

Staff Report



To	Committee of the Whole
Service Area	Corporate Services
Date	Tuesday, March 7, 2023
Subject	2022 municipal and school board election report

Recommendation

1. That the report number 2023-57, titled 2022 Municipal and School Board Election Report, be received.
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Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

To provide Council with an overview of the administration and delivery of the 2022 municipal and school board election, as well as, identify opportunities ahead of the next regular municipal election in 2026.

Key Findings

The 2022 municipal and school board election was held on October 24, 2022. The City Clerk is responsible for election administration, including establishing voting places, establishing policies and procedures, as well as, hiring and training election workers under the authority of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 (MEA).

The 2022 election was a success. Official results were declared on October 25, 2022 with all offices filled.

A summary of election activities and considerations for future are outlined in the report below along with upcoming Council reporting timelines ahead of 2026.

Strategic Plan Alignment

This report aligns with the Strategic Plan priority of Working Together for our Future. Sharing lessons learned and opportunities ahead of 2026 will improve how the City communicates and delivers services to residents. The delivery of successful, fair, secure and accountable elections also upholds the City's corporate values of service and integrity.

Financial Implications

The 2022 municipal and school board election was funded by the election reserve which currently receives an annual contribution of \$151,000 for a total of \$604,000 every four years. With surpluses from previous elections, the City Clerk's Office had \$775,000 to manage the 2022 municipal election which came in at a total cost of \$725,000. Future budget considerations will be raised through the 2024-2027 multi-year budget process.

Report

The City of Guelph 2022 municipal and school board election was held on October 24, 2022 to elect one mayor, 12 city councillors and 11 school board trustees.

The election was administered in accordance with the requirements of the MEA and relevant City by-laws and policies. The principles of the MEA guide the work of the City Clerk's Office when conducting the election. These principles state that:

- the secrecy and confidentiality of the voting process is paramount
- the election shall be fair and non-biased
- the election shall be accessible to the voters
- the integrity of the voting process shall be maintained throughout the election
- there is to be certainty that the results of the election reflect the votes cast
- voters and candidates shall be treated fairly and consistently
- the proper majority vote governs by ensuring that valid votes be counted and invalid votes be rejected so far as reasonably possible

This report is broken down into a number of sections to provide key highlights with metrics and outline considerations for future elections.

Early planning

The City's election team began planning for the 2022 municipal and school board election in early 2020 with a focus on voting methods and engagement for a ranked ballot voting consideration.

However, several unanticipated amendments to the MEA, including [Bill 218](#), Supporting Ontario's Recovery and Municipal Elections Act, 2020, brought forward legislative updates. These ranged from minor changes in dates and timelines to the removal of the option for ranked ballot elections at the municipal level.

Nominations and registrations

The MEA establishes timelines and qualifications for candidates interested in running for office. The nomination period was open from May 2 to August 19, 2022 at 2:00 p.m. 72 nominations were filed for offices of Mayor, Councillor or School Board Trustee.

Nominations for City Council, the Upper Grand District School Board and the Wellington Catholic District School Board were filed with the City Clerk's Office. Nominations for Conseil scolaire Viamonde were filed with the City of London and nominations for Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir were filed with the City of Brampton as the returning offices for those boards. Two nominations were withdrawn by candidates within the legislated timeline. All remaining nominations were certified. The [Association of Municipalities Ontario \(AMO\)](#) has identified a trend of declining number of candidates in the last two regular elections. In Guelph, the number of filings have remained consistent with a minor increase, with 67 nominations filed in 2014, 65 in 2018 and 72 in 2022.

The third party advertising framework was in place for the second time in 2022. The MEA also sets out criteria for who qualifies as a third party advertiser, the requirement to register with the municipality and the campaign period in which advertising can take place. Registrations could be filed by eligible third party advertisers from May 2 to October 21, 2022. Zero third party advertiser

registrations were filed for the 2022 municipal election, in comparison to the two that registered in 2018.

Voters' list

An accurate voters' list is essential to the integrity of the election. In order to vote in the municipal election, a person must be a Canadian citizen, 18 years of age as of Election Day and must be either:

- a resident of Guelph; or
- an owner or tenant of property in Guelph; or
- the spouse of an owner or tenant of property in Guelph.

