

City of Mississauga
Corporate Report



<p>Date: October 27, 2023</p> <p>To: Chair and Members of Governance Committee</p>	<p>Originator's files:</p>
<p>From: Raj Sheth, P.Eng, Commissioner of Corporate Services</p>	<p>Meeting date: November 20, 2023</p>

Subject

Benchmarking related to Election Technology and City of Mississauga Election Technology Background

Recommendation

That the Corporate Report dated October 27, 2023, from Raj Sheth, Commissioner of Corporate Services, entitled Benchmarking related to Election Technology and City of Mississauga Election Technology Background, be received for information.

Executive Summary

- The purpose of this report is to provide Governance Committee with benchmarking related to the election technology used in other municipalities and an overview of the technology currently used during City of Mississauga elections
- This report also provides information regarding election technology that has been considered by Council in the past
- The next municipal election will be on October 26, 2026. With this in mind, Governance Committee recommendations must be approved by Council by October, 2024. This gives staff a year to go through the Request for Purchase (RFP) process (if required), acquire equipment and staffing and put related administrative practices in place prior to the year of the election

Background

At the October 4, 2024 General Committee meeting, Elections and Information Technology (I.T.) staff were directed to report to Governance Committee with respect to election technology. This report includes:

- Benchmarking related to the election technology used in other municipalities
- Information on the election technology currently used in the City of Mississauga

- Past Corporate Reports presented to General Committee and Council related to the implementation and use of election technology

Comments

Under section 11 of the [Municipal Elections Act, 1996, as amended](#) (MEA), the Clerk of a municipality is responsible for conducting municipal and school board elections. When considering the implementation of new election technology, the Clerk must abide by the principles of the MEA, which are generally recognized as being that:

- 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 all 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 ballots cast
- f) Voters and candidates shall be treated fairly and consistently; and
- g) The proper majority vote governs by ensuring that valid ballots are counted and invalid ballots are rejected so far as reasonably possible

Other considerations include but are not limited to the following:

- That in accordance with the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\) Customer Service Guide](#), “Persons with disabilities must be given an opportunity equal to that given to others to obtain, use and benefit from the goods or services”
- That new initiatives provide convenience for voters, meet the needs of voters and do not alienate segments of the voting population while upholding the principles of the MEA
- Funding required to implement a new technology is reasonable and the cost is justifiable
- New initiatives provide streamlined services and do not complicate the voting process
- The vote, tabulation of results and re-counts can be conducted in a way that instills confidence in the outcome of the election
- Staff are confident in the security of the technology and I.T. staff support the implementation

Although the Clerk is responsible for conducting elections, Council is responsible for approving funding for new initiatives and for passing a by-law prior to each election authorizing voters to use alternative voting methods. As part of regular election planning, staff research and assess emerging election technologies and make recommendations to Council regarding what technology may best meet the needs of voters while upholding the principles of the MEA and ensuring the security of the results.

Benchmarking: Election Technology in Other Municipalities

As per General Committee recommendation GC-0449-2023, staff have conducted benchmarking to determine the type of voting technology used in other municipalities. Appendix 1, Benchmarking - Voting Methods Reference Data from the 2022 Municipal Elections, details

the voting methods used in other municipalities and provides information about the uptake from voters.

Background Corporate Reports

Since 1980, the City of Mississauga has implemented various election technologies to improve convenience for voters and the efficiency of reporting results while upholding the principles of the MEA described above. For a complete history of the election technology that has been used, see Appendix 2, History of Election Technology in City of Mississauga Elections.

To provide Governance Committee with further background, the following Corporate Reports (reports) and documents have been attached as appendices:

- Appendix 3: Alternative Voting Equipment
- Appendix 4: Potential Enhancements for the 2018 Municipal Election: Internet Voting, Ranked Choice Elections and Vote Anywhere
- Appendix 5: Election Administration Information Report: Ranked Choice Voting
- Appendix 6: Internet Voting Information Update
- Appendix 7: 2022 Municipal Election – Use of Alternative Voting and Vote Counting Methods
- Appendix 8: 2022 City of Mississauga Municipal Election Information

While reports related to Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) or Ranked Ballots are included for information, under [Bill 218, An Act to enact the Supporting Ontario's Recovery Act, 2020 respecting certain proceedings relating to the coronavirus \(COVID-19\), to amend the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 and to revoke a regulation](#) municipalities no longer have the option of implementing RCV. However, providing this information is intended to help Governance Committee understand how election technology has been assessed over time.

Planning for the 2026 Municipal Election

For the 2026 election, the Clerk is investigating the implementation of a Vote from Home program. Through this program, those voters who are unable to physically attend a voting location and do not wish to appoint a proxy to vote on their behalf, will be provided with the ability to vote from their home. The process will likely be as follows:

- The voter will make an appointment through the Elections Office
- Staff will visit the voter's home at the pre-arranged time
- Staff will review the voter's identification and if the voter meets the eligibility criteria, they will be struck off the Voters' List and provided with a ballot
- Once marked by the voter, the ballot will be secured in a ballot box and returned to the Elections Office to be locked in a vault until election night

- On election night, ballots that are part of the Vote from Home program will be fed through a tabulator and counted at a central vote counting location

This program has been implemented in other municipalities such as the City of Brampton and provides the following benefits:

- Voters can vote from home even if they do not have internet access
- Unlike with mail-in ballots, voters do not have to go to a mail box to send their ballots back to the Elections Office; there is concern that this step of getting to a mail box to return the ballot could be a barrier for individuals who have limited mobility
- The process is less complicated than both internet voting and mail-in ballots because there is no extra registration process
- The City of Mississauga does not have to electronically collect identification which poses privacy concerns
- Election staff can vet the voter's identification in-person, unlike with internet voting and mail-in ballots where identification is provided electronically
- Paper ballots are used, allowing for a recount of hard copy ballots if necessary which is not possible when votes are cast electronically

Financial Impact

When implementing new election technology, there can be a significant cost. Estimated costs for various technologies such as mail-in ballots and internet voting have been included in the attached reports; however, it is likely that costs have increased and must be re-investigated based on the Committee's direction. For example, staffing costs have increased because of economic adjustments applied since the reports were written. For the sake of estimating, it is suggested that inflation rates be considered when reviewing costs included in the attached reports.

Conclusion

There are many options when it comes to implementing new election technology; however, it is important to ensure that any changes to the election process align with the principles of the MEA as well as meeting the needs of voters. The benchmarking, background information and reports information included as part of this report are intended to provide Governance Committee with information that can be used when considering election technologies.

Based on Governance Committee's direction, staff will investigate or re-investigate voting technologies and report back with information and costs.

Attachments

Appendix 1: Benchmarking - Voting Methods Reference Data from the 2022 Municipal Elections
Appendix 2: History of Election Technology in City of Mississauga Elections

Appendix 3: Alternative Voting Equipment

Appendix 4: Potential Enhancements for the 2018 Municipal Election: Internet Voting, Ranked Choice Elections and Vote Anywhere

Appendix 5: Election Administration Information Report: Ranked Choice Voting

Appendix 6: Internet Voting Information Update

Appendix 7: 2022 Municipal Election – Use of Alternative Voting and Vote Counting Methods

Appendix 8: 2022 City of Mississauga Municipal Election Information



Raj Sheth, P.Eng, Commissioner of Corporate Services

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