feedback was received.

"Green" Option: There would be minimal paper required as there would be no printing of ballots and a reduced carbon footprint due to the reduction of travel to voting locations by electors.

Things to Keep in Mind

While the above details the advantages of this voting method, there are potential drawbacks that should be noted.

Perceived insecurity: In the past, concerns have been expressed with respect to the security of Internet voting and fraudulent activity. Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks, Trojan horses, viruses and website spoofing have all been identified as potential threats. Internet voting procedures established by municipalities address potential risks by employing both technical and process related security measures designed to support system administration and control user access. Technical protective measures such as firewalling, user authentication techniques, failover connectivity and server redundancy all decrease the likelihood and effectiveness of these threats. Proper testing and auditing throughout the various implementation phases also serve to protect the voting system from external threats. Internet voting platforms utilize the same stringent access methodologies and encryption principles which protect internet banking sites and Electronic Medical Records (EMR) systems. Although there have been documented cases of malicious attempts designed to comprise an online voting system, there are no known controverted elections resulting from the use of an internet voting channel.

Validating the identification of voters is another concern often noted. As a result, voter authentication practices commonly exist as part of any online voting system and can be customized to include use of personalized security questions, CAPTCHA challenges, and/or unique identification codes (e.g. "vote-TANs"). There are also procedural controls in place to authenticate potential electors. For example, only electors on the voters' list

receive credentials which can be used to register to vote and/or vote online. An individual may be added to the voters' list but first must validate their identity by submitting an acceptable form of personal identification to a designated Election Official. Notwithstanding the process to validate the voters' list and the various techniques noted above, it will always be more difficult to validate voters using an unsupervised voting method. That is not to say that supervised voting methods are infallible in this regard, only to suggest that the prospect for abuse is greater in relation to an unsupervised voting channel. That said, Section 89 of the Act is applicable in that the legal responsibility of upholding the integrity of the voting process rests with the voters themselves.

Internet voting products have continued to develop in response to common concerns expressed about the technology or the associated processes. For example, some products have the capability to create ballot images representative of the online ballots which are submitted. These images are marked accordingly from a database consisting of thousands of hand-written "X's" rendering the ballot image indistinguishable from any hand marked ballot. If a manual recount is ordered, these images can then be physically produced and run through tabulators along with manually marked ballots.

Regardless of the voting channel(s) used in an election, risk cannot be eliminated, rather it must be managed.

Potential Interruptions in Internet Services:

Back-up plans and redundancies must be put in place in the event of an interruption in internet services during the voting period. As the voting period is 10 days, there are many opportunities for electors to cast their ballot should they experience a service interruption. The following back-ups and redundancies will be put in place to mitigate any service interruptions:

Service interruptions during advanced voting:

Due to the length of advanced voting, any interruptions in service due to internet outages are mitigated as electors can chose to cast their ballot anytime during that period. An extended interruption is highly unlikely, and in that event, electors would have the choice of casting their ballot via telephone voting.

Service interruptions on Election Day:

A service interruption on Election Day would need to be treated differently then during an advanced vote. If the interruption is short and earlier in the day, no remedial action would need to be taken. Should an interruption last an hour or more or be after 4pm, the Clerk would need to determine if voting hours should be extended. The Clerk has legislative authority to extend voting hours for any purpose deemed as an emergency. As an example, if a service interruption took place for 2 hours on the afternoon of Election Day, it would be appropriate for voting to be extended by 2 hours.

Back-up plans for the voting location include:

- Use of “hot-spotting” cellular data to the tablets used for in-person internet voting to ensure electors attending the polling location are able to cast their ballot in the event of an internet outage.
- Promotion of telephone voting, with back-up phones at the Administration Centre for electors who are attending in-person.

It is important to note that a service disruption would also affect an in-person traditional paper election as access to the voters list (to ensure the elector has not already voted and additions/amendments to the voters list) requires access to the internet. Without internet connection, in-person traditional paper voting would also need to be stopped, and the above mitigating measures would be taken into consideration, including the extension of voting hours.

