

0:21:45.990 --> 0:22:6.30

Wendy (Guest)

Welcome to Big G in conversation, the podcast from Inside Guelph City Hall. Hi, I'm Wendy King and on today's show, we're talking with the city clerk to discuss the upcoming municipal election. We'll learn about key voting dates, the different ways you could cast your ballot and other important things that well voters want to know.

0:0:0.0 --> 0:0:6.50

Wendy (Guest)

Joining me today is Stephen O'Brien, city clerk and general manager of Guelph City clerk's office. Thanks for joining me. Steven, nice to talk to you again.

0:0:6.520 --> 0:0:8.50

Stephen O'Brien

Great to be back. Wendy, thanks so much.

0:0:8.620 --> 0:0:28.200

Wendy (Guest)

So I I really can't believe we're talking election again or you know, it just things seem to happen very quickly as as we discussed the summer has flown by and here we are. It's time to talk about municipal election coming up. So when is it all happening?

0:0:28.810 --> 0:0:59.390

Stephen O'Brien

While the big day is October 24th, UH but really guelphites and residents here in Guelph can vote a few, they have a few opportunities to vote. So obviously voting day 10:00 AM to 8:00 PM, that's October 24th. That's a set time that folks can vote, but also during the advanced period. So October 8th to 10th October 14th to 16th and we've got a vote by mail option that runs during a good chunk of that period as well. So in short, two weekends before voting day and a remote voting option and vote by mail, lots of time to get out and vote.

0:1:0.250 --> 0:1:7.790

Wendy (Guest)

So let's start with that. You mentioned the new vote by mail option. Could you give us a little bit more detail on that?

0:1:8.250 --> 0:1:41.240

Stephen O'Brien

Yeah, new for us in 2022 for sure. We've had remote what we call remote voting options in a sort of a broad category of voting options for some time. But new for us in 2022 is vote by mail. Part of it is a response to what we've seen provincially and federally. Other levels of government have offered vote by mail and also a response to what we've come through for the last two and a half years or so. So it gives people an opportunity to vote remotely if they choose. And as I said, through the advanced voting period. So effectively between September 12th and October 14th, that's the window in which electors can register to receive a vote by mail kit.

0:1:41.360 --> 0:1:56.540

Stephen O'Brien

We really recommend that listeners register early within that window if they're interested in voting by mail. And what I'll say is without getting into a whole bunch of details, all the details can always be found at [guelph.ca/vote](http://guelph.ca/vote) and I I would guess you're gonna hear me say that website a whole lot in our chat today.

0:1:56.950 --> 0:2:3.580

Wendy (Guest)

That's OK. That's good for people to know. So Speaking of casting ballots, let's run down all the ways you can do that.

0:2:4.60 --> 0:2:28.900

Stephen O'Brien

Yeah, certainly so advanced voting similar to what electors will experience on Election Day, physical voting locations with accessible voting equipment is effectively what they'll find that those voting location locations and by accessible equipment. I mean we've got really cool technology that allows an audio ballot to be read to an elector if they need that accommodation and then they can mark their ballot using that audio device. We're gonna have one location during the advanced voting in each ward.

0:2:28.980 --> 0:3:0.640

Stephen O'Brien

On the weekend of October 14th to 16th and on the weekend prior to that October 8th to 10th, voting will be at City Hall. Also with that fully accessible voting equipment. And then on Election Day, October 24th, 45 plus locations throughout the city and upwards of about 7 locations per ward. One location within each of those words. Again we'll have that accessible equipment that I just mentioned and so you've got the ability to vote at a lot of or you've got the options sorry to vote you know fit it into what works with your schedule.

0:3:0.730 --> 0:3:2.980

Stephen O'Brien

This is how we're we're trying to make it easy for folks.

0:3:3.650 --> 0:3:12.650

Wendy (Guest)

It's really interesting to me how things have evolved over the last few years, so for sure COVID has has changed something for you guys and the procedures, right?

