

2026 Municipal Election Alternative Voting Methods and Accessible Voting Service Enhancements

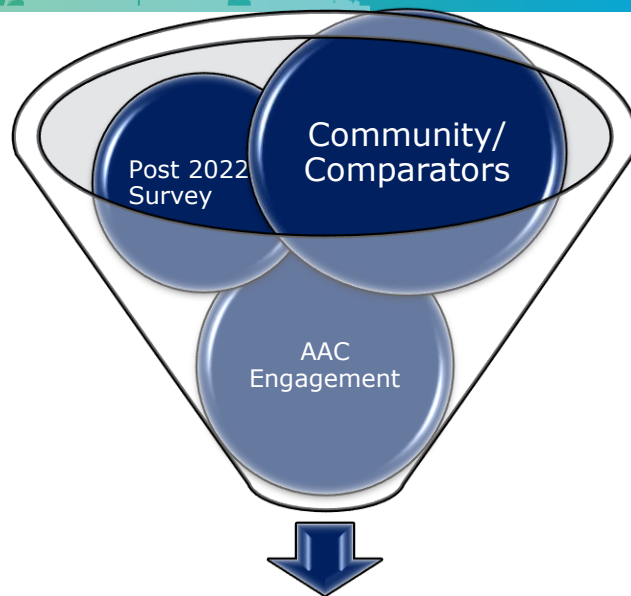
Stephen O'Brien, General Manager, City Clerk's Office/City Clerk

Jennifer Slater, Manager, Information, Privacy and Elections/Deputy City Clerk

May 7, 2024

Staff Recommendation

1. That Council approve free Guelph Transit service and free parking at Market Parkade on Election Day to support access and remove barriers to voting for the 2026 municipal and school board election.
2. That Council approve the use of vote tabulators in the 2026 municipal and school board election.
3. That Council approve the use of vote by mail and vote from home as the alternative voting methods for the 2026 municipal and school board election.



Key Factors and Requirements under the MEA

SWOT & Risk Assessment

Recommendations

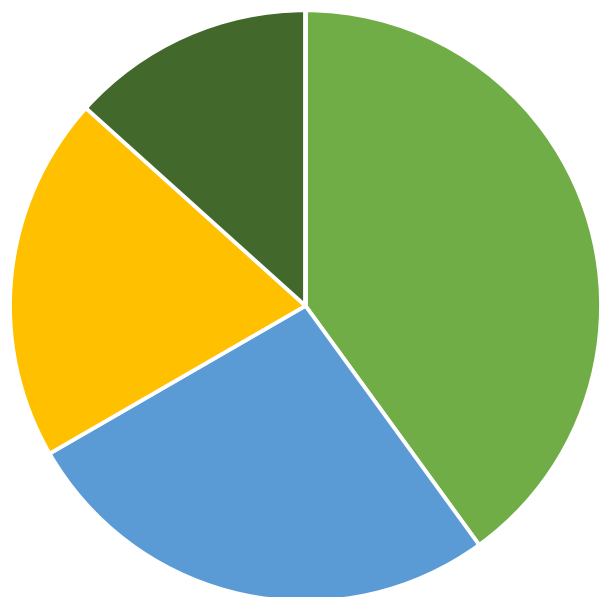
Comparator Municipalities

Oakville
Chatham-Kent
Hamilton
Kingston
Kitchener
Mississauga
Greater Sudbury
Cambridge
Barrie
Burlington

