



THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF PARRY SOUND

Open Agenda	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Council Report & Recommendation
Closed Agenda	<input type="checkbox"/>	

a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	If Closed Agenda, identify applicable reason(s) per Section 239 (2) Municipal Act
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	MEETING DATE: July 19, 2011

SUBJECT: Cost and effectiveness comparison of the traditional paper ballot method with internet and telephone voting.

Spokesperson(s) / Referred By: Jackie Boggs
Title: Deputy Clerk/EA

Ec. Dev. Spec. Events	Operations	Emergency/Fire	Comm. Dev. Building/Bylaw	Finance/Admin. & POA Court Services	Other
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

BY-LAW: 2011 –

Being a by-law to authorize the execution of an Memorandum of Understanding with Datafix for the use of the computer application of Municipal Voter View for Parry Sound Voters' List Management and internet Voter Look-up during the 2014 Municipal Election.

BY-LAW: 2011 –

Being a by-law to authorize voting by telephone/internet for the 2014 municipal election and subsequent municipal elections.

or

RESOLUTION: 2011 –

or

DIRECTION

For Direct Staff Follow Up

For Open Council

Resolution

By-Law

THAT pending the passage of the alternate voting by-law, staff provide an education and advertising budget for the 2012, 2013 and 2014 municipal budget to assist the public transition from paper ballot voting to internet/telephone voting.

PURPOSE

As a result of the R&R provided to Council at the March 15, 2011 regular meeting of Council, Council requested a follow-up R&R outlining what the public had to say about an alternative voting method, and the cost and effectiveness of the traditional paper ballot voting method versus internet and telephone voting.

This report will also outline the Datafix Web Hosting; List Management and Internet Voter Lookup Services and provide support for entering into a MOU with Datafix.

RELEVANCE TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES or BUSINESS/STRATEGIC PLAN

Quality of Life, Quality Organization

BACKGROUND/REPORT

Some of the areas the March 15th, 2011 R & R addressed were voter participation, some of the issues encountered with Parry Sound's election administration, the accuracy of the vote count, the cultural aspects of moving toward an more inclusive and convenient way to vote, difficulty finding election workers and compliance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. (I have attached this R&R and its attachments for Council's reference – Attachment #1)

This report will address the results of a Parry Sound-wide survey that was conducted to determine how favourable internet and telephone voting would be to eligible voters in Parry Sound. It will provide a cost comparison between the traditional paper voting utilized in 2006 and 2010 and internet/telephone voting for 2014 and it will assess the effectiveness of each method.

Finally, it the report will make a recommendation to purchase the services of Datafix to provide Web Hosting: List Management and Voter Lookup Services from now until the next municipal election. The List Management Service will allow the electoral staff to utilize the voters' list to find, add, change, delete or move voters as required, provide electoral reports and provide an electronic copy of all changes to the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation at the end of the electoral event. Voter Lookup service will allow the public to check to see if their name is on the voters list on-line prior to the election.

Alternate Forms of Voting Survey

At the end of the last municipal election it was determined that there were 4,687 eligible voters in Parry Sound. Of those eligible voters, 287 voters responded to the survey. (See survey sample Attachment #2) however 35 of those indicated they were not eligible to vote in Parry Sound. The 252 eligible voters also includes the 42 respondents to the survey when it was handed out to the attendees at the Community Café held March 29, 2011 for input into the Town's Strategic Plan. That's a 5.4% response to the survey of the 4,687 eligible voters in Parry Sound. The survey deadline was June 17th however; surveys were still coming in after the deadline and were accepted up to Noon July 8, 2011--3 weeks past the deadline.

Eligible voters were advised of the availability of the alternate voting methods survey by:

- Cable - announcement at Council meeting May 17/11.
- Information provided in two letters from the Mayor that was published in the local paper.
- Poster in the Library informing people that there was an on-line survey that they could take or they could wait for the hard copy survey that will be coming to their door.
- Hard copy distribution of survey to all households in Parry Sound.
- Town's Website – We have had a 2014 municipal election tab on our website since the beginning of 2011. The on-line survey was accessible under that heading along with the March 15, 2011 R&R and other pertinent background information for those who wished to take the survey.

Results of the Survey:

Question 1. Are you eligible to vote?