0:3:13.200 --> 0:3:43.170

Stephen O'Brien

Absolutely. It's really made us focus on on how voting locations are set up. I mean, we've always had distancing, for example, to to, you know, respect the privacy of the voting process. But we're more cognizant of that. We'll make sure that hand sanitizers are available and all the things that we've come used to seeing when we physically enter all kinds of different places in today's day and age. But the vote by mail option is one that really allows people, if they feel more comfortable voting at home and and having that remote voting option, they can do that as well and avail themselves of that.

0:4:1.90 --> 0:4:3.220

Stephen O'Brien

Yes. Yeah, it's a tabulator.

0:3:43.860 --> 0:4:8.310

Wendy (Guest)

So just curious, I think the last time I voted, it was a little different in that we still did, you know, the X on the ballot and then you handed it to the person. But they put they you watched them immediately put it into a I don't know, high tech thing. You know, the word and that there was the little, the little box wasn't there anymore. So what I'm trying to say so is that what you're talking about with the new technology.

0:4:8.700 --> 0:4:39.390

Stephen O'Brien

Yeah, certainly that that's the technology we're talking about, you know, municipal elections are infinitely more complex, I say, than our friends, federally and provincially, there's one ballot federally and provincially, with 567 names on it, depending on how many folks are running in the writing, in the municipal election, we've got many names on the ballot and up to three contests on each ballot. So you're voting for mayor. You're voting for two Ward Council representatives and in some cases, you're voting for one, maybe 2, maybe 4. School board trustee candidates. So we have what we call a composite ballot.

0:4:39.650 --> 0:4:43.80

Stephen O'Brien

And those vote Tabulars really help us ensure that there's an accuracy.

0:4:44.210 --> 0:4:49.850

Stephen O'Brien

To you know, an efficiency, certainly, but more so in accuracy to the to the tabulation of the vote results.

0:4:50.790 --> 0:5:1.980

Wendy (Guest)

So when you say, you know, here's where you're gonna go to vote. Can you tell us a little bit about, like, is it ward specific or does everybody go to one general area?

0:5:2.350 --> 0:5:30.40

Stephen O'Brien

That's a great question. So we're also in the business of trying to make voting easy for people. So on advanced voting, I mentioned that the one weekend where we've got multiple locations around the city, the 14th to the 16th of October, you can vote at any location in the city. So we'll have one location in each ward and you can go to any one of those locations. You're not required to visit any one specific location. And our thought process in there with what we call through the vote anywhere within the city model is that people have busy lives.

0:5:30.130 --> 0:6:2.230

Stephen O'Brien

They might be visiting elderly parents in another part of the city. They may have commitments with children that take them across different parts of the city. It may be easier for them to vote near those locations than it is near home, and then that extends to a certain degree as well on Election Day. So on Election Day, you can vote at any of the locations within your ward. Again, recognizing that people are busy there coming and going from groceries and any number of activities that they're carrying out. And so the vote anywhere within the ward and vote anywhere within the city are aimed at making sure that people have.

0:6:2.630 --> 0:6:3.750

Stephen O'Brien

Easy access to voting.

0:6:4.850 --> 0:6:6.570

Wendy (Guest)

What kind of ID do we need?

0:6:7.380 --> 0:6:8.50

Stephen O'Brien

Great question.

0:6:8.530 --> 0:6:37.540

Stephen O'Brien

Umm. What? You really wanna bring is identification that shows your name and qualifying address, so most commonly electors will bring a driver's license or the new. Well, not so new actually now, but the Ontario photo ID card. With them, there's only a select few of Ontario health cards that have a qualifying address. That's the biggest thing for us. We wanna make sure that you are who you are in front of us, but also your address matches the address we have on the voters list. So we don't need photo ID. We just need ID that shows qualifying address.

0:6:51.440 --> 0:6:52.650

Wendy (Guest)

Oh, that's interesting.