And larger
municipalities:
Vaughan, Ottawa and
Toronto

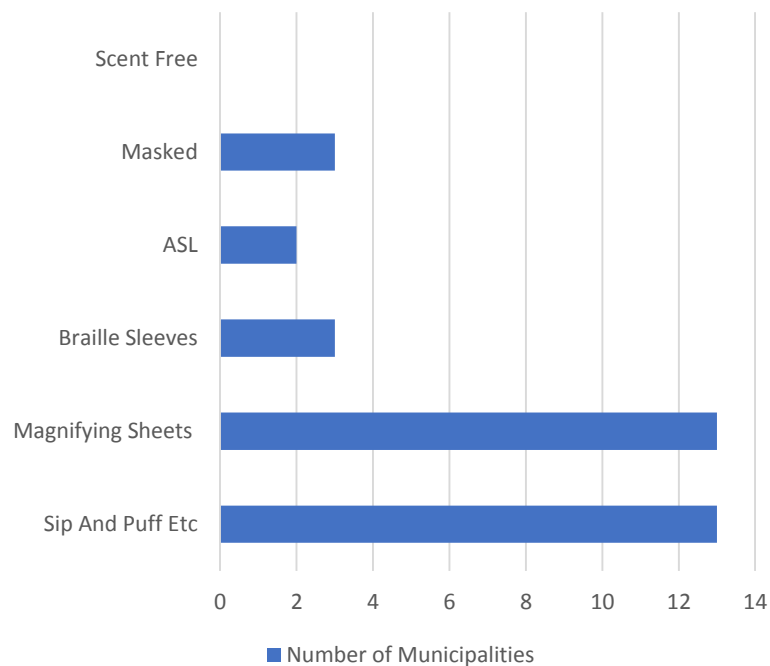
Comparator Municipalities

Voting Method



■ Internet (6) ■ Home (4) ■ Mail (3) ■ VBP (2) ■ RAVBM (0)

Voting Enhancements



■ Number of Municipalities

Community and Agency Stakeholders

- 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
- A First Nations group who asked not to be named

Engagement points with the AAC

April 18, 2023

- Engagement plan presentation

August 15, 2023

- Shared results from comparators and stakeholders

October 3, 2023

- Attempted workshop cancelled due to lack of quorum

November 14, 2023

- 2 Hour engagement workshop

December 19, 2023

- AAC Recommendation

February 20, 2024

- Attempted to share staff recommendation

April 16, 2024

- Staff Recommendation shared with AAC

AAC Recommendation

Passed December 19, 2023

In order to accommodate independent voting for all residents of Guelph, the AAC recommends that the city offer Online/Internet Voting, Remote Accessible Vote by Mail, Vote by Phone, Vote by Mail, and door-to-door vote from home options for upcoming municipal elections. The AAC feels that leaving any of these options out will leave some disabled voters without access to a confidential and independent way to mark their ballot. Providing all options will help the city meet their duty to accommodate those individuals under the Ontario Human Rights Code. Furthermore, the AAC would like to highlight the importance of specifically RAVBM and Internet voting as the most universally accessible options, which would solve significant service gaps that have been present in the past two elections for many disabled individuals who have not had access to independent voting.