252 were eligible to vote (100% of the respondents)–

This is the number (252) used for all the results for the survey. The 35 ineligible voters were filtered from the survey results. I have also attached the bar charts for the 287 respondents, which would include the ineligible voters, just for Council's information. (Attachment #3).

Question 2. Age Group

18-25 – 1.2% of 252
 26-35 – 4.8% of 252
 36-45 – 7.2% of 252
 46-55 – 17.6% of 252
 56-65 – 22.0% of 252
 66 + - 47%.6% of 252

The age group 66 + was by far the largest respondent group.

Question 3. Gender

Female – 59.3% of the 252 respondents
 Male – 40.7% of the 252 respondents

Question 4. Changing to telephone and internet voting can increase voter turnout, improve accuracy, assist those with disabilities and provide prompt and accurate election results on election night. For the next municipal election, Council is considering changing our method of voting from paper ballot to telephone and internet voting only. Do you:

Like the Idea – 63.2% of 252

Dislike the Idea – 37.2% of 252

It would appear that the largest group represented on the survey--66 years old and up likes the idea of telephone and internet voting.

I have attached the summary, bar charts and comments provided as Attachment #4. Of the 110 respondents who provided comments on the survey, 56 disliked alternate voting and 53 liked alternate voting.

Comparison of Internal Costs, Methods and Effectiveness

Costs - The Election Cost Comparison spreadsheet (Attachment #5) provides the breakdown in costs of the 2006 municipal election at \$22,653 and the 2010 election \$26,184--both of which were, of course tradition, ballot votes. By far the largest expense for both election years was salaries for election workers at \$10,540 in 2006 and 13,406 in 2010. The projected cost of the 2014 municipal election using Internet and Telephone Voting is \$25,500. Most of that cost would be spent on Internet and Telephone Voting Services, including Voter Info Kit and Postage.

Methods and Effectiveness – The following are just a few municipalities that have been contacted to determine the effectiveness of internet/telephone voting over tradition ballot:

The Township of The Archipelago – CAO for Archipelago and Carling states that Carling enjoyed a 10% increase in voter participation this past 2010 election. This was the first time Carling has used internet/telephone voting as opposed to traditional ballot. This is the third election that the Archipelago has used internet/telephone voting.

Laurentian Valley (population 8,800) switched from tradition ballot to internet voting for the first time in the 2010 election. They realized a reduction in cost for the election due to the reduction in staff required for 2010. Four staff in 2010 versus 28 staff in 2006. The voters generally speaking liked the system although

some people were concerned about the security of their vote. Generally speaking older folks and young people were the easiest to work with regarding internet voting. The most difficult age group were the 40 to 50 year olds. The CAO indicated that they would be using this form of voting for the 2014 election

As of June 1, 2010 prior to the 2010 municipal election over 54 municipalities switched to the use of electronic voting methods, 30 of which went exclusively with internet/telephone voting.

In May 2011 the 2010 Ontario Municipal Elections AMCTO (Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario) Post-Election Survey Final Report was produced. 415 of Ontario's 445 municipalities responsible for conducting elections for council and school trustees were invited to participate. 52.5% of the municipalities answered the call. This is down considerably from the response rate of 85.8% for the 2006 Election Survey, but still a significant response rate. Notably, response rates increase proportional to the size of the municipality.

In the question asked, "In your opinion, what were the factors affecting the turnout in 2010?" 15.7% responded Internet voting provided and 11.9% responded, telephone voting provided. Some the other responses included, strong contest for Mayor (51.5%) and significant local issue (18.7%). These are strong indicators that the rest of Ontario municipalities find these methods of voting effective.

The report goes on to say that internet voting and vote-by-phone use among the respondent municipalities grew significantly and at about the same rate with about one-third of those who used these methods in 2010 saying they used these methods in 2006.

While the rate of increased use of alternative voting by municipalities is growing, the number of municipalities using internet voting is still only one-half the number who use mail-in-balloting. Presumably this convenience would be because of seasonal population migration. It is interesting to note, from experience, that vote by mail was very unpopular when it was first introduced some years ago.

The development of an electronic based voting system would assist the disabled, the elderly, improve voter turnout and provide more accurate and quicker results on voting night.