0:6:38.140 --> 0:7:8.550

Stephen O'Brien

And your name? Other options that people can bring might include things like mortgage statements, lease rental agreements, income tax assessment notices, health cards against some do, but many don't. Passports not acceptable because individuals. Yes, individuals. Right. If you look at your passport, you hand wrote your address into that. And obviously people can move in. That address can change. So I would suggest you you visit [guelph.ca](http://guelph.ca) vote we've got a full list of ID that's available again most common driver's License Ontario photo ID.

0:7:8.890 --> 0:7:19.200

Stephen O'Brien

And you're going to get a voter notification card in the mail if you're on the voters list, so that those two things. Combine your piece of ID and that voter notification card can really make your experience quicker at the polls.

0:7:19.710 --> 0:7:26.930

Wendy (Guest)

Right. For sure. Yeah. That's, I'm glad you said that because I think people would think well, passport would do everything, but not in this case, not in this case.

0:7:27.770 --> 0:7:28.600

Wendy (Guest)

Yeah, yeah.

0:7:26.300 --> 0:7:43.810

Stephen O'Brien

There's one more thing, Wendy. I'm going to add to that. You know what else you can bring? You can bring a friend. You can bring a neighbor to the voting location with you. So bring your ID, bring your voter notification card. But why not make it a community event? Why not make it a family event? Again, we're we want as many people to get out and vote as they can. So bring a friend and courage others to come along with you.

0:7:44.560 --> 0:7:46.610

Wendy (Guest)

So that was my other question because.

0:7:47.870 --> 0:8:10.810

Wendy (Guest)

Canada, Ontario, any city you visit, voter turnout is notoriously low. For whatever reason, I feel like, and I could be wrong, but I feel like with all the issues that are going on right now and what we've dealt with the last couple years, people should be and maybe more engaged. I'm sure that's your hope. What do you think is reality?

0:8:11.860 --> 0:8:13.630

Stephen O'Brien

Yeah. I mean, I think you're right, the, the.

0:8:14.800 --> 0:8:27.10

Stephen O'Brien

The truth comes out in the numbers historically in terms of voter turnout, and you're you're quite right about voter turnout. I mean, even provincially in this last election in June, we saw lower voter turn, right? I believe it was at the sort of 42-43% range.

0:8:26.980 --> 0:8:28.170

Wendy (Guest)

Yeah, it was bad.

0:8:28.390 --> 0:9:0.520

Stephen O'Brien

Yeah, and and we are not, you know, in some cases municipalities aren't much better than that or aren't even close to that. I think what's really important for people to realize is that, as you said, Wendy, the municipal level government is the one that's closest to the people. And what I mean by that is when you wake up in the morning and you take the dog for a walk or you walk your kids to the bus stop, you're

walking on a municipal sidewalk that needs to be maintained. When you turn your lights on. I mean, Electra is the local utility here in Guelph, but effectively that's a municipal service. Maybe you visit a park and you walk on trails. Those are municipal services and such.

0:9:1.240 --> 0:9:20.100

Stephen O'Brien

The water when you turn on the tap to brush your teeth in the morning, that's a municipal service. So it really, really is in everybody's life every single day. And so voting and and having a say in that and who will represent you and decisions around those things is is really critical and really important. So I hope that that sort of puts things in perspective for some of your listeners.

0:9:20.910 --> 0:9:48.780

Wendy (Guest)

I always thought that the municipal election was the most important for exactly the reasons you said. It's your local neighbor running. You probably know them. It's the local issue. It's it's where you you can really actually have an impact like, you know, we always say, ohh, what's the point of telling Canada what to do? They're not gonna do what we want. You know, there's all that, you know, I guess you get jaded sometimes about voting, but but municipal, you really do have the voice.

0:9:49.300 --> 0:10:18.830

Stephen O'Brien

Yeah, absolutely. I think you said it right, these are your neighbors. These are the people that will make decisions that impact you on a daily basis and in a much shorter time horizon, right? Some of the decisions that Council makes at the Council horseshoe table are development applications that are gonna impact your neighborhood and critical issues about how Guelph grows and where Guelph grows all the way down to. Like I said before, what's your park design, what the new park design is going to be around the corner from your house and that type of thing? So.

0:10:19.860 --> 0:10:31.820

Stephen O'Brien

Yeah, it's, it's, it's personal. It's personal for a lot of different reasons. And that's what makes it special and that's why we hope that folks take advantage of the opportunity to get out and vote again, as I said earlier, we're we're doing our part to hopefully make it as easy as possible to get out and vote.

0:10:31.990 --> 0:10:45.750

Wendy (Guest)

Yeah, absolutely. You really are. So we talked about technology, but because it's this like kind of vote anywhere approach, does that make it easier to to host a municipal election or I'm sure there's still there's always glitches.

0:10:46.210 --> 0:11:15.620

Stephen O'Brien

Yeah, I think vote anywhere within the city during the advanced voting period and voting at any location in Guelph is is really giving electors the flexibility to vote at a location that's most convenient for them. As I said, maybe they work across the city from their home and voting at a location near work is more convenient. That I think is really valuable. We've got lots of locations within each of the words on

Election Day. Most words have, I think, all have at least seven voting locations and some have, you know, eight or nine locations within the board. So.

0:11:16.840 --> 0:11:47.270

Stephen O'Brien

The intent there is to make them all hopefully take the load off and make it less busy for for locations, but also allow people to select which location is best for them and we hope again that people avail themselves of advanced voting opportunities again, the 14th to the 16th, the 8th to the 10th of October using the the vote by mail option is a great option as well. Again register early for that. That's the one message I would suggest. Get online on the the week of September the 12th and and check if you're if you're on the voters list and subsequently register. But hopefully those things make the lineups.

0:11:47.390 --> 0:11:55.860

Stephen O'Brien

A little bit less cumbersome on Election Day. We know things get busy at the end of the day, so we're trying to make make it as easy for possible throughout the process.

0:11:56.850 --> 0:12:21.720

Wendy (Guest)

I hate to bring it up, but we've all been watching what's going on in the states. They have so many issues with their elections, like so many things that aren't even happening. People say are happening. It's gotta be simpler for you guys. Yes, because you're, you're smaller. You're one municipality. I I guess I'm asking do people have the same concerns that they do in the US about your vote actually counting?

0:12:22.420 --> 0:12:51.690

Stephen O'Brien

Yeah, I I mean I I think you you sort of have to ask the question to individual electors in that regard. But what I'll say is that I think in, in the Canadian context, we're fortunate because we've got at senior levels of government, federally, provincially, we've got nationwide or province wide agencies or bodies that coordinate elections in the US those elections are down at the county level. And so the county level supports the election process for state and federal level offices that can be.

0:12:52.790 --> 0:13:23.40

Stephen O'Brien

Provide like a quilt or a patchwork quilt of options throughout the country in the United States, in the Canadian context, we've got those national authorities and then again in Ontario, at your local level, there's one election administration group, and that's the team in the City clerk's office here at the city. My folks here that are working very hard to deliver that election, and we're working really hard to make sure that the messages are clear and succinct and that people know when they can vote, where they can vote and how they vote in terms of the technology again.

0:13:23.150 --> 0:13:34.280

Stephen O'Brien

How you vote in terms of who you select is perfectly your choice, and we're we're not overly concerned about that obviously, but we wanna make sure that you've got the, you know, the where and when to vote most importantly.

0:13:35.130 --> 0:13:39.580

Wendy (Guest)

Do you have a a large field of candidates this time around?

0:13:51.450 --> 0:13:52.50

Wendy (Guest)

Wow.

0:13:39.920 --> 0:14:0.30

Stephen O'Brien

Yes, we do. And we got a lot of candidates registering and filing what we call their nomination papers near the tail end of the nomination period, which ended on August 19th. We have 72 candidates. That's for all of the Council contests. So mayor and all the ward councillors, including all of the school board trustee races, so.

0:14:5.670 --> 0:14:6.240

Wendy (Guest)

Yeah.