The municipal voters' list is currently the responsibility of the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) and the City Clerk. MPAC is legislatively responsible, under the [Assessment Act](#), for the initial enumeration and collection of voter information. This information is derived from MPAC's database of municipal property owners, as well as, information added to the voters' list in previous municipal and school board elections.

Eligible voters are able to add and update their information before voting in three different ways. The first is using MPAC's voterlookup.ca online tool before the Preliminary List of Electors (PLE) is delivered to the City Clerk's Office in August in the year of the election. The second is by completing a paper or digital Application to Amend Form available through the City's election website or at the ServiceGuelph counter starting in early September. The third and final way is to make additions or updates at a voting location.

Despite ongoing efforts to increase the accuracy of voters' list data, the quality and accuracy of voter information from MPAC remains one of the most foundational challenges in administering the election. MPAC derives its information primarily from property ownership information. While this captures many eligible voters, the integrity and accuracy of information is lacking when it comes to capturing tenant information, capturing recent moves or property developments, and for institutional enumeration. For example, almost half of the final 2022 voters' list is made up of tenants and boarders with just over 45,000 compared to 58,500 property owners. This significantly impacts the quality and accuracy of the list for the City of Guelph. The quality of data provided can also be inconsistent. For example, ward boundary updates were not corrected for 65 addresses and birthdate information is incomplete or blank for over 1,700 voters due to entry errors before the City received the PLE. In total, 17,302 additions or corrections were made by the City to voter or property information leading up to or following the election in 2022.

Throughout 2022, staff were involved with the Elections Ontario (EO) Voters' List Working Group to provide feedback and plan the transition to using the EO list in 2026. More details on this future transition and its impacts has been included in the [Looking forward to 2026](#) section of this report.

Staffing

Internal staffing and capacity

The scope and scale of election services provided in 2022 was significantly beyond the current staffing resources and capacity.

At present, there are no full-time positions dedicated solely to election preparation or delivery at the City. The City Clerk's Office is a highly legislated and compliance driven department with requirements under the Municipal Act, the Planning Act, the Vital Statistics Act and the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Council, committee, Ontario Registrar and freedom of information request processes must be maintained to ensure public transparency and good governance. These are areas where service reduction or pause is not an option.

Preparing for the municipal election requires existing staff to take on additional hours and projects beyond full-time workloads. Two new contract positions, an Election Coordinator and Election Assistant, were temporarily added for 2022. Even with these additional resources, it was challenging to meet legislated timelines and community service level expectations. For example, the scale of election worker recruitment and training outpaced internal City Clerk's Office capacity in 2022. Notably, a previous City Clerk's Office team member on secondment to another department had to be asked to support training development and delivery in order to meet tight timelines.

Delivering three voting methods, increasing digital services and more voting locations stretched existing resources beyond capacity. To deliver the 2022 election, the City Clerk's Office team had to work a total of 616 hours of paid and unpaid over-time between August and November 2022. Several team members worked between 20 and 24 days straight without days off over a three-week period. This lack of capacity is unsustainable.

If service levels are to be maintained or increased for 2026, additional staffing and election reserve resources are required in order to do so. Future considerations to support resourcing is provided in the [Looking forward to 2026](#) section of this report.

Election worker recruitment and training

In-person voting continues to be the main voting method used by voters to cast their ballots in 2022. As such, having enough trained election workers to staff voting locations and provide a high quality of service is one of the most important aspects of successful election administration. Finding enough qualified workers and the time to recruit and train them is consistently the biggest challenge and the most resource intensive aspect of election administration for the City Clerk's Office. 2022 was no exception.

Recruitment was conducted through an online application process, which helped streamline the review of applications and communication with applicants. Response to the call for election workers was strong with 634 applications received from the public. Interviews were conducted over four weeks. A call for election workers was also put out to City staff to encourage participation in this important community initiative. Having staff work the election assists in finding enough workers with technical and customer services abilities to represent the City. Staff could work at a poll individually or could adopt-a-poll as a department to staff an entire location. In 2022, 13 polls were adopted on Election Day by City staff and a total of 108 staff

worked polls. Just under 2000 hours of staff time was dedicated to receiving training and working at advanced and voting day locations.

