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Communication

CW(WS) – November 29, 2023

Item No. 3

Elections Vaughan Roadmap 2030



Agenda



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Roles and Responsibilities

Municipal Elections Act, 1996

Duties of the City Clerk

- ▶ Section 11(1) of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 (MEA) identifies that the clerk of the municipality is responsible for conducting elections within the municipality
- ▶ The City Clerk has statutory and independent authority over areas including, but not limited to:
 - Dates, times and locations for Advance Vote
 - Voting Day locations, earlier opening times for select locations, and reduced hours for institutional voting
 - Preparation of forms and procedures not otherwise prescribed
 - Procedures for alternate voting methods including internet and tabulators
 - Recruitment, training and appointment of election officials

Responsibilities of Council

- ▶ The MEA identifies the following authority and decision-making responsibilities to Council:
 - Submit to electors a by-law or question on the ballot;
 - Authorizing notices, forms and other information under the MEA to be provided in languages other than English;
 - Authorizing the use of voting and vote-counting equipment such as voting machines, voting recorders or optical scanning vote tabulators;
 - Authorizing alternate voting methods such as voting online, by mail or by telephone, that does not require electors to attend a voting place in order to vote;

Responsibilities of Council cont'd

- Establish a compliance audit committee prior to October 1 of an election year;
- Pass a resolution requiring a recount; and
- Adopt a policy with respect to circumstances requiring recounts.

Election Principles

- a) The secrecy and confidentiality of the voting process is paramount;
- b) The election shall be fair and non-biased;
- c) The election shall be accessible to the voters;
- d) The integrity of the voting process shall be maintained throughout the election;
- e) There is to be certainty that the results of the election reflect the votes cast;
- f) Voters and candidates shall be treated fairly and consistently; and
- g) The proper majority vote governs by ensuring that valid votes are counted, and invalid votes are rejected so far as reasonably possible.

Background

Background

- ▶ Following a comprehensive assessment of internet voting which considered best practices from Canadian and international jurisdictions using online voting, and a detailed security analysis of risks and mitigation tactics, in December 2021, Council authorized internet voting for the 2022 Municipal Election on the recommendations of the City Clerk / Returning Officer
- ▶ This election was the first use of internet voting in the City of Vaughan
- ▶ The 2022 Municipal Election featured an internet-based Advance Vote with a tabulator-based Voting Day experience
- ▶ Advance Voting ran for 15 consecutive days, from October 6 – 20, 2022

2022 Municipal Election by the Numbers

104 Voting Day locations

68 Candidates

27.03% Overall Turnout

60.38% Advance Vote turnout

Roadmap 2030

Harnessing Technology

Harnessing Technology

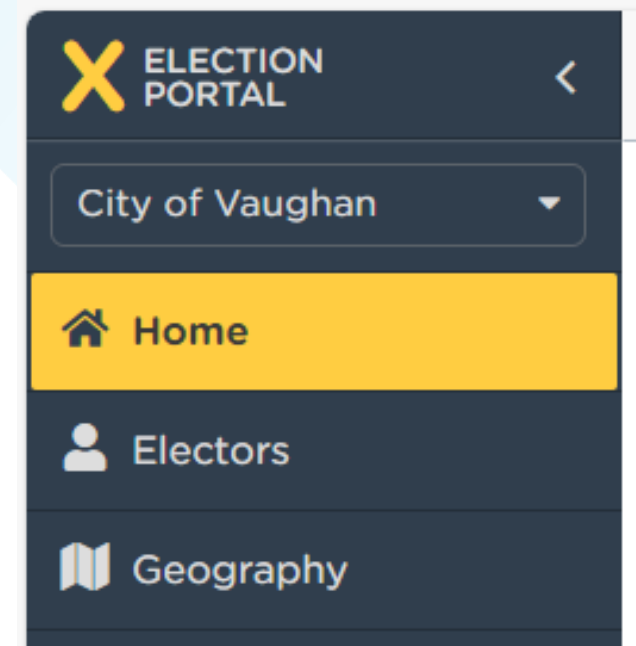
- ▶ Elections Vaughan has successfully deployed innovative technologies and systems to support voters and candidates, and to allow for a more efficient and effective election
 - Adoption of ePollbooks for live voters list management and real-time information on voter turnout
 - Candidate Access Portal to connect candidates and their staff with critical documents, resources, voters list information and real-time strike-off data
 - Optical-scan vote tabulators which digitally read and count electoral results from paper ballots deposited inside for timely and accurate results

Harnessing Technology

- **Internet voting:** provides for greater accessibility and flexibility for voters to vote when and where they want while ensuring access is limited to eligible voters through two-factor authentication
- **Online voter registration tool:** allows for eligible electors to register to be added to the voters list by Elections Vaughan staff on reviewing qualifying identification
- **Online election worker portal:** a virtual hub for election worker job applications, position assignments, enrolling in in-person training and completing online training modules