Finally, please refer to an article from the *Globe and Mail* dated April 30, 2011 entitled *Young voters left out in the cold*. (Attachment #6) The article asks the question, do young people not vote because they are lazy? Maybe, it answers. But they also don't have a voting system designed around them like their grandparents did. Anytime, anywhere voting would assist to engage the young voter in building a voting system that meets their needs as well as the rest of the community's needs.

Should Council approve the alternate voting by-law, a systematic education and promotion of this program would need to be undertaken. All the lower cost initiatives (newsletter, mail outs, Mayor's Corner, website, visiting local service providers, etc.) as well as radio and print over the next 4 years should be utilized to education and inform the public.

Data Fix Municipal Voter View List Management Services

Municipal VoterView is an internet-based application designed to provide municipal elections officials with an electronic view of their electoral information including the ability to make corrections to the list, to access various voter counts needed for electoral planning, and the capability to provide an electronic copy of all changes to MPAC.

VoterView has been successfully used by the Town in the last two municipal

elections and it would be advantageous to continue the relationship. In the past we have paid for the service during the election year however, I'm told by the service provider that retaining the VoterView list now will allow us to make continuous additions and changes to the current voter's list that was provided to MPAC in the fall of 2010. This will allow for a more accurate voter's list when it is combined with MPAC's in the summer/fall of 2014. Spreading the payment out over 4 years will cost less than waiting until 2014.

The Voter Look-up service would be an indispensable tool to allow any of our eligible voters to go on-line to see if their name is on the voter's list. This service would be available when the preliminary list of electors is released in late summer 2014.

The signing of the MOU for the use of VoterView list management and the Voter Look-up service are indispensable tools for election planning whether by tradition ballot or internet/telephone voting.

ADVANTAGES and/or DISADVANTAGES OF RECOMMENDATION

The advantages to telephone and internet voting are:

Accurate count; anytime, anywhere voting during the voting period; elimination of traditional advance voting; no proxies; results within 10-15 minutes on Election Day after 8:00 p.m.; allows voting over a 6-10 day period; largely reducing staffing requirements; no over votes (such as with optical scan voting/vote tabulators unless they are programmed to reject overvotes); no subjectivity relating to count/recount; increase convenience for electors if it is combined with an ability to vote at any location, any time.

Disadvantages to telephone and internet voting are:

Technology may be perceived as vulnerable to hackers, unsupervised voting (but all secret ballots are technically unsupervised); voter card/letter may be stolen and used by another person (mail fraud); perceptions that not everyone will be able to vote over the internet because of speed and security level of the computer, but telephone voting would be available as a second method of voting.

ALTERNATIVES

Continue with the traditional voting method.

COST/FINANCIAL IMPACT

For 2010 it would be \$1,300/year for the VoterView List Management and Voter Look-up List.

INCLUDED IN CURRENT BUDGET? Yes No N/A

Until the 2010 budget \$6,000/year was set aside for the municipal elections. That is no longer the case.

ATTACHMENTS (please list your attachments here, including draft By-Laws):

- #1 – March 15, 2011 R&R
- #2 – Sample of Alternate Voting Survey
- #3 – Survey Results of Total Respondents (287)
- #4 – Survey Results of Eligible Voters (252), including comments
- #5 – Election Cost Comparison 2006-2010-2014
- #6 – Globe and Mail article-April 2011
- #7 – Draft By-law and MOU for Datafix services

#8 – Draft By-law to Authorize telephone/internet voting

CAO'S COMMENTS

Recommends Council approval of Staff recommendation

Recommends Council consider Staff recommendation with the following additional comments:

Moving to telephone / internet voting will be a leap for many of our residents; change such as this is not necessarily looked forward to. The change at some time though to alternate voting is inevitable. There are distinct advantages particularly to the running of the election as outlined in the RR.

There was ample opportunity for citizens to be informed of the survey. The 5.4% response rate cannot be considered, nor is it intended to be representative of the Town's voting population. It is an indication.

While the largest demographic group to respond were seniors at 47.6%, it cannot be clearly ascertained that the average favourable response rate of 63.2% is also representative of this demographic group – it is an extrapolation. From the survey, there are still approx 37% of the population that are not in favour. That is as of today – without an education and promotion campaign.

Education and training won't be just important, it will be absolutely **critical** to an effective 2014 municipal election. I recommend that the training, advertising and promotion of the new voting method be referred to the Communications Committee for consideration and input into a plan with budget allocations over the next three years.