

Voting methods review

Benefits and drawbacks of each voting method

Vote by mail

Benefits	Drawbacks
Offers an option for voters to cast a ballot without attending a physical voting location	Will not help voters who realize they are unable to vote in-person after the deadline to register for a mail in ballot
Convenience for voters who know they will be unable to attend a voting location well in advance of Election Day	Mail processing timelines impact how long it takes a voter to receive and return a ballot
May be familiar as this is available for use in Federal and Provincial elections	Ballots may be lost or damaged in the mail
	Ballots received after Election Day or without a signed voter declaration card could not be counted
	Higher chance of unintentional ballot marking errors or a spoiled ballot that could not be counted as there are no prompts for a voter if a ballot or race is blank, over-voted or under-voted like with in-person voting locations or other remote voting methods
	Additional costs to support mail out and return of ballots
	Environmental impact of paper-based ballots
	Challenging to access for voters who are moving addresses, who do not have a consistent residence or are homeless
	Increased manual administrative processes to send, track, receive and verify only one ballot is cast per voter

	Potential for fraudulent interference of vote-by-mail-kits
	Potential impact if a postal strike occurs during mail-in voting

Vote by phone

Benefits	Drawbacks
Offers an option for voters to cast a ballot without attending a physical voting location	Typically used by smaller more rural municipalities, not comparators the size of the City of Guelph
Flexible voting times with an automated system	Low voter use when it is offered – typically around 5% uptake
Decreased chance of a ballot being marked in error or spoiled unintentionally as the system flags ballot marking errors, such as blank, over and under-voted races, and allows the voter to correct before casting the ballot just like in-person voting locations	Potentially frustrating voter experience when stuck in a long phone automation script reading out all contests, all candidates and then verifying all selections
Environmentally friendly as no paper ballot printing	Potential for fraudulent interference with ID on voter notification cards sent in the mail
Efficient automated administration of voter identity verification, ballot receipt and striking voter off the voters' list and counting	Operates on the same platform as internet voting system so any security considerations with that system would apply to this method as well
Fast and accurate results tabulation	Potential for technical difficulties to pause or delay voting
Digital audit trail for audit, investigation or recount	No manual recount possible because no paper ballot
Cost effective based on flat rate per voter that uses the system	

Internet voting

Benefits	Drawbacks
Offers an option for voters to cast a ballot without attending a physical voting location	Internet access may be less available to some voters
Flexible voting time (24/7)	Potential for technical difficulties to pause or delay voting
Supports accessible voting with options to adjust colour contrast, screen size, font size and ability to use a screen reader on a personal device	Potential for fraudulent interference with ID on voter notification cards sent in the mail, requiring a two-step registration process to enhance security with personal information verification and a PIN sent by encrypted email
Environmentally friendly as no paper ballot printing	Security of voting online and potential for fraudulent activity has been raised, based on use of personal devices or potential to interfere with the internet voting system
Decreased chance of a ballot being marked in error or spoiled unintentionally as the system flags ballot marking errors, such as blank, over and under-voted races, and allows the voter to correct before casting the ballot just like in-person voting locations	No manual recount is possible because there is no paper ballot
Efficient automated administration of voter identity verification, ballot receipt and striking voter off the voters' list and counting	
Fast and accurate results tabulation	
Cost effective based on flat rate per voter that uses the system	
Digital audit trail for audit, investigation or recount	