

# **Municipal benchmarking and stakeholder engagement summary**

## **Comparator Municipalities**

### **Who we engaged with**

We reached out to comparator municipalities and heard back from Oakville, Chatham-Kent, Hamilton, Kingston, Kitchener, Mississauga, Greater Sudbury, Cambridge, Barrie and Burlington. We also reached out to three cities that have a larger population than Guelph; Vaughan, Ottawa and Toronto.

### **What we heard**

We heard that every municipality offers a different configuration of voting methods and voting enhancements. Every voting method has its own benefits and drawbacks, and there is no 'one size fits all' solution; an option that one may find accessible isn't accessible to the next person. Comparator research revealed additional voting methods that city staff had not considered, including a mobile voting location, "the Vote Van," curbside voting and voter assist terminals.

Overall, those municipalities that used internet voting felt that it was a beneficial voting method, particularly for those with various abilities. Municipalities noted that it is the easiest way for people to independently mark their own ballots using their own assistive technology, with little to no assistance from another person. These municipalities also believe that internet voting increases voter turnout. One municipality shared that they had a contested election due to internet voting and were unsure if they would recommend it again. Some municipalities also noted an increased demand for customer service to support internet voting, particularly for individuals unfamiliar with technology.

Vote-by-mail received positive reviews from comparator municipalities, with comments like the "mail-in voting program was a necessary complement to in-person voting to ensure casting a ballot remained safe, secure and accessible." One municipality also offered services in braille for the mail-in voting option. Drawbacks that were noted for this option were that although it does increase accessibility, it doesn't necessarily work for everyone. There was also an increased need for customer service to assist people in all the stages of this voting method.

There wasn't much commentary on the last two voting methods. Telephone voting was identified as a confusing option and less likely to increase accessibility than other methods. One municipality noted that a vote-from-home method was particularly helpful for house-bound voters.

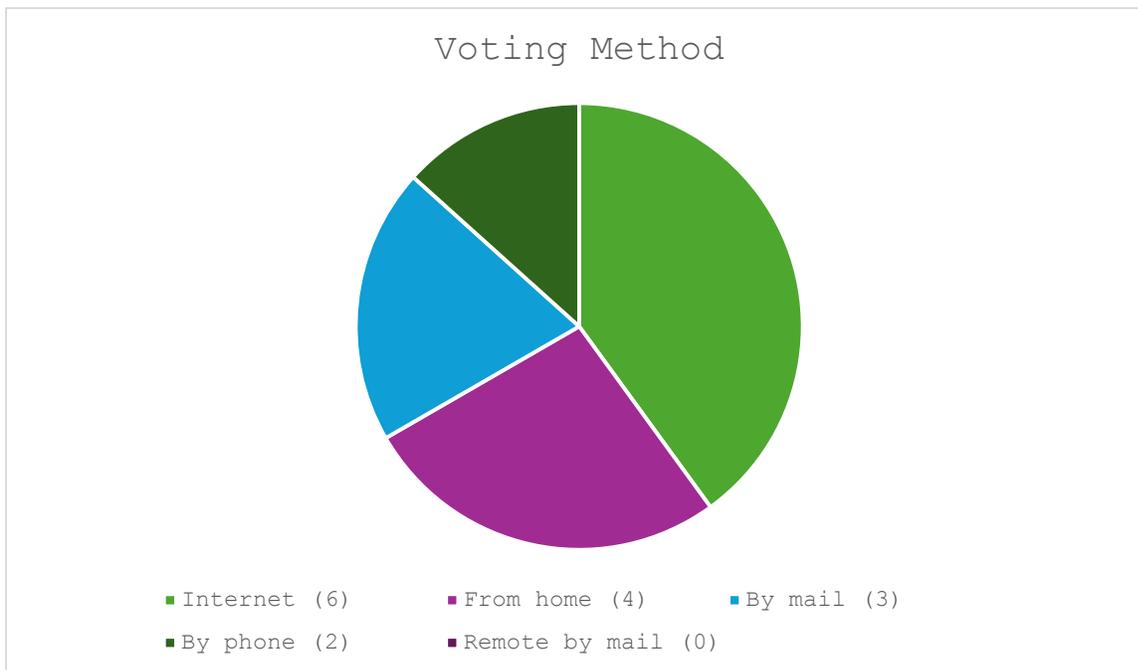
A few accessibility enhancement options were offered, like ASL interpretation and ATI, but there was no uptake, which is consistent with the experience in Guelph.