Election worker turnover is a consistent challenge given the amount of staff time spent on hiring and training. Cancellations and training occurs continuously from the time of hire at the end of August up to and including on Election Day. Out of 461 election workers hired, 92 or just under 20 per cent of workers resigned their position and needed to be replaced up to and on Election Day.

Thorough training is important to ensure that legislative requirements and City procedures are followed, staff are comfortable working with the technology at the polls and a high level of customer service is provided to voters. All election workers were required to take an online training module on accessible customer service in compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). Specialized training was provided for Managing Officers, Revision/Ballot Officers, Tabulator Officers, Information Officers and Rovers who support voting at long-term care facilities. In total 12 trainers from the City Clerk's Office delivered training over 60 hours leading up to the election. This training program took four months to prepare and was delivered over three weeks.

Voting methods

A [voting methods review](#) with strategic engagement was planned from April to June 2020. Public engagement on remote voting methods was conducted over four weeks from November 9 to December 4, 2020. All engagement activities were remote following public health guidelines during the COVID-19 pandemic. The City Clerk's Office engaged with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) ahead of and following voting methods related reports to Council at Committee meetings from December 20, 2020 to December 20, 2022. Further detail on engagement dates with the AAC has been outlined in the [Communications and engagement](#) section of this report.

Alternative voting methods

The MEA requires that Council pass a by-law authorizing the use of vote counting equipment and any alternative voting methods. The City Clerk's Office initially brought forward a staff report on [Voting systems and alternative voting methods for the 2022 municipal election](#) on February 17, 2021 for Council's consideration. At that time, Council approved the use of tabulators for in-person voting and vote by mail as an alternative voting method for 2022 with by-law (2021)-20575. A resolution was also passed to support the potential implementation of a pilot for the delivery of a home visit program during the 2022 municipal and school board election.

Following Council direction, staff investigated two additional new voting methods, including an information report on a [Vote from Home Service Pilot for the 2022 Municipal Election](#) in June 2021 followed by another staff report titled [Remote Accessible Vote by Mail as a Voting Method for the 2022 Municipal Election](#) in November 2021. The vote from home method was approved by by-law (2021) - 20620.

Vote by mail and the home vote pilot were two new voting methods offered for 2022. In total, 593 vote by mail kits were mailed and 464 were received back and tabulated by the deadline. 54 vote by mail kits were received after the deadline and could not be tabulated. Seven vote from home appointments were booked

which supported 11 voters to cast their ballot. At the request of the Chair of the AAC, staff are noting that the vote from home method was not recommended by the Committee. However, several voters who accessed this service indicated to the City Clerk's Office that they faced barriers related to both mobility and access to online services that would have prevented them from voting if it was unavailable. Both pieces of feedback will be considered ahead of a staff recommendation to Council before the next election.

Feedback on alternative voting methods was provided through the statistically relevant OraclePoll phone survey and the Have Your Say online survey shared as Attachments 1 and 2. Responses provided the following feedback on voting experience and satisfaction with the alternative voting methods offered:

- For vote by mail, how would you rate your experience with the following?
 - The application process
 - Satisfied – 72.73 per cent
 - Dissatisfied – 18.18 per cent
 - I don't know – 9.09 per cent
 - The vote by mail kit you received
 - Satisfied – 80 per cent
 - Dissatisfied – 10 per cent
 - I don't know – 10 per cent
 - The dates vote by mail was offered
 - Satisfied – 90.91 per cent
 - Dissatisfied – 0 per cent
 - I don't know – 9.09 per cent
 - The information you received explaining how to cast your ballot
 - Satisfied – 72.73 per cent
 - Dissatisfied – 18.18 per cent
 - I don't know – 9.09 per cent
- For vote from home, how would you rate your experience with the following?
 - The appointment booking process
 - Satisfied – 100 per cent
 - Dissatisfied – 0 per cent
 - I don't know – 0 per cent
 - The service provided during the appointment
 - Satisfied – 100 per cent
 - Dissatisfied – 0 per cent
 - I don't know – 0 per cent