Further Mitigating Risk

Another common concern is the theft of the voter information card (VIL) from the mail. To mitigate this risk, a validation process can be implemented in increase security of the voting process. One option is to require the voters date of birth must be entered before being able to access the ballot with the unique code found on the VIL. Another option is to also have a password delivered by email or text to the elector that they must enter in order to vote. Some vendors also offer a digital VIL delivery feature where electors can access a dedicated web portal, authenticate themselves using their personal identifiers such as name, address and date of birth and then securely download the VIL as a PDF.

Additionally, municipalities can deploy targeted public awareness campaigns to encourage recipients to be vigilant about their mail, report missing cards promptly, and understand the process for rectifying such situations without disenfranchisement.

2022 Municipal Election – Methods and Statistics

In the 2022 election, the Township of Springwater utilized three voting methods: vote in-person electronically at a Voter Help Centre, remote internet voting or telephone voting. The 2022 election was the first time the Township of Springwater held a fully electronic election with the removal of traditional paper ballots. To accommodate those without

internet or those requiring assistance, the Township held Voter Help Centres throughout the voting period as outlined below:

Saturday, October 15, 2022	**Tuesday, October 18, 2022**	**Thursday, October 20, 2022**	**Saturday, October 22, 2022**	**Monday, October 24, 2022**
11:00 AM to 3:00 PM	5:30 PM to 8:00 PM	5:30 PM to 8:00 PM	11:00 AM to 3:00 PM	10:00 AM to 8:00 PM
Minesing Community Centre	Administration Centre	Administration Centre	Elmvale Arena	Administration Centre

Voters were also able to visit the Township Administration Centre during regular business hours throughout the voting period to cast their ballot or seek assistance. This amounted to 75.5 hours available to electors for in-person assistance. A total of 474 electors chose to cast their ballot in-person at a Voter Help Centre.

A dedicated Voter Help Line (VHL) was established to provide over the phone assistance. The VHL was staffed during business hours and after hours on days where no Voter Help Centre was available, mainly on Sunday, October 13 and Sunday, October 23.

Voter Turnout and Statistics

Below are statistics comparing the voter turnout from the last 4 elections, as outlined in Chart 1. Note that the 2006 and 2010 elections used a traditional paper ballot method only, while the 2014 and 2018 election used a hybrid method of traditional paper ballot with internet/telephone voting. Of the ballots cast, 48.79% were cast during the advanced vote period (October 12-21, 2018) which was available via telephone and internet methods only.

Chart 1: 2006-2018 Election Statistics – Comparison

	2006	2010	2014	2018	2022
Eligible Voters	14,712	14,653	15,399	15,796	17,506
Votes Cast	4,495	5,686	6,475	5,962	5,756*
Voter Turnout	30%	38%	42%	37.74%	32.88%
Advanced Vote	5%	5%	17%	48.79%	66.49%

*One ballot was quarantined by the election vendor, Scytl. This ballot was spoiled and caught by the system as the elector made more than one selection for one race when not permitted. The system initially allowed the ballot to be cast, but through the verification process, it was identified and quarantined for auditing. As such, this ballot was not included in the final count. The refusal of this ballot did not affect the outcome of the election.

Of the total ballots cast, 89.08% of those were cast by telephone or remotely by internet, as depicted in Chart 2.

Chart 2: 2012 Election – Ballots Cast by Voting Method

Voting Method	Total Votes Cast
Telephone	631 / **10.96%**
Internet	4,651/ **80.80%**
In-Person Electronic	474/ **8.12%**

Additional Alternative Voting Methods

In addition to the recommended voting method, there are three additional methods that Council should be aware of:

- In-Person: Traditional Paper Ballot with Tabulators
- Vote-by-Mail
- Hybrid Model: Remote Internet and Traditional Paper Ballot with Tabulators

A hybrid model: Remote Internet/Telephone and Traditional Paper Ballot with Tabulators, was conducted by the Township of Springwater in the 2014 and 2018 election and is also discussed below.