Voters List Administration

- Effective January 1, 2024 the responsibility to maintain and produce the municipal voters list will transition from MPAC to Elections Ontario
- Elections Vaughan staff have been involved in Elections Ontario's development of the new municipal voters list administration platform and requirements
- This new portal provides an accurate and up-to-date list of eligible voters, and furthermore allows Elections Vaughan staff to effectively and efficiently manage information for eligible electors



Voters List Administration

- Elections Ontario voter data will be regularly updated to reflect changes provided from other sources such as the MTO and Elections Canada
- Elections Ontario has a robust enumeration process which is ongoing and changes to the provincial Register of Electors carry over to the municipal list
- Elections Vaughan staff will now be able to review and update the municipal list outside of a municipal election, to ensure it remains as accurate and current as possible

Internet Voting in the Canadian Context

- ▶ Canada is a world leader in the adoption of internet voting as a voting method, both as a standalone method or paired with other voting methods like paper ballots/tabulator, telephone voting and mail-in voting
- ▶ The majority of municipalities (including: Markham and Richmond Hill) in Ontario and Nova Scotia now offer internet voting and the province of Nova Scotia and the Northwest Territories will be offering an internet voting option to some or all voters at their next elections
- ▶ Internet voting was the preferred voting method for electors in the 2022 Municipal Election in the City of Vaughan



60% of voters used the internet option in 2022

The Advantages of Internet Voting

- ▶ Internet voting brings with it a number of advantages, some which are not present in more traditional voting methods
 - Increased voter satisfaction
 - Improved accessibility
 - Easier voting process
 - Reduced wait times
 - Environmentally friendly with reduced ballot waste
 - Less human error
 - Cost savings
 - Improved efficiency
 - Greater flexibility for voters



“I found online voting to be very simple and easy. The best way to vote.”

Respondent, Post-2022 Municipal Election Survey

Mitigating Risks

- ▶ All voting methods come with risks associated with them, Elections Vaughan staff actively work to mitigate those risks, including with internet voting
- ▶ Internet voting systems undergo frequent and rigorous security, logic and accuracy testing to ensure the system operates according to the procedures established by the City Clerk
- ▶ Multi-factor authentication ensures that electors require two credentials to securely access the online voting platform and cast a ballot and provides an additional layer of verification not present with in-person paper-ballot voting
- ▶ Strong messaging through voter information letters, the online voting platform and City communications channels to reinforce legal obligations and penalties for violations of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*

Mitigating Risks

Risks	Mitigations
Unprotected/infected endpoint computers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage voters who don't feel comfortable voting with personal devices to attend a Voter Assist Centre• Devices in these locations should be scanned for malware and have anti-malware software installed
Vulnerability in voting application/infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extensive testing of voting solution prior to implementation and rollout
Online support issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expand support services to include more trained staff• Secure vendor resources to provide live support

Mitigating Risks

Risks	Mitigations
Unexpectedly high voter turnout	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Load test voting solution at maximum capacity
High system utilization for vote encryption	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mitigate performance issues flagged during testing• Monitoring of voting solution throughout the day (at different peaks)
Improperly designed infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have vendor and vendor resources on standby ready to triage if necessary

Mitigating Risks

Risks	Mitigations
Voters with limited access to digital services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offer Voter Assist Centres with devices connected to the internet free of charge
Voters not technically inclined and required to vote online	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offer non-electronic voting alternatives
Coercion or vote buying	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Educate voters on their rights• Encourage voters who don't feel comfortable voting on personal devices to use a Voter Assist Centre• Monitor voting application for suspicious activities such as a high number of failed logins



89.76% of survey
respondents indicated they
would vote online again

Internet Voting in 2026 & 2030

- ▶ Based on the successful implementation of internet voting for the 2022 Municipal Election, the City Clerk is proposing to make internet voting a permanent feature of municipal elections in the City of Vaughan
 - Internet voting would be offered during the Advance Vote period only for regular municipal elections
 - Review opportunities to include more analytics and reporting options post-election

Internet Voting in 2026 & 2030

- Voter assistance centres (VACs) would be provided for in-person support during Advance Vote and for voters list revisions
- Paper ballots and tabulators would be provided only on Voting Day, with multiple voting places in each ward
- Internet-only elections would only be considered on a case-by-case basis for by-elections if required

Roadmap 2030

Managing Resources Effectively

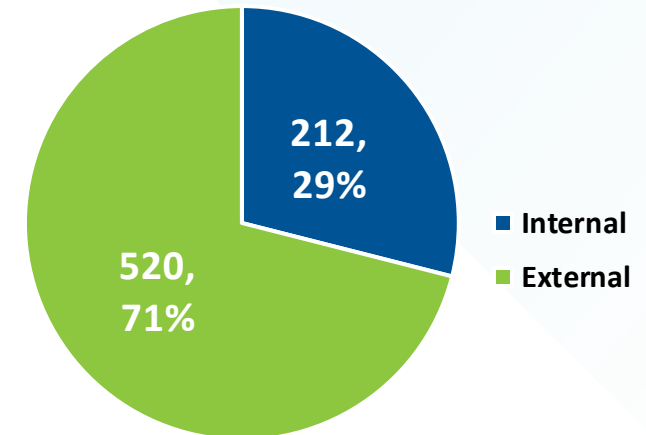
Managing Resources

- ▶ The implementation of internet voting has a significant impact on the demands placed on traditional in-person voting places from a staffing and logistics perspective
- ▶ With only 40% of electors voting on Voting Day, there is a reduced requirement for voting places and in turn, a reduced requirement for election workers, equipment and supplies
- ▶ Opportunities exist to consolidate single-poll electors from condos at multi-poll locations like schools and community centres
- ▶ Vote-anywhere-in-your-ward becomes a practicable option for Voting Day with a reduced footprint