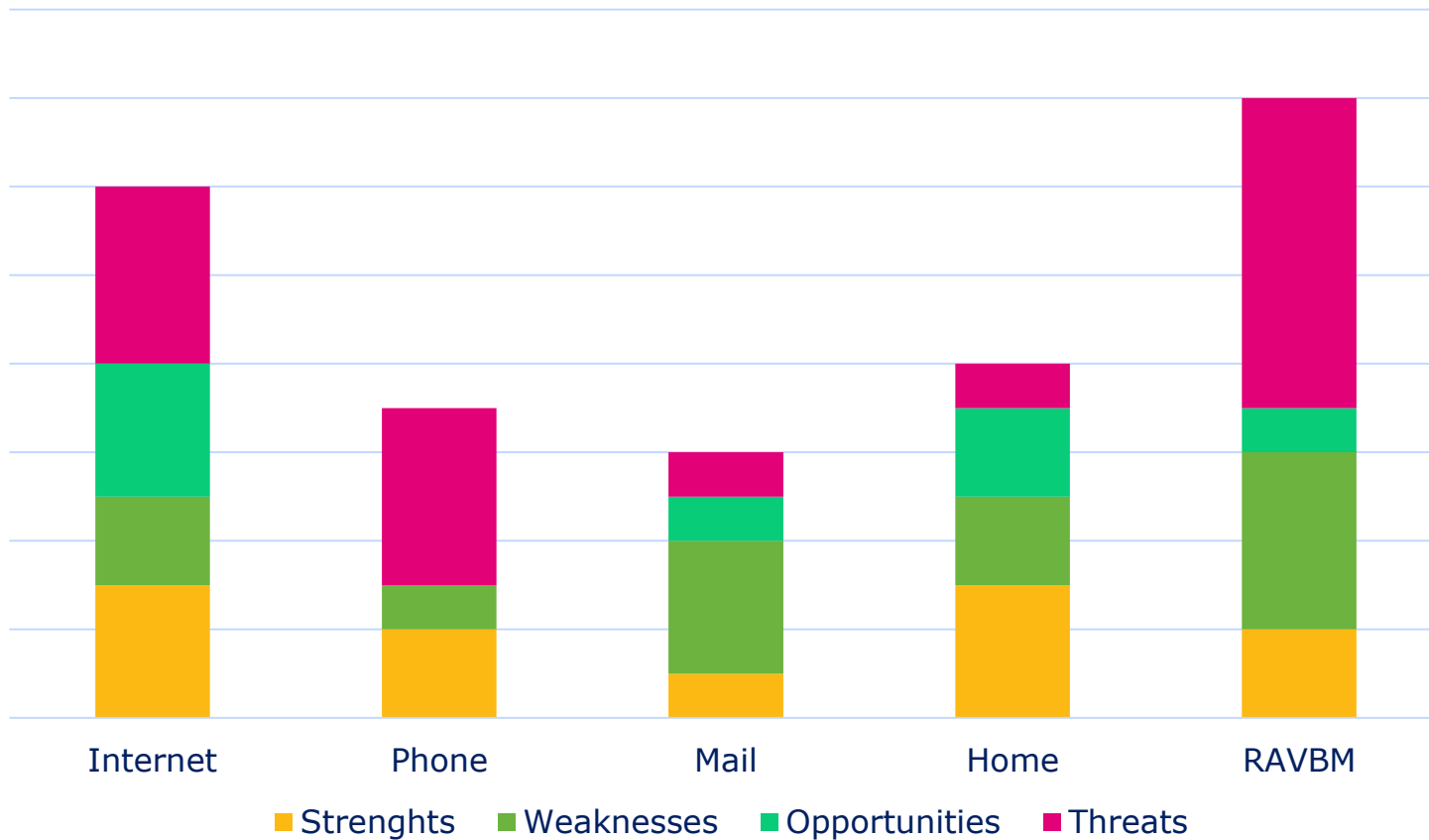
AAC Recommendation

Passed April 16, 2024

The AAC does not support the staff recommendation that vote from home and vote by mail be offered as the only alternative voting methods for the 2026 election. We believe that this leaves insurmountable barriers to accessibility and denies many members of the community access to a confidential, independent, and verifiable voting method. Failure to provide a voting method to disabled individuals serves to disenfranchise a vulnerable population.

The AAC recommends that council move forward with online voting and remote accessible vote by mail as the main alternative voting options, with vote from home and vote by mail remaining available as supplementary accessible options.