## Voting Methods:

Below is a chart showing the voting methods used by comparator municipalities. This does not include the municipalities larger than Guelph. Of the three municipalities larger than Guelph, only one has used internet Voting, two have used vote from home, and two have used vote by mail.

The [Association of Municipalities of Ontario's \(AMO\)](#) website provides broader data on voting methods used by municipalities other than those engaged with as part of this project.

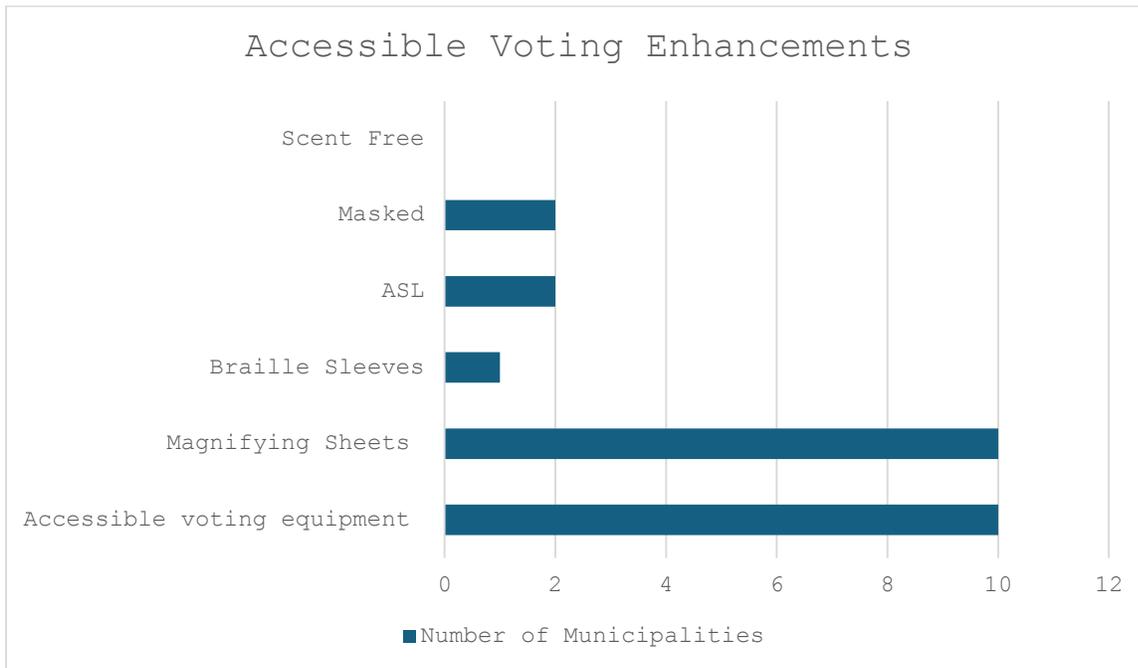
Figure 1 - Other Municipalities, Voting Methods



## Voting Enhancements:

Below is a graph showing the number of comparator municipalities using the various voting enhancements identified. All municipalities (comparator and larger) used the accessible voting equipment and magnifying sheets. In the three municipalities that are larger than Guelph, two offered braille sleeves and one offered a masked location. None of the municipalities, comparator or larger, offered a scent-free location.

Figure 2 - Other Municipalities, Accessible Voting Enhancements



## Stakeholders

### Who we engaged with

Eight different community groups including the Canadian Hearing Services, Community Living Guelph Wellington, Guelph Independent Living, Canadian National Institute for the Blind, Immigration Services Guelph Wellington, T2ACOI, Guelph Wellington Senior Association and a First Nations group (who asked not to be named) were engaged for this project. City staff reached out to but did not hear back and were unable to engage with the Disability Justice Network of Ontario, Canadian Abilities Foundation, Kerry's Place and the ADHD and Spectrum Center.

### What we heard

Through stakeholder engagement, it became increasingly evident that the voting method itself was less of a concern and the lack of understanding of the voting process in general was the largest barrier for the members of the various communities that these groups served.