



REPORT

Office of the Clerk

Meeting: Council

Date: May 27, 2025

Report No.: CLERKS-12-25

RESOLUTION NO.: _____ **BY-LAW NO.:** _____

Subject: Alternative Voting Method for 2026 Municipal and School Board Elections

Recommendation(s):

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council receive Report CLERKS-12-25 for information; and

THAT Council authorize the Alternative Voting Method of Internet and/or Telephone Voting for the 2026 Municipal and School Board election; and

THAT Council authorize staff to bring forth a by-law to authorize the Alternative Voting Method of Internet and/or Telephone Voting for the 2026 Municipal and School Board election under Section 42 of the Municipal Elections Act 1996.

Background:

The principles of the Municipal Elections Act include:

- maintaining the secrecy and confidentiality of the voting process and individual votes;
- providing an election that is accessible to the voters;
- providing an election that is fair and non-biased;
- ensuring the integrity of the process is maintained throughout the election;
- ensuring the results of the election reflect the votes cast, and that valid votes be counted and invalid votes be rejected so far as reasonably possible; and

- ensuring voters and candidates are treated fairly and consistently within the municipality. Staff have considered all of the possible elections' methods, and present details of each option below.

The Municipal Elections Act, S.O. 1996 c. 32, Sched., specifies that a municipal council may authorize the following through a by-law passed on or before May 1 in the year of the election:

- The use of voting and vote-counting equipment
- The use by electors of an alternative voting method that does not require electors to attend at a voting place in order to vote.

On June 9, 2016 the Province of Ontario passed Bill 181, Municipal Elections Modernization Act, 2016. This Bill amended the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 and provides for further opportunities for municipalities to adopt new alternative voting methods such as internet voting. Council is still required to authorize the use of any alternative voting equipment (such as optical scan vote tabulators or vote by mail, telephone or internet voting).

Internet voting is a fast and efficient method and the most accessible. Users of online voting have found it is simple, convenient and private, at all ages and computer use levels. Once complete, the voter has the opportunity to review their selections. Data is then stored in a secure database and not tabulated until voting has been closed. Results are generated in real time and provided easily after the close of the election. Election results are available by 8:15PM with limited staff required and most cost beneficial to the municipality. Using Internet (and telephone voting) allows the municipality to open the voting period for as long as the municipality deems – so the voting period could be 10 days to 14 days, allowing everyone the ability to vote when they are available. Voters may also vote anywhere, at any time. This method does not allow for unintentionally spoiled ballots and provides warning prompts in races that may be under-voted or left blank. Voting credentials can be mailed to non-residents who have the capability to cast their ballot from anywhere in the world, provided there is internet available. Electors who prefer assistance can still be helped during the voting period in established voting centres or other municipal facilities providing internet access such as the Cramahe Public Library or a dedicated election kiosk. iPads and laptops can be purchased through the election budget and can be repurposed to staff or members of council.

The Township of Cramahe used in person and mail-in voting in elections prior to 2022. In the 2022 election, Council voted in support of using internet and telephone voting. The Clerk department used Internet Voting and is experienced with training, education and communication. Voters now have experience with the process for internet voting and turnout has been relatively consistent. There is no need to hire additional volunteer or paid staff for an internet only election. Current Clerks staff can adequately manage the election workload, with no additional support from other departments for customer service and IT support. With the extended voting period and ability to vote anytime and anywhere, staff will be able to set up voting kiosks in various locations across the municipality with assistance during regular business hours or after hours.

Staff Comments:**Financial Implications:**

There are significant financial implications associated with this report. Costs for Internet and Telephone voting are approximately \$2.00 per elector, and mail in ballot approximately \$4.85 per elector and in-person ballot is significantly increased due to extra staff and additional staff time at around \$7.00 per voter. Therefore, based on 5851 electors in Cramahe the total costs for Internet and Telephone voting is \$11,702, mail in ballot \$28,377, and in-person \$40,957.

Concluding Comments:

Staff are recommending that Council approve Internet and Telephone voting for the 2026 Municipal & School Board Elections and will begin providing communications and education to voters in the new year. The role of the Clerk in a municipal election is to administer the election as accessible as possible. The Clerk will also work with the area municipalities who will be recommending the approval of internet and telephone voting for the 2022 municipal and school board elections.

Submitted by:

Nicole Newton, Deputy Clerk

Reviewed by:

Holly Grant, CAO/Clerk

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Alternative Voting Methods for 2026 Municipal and School Board Elections - CLERKS-12-25.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Sep 3, 2025

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

No Signature - Task assigned to HOLLY GRANT was completed by workflow administrator NICOLE newton

HOLLY GRANT