For detailed processes regarding how each voting method works, please review Appendix "A" - Voting Methods Review – How each voting method works.

In Person: Traditional Paper Ballot with Tabulators

Pros

- **Familiarity** - The traditional vote in-person method is the most familiar to electors and is used in various government elections, for example the 2019 federal election.
- **No additional communications** - As most residents are familiar with this method, it would require minimal education or instruction throughout the process.
- **Trusted method** - Offering a secure and monitored location for electors to cast their ballot, this method is the most trusted by electors. Polling stations are monitored by municipal staff, volunteers, and scrutineers, to ensure all votes are cast in a secure environment and that all ballots are accounted for in a controlled process.

Cons

- **Resources** – Voting in-person requires significant staff time and resources during the election. Polling stations require staff to work outside of normal working hours to assist in the election process and count ballots. The hiring of approximately 40 election workers would be required as the Township's current staff compliment is not sufficient to conduct in-person voting.
- **Less accessible** – Voting in-person requires fixed polling locations during set hours which may not meet the needs of some electors. Those who are unable to easily leave their home due to mobility issues, transportation issues or simply due to work/life schedules may have a hard time voting. This leads to lower voters turn-outs and disengagement of the community with its election process. Proxy voting is an option where an elector can allow someone else to vote on their behalf if they cannot attend the polling location themselves. This system relies on the elector to trust someone else to cast their vote for the candidate of their choice and may not be a favourable option for some. Proxy voting is

complex and requires the elector to complete a form, witnessed by a Commissioner of Oaths and then brought to the voting location by the proxy. For these reasons, this method could result in barriers for some electors.

- **Safety Protocols** – Voting in-person requires significant planning for public health measures related to COVID-19 for example, directional signage, proper social distancing measures, mask requirements, sanitization of the voting booths and capacity limitations at the polling locations. This could also deter election workers from applying. Further to this, individuals may not be comfortable or may have become hesitant due to the past 16 months and having to deal with COVID-19, thus attending in person due to the potential of contracting COVID-19 and/or any other communicable disease could be a barrier.

Vote-by-Mail

Pros

- **Convenience** – Voting kits are mailed to all electors at their preferred mailing address and electors are able to vote from the comfort of their home. This alleviates most public health concerns related to COVID-19.
- **Processes** – Vote-by-mail eliminates the need for proxy voting and in-person voting which saves staff time, resources and planning for these processes.

Cons

- **Security from the public's perspective** – Vote-by-mail presents the possibility of forged ballots or mail fraud such as opening or tampering with the mail or altering ballots. Although these concerns are limited, over the years this method has been cause for concern from the public perspective.
- **Resources** – Vote-by-mail can get expensive considering the cost for postage and education campaigns required to ensure electors are aware of how to register to vote and how to vote using this method.
- **Potential Barriers** – Vote-by-mail requires a more extensive timeframe to get the voting kits mailed out while ensuing enough time for the ballots to be returned by Election Day. For example, a barrier is created when non-resident voters who may not receive their voting kit and are unable to pick one up prior to Election Day.
- **Effects on Campaigns** – Voters may feel pressure to complete their ballot so they can be mailed back in time which would affect the campaign period, there would be little value in candidates campaigning close to Election Day.

Hybrid Model: Remote Internet and Traditional Paper Ballot with Tabulators

The Township conducted a hybrid model election using remote internet/telephone and traditional paper ballot with tabulators in 2014 and 2018.

Having a hybrid model equates to staff running two separate elections. Most work, including processes, manuals, training (separate for each system; internet/telephone and paper ballot with tabulators), auditing, advertisement, education for electors is done twice. This results in a very labour-intensive process, which is exacerbated by the short timelines that are required for various functions of the election, including due dates for manuals, review of ballots/proofing of various documents and testing of the systems.