Staffing

- ▶ The ability to recruit and employ over 700 temporary election workers has become increasingly difficult, a fact recognized by Elections Canada and Elections Ontario in their own elections
- ▶ Internet voting would allow Elections Vaughan to reduce its reliance on external election workers, thereby providing the opportunity for increased quality control over new hires.
- ▶ Municipalities with significant internet voting uptake such as Richmond Hill and Markham have been able to substantially reduce or eliminate the need to recruit external election workers

Election Workers by Source



Staffing

- ▶ Elections Vaughan would be able to reduce voting locations by up to 50%, with a commensurate reduction in staff requirements
- ▶ With City Manager support, this reduced staff requirement could be more fully met by internal staff and election worker pay could be increased to ensure more competitive compensation given current realities of the employment market

Logistics

- ▶ With fewer voting places, the need for technology, supplies and materials would be similarly reduced
- ▶ This reduction not only saves cost, but reduces the logistics burden on Elections Vaughan to prepare and deploy equipment and supplies across the City
- ▶ Reducing the Voting Day footprint would also allow Elections Vaughan to be more selective with voting locations
- ▶ As the only York Region municipality still reliant on schools to support in-person voting, this would allow Elections Vaughan to re-assess certain school locations and reduce the number required to support an election

Condo Voting

- ▶ The significant uptake in internet voting use by electors has prompted a review of the use of condos as voting locations for future elections
- ▶ Condo voting locations offer in-person voting opportunities exclusively for residents of that condo
- ▶ Condo voting locations have been an ongoing challenge for Elections Vaughan:
 - Unresponsive condo management and condo boards
 - Poor communication between condo management and security, creating barriers for election workers to setup confirmed locations despite agreements in place
 - Resource intensive - each condo requires a minimum of two staff, a tabulator and epollbook equipment to function

Condo Voting

- ▶ The average cost per voter for a condo voting location amounts to \$24.23 versus \$7.80 at a multi-poll voting place such as a school or community centre
- ▶ The 2022 Municipal Election tested the consolidation of condo voting locations with the use of the Promenade Mall voting place in lieu of individual condo voting places at addresses in proximity to the mall
- ▶ For future elections, condo voters would be assigned a multi-poll voting place for in-person voting on Voting Day and condo voting locations would be significantly reduced

Vote-Anywhere-In-Your-Ward

- ▶ The reduced demand on Voting Day and a reduction in smaller voting locations would allow Elections Vaughan to implement a vote-anywhere-in-your-ward model that gives electors more choice on Voting Day
- ▶ Elections would have the option to attend any available voting places in their own ward on Voting Day
- ▶ If it is more convenient to stop at a community centre and vote on the way home from work instead of the school closer to home, they would have the ability to do so

Managing Resources

- ▶ Internet voting allows for a fundamental shift in the Voting Day deployment of resources
- ▶ It reduces the burden on Elections Vaughan to manage personnel and equipment, reduces the costs associated with staff and supplies, and reduces our reliance on externally managed facilities like schools and condos for voting places
- ▶ Neighbouring municipalities like Markham and Richmond Hill have managed to eliminate the need for external facilities, public recruitment of election workers and large supply requirements thanks to large-scale uptake in internet voting as the dominant voting method

Conclusion

Conclusion

- ▶ Elections Vaughan has successfully innovated on each successive election it has undertaken, utilizing new technologies to help make the process of voting more accessible, efficient, reliable and secure.
- ▶ The successful introduction of internet voting in the 2022 Municipal Election saw a large initial uptake in electors choosing to cast a ballot online instead of the more traditional method of paper ballots and tabulators.

Conclusion

- ▶ Elections Vaughan recognizes the importance of providing electors with choices that allow them to vote where and when it is convenient, while ensuring that the secrecy of their vote is maintained and that the voting method is secure.
- ▶ With Council's support, the 2026 and 2030 Municipal Elections would continue the use of internet voting, while maintaining the option to vote by paper ballot and tabulator.

Conclusion

- ▶ The permanent adoption of internet voting in Vaughan would not only provide electors with more choice for casting a ballot, but it would reduce the significant requirements for physical voting places, supplies and materials, as well as election workers.
- ▶ Elections Vaughan will continue to work with Corporate and Strategic Communications to educate and inform the public about their options at an election, the security and confidentiality of the voting method and the importance of local democracy and their role in it.



Thank you!

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