



TOWNSHIP OF EDWARDSBURGH CARDINAL INFORMATION ITEM

Committee: Committee of the Whole – Administration & Operations

Date: January 9, 2023

Department: Administration

Topic: 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Report

Background: Section 12.1(3) of the Municipal Elections Act requires that the Clerk shall prepare a report about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities and shall make that report available to the public. In addition to the requirement, included within the report are the statistics and an overall impression of the 2022 Municipal Election.

Voter Participation:

There has been a consistent voter participation rate since the introduction of electronic voting in 2006:

- 2003: 35% only paper ballot voting available
- 2006: 46.26%
- 2010: 47.4%
- 2014: 55.1%
- 2018: 53.1%
- 2022: 47.9%

Of those who voted in 2022, 30.4% chose to vote by paper ballot, 59% by internet, and 10.5% by phone. From 2018 to 2022 there has been a reduction of 4.3% in paper ballot voting, which equates to a 4.3% increase in electronic (internet/phone) voting.

The percentage of voter participation has increased since the introduction of the internet and phone voting with an average voter participation rate of 49.952% between 2006 to 2022, compared to only 35% in 2003 when only paper ballot was offered.

According to AMO municipal election statistics, with 417 municipalities reporting, there was on average 36.3% voter participation (see Figure 1), compared to Edwardsburgh Cardinal's 47.9% participation rate. Additional information from AMO – 2022 Municipal Election – Context is attached for information.

During the 2022 Municipal Election there were 5,523 eligible electors in Edwardsburgh Cardinal with 2,648 participating in the election, resulting in a 47.9% turnout rate.

Voters' List:

Similar to previous years, the Township acquired software offered by Datafix, known as Voterview to manage the early stages of the voters' list in order to enhance accessibility to the list for amendments and updates by MPAC and the www.voterlookup.ca website. Staff were told that the list from the MPAC would be well-managed and up to date, which was unfortunately not the case. Additionally, better communication and messaging should have been prepared by MPAC explaining the timeframes the www.voterlookup.ca was available to update information and their deadline/cutoff. This left municipalities to create additional messaging to the public to inform them of the deadline date that they may update their information on the MPAC site versus filling out forms with the municipality.

An important aspect when using electronic voting, is to make sure that only eligible electors receive voting PIN (Personal Identification Number). Staff initially received the list from MPAC in August and the Clerk's department dedicated numerous hours to making corrections/modifications for the preliminary elector list to be produced for candidates. The www.voterlookup.ca website closed at the end of August and another list was produced based on the information that MPAC received. Following the interim list of changes, the public was able to attend the Township office to request corrections/additions/deletion from the list. Mid-September the electors list was transitioned over to the Intelivote system to prepare for the election and candidate module. Staff prepared dedicated election webpages for general information, information for electors/voters, information for candidates and information for third party advertisers.

Between September 1 to October 24 eligible electors were added to the voters' list through the Township office. When making additions/deletions/amendments to the voters' list, the best practice to follow is requiring the voter to attend the Clerk's office in person (or a voting location on election day) to complete the required form and make the declaration of eligibility along with providing proof of identity and residency. Staff were flexible in order to ensure that those eligible and wishing to vote were able to be on the voters' list, so long as they provided the proper identification and completed form.

To ensure additional accessibility was available the Clerk's department completed a number of individual virtual sessions with eligible electors that could not come into the office due to mobility restrictions. Additional steps were taken to provide additional assistance for electors by having a voter assistance/registration evening in mid-October at the Cardinal Ingredion Arena to assist those who were unable to make it into the

Township Office during regular business hours. During the Cardinal event, staff provided general election information and processed between 15-20 electors. Throughout the election period, staff utilized the local newspapers, Township website, and social media with ads regarding the nomination period, updating the voters' list, receiving of elector voter information letters and how electors were able to cast their votes. Some of the newsprint ads were shared with other municipalities within Leeds-Grenville for cost savings and in order to produce consistent messaging.