0:14:0.910 --> 0:14:7.700

Stephen O'Brien

You know, municipal elections are infinitely complex. I told you about those different races on the ballot. We have 30 different ballot faces.

0:14:8.730 --> 0:14:35.50

Stephen O'Brien

Uh, federally and provincially, there's one. So that's a degree of complexity. I don't people think people realize there's one ballot phase for each ward. And then there's one ballot phase for each of the five different school support options. English public English, separate French public, French separate and no school support. So 30 distinct and different ballot faces makes our elections really complex. So we do our best to sort of distill out the complexity and things and really make it easier for people to find information and get it in both.

0:14:35.870 --> 0:14:41.560

Wendy (Guest)

So it's the day after the election. What happens after all the votes are cast and counted.

0:14:42.540 --> 0:14:53.570

Stephen O'Brien

And well, there's certainly a transition process, Wendy. So we focus on the incoming Council and ensuring that they have all the information they need to get up and running. There's administrative things for us to close off related to the election official results.

0:14:58.640 --> 0:15:28.950

Stephen O'Brien

Post election, we have a we're we're actively planning at this point with our colleagues across the city, a new Council orientation and the same will hold true for school board trustees. The first date of this new term of council is November 15th and as a result, we'll be holding accounts orientation session through



the early part of November. And then, of course periodically throughout the year on November 15th. That's that first day of the term, the 2022, 2020 six term of office.

0:15:29.20 --> 0:15:50.720

Stephen O'Brien

The members of Council will take their oath of office at an inaugural meeting on that day, and so it's a ceremony meeting no other city business occurs at that time, but it's important nonetheless. And then I think following that inaugural, things certainly don't slow down for the newly elected Council. There's a regular schedule of council meetings that begin promptly in December. And then, as you well know, and your listeners know, they carry on through the rest of the term.

0:15:51.410 --> 0:15:51.760

Wendy (Guest)

Here.

0:15:55.240 --> 0:15:56.370

Stephen O'Brien

Yeah, absolutely.

0:15:51.830 --> 0:15:59.760

Wendy (Guest)

Huge learning curve for people if they haven't done it before. Yeah, for sure. Faster results with the technology.

0:16:8.420 --> 0:16:8.930

Wendy (Guest)

Wow.

0:16:0.420 --> 0:16:14.930

Stephen O'Brien

Yes, certainly it is. Uh, again, the complexity of that ballot that I mentioned means that if we were to hand count some of these, these results would take us days to to tabulate the Tabulators. Certainly make that more efficient. But again, there's accuracy in in the in the in the use of the Tabulators as well.

0:16:16.190 --> 0:16:41.890

Stephen O'Brien

And so that's, that's what we will have is is unofficial results officially on the night of after the close of the polls at 8:00 PM. I'm gonna say sometime hopefully before or around ten 10:30 and then we certify those results which is really just means we take another quick glance at the results, make sure that all the results line up with the with the ballot tallies from each of the voting locations and we'll certify those results hopefully on the Tuesday falling Election Day the 25th.

0:16:42.770 --> 0:16:52.570

Wendy (Guest)

So just to kind of wrap up and if you want to repeat some of the the key dates and everything, what else do you think is really important for a Guelph voter to know?

0:16:53.600 --> 0:17:23.620

Stephen O'Brien

Well, I'm going to start with the first and foremost, get out and vote to do that easily. Check if you're on the voters list. Go to [guelph.ca/vote](http://guelph.ca/vote). We've got links to some of the tools that are available to check if you're on the voters list. If you wanna register to use a vote by mail option, please, please, please do that early in the opportunity to register for that, I would suggest individuals get on that sometime during the week of September 12th. That's the best bet. Take the time to understand what decisions mayors and members of council make collectively as a group.

0:17:23.690 --> 0:17:26.210

Stephen O'Brien

We talked about some of that today, Wendy, but but make sure your research.

0:17:27.430 --> 0:17:40.400

Stephen O'Brien

Again, we're not really concerned with who you vote for or why you got out and vote. That's personal, just that you do. And if you're voting in person, like I said earlier, why not bring a plus one to cast a ballot with you? The more the merrier is what we say.

