



The Corporation of the Town of LaSalle

To: Mayor and Members of Council

Prepared by: Jennifer Astrologo, Director of Council Services

Department: Council Services

Date of Report: February 24, 2025

Report Number: CS-01-2025

Subject: 2026 Municipal Election – Voting Method Selection

Recommendation

That the report of the Director of Council Services, dated February 24, 2025, (CS-01-2025) regarding the selection of a voting method for the 2026 Municipal Election be received;

And that, Council authorizes internet voting as the method of election for the 2026 Municipal and School Board Elections.

Report

The next Municipal and School Board Election will be held on October 26, 2026. In accordance with the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, Council must adopt bylaws authorizing voting and vote-counting equipment, and authorizing the use of an alternative voting method on or before May 1, 2026.

Although there is still time before Council must make a decision, it would be prudent for the Town to select a method of election now so Council Services can procure a vendor with the necessary equipment and expertise.

Alternative methods of election have been permitted since 1996, when the legislation was amended to allow for voting methods other than paper ballots at polling stations. In Ontario, online voting was first introduced in 2003 by the City of Markham. In 2014, 97 municipalities (representing 22% of all Ontario municipalities) used internet voting for their municipal election. In 2018, that number almost doubled and 178 municipalities (representing 42.3% of Ontario municipalities) offered internet voting as a method of

election.¹ In 2022, 231 municipalities offered online voting, representing 56% of all Ontario municipalities.²

As Council is well aware, internet voting modernizes the election experience. It is an accessible, convenient and secure method of election. During the voting period, electors can independently cast their ballot from anywhere provided they have an internet connection. There is inherent flexibility built into this method of election as voters are not required to attend a physical voting location. Rather, they have the convenience of voting at a time and place that fits their schedule. Moreover, the voting platform is accessible, providing a range of customization options for the voter (i.e. font size, language and contrast) and is compatible with accessible technology such as screen readers. Although the voting screen is subject to customization options, these options are the same for each voter and does not influence how their ballot should be cast. The options allow the voter to customize the screen to enhance their experience with the platform and ultimately their ability to navigate the ballot.

The primary concerns in connection with internet voting revolves around the security of the process, secrecy of the ballots, and overall integrity of the election. Entities providing platforms for internet elections take these concerns seriously and have measures in place (i.e. firewalls, encryption protocols, user authentication etc.) to prevent breaches of security, maintain the secrecy of the ballot and ensure the capacity of the system to deal with increased traffic volumes. Additionally, the processes and procedures established by Council Services are designed to uphold the integrity of the election and ensure consistency with the principles of the Municipal Election Act, 1996.

LaSalle offered internet and telephone voting in both the 2018 and 2022 Municipal and School Board Election. Both election events were largely successful and were conducted without any incidents. In 2018, 1,187 electors voted via telephone, representing approximately 12.1% of all votes cast³. That number declined in the 2022 Election. Only 422 individuals voted via telephone, representing approximately 5.5% of all votes cast.⁴

The Town received a number of concerns and complaints regarding telephone voting. The main complaint the Town received was that the telephone voting system was cumbersome, difficult to navigate, and not user friendly. These concerns are valid. Unfortunately, there is nothing the Town can do to improve that system. Telephone voting requires patience and concentration as the system reads out each candidate for each office. When multiple candidates can be selected for an office (i.e. councillor), the

¹ <https://www.amo.on.ca/2018-municipal-election-vote-methods>

² Voting Online – Technology and Democracy in Municipal Elections, Nicole Goodman et. Al (McGill Queens University Press 2024), pg. 48.

³ The Town saw 9,832 ballots cast in the 2018 Municipal and School Board Election.

⁴ The Town saw 7743 ballots cast in the 2022 Municipal and School Board Election.

system will review the list of candidates as many times as is necessary to allow the elector to vote for the maximum number of candidates, which is tedious and time-consuming. Additionally, since the voter cannot see their ballot, the process can become overwhelming for them.

As has been done in previous elections, a Voter Help Centre (the “Centre”) at Town Hall will be established to help with the voting process. The hours of operation will be established closer to voting day. The Centre will be staffed by election officials who will assist voters in navigating the voting platform.

The Town has experienced success with alternative voting methods and Administration recommends that it move forward with internet voting. Given the difficulties experienced with the telephone voting platform and the decline in usage of that method of election, Administration also recommends removing the telephone voting option for the 2026 Municipal and School Board Elections.

Consultations

None.

Financial Implications

There is currently approximately \$149,000 set aside for the Municipal Election, inclusive of the 2025 Budget contribution. This amount should be sufficient to conduct an electronic election.

Prepared By:



Director, Council Services/Clerk

Jennifer Astrologo

Link to Strategic Goals

1. Enhancing organizational excellence - No
2. Strengthen the community’s engagement with the Town - Yes
3. Grow and diversify the local economy - No
4. Build on our high-quality of life - No
5. Sustaining strong public services and infrastructure - No

Communications

None.

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	2026 Municipal Election - Voting Method Selection.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Mar 7, 2025

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:



Chief Administrative Officer

Joe Milicia