



## Town of Huntsville Staff Report

**Meeting Date:** January 29, 2025

**To:** General Committee

**Report Number:** CORP-2025-6

**Confidential:** No

**Author(s):** Tanya Calleja, Director of Legislative Services/Clerk

**Subject:** 2026 Municipal Election - Voting Method

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### Report Highlights

Approval for the presentation at Council of a by-law for an alternative voting method of internet and telephone for the Town of Huntsville 2026 Municipal Election.

### Recommendation

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:** Committee approve the use of internet and telephone voting for the 2026 Municipal Election and directs the Clerk to prepare a by-law for Council's consideration.

### Background

Section 42(1) of the *Municipal Act, 2001* provides for a municipality to pass by-laws: (a) authorizing the use of voting and vote-counting equipment such as voting machines, voting 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.

As per section 42(2), a by-law must be passed by Council on or before May 1st in the year of the election. The 2026 Municipal Election will be held on Monday, October 26, 2026.

The Town of Huntsville began using internet and telephone for its Municipal Election in 2010, changing to vote by mail for 2014, and back to internet and telephone voting for 2018 and 2022. Beginning in 2018, the additional five Muskoka municipalities also began to use internet and telephone as their voting method for their Municipal Elections.

Internet Voting continues to grow amongst municipalities. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario reported the following numbers using internet and/or telephone/combined over the past 3 municipal elections:

- 2014 - 94
- 2018 - 178

- 2022 - 217

Internet voting provides enhanced accessibility and convenience for voters to vote at any time during the voting window. Using the same voting method provides consistency for the public and easier understanding. Staff continue to build and expand on internet and telephone education and outreach material with each municipal election.

## **Discussion**

To begin preparations for the 2026 Municipal Election staff require the by-law confirming the method of internet and telephone voting to be adopted in order for staff to obtain a vendor for voting services.

Procurement Policy By-law 2023-123 provides authority for the Clerk to purchase goods, services and equipment considered necessary to carry out the requirements of the Municipal Act.

### Collaboration with Muskoka Municipalities

As in 2018 and 2022, the six Muskoka municipalities will again be collaborating in releasing a joint procurement and awarding a vendor for internet and telephone services. As vendors usually have a maximum number of municipalities they accept, the Muskoka Clerks are eager to have their by-laws adopted in moving ahead with releasing the joint procurement.

A Joint Post Election Report with all the Muskoka municipalities for the 2022 Municipal Election was provided to General Committee on March 29, 2023. The Report was comprehensive in outlining all the aspects and components of the 2022 Municipal Election. The Report is being provided as a reference [Report CORP-2023-37](#) - Post-Election Report on the 2022 Municipal Election.

### Muskoka Municipalities: Timelines - Adoption of By-laws for the 2026 Municipal Election:

- Town of Bracebridge - By-law adopted on November 13, 2024
- Town of Gravenhurst - By-law adopted on January 21, 2024
- Town of Huntsville - Report (January 29, 2025) and proposed By-law on February 24, 2025
- Township of Georgian Bay - Report (March 3, 2025) and proposed By-law on April 7, 2025
- Township of Lake of Bays - TBD
- Township of Muskoka Lakes - Report adopted on January 15, 2025, proposed By-law on February 12, 2025

The Muskoka Clerks meet on a regular basis collaborating in preparing for all aspects of the municipal election. This collaboration not only allows the ability to share in best practices, resources, and training, but it also allows for consistency in practices and procedures to help reduce voting confusion. It also allows for the ability to obtain group pricing in areas such as advertising and vendor voting services.

### Important Updates to Note for 2026

- In December 2024, The National Standard Institute of Canada published a new standard "*Online Electoral Voting - Part 1: Implementation of Online Voting in Canadian Municipal Elections*". This new document will assist municipalities with best practices and for the procurement of vendors.

- The recent adoption of Town of Huntsville By-law 2024-114 changing the composition of Town Council requiring two representatives for the pairing of Huntsville and Chaffey Wards.
- The amendment to the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* (Bill 204), that moved the responsibility for preparing the preliminary voters' list from the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) to the Chief Electoral Officer, beginning in 2024. Elections Ontario has been continually working with Ontario Municipal Clerks since this date. It is much anticipated that this change will help capture a larger electorate than only property owners provided in previous MPAC lists.

## Options

1. Committee directs staff to prepare a by-law authorizing the use of internet and telephone voting for the 2026 Municipal Election. **(Recommended)**
2. Committee directs staff to prepare a by-law authorizing the use of vote by mail and vote-counting equipment for the 2026 Municipal Election. (Not Recommended)
3. Committee directs staff to prepare a by-law authorizing the use of paper ballots and vote-counting equipment for the 2026 Municipal Election. (Not Recommended)

## Capital

N/A

## Operational

The total amount included in the 2026 Election Budget for expenses is - \$178,310.

Election Reserve	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
<b>Opening</b>	\$140,593	\$48,551	\$74,335	\$110,335	\$151,335	\$14,025	\$57,025	\$102,025	\$149,025
<b>In</b> (reserve transfer)	\$29,000	\$31,000	\$36,000	\$41,000	\$41,000	*\$43,000	*\$45,000	*\$47,000	*\$49,000
<b>In</b> (special reserve transfer)	\$45,000								
<b>Out</b> (expenses)	(\$166,042)	(\$5,216)			*(178,310)				*(180,000)
<b>Total</b>	\$48,551	\$74,335	\$110,335	\$151,335	\$14,025	\$57,025	\$102,025	\$149,025	\$18,025

\*Estimated

Blue highlight indicates a municipal election year.

The contributions from the levy for the election is \$41,000 for both 2025 and 2026.

## Council Strategic Direction / Relevant Policies / Legislation / Resolutions

- *Accessibility for Ontarians and Disabilities Act, 2005*, S.O. 2005, Chapter 11
- *Education Act, R.S.O. 1990*, c. E.2
- *Municipal Act, 2001*, S.O. 2001, c. 25
- *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, S.O. 1996, c. 32, Sched
- By-law 2024-114 - Composition of Municipal Council
- By-law 2023-123 - Procurement Policy
- Strategic Plan Action 2.3: Advance IT and digital enablement to support efficient and effective service deliver
- [Report CORP-2023-37](#) - Post-Election Report on the 2022 Municipal Election

## Consultations

Muskoka Clerks

**Respectfully Submitted:** Tanya Calleja, Director of Legislative Services/Clerk

**Manager Approval (if required):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Director Approval:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CAO Approval:** Denise Corry, Chief Administrative Officer