The Clerks Department, excluding staff within By-law Enforcement consists of 3 full time staff. The hybrid model requires additional resources to ensure all election tasks are completed on time, in accordance with the Municipal Elections Act as well as timelines and due dates established by the election's vendor. Based on the current staffing levels, staff do not recommend this method without the addition of a contracted Elections Coordinator. Additional budget funds would be required to fund this position resulting in an increase to the 2022 budget of $51,469.60 to $58,678.80. The Election Coordinator would be responsible for general election preparation, including: drafting of policies and procedures, creating a schedule and plan for completion of legislative requirements, drafting advertising and public education, working with the election vendor, reviewing and correcting the voters list, assisting the Clerk with candidate submission interviews, updating the election webpage, coordinating the recruitment and training of election staff, first contact for the voters help line, ensuring AODA compliance, conducting post election data review and collection of statistics.

Costing of Alternative Voting Methods

The below chart outlines the approximate cost of each voting method. A detailed listing of costs associated with each voting method is included as Appendix "C" to this report.

Costing Comparison Chart – All Voting Methods

Voting Method	Approx. Cost
Recommended – In-Person Electronic and Remote Internet/Telephone Voting	$87,544 or $4.61 per elector
In Person: Traditional Paper Ballot with Tabulators	$95,544 or $5.02 per elector
Vote-by-Mail with Tabulators	$90,000 or $4.75 per elector

Hybrid Model: Remote Internet/Telephone and Traditional Paper Ballot with Tabulators	$188,744 or $9.93 per elector

Financial Implications

A In-Person Internet and Remote Internet/Telephone voting method would cost approximately $87,544 or $4.61 per elector. Additional costs for advertising/promotional materials (pens/styluses), statutory notices in newspapers, lieu time for staff to attend various events to promote the election/voters list/ prior to advanced voting are not included in this figure. These additional costs are estimated to be approximately $20,000.00 to $30,000.00. Inauguration and Council Orientation Costs are also funded from the Elections Reserve. While planning is only in its preliminary stages, it is estimated that $10,000.00 to $15,000.00 will be required for these events.

Since the last election, the Township has budgeted $30,000 each year towards the Elections Reserve. At the time of writing this report, the Election Reserve had a balance of $84,512.81. Some funds have been used for training and ongoing access/maintenance to the Voter's List platform. As such, there would be no negative impacts to the budget and all funds needed for the 2026 Municipal Election would be covered by the current balance of the Elections Reserve, with an additional $30,000 budgeted in 2025. Any remaining funds will be kept in the reserve for future elections.

Strategic Priorities

The above initiative supports the following Strategic Priorities/Goals:

Goal 5 – Corporate actions.

Approvals

Submitted by:	Jennifer Marshall, AMP, Clerk
Financial Implications Reviewed by:	Greg Bedard, CPA, CMRP, Interim Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
Approved by:	Renée Ainsworth, Dipl. M.A, AOMC, Interim Chief Administrative Officer
Version Code:	C04 8/27/2025 10:08AM 3099978 SHARED\C - Council, Boards, By-Laws and Resolutions\C04 Reports to Council\Clerk's Department\2025

Applicable Municipal Policy or Legislation

Municipal Elections Act

Attachments

Appendix “A” - Voting Methods Review – How each voting method works

Appendix “B” - Voting Methods Across Simcoe County Municipalities

Appendix “C” - Detailed Costing Breakdown of Voting Methods

Appendix "A"

Voting Methods Review – How each voting method works

Telephone Voting

Telephone voting is an alternative voting method which allows voters to complete a ballot using any point-to-point telephone connection. Qualified electors on the voters' list receive a Voter Information Letter containing instructions on how to dial in to access the system as well as how to navigate the audio ballot. Most interactive telephone voting systems rely on the voter to interact with the audio ballot by way of dialing on the keypad in relation to response requests, however, the potential exists to use voice activated responses to navigate and complete an audio ballot.

After voting selections have been made for each office, the voter is prompted to review their decisions and continue on. Once the ballot is completely "marked" by the voter, they are then asked to review their selections prior to submission. Once submitted, the respective data is transferred to a secure server which effectively separates the voters' identity data (name, phone number etc.) from their ballot data. The former serves as the master voters' list identifying, in real-time, those electors who have voted and the latter represents pending results which are not tabulated until the end of voting day.

Telephone voting is most commonly employed as part of a multi-channel voting solution in conjunction with remote internet voting. Telephone voting provides for an enhanced level of convenience as it allows voters to cast their ballot remotely from anywhere they have access to a phone line at any time within a defined voting period. A telephone-based system is also better able to fully qualify voter intent through use of automatic controls. In other words, the system could be programmed to disallow a voter from proceeding to the next office if their current selection resulted in an over-vote. This all but eliminates unintentional spoiled ballots, a control which can also be engaged on vote scanners/tabulators.

One of the most commonly cited concerns regarding telephone voting has been that it can take a significant amount of time to navigate through and complete an audio ballot. A ballot for a local municipality in Ontario can consist of a multitude of offices with which to vote including municipal candidates and school board candidates. Depending on the number and sequencing of selections and the review options engaged, a lengthy audio ballot can even serve to disengage and confuse voters. Furthermore, the clear pronunciation of candidate names can be a challenge if call quality on either end is compromised. Other documented issues relate to network congestion as the host telecommunications system must be able to support call volumes that are often difficult to predict. As with most technology solutions, the overall cost of telephone voting can fluctuate based on the scale and composition of the system. Often, the largest

contributor to cost in this regard relates to the capacity of the system to be able to support high volumes of traffic and its ability to provide for an adequate backup system.

Internet Voting:

Internet voting can be conducted in the following ways:

- remotely, from the comfort of someone's home, work or other location using their personal computer, tablet or smartphone anywhere there is an internet connection.
- within a physical voting location supervised by election workers on an electronic device (tablet or computer).
- A combination of the above methods.

To vote online, a voter enters the website address provided on their Voter Information Letter into a web browser on a computer, tablet or smartphone to go to the secure internet voting website dedicated to the municipality. They will first register to vote online, which requires that they enter the unique voter ID and PIN provided on their voter notification card and verify other personal information to confirm their identity. This usually asks for the voters' birthdate. This automatically checks that they are eligible to vote if all information matches the voters' list.

The voter will be asked to accept a voter declaration statement indicating that they are aware of offences and penalties under the Municipal Elections Act and that they are not committing fraudulent or corrupt acts by voting. The voter then receives their ballot. Instructions are provided on how to mark and navigate from one race to the next. Once the voter has completed all races on the ballot, they are presented with a confirmation screen which provides an overview of how each race is marked and shows any warning messages if the voter has left any races blank, under-voted or over-voted. This is an opportunity to update the selections.

Once everything is marked as intended, the voter clicks the 'cast ballot' button. If the voter is disconnected before selecting 'cast ballot', their voter credentials are still valid. They simply have to re-log in to the internet voting system and would begin marking a blank ballot again. The ballot is only cast when the voter provides final confirmation to cast it at the very end. When a voter casts their ballot online, the ballot is sent through an encrypted channel to secure servers. Ballot information is encrypted to protect the information on the ballot and hash coded to ensure the ballot is not altered by malicious intent before reaching the election servers.

Once at the application servers, the integrity of the information is then verified one last time against business rules then the ballot is stored on secure servers. It is stored with an electronic audit trail that can be used to audit, investigate or conduct a recount if needed. This includes the storing of IP addresses for auditing purposes should there be

concern of fraudulent voting. Once a ballot is cast the voter is struck off the voters' list and cannot receive another ballot online or at an in-person voting location.

In person Voting: Traditional Paper Ballot and Tabulators

In the lead up to the election, voters receive a Voter Information Letter advising them of voting locations, voting dates, how to cast their ballot and identification requirements. Voting can take place at an advanced voting location(s), and at voting locations on Election Day. Advanced voting locations are generally scheduled within the 2 weeks leading up to Election Day and are established by the Clerk. Having advanced voting locations provides voters who are not available on Election Day the opportunity to vote, and it also alleviates the number of persons visiting voting locations on Election Day.