Data shown is rounded to the second decimal point and may not add up to 100 per cent. Satisfied and dissatisfied data is summarized to include satisfied and very satisfied, as well as, dissatisfied and very dissatisfied responses. The vote from home question was only asked as part of the OraclePoll survey as it was a statistically significant phone survey. It was not asked in the City of Guelph's Engagement Headquarters, [Have Your Say](#) (EHQ) online survey and a statement

was provided that the home vote method would be evaluated for future elections. The City Clerk's Office directly reached out to voters who used the home vote method to verbally discuss satisfaction.

In-person voting days and locations

In-person voting was available for 56 hours in 2022. An increase of 24 hours compared to 2018. Advanced voting was held over six days from October 8 to 10 at City Hall and October 14 to 16, 2022 at six locations, one within each of the City's wards. On Election Day, 46 public voting locations and 11 long-term care facilities for a total of 57 locations managed on October 24.

When establishing voting locations the Election Team considers many different factors, including how central or convenient the location is for voters, whether the building or facility meets accessibility requirements under the AODA, the availability of wireless connectivity needed for equipment, distances from bus routes, and the amount of parking available.

Schools are often chosen as voting locations as they are accessible facilities distributed throughout the community. In addition, schools are facilities that must be provided free of charge by school boards for the purpose of elections. Staff engaged with local school board administration and, with the support of ongoing [advocacy from the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario \(AMCTO\)](#) and the Ministry of Education, were successful in aligning a PA day on Election Day. This greatly reduced potential risks and issues with using schools as voting locations, such as parking, school safety and pandemic considerations. The City Clerk's Office staff are appreciative of the provision of a PA Day on Election Day by the Upper Grand District School Board and the Wellington Catholic School Board. Staff thank our colleagues and board representatives at these respective school boards and look forward to this being provided in future election cycles.

Community feedback from public surveys provided the following feedback on in-person voting experience and satisfaction:

- How satisfied were you with the number of advanced voting days offered?
 - Satisfied – 77.36 per cent
 - Dissatisfied – 8.38 per cent
 - I don't know – 14.26 per cent
- How satisfied were you with the number of advanced voting locations offered?
 - Satisfied – 80.21 per cent
 - Dissatisfied – 2.85 per cent
 - I don't know – 16.93 per cent
- How satisfied were you with the number of Election Day voting locations offered?
 - Satisfied – 86.1 per cent
 - Dissatisfied – 1.78 per cent
 - I don't know – 12.12 per cent
- For advanced and Election Day in-person voting, how would you rate your experience with the following?
 - The location where you cast your vote

- Satisfied – 94.02 per cent
- Dissatisfied – 5.98 per cent
- I don't know – 0 per cent
- The sign to direct you to the voting room
 - Satisfied – 92.93 per cent
 - Dissatisfied – 7.07 per cent
 - I don't know – 0 per cent
- The amount of time you waited before casting your vote
 - Satisfied – 85.33 per cent
 - Dissatisfied – 14.67 per cent
 - I don't know – 0 per cent
- The information you received explaining how to vote
 - Satisfied – 95.65 per cent
 - Dissatisfied – 3.8 per cent
 - I don't know – 0.54 per cent

If voters were unable to vote by mail or in-person during the six advanced voting days or on Election Day, the MEA allows for the appointment of a proxy voter to cast a ballot on their behalf. Both the appointing voter and the proxy voter must be eligible to vote and must be on the voters' list for the City of Guelph. The City Clerk's Office certified six proxies in 2022. This was a significant decrease from 42 proxies in 2018 when in-person voting was the only voting method offered.

Accessible election services

The City of Guelph is committed to providing an accessible and barrier free community and services. Each election, an [Accessibility Plan](#) is developed, posted online and communicated before voting begins in compliance with sections 12.1(1)(2) and 45.(2) of the MEA. Accessible customer service training, documents and alternative formats are provided in line with the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#), 2005 (AODA) and the City's [Corporate Accessibility Policy](#).