0:17:41.40 --> 0:17:50.630

Wendy (Guest)

Yeah. So just give me the key dates again, if you don't mind. Just recap the advanced days and then what happens voting day and the times.

0:17:50.990 --> 0:18:14.110

Stephen O'Brien

Certainly yes. On the first weekend you can vote in person as October 8th to 10th, the second weekend you can vote. Advanced is October 14th to 16th. Election Day is October 24th and you can register to receive a vote by Mail Kit on October or sorry, on September the 12th. So those are the dates you really want to remember.

0:18:14.610 --> 0:18:15.100

Stephen O'Brien

Umm.

0:18:16.180 --> 0:18:19.270

Stephen O'Brien

And now we hope everyone that gets a chance to to pick the option that works best for them.

0:18:20.80 --> 0:18:24.280

Wendy (Guest)

Got a couple of kind of fun, silly, rapid fire questions for you.

0:18:23.670 --> 0:18:24.660

Stephen O'Brien

Sure, sure, sure.

0:18:24.700 --> 0:18:33.730

Wendy (Guest)

Ohm where and how are you going to not? How are you going to vote? Not. Who are you going to vote for? But what option are you choosing to vote?

0:18:38.50 --> 0:18:38.540

Wendy (Guest)

Yeah.

0:18:33.800 --> 0:18:50.920

Stephen O'Brien

Well, as a proud Guelph resident, I and someone will be very busy on the 24th, I will probably the how I vote will be in person at an advanced voting location. Conveniently, there's one here on October 8th to 10th at City Hall, so I'll probably wander down at some point. Try and be as innocuous as possible and cast my own ballot.

0:18:51.740 --> 0:18:54.670

Wendy (Guest)

She really Election Day superstitions.

0:18:56.90 --> 0:19:2.400

Stephen O'Brien

No, there's no. There's no. You know, this pair of socks that I wear every, every election.

0:19:18.840 --> 0:19:19.760

Wendy (Guest)

Totally.

0:19:2.820 --> 0:19:34.700

Stephen O'Brien

Umm I I try and get in really early on the day of my superstition is to get in and get settled. I think one thing I will say is not so much of a super supervision but a fun tradition with the team here in the city clerk's offices. Election Day has becomes all about food so we do a bit of a potluck on Election Day. Folks folks bring in some stuff and it's so busy that really that's nice that folks can come up and grab something to eat while they're running and doing any number of things supporting the voting locations throughout the city on answering phone calls, questions from candidates, questions from the teams that are at the location. So.

0:19:34.830 --> 0:19:39.800

Stephen O'Brien

Food keeps us going in the day, and it's an interesting, maybe not superstition, but an interesting tidbit of info on the back end.

0:19:47.400 --> 0:19:48.30

Stephen O'Brien

Yes.

0:19:50.250 --> 0:19:50.830

Stephen O'Brien  
Yeah, that's right.

0:19:39.420 --> 0:19:52.150

Wendy (Guest)

I was going to say I don't know if it's the same in City, County, City Hall, but yeah, working in newsrooms, election is always pizza day. You live till it's time to order the pizza and keep the caffeine coming right.

0:19:52.130 --> 0:19:55.210

Stephen O'Brien

Yeah, lots of coffee and and good food keeps us going.

0:19:54.960 --> 0:20:2.880

Wendy (Guest)

Absolutely. Hey, thanks so much to Stephen O'Brien for the great discussion. As give me the website one more time, Stephen for people.

0:20:3.210 --> 0:20:9.200

Stephen O'Brien

Yeah, [guelph.ca/vote](http://guelph.ca/vote) all your resources, all the information you need is there. Thanks so much, Wendy. I really appreciate the time.

0:20:8.550 --> 0:20:9.970

Wendy (Guest)

Thank you. You too.

0:20:10.290 --> 0:20:10.680

Stephen O'Brien

Take care.