Upon entry to the voting location, election staff will view an elector's Voter Information Letter along with acceptable identification. If satisfied that the elector is eligible to vote, the election staff will provide them with a paper ballot and direct them to a privacy screen to mark their ballot. Once marked, the elector will insert it into a tabulator that records their vote on an internal memory card. Upon the close of polls, all memory cards are securely brought to a central location and collated to determine election results. Unofficial results are certified by the Clerk and the successful candidates announced.

Vote-by-mail

The vote-by-mail method requires vote-by-mail kits that contain a ballot, secrecy folder, voter declaration card and a return envelope with postage pre-paid, to be sent to each elector listed on the final list of electors, several weeks in advance of election day, approximately one (1) month.

Once received, a voter would mark their ballot and seal it inside the secrecy envelope provided in the vote-by-mail kit. They would also sign their voter declaration card and mail it/deliver it along with the secrecy envelope back to the Administration Centre using the provided return envelope. The voter declaration card acts as an affidavit or solemn oath and must be signed in order for the ballot to be counted.

When election officials receive the returned envelope, they will open the vote-by-mail package and separate the voter declaration card from the ballot, which is kept secret and sealed in the secrecy envelope. Election officials review and scan the voter declaration card to automatically strike that voter off the voters list. This is completed in pre-scheduled sessions with candidates appointed scrutineers in attendance to view the process. This is an important step to ensuring a secure voting process by verifying the details on the voter declaration card and confirming that the voter is struck off the voters list at the time the mailed ballot is received. They will take the secrecy envelope containing the ballot and place it in a ballot box for safe keeping until Election Day. At

the end of the session, the ballot box will be sealed and all scrutineers in attendance initial or sign the seal. At the next scheduled session, the sealed ballot box is inspected by the scrutineers and then opened for the addition of more ballots. This process is repeated as necessary leading up to Election Day. Multiple ballot boxes may be used for this process as they start to reach their capacity.

If the voter declaration card is not signed, the ballot cannot be accepted or counted. These vote-by-mail packages will be separated out and securely stored should candidates or scrutineers wish to review this decision at the time of vote counting.

On Election Day, tabulators will be deployed at the election office. At the start of the scanning process, a report will be run to demonstrate to all officials and scrutineers that the results database is empty, and all candidate totals are zero. Secrecy envelopes containing ballots, which are anonymous and separated from anything identifying the voter, would then be opened. Ballots would be flattened and stacked in batches by election staff, and the batches would then be placed in the feeding trays of the tabulators. After the close of voting locations on Election Day, the vote by mail results would be counted and announced at the same time as unofficial results on election night.

Appendix “B”

Voting Methods Across Simcoe County Municipalities

The following is a summary of Simcoe County municipalities their voting methods for the 2026 Municipal Election based on available staff reports.

Municipality	2022 Municipal Election Vote Method	2026 Municipal Election Vote Method
Adjala-Tosorontio	Internet and telephone	Internet and telephone
Bradford West Gwillimbury	Internet and Telephone	Internet and telephone
Clearview	Internet, Telephone, Paper Ballots with Tabulator	Internet and telephone
Collingwood	Internet, Paper Ballot with Tabulator	Internet supplemented by paper ballots with tabulators
Innisfil	Internet and Telephone	Internet and Telephone
Midland	Internet and Telephone	Internet and Telephone
New Tecumseth	Internet and paper ballot	Paper ballot for advanced voting only. Internet voting during advance voting and election day.
Oro-Medonte	Paper ballot and Vote by Mail	Internet and Telephone
Penetanguishene	Internet and Telephone	Internet and Telephone
Ramara	Internet/telephone and paper ballot with tabulator	Internet/telephone and paper ballot with tabulator.
Severn	Paper Ballot and Vote by Mail	Internet
Tay	Internet and Telephone with option of paper ballot on Election Day.	Internet and Telephone
Tiny	Vote by mail	Internet and Telephone
Wasaga Beach	Internet, Paper Ballots with Tabulators	Internet supplemented by paper ballots with tabulators

Appendix "C"

Detailed Costing Breakdown of Voting Methods

Below is a breakdown of estimated costs associated with each voting method outlined in this report. Staff received preliminary quotes from election vendors in order to provide Council estimated costing. As such, exact costs of a voting method would only be known once the Township conducts the procurement process. All costs are estimated using 19,000 eligible electors. Final costs will be determined based on the final list of electors.