In 2022, the City conducted voting location audits to ensure all voting locations were physically accessible, were on a transit route and offered accessible voting equipment. Accessible services were reviewed and expanded based on feedback from Council, the AAC and staff. New services included a vote from home service pilot, ASL translation and language interpretation on request and a scent free/masked voting location at City Hall. More information can be found in the Post-Municipal Election [Accessibility Information Report](#) shared on January 20, 2023.

A post-election survey was developed with Accessibility Services staff and shared with members of the AAC to request feedback around the accessibility of election services and identify any potential barriers to voting that should be addressed going forward. A [summary of the feedback received](#) was shared with the Committee and made public as part of December 20, 2022 and January 17, 2023 AAC agendas. This will inform future election planning and form part of ongoing engagement planned ahead of 2026.

Technology and results

A range of election equipment is deployed at voting locations including laptops and bar code scanners used to search and strike voters off a digital voters' list, tabulators that scan and record cast votes, and audio tactile devices that assist voters with disabilities to cast a ballot.

Technologies used in the election are held to strict security and integrity requirements. All tabulators and accessibility equipment undergo thorough logic and accuracy testing to ensure the integrity of the election. Prior to voting day, tabulators are tested to ensure that they will accurately count the votes for all candidates.

Logic and accuracy testing was conducted over five days by eight City Clerk's Office employees over a total of 35 hours or one week. Any technology used to process or tabulate votes is isolated from other applications or programs to prevent remote access to the system or device and ensure security and integrity of the election. Tabulators are not connected to any network either wirelessly or by hardwire. The tabulators are then locked and stored securely until their use during the election event.

Results are stored on memory cards in each tabulator and results tapes are not run until after the close of voting on Election Day at 8:00pm. Once voting closed on October 24, 2022, results from memory cards from high-speed tabulators used for vote by mail, vote from home and long-term care facilities were uploaded along with advanced tabulators first. Election Day tabulators were then uploaded as they returned to City Hall. Unofficial results were declared by 10:30pm on election night with final results certified the following day and a media release issued on October 26, 2022.

Communications and engagement

Communication and engagement are essential to ensure the community is aware of important information in order to cast their ballot and to reviewing and ensuring election services align with community needs and expectations.

Communications tools and collateral were delivered in a range of mediums, from newspaper and radio ads to digital screens, social media posts, community group and business newsletters. \$29,500 from the election budget was used for communications and advertising. The City's election website was the central place for election information and was continuously updated from the call for nominations to the presentation of final results.

One of the most important communications tools to share voting information is the voter notification card, sent to every voter on the voters' list in early September. 104,596 cards were mailed out to voters to provide information on where and when they could cast their ballot. These cards are not required in order to vote and cannot be used as acceptable identification at the voting location but are the most direct way of sending information to voters. Voter notification cards are the largest communications expense in the election budget with the cost of production at \$11,000 and postage cost just under \$108,000.

During the campaign period, City Clerk's Office staff identified a number of candidate materials and websites that provided incorrect information on voting methods, voting days and times, voting locations, acceptable identification and who

was eligible to vote. Communications to re-direct the community to official sources of information like the election website and election team contacts were needed in order to address this misinformation.

Three candidate information sessions were held, two sessions prior to the opening of nominations focused on everything a new candidate would need to consider before filing their nomination and one session in August focused campaign related topics such as election signs, financial contributions and filing requirements.

Post-election, the City Clerk's Office conducted 4 different surveys. A public survey was conducted online through [Have Your Say Guelph](#) and the same survey was carried out by OraclePoll over the phone for a statistically significant result. Data provided in this report has been summarized to include feedback from both surveys. Detailed responses are provided as Attachments 1 and 2 to this report.

Public survey feedback on election communications noted that people received information about the election the most through voter notifications cards, the City's election website, local news media coverage and social media. These trends and suggestions for other communication approaches will be considered ahead of 2026.

The AAC was engaged from December 2020 to January 2023 regarding the 2022 regular election. These meetings were to gather input, collaborate and discuss accessibility considerations and voting methods being used in the election. Nine meetings were held with members of the AAC as follows:

- December 22, 2020 – [agenda](#) and [minutes](#)
- March 9, 2021 – [agenda](#) and [minutes](#)
- April 20, 2021 – [agenda](#) and [minutes](#)
- February 15, 2022 – [agenda](#) and [minutes](#)
- May 25, 2022 – [agenda](#) and [minutes](#)
- July 5, 2022 – [agenda](#) and [minutes](#)
- August 16, 2022 – [agenda](#) and [minutes](#)
- December 20, 2022 – [agenda](#) and [minutes](#)
- January 17, 2023 – [agenda](#) (minutes to be posted)

Surveys were also conducted and sent directly to all registered candidates and election workers.

All feedback will be used to evaluate services and inform future election planning.

Looking forward to 2026

Work continues with financial filing and compliance audit processes from the 2022 election ongoing into June 2023. However, early planning is already underway for the next election in 2026.

As [directed by Council](#), City Clerk's Office staff will be researching and investigating further accessible voting service enhancements, including the Remote Accessible Vote by Mail (RAVBM) method in 2023. This work will be done in consultation with the AAC and Accessibility Services staff. A staff report will be coming back to Council by Q2 of 2024.

In line with research on future voting methods, staff are actively involved with two external projects that will influence voter list data quality and security. The first is the transition from a voters' list provided by MPAC to one provided by Elections Ontario. As a members of the Elections Ontario Voters' List Working Group, the City

Clerk's Office has been monitoring and providing feedback throughout this transition and is hopeful that the move to a central voter registry will improve the quality of data on the voters' list and make it easier for voters to add or update their information.

The second initiative is the development of electoral voting technology standards. Movement towards developing standards is in progress through work by Dr. Nicole Goodman, Dr. Aleksander Essex and the CIO Strategy Council which has now become the [Digital Governance Council](#). Any movement towards standards for procurement, testing and security of voting technology will be monitored and used to inform future recommendations on alternative voting methods and vote counting equipment.

Ahead of the next election, staff will also be identifying the potential of free Transit and other initiatives to support voter engagement. These considerations will be addressed as part of the Q2 2024 staff report.

Staff will monitor the initiatives, success and challenges faced by other municipalities in the delivery of election services ahead of 2026. Lessons learned and findings will be considered in future recommendations to Council. Staff will also be advocating to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing on new and ongoing issues including PA days and inclusion considerations as Election Day in 2022 fell on Diwali. This will be done directly and indirectly through professional associations like AMCTO.

Finally, future financial consideration related in increased election service levels expectations, voting methods, staffing capacity, as well as, the cost of goods and services must be addressed ahead of 2026. Current annual election reserve funding and lack of dedicated election staff have seen service levels grow beyond what can be maintained or expanded in future. Financial implications outlined in this report will be considered through the 2024-2027 multi-year budget process.

Financial implications

The 2022 municipal and school board election cost \$725,000 in total to deliver. This increased by \$276,000 from the cost of the last election at \$449,000 or just over 61 per cent.

This increase in cost relates to a number of factors, including:

- Increased number of voting methods from one in 2018 to three in 2022;
- Increased number of voting days and locations with corresponding increases in the number of election workers hired, tabulators, laptops and other equipment and supplies needed;
- Increased postage costs for vote by mail and voter notification cards; and
- Inflationary impacts on the costs of existing goods and services.

The annual election reserve allocation of \$151,000 per year for a total of \$604,000 every four years. With surpluses from previous elections, the City Clerk's Office had \$775,000 to manage the 2022 municipal election and any post-election processes such as recounts, compliance audits, and by-elections.

Current budget allocations are no longer able to cover all potential election costs and will be considered through the 2024-2027 multi-year budget process.

Consultations

Accessibility Advisory Committee

Accessibility Services

Finance

Information Technology

Strategic Communications and Community Engagement

Attachments

Attachment - 1 OraclePoll City of Guelph Election Report 2022

Attachment - 2 EHQ Municipal Election Feedback Report 2022

Departmental approval

None.

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