

Voting methods review

Questions and answers

1. What are voting methods?

Voting methods are the different ways that a voter can cast their ballot. Examples include in-person voting with tabulators or remote methods like vote by mail, vote by phone and internet voting.

2. What remote voting methods are being considered for the 2022 municipal and school board election?

The City is considering vote by mail, vote by phone and internet voting options. These are the only remote methods currently available and supported by election vendors.

3. Will voting in-person still be an option?

In-person voting at voting locations across the City will still be offered on advanced voting days and on Election Day. Any remote voting option would be in addition to in-person options.

4. Why is the City considering remote voting options?

There are a few different situations that can make it hard for eligible voters to cast a ballot in person.

A voter may not live in the City. Owners of residential or commercial property who have tenants, for example, may live in another municipality and would otherwise have to travel to cast a ballot in person.

A voter may be out of town on work or personal matters during advanced voting and Election Day. This is one of the most common reasons that the City Clerk's Office hears that someone is unable to vote. Advance days can be extended, however, if someone is away for the two to three weeks before Election Day, they may be unable to cast a ballot in person.

A third situation is that someone may be unable to come to an in-person voting location due to limited mobility or other health concerns, such as allergies. Planning for the next municipal election in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized the health and safety considerations that in-person voting has for voters. An in-person voting location presents a barrier for some to be able to safely cast a ballot.

5. What is proxy voting and does it solve the need for a remote voting method?

Municipal election legislation allows a voter to vote by proxy, that is appoint another eligible voter to cast a ballot on their behalf at an in-person voting location.

This approach is used by some voters; however, it does not help many voters for different reasons. First, the proxy form must be hand signed by the voter and the proxy must come into City Hall to hand sign a form and complete the appointment. This does not work for voters who are out of town for a period of time before Election Day. Often voters say that they do not have someone they are comfortable casting a ballot on their behalf or are asking too much of a friend or family member as they have to go in-person to City Hall and then go to a voting location, potentially a second one on Election Day if they live in different wards. Many voters prefer to be able to cast the ballot themselves if possible.

6. Have remote voting options been offered by the City of Guelph in the past?

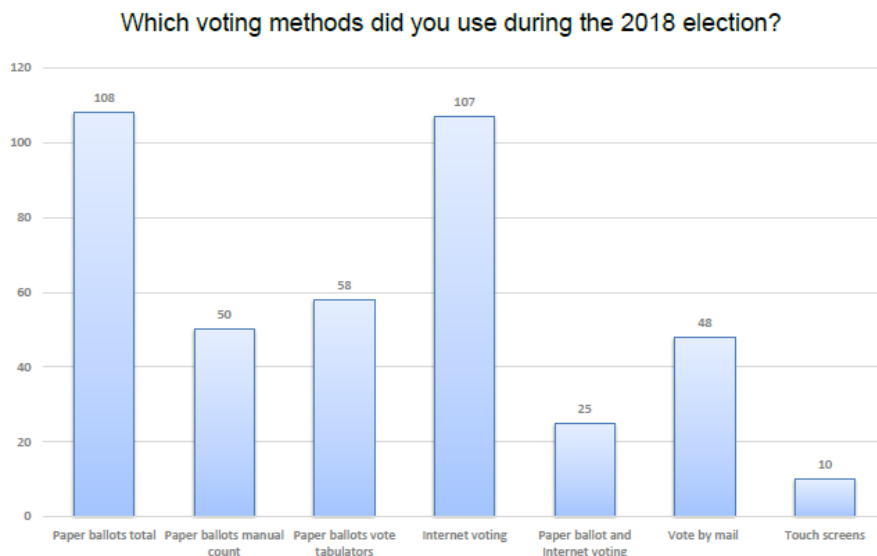
No remote voting method was approved by Council for the 2018 municipal election. Internet voting was approved by Council and used as part of advanced voting for the 2014 municipal election.

7. Who else uses these methods?

Vote by mail is the remote voting option used by Elections Ontario at the provincial level and Elections Canada at the federal level.

A survey of Ontario municipalities conducted by the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO) after the 2018 municipal election showed that, of 263 municipalities that responded, 48 used vote by mail, 107 used internet voting and 25 used paper ballot and internet voting. The survey did not ask about vote by phone and it is unknown how many municipalities use this method. Preliminary discussions with election vendors indicate that vote by phone is typically used in smaller rural municipalities with fewer voters than the City of Guelph.

VOTING METHODS



8. Does Guelph have to use a remote voting method?

A remote voting method is not required but is an important consideration to potentially support voters and help ensure they are able to cast their ballot. Having at least one remote voting method helps voters in a variety of circumstances, including those who are out of the City on voting days, those that are unable to get to a voting location or cast a ballot in-person due to mobility, health or disability concerns.

9. Who decides what voting methods are used for the 2022 municipal election?

The City Clerk's Office administers the municipal election and makes recommendations on voting methods to City Council.

City Council must decide which voting methods will be used. A decision on voting methods must be made before each municipal and school board election every four years.

10. How secure are remote voting methods?

The City takes the integrity and security of municipal elections very seriously. The City Clerk's Office takes careful precautions and plans out secure processes for all voting methods that will be used in an election.

Vote by mail includes verification of requests for a mail in ballot, tracking of vote-by-mail kits and requires signed voter declaration cards that are cross referenced with the voters' list.

Vote by phone uses unique voter ID's and asks for personal information to verify identity based on the voters' list.

Internet voting uses a two-step process with unique voter ID's and generates a second unique PIN based on personal information verified checked against the voters' list.

All remote voting methods ensure that the voter is struck off the voters' list once a remote ballot is received. This means someone would be unable access the remote system for another ballot and they would be unable to get another ballot at an in-person voting location.

11. Would voter fraud be possible with remote voting methods?

Voter fraud involves intentional and illegal attempts to fraudulently cast more than one ballot, cast a ballot on behalf of someone else without their knowledge and permission or the tampering with ballots.

The City takes careful precautions and plans out secure processes for all voting methods that will be used in an election. These involve system testing, audit tracking and checking identification before someone receives a ballot in-person or with secure questions for remote methods whenever possible.

However, the City must balance security with access and ensuring that someone is not prevented from voting. Voter fraud is possible in all voting methods and in all elections and it could be attempted using in-person or remote voting methods. For this reason, the City has thorough audit tracking of the voter's list and vote tabulation systems so that, in the

event a concern is raised during or after voting, an investigation could be conducted by police and charges could be laid if evidence of fraud is found.

12. Can there be more than one remote voting option?

The City Clerk's Office plans to recommend that one remote voting method be used for the 2022 municipal and school board election. Offering more than one remote method would have increased costs and could be challenging to support administratively.

13. Would it be possible to have someone come to my home so I can vote?

A home visit is an option that is required by election legislation for the provincial and federal governments under specific circumstances, such as if a voter is unable to go to a voting location due to a disability, requires additional assistance or is unable to read or write.

The Municipal Elections Act does not require that a home visit service be provided, and this option has not been offered by the City of Guelph in past elections largely due to a lack of resources and staff to support individual home visits. Election Day voting locations are always offered at long-term care facilities and retirement homes. In addition, general voting locations are selected based on strict accessibility criteria which includes proximity to public transit.