To note: the below estimates do not include costs for advertising/promotional materials (pens/styluses), statutory notices in newspapers, lieu time for staff to attend various events to promote the election/voters list/ prior to advanced voting.

Recommended – In-Person Electronic and Remote Internet/Telephone Voting

Service	Approx. Cost
Internet/Telephone Voting System - Includes all setup and implementations fees, training, materials, support and project manager from election vendor	$40,200
Voter Information Letter (VIL) - Includes preparation, printing, and stuffing of VIL	$6,300
Postage for VIL	$28,044
Rental of Tablets for Voting Locations	$3,000
Election Workers: Use of existing Township staff is sufficient for this voting method, however, overtime or additional compensation would be required for after hours, weekend and additional time over 35 hrs per week.	$10,000
Total Estimated Cost:	**$87,544.00**

Total Estimated Cost per Elector:	**$4.61 per elector**

In-Person: Traditional Paper Ballot with Tabulators

Service	Approx. Cost
Tabulators (4) with cases (Rental)	$5,000
Software License, Training, Testing and On-site Support Ballot design, preparation, and coding Ballot – Print on Demand Solution	$13,200
Stock of Ballot Paper	$5,000
Voter Information Letter (VIL) - Includes preparation, printing, and stuffing of VIL	$6,300
Postage for VIL	$28,044
Election Workers - Hiring of approx. 40 election workers - 3 Advanced Voting Locations (13 workers each) - 3 Election Day Voting Locations (13 workers each) Cost breakdown: Training: $8,000.00 Advanced Voting Days: $10,000 Election Day: $20,000	$38,000
Total Estimated Cost:	**$95,544**
Total Estimated Cost per Elector:	**$5.02 per elector**

Vote-by-Mail

Service	Approx. Cost
Voter Kits - includes ballot, secrecy folder, voter declaration card and a return envelope	$35,000
Postage - includes outgoing postage costs per voter kit, postage for ballot return and Canada Post Administration Fee	$45,000
Tabulators (4) with cases (Rental)	$5,000
Election Workers Use of existing Township staff is sufficient for this voting method, however, OT or additional compensation would be required for after hours, weekend and additional time over 35 hrs per week. Most additional time would be accrued on Election Night to feed the ballots through the tabulator.	$5,000
Total approx. Cost:	**$90,000**
Total approx. Cost per Elector:	**$4.73 per elector**

Hybrid Model: Remote Internet/Telephone and Traditional Paper Ballot with Tabulators

Service	Approx. Cost
Internet/Telephone Voting Methodology - Includes all training, materials, support and project manager from election vendor	$40,200
Voter Information Letter (VIL) - Includes preparation, printing, and stuffing of VIL	$6,300
Postage for VIL	$28,044
Rental of Tablets for Voting Locations	$3,000
Tabulators (4) with cases (Rental)	$5,000
Training, Testing and On-site Support Ballot design, preparation, and coding Ballot – Print on Demand Solution	$13,200
Stock of Ballot Paper	$5,000
Election Workers - Hiring of approx. 40 election workers - 3 Election Day Voting Locations (13 workers each) Cost breakdown: Training: $8,000.00 Election Day: $20,000	$28,000
Hiring of Contract – Election Coordinator	$52,500.00 to $60,000.00 (12-month contract)
Total approx. Cost:	**$188,744**

Total approx. Cost per Elector:	**$9.93 per elector**