

May 23, 2024

Dylan McMahon  
City Clerk's Office  
City of Guelph  
1 Carden Street  
Guelph, ON N1H 3A1

*via email: dylan.mcmahon@guelph.ca*

Dear Dylan McMahon,

As per the *Ontario Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, the clerk of a local municipality is responsible for conducting elections within that municipality, subject to certain exceptions. This includes elections for Trustees of the District School Boards in the municipality. The City Clerk's office provided notice to the UGDSB on May 10, 2024, reading in part:

"I am writing on behalf of the City Clerk as the Returning Officer for municipal and school elections. An important early decision ahead of the next regular election is approaching with a City Council decision anticipated on May 28, 2023 regarding alternative voting methods.

We appreciate the UGDSB is affected by this decision and may have input to share regarding engagement and accessibility advisory groups that support your work."

On May 14, 2024, the Board of Trustees of the Upper Grand District School Board passed two resolutions:

THAT the Upper Grand District School Board express frustration at the lack of consultation with the school board, as a party affected by the decision; and

THAT the Chair be directed to write a letter to City Council requesting that they adopt city staff's recommendations concerning options for the upcoming municipal election and not pursue the online voting option in 2026.

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**Upper Grand District School Board**

Trustees expressed frustration that the City Clerk's office acknowledged that while there is an important decision approaching that affects the UGDSB and that the Board may have input, notice was not provided until days before the last Board meeting at which time this could be discussed, and only after the City's Committee of the Whole had made a recommendation. While other stakeholders were consulted as part of the Staff Report, the UGDSB, and potentially other local District School Boards, organizations whose Board members are elected in elections conducted by the Municipality, were not.

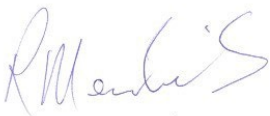
This timing denied us the opportunity for fulsome consultation with electors. A more collaborative approach would have allowed us to consult with and through our many committees including the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Council, the Special Education Advisory Committee, Parent Involvement Committee and School Councils, and our Ensuring Equity of Access Advisory Committee.

Trustees also expressed concerns about the recommendation from the Committee of the Whole, to not follow Staff recommendations for alternate voting methods, and to include Internet Voting. Trustees highlighted several potential risks involved with an online election such as voter fraud, the inability to determine results or conduct a physical recount, security risks due to malicious actors, and technical dependencies that could impact the reliability of service. These concerns were expressed in the City Staff Report. Trustees also expressed concerns of the potential misappropriation of votes in situations of domestic violence, amplified by the fact many individuals are trapped in relationships, partially due to the housing market and other economic factors.

We respectfully request that City Council adopt the staff recommendations regarding alternate voting methods. The concerns City staff raised in their report about Internet Voting are echoed by the Upper Grand District School Board.

As a District School Board, we would be happy to engage in any future discussions regarding municipal elections. School boards are the one of the oldest democratic institutions in Canada and are often the first point of engagement with the democratic process for young adults and New Canadians. Working together, we can help increase engagement and trust in the democratic process.

Sincerely,



Ralf Mesenbrink  
Chair of the Board  
Upper Grand District School Board

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**Upper Grand District School Board**

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| • Ralf Mesenbrink; Chair       | • Jen Edwards | • Irene Hanenberg | • Martha MacNeil | • Alethia O'Hara-Stephenson |
| • Katherine Hauser; Vice Chair | • Robin Ross  | • Luke Weiler     | • Laurie Whyte   | • Lynn Topping              |

cc: Wellington Catholic District School Board  
Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir  
Conseil scolaire Viamonde  
Ontario Public School Board Association

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**Upper Grand District School Board**

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