Voting Methods SWOT

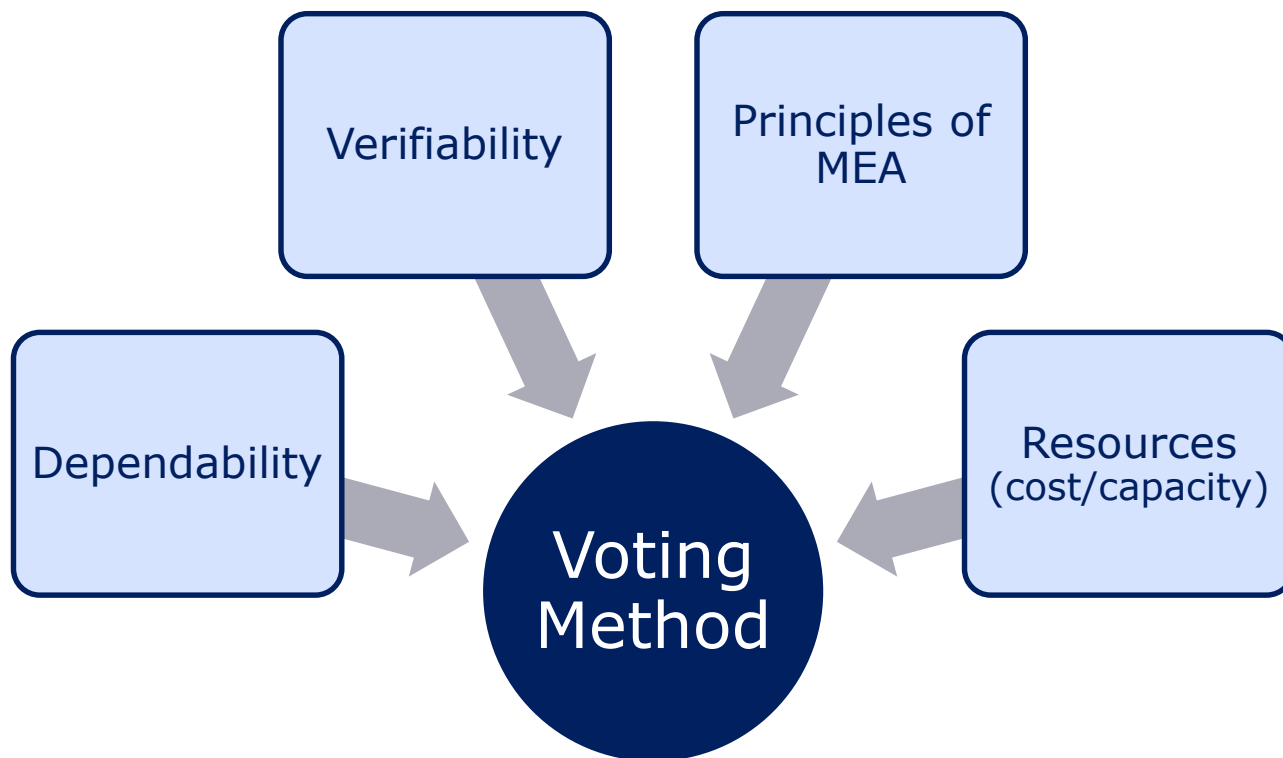


Risk Management Framework

Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Overall Risk Rating	Applicable Voting Methods
Malicious actors posing security risk	4	2	8	Internet Voting, Vote by Phone, RAVBM
Compromised reliability to verify recount	4	3	12	Internet Voting, Vote by Phone
Technical reliance outside of City control	4	4	16	Internet Voting, Vote by Phone, RAVBM

Noted above is the medium to high level risks identified for alternative voting methods

Key Factors



Technology Concerns

2018 – Internet Voting, vendor bandwidth issues

- 51 Ontario municipalities impacted by system load issue¹

2022 – Voters list database experienced temporary overload impacting many municipalities

- Guelph experienced this issue but voting location staff were able to continue to process elections, however this was not the case in other municipalities

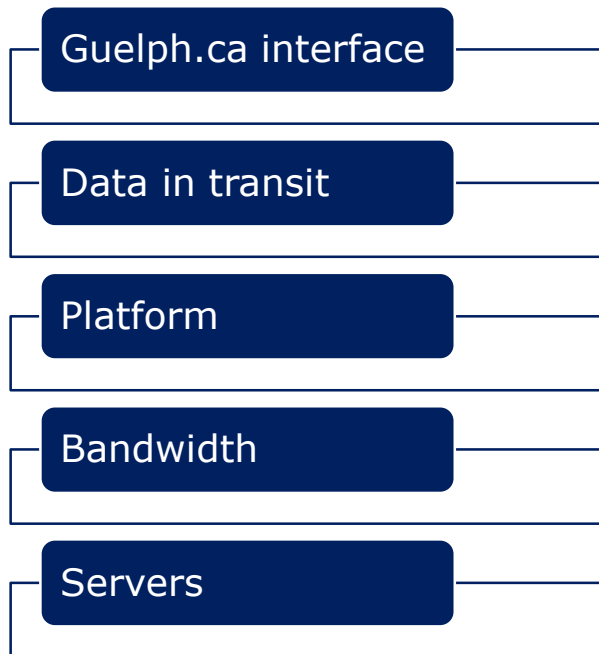
Municipalities are increasingly targets for malicious actors looking to hold information for ransom

- Recent examples include the Toronto Public Library and the City of Hamilton

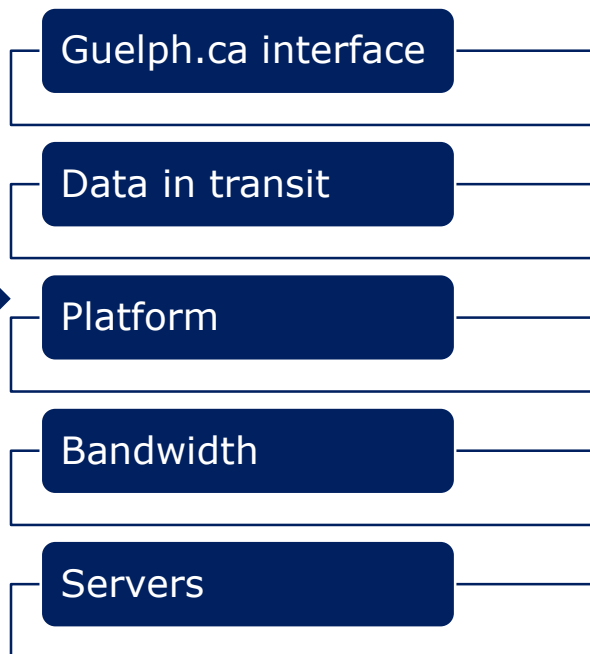
¹[Online voting in 51 Ontario municipalities marred by election-day 'system load issue'](#)

Technology Stack

Online voting system



Voters' list database



Enhancements

- Accessible Voting Equipment
- Magnifying sheets
- Braille sleeves
- Masked/Scent-free location
- ASL translation
- City Hall Central Hub

Thank You