For the second election in a row the Township utilized the local Moose FM station with multiple ads aired during the months of September and October to provide electors with friendly reminders about deadline dates, confirming that they are on the voters' list, how to get in touch with the Township, voter information letters, when voting was available, and how electors were able to vote during the voting period (internet, phone, and paper). Multiple calls, emails and drop ins from electors were received by staff directly due to the multitude of alternative messaging sources. This demonstrates that the use of alternative advertising, other than the regular newspapers, did positively affect the outreach to potential electors.

Staff completed all corrections/additions/deletions etc. to the voters' list between September until two weeks following the election. While the preliminary list that was provided by MPAC was far from accurate, the access to Voterview and Intelivote greatly assisted staff with completing the necessary revisions to the voters' list through the election period.

Paper Ballot Voting & Locations:

Electors were offered three locations to cast their ballots by paper (Cardinal – Ingression Arena, Johnstown – Community Centre, and Spencerville – Drummond Building). Similar to previous elections there was no advance poll for paper ballots as during the 2010 advanced paper ballot poll, only 48 electors attended. Each year there is a steady decline in the use of paper ballot voting amongst electors, as noted above between the 2018-2022 municipal election there was a reduction of 4.3%. Due to the slowly decreasing number of paper ballot voting and low turnout numbers with paper ballot advanced polling, it will be more cost effective during future elections to remain status quo regarding only holding advance voting via electronic methods.

Each polling location was equipped with 4 election workers, which included a greeter, two election assistants, and a deputy returning officer (DRO). Chairs were made available at each location for electors who were unable to stand in line to cast their ballots. With two election assistants at each location to help with the enumeration process, the voters were processed in a timely manner, with the longest wait times being approximately 10 minutes from entering the voting location to being issued their ballots by the DRO. Voters were advised through their voter information letters, social

media, radio, Township website, newspaper ads, and speaking with Township and election staff with respect to what forms of ID would be required for paper ballot voting, which assisted the greeters to direct each elector in the right direction during the voting process.

Electronic Internet/Phone Voting:

During the 2022 municipal election, electors were offered the new option to vote at the electronic kiosk. Each voting location had a dedicated iPad set up with the voting kiosk module. The kiosks served both people without an accessibility need and those with accessibility needs. Persons were able to utilize the kiosk if they did not wish to wait in the paper ballot line, learn to use internet voting for future elections and assisted electors with disabilities in casting their votes with independence and privacy. Elections staff were available to assist electors at the kiosks upon request. Additionally, during the week of advanced voting, electors could come to the Township Office to vote using the backup kiosk with the assistance of the Clerks department.

Advanced internet/phone voting began on Monday October 17 at 10:00am and was available 24 hours a day until the close of polls at 8:00 pm on election day October 24. The internet/phone voting supplier, Intelivote, was selected by the Clerk's group throughout the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville. There were no technological errors or delays during the advanced electronic voting or during election day. Overall staff were satisfied with how the electronic voting system functioned during both the advanced voting period and on election day. Staff were able to easily communicate with the election auditor and Intelivote to close each voting location and kiosk at 8:00pm and received the preliminary electronic counts from Intelivote at 8:11pm and shortly after 8:20pm from the auditor, with the final paper ballot counts being received by 10:05pm.

Accessibility:

As previously stated, the overall voter participation rate was 47.9% for the 2022 election. With the availability of electronic internet/phone/kiosk voting, persons with accessibility needs and out-of-area electors were able to cast their ballot and the municipality was able to meet and exceed their obligations under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). All three voting locations were on ground level, making them easily accessible. Greeters and election assistants were at each location to assist any electors requiring additional assistance during the election day process.

Intelivote ensures that the electronic internet/kiosk voting meets the web accessibility requirements which guarantees that persons with disabilities and the elderly can easily understand, observe, navigate and interact with the voting methods. In addition, the phone voting offered those electors not comfortable with internet voting and those with visual impairments the ability to access the phone voting system with ease.

Next Steps:

- As per the Municipal Elections Act, election materials are to be destroyed 120 days after the election.
- Candidate election campaign financial report (Form 4) filing deadline is March 31 on or before 2:00 pm.
- Notice of default, if applicable (those who haven't submitted their financial reporting) shall be issued by the Clerk to the Township website following the deadline for candidates' election campaign financial reporting.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "R. Williams", written in black ink.

Clerk

Figure 1:

