**TOWNSHIP OF EDWARDSBURGH CARDINAL
INFORMATION ITEM**

Committee: Committee of the Whole – Administration & Finance

Date: January 7, 2019

Department: Administration

Topic: 2018 Municipal Election – Accessibility Report

Background: Section 12.1(3) of the Municipal Elections Act requires that the clerk submit a report to Council about the identification of barriers that affect elections and candidates with disabilities. In addition to that requirement, we have included statistics and an overall impression of the 2018 Municipal Election.

Voter Participation:

There has been a very steady increase and show of interest in voter participation since the introduction of electronic voting in 2006:

        2003: 35% -only paper ballot voting available
        2006: 46.26%
        2010: 47.4%
        2014: 55.1%
        2018: 53.1%

Of those who voted in 2018, 34.7% chose to vote by paper ballot, and 65.2% by internet and phone. The percentage of voter turnout has increased since the introduction of internet and phone voting with an average voter turnout rate of 50.47% between 2006 to 2018, compared to only 35% in 2003 when only paper ballot was offered.

According to AMO municipal election statistics, with 430 municipalities reporting, there was on average a 37.66% voter turnout, compared to Edwardsburgh Cardinal's 53.1% turnout rate.

Voter List:

The Township acquired software offered by Datafix to manage the voter's list, in order to enhance accessibility to the list for amendments and updates by MPAC and the voterlookup.ca website. Staff were told that the list from MPAC would be well-managed and up to date, which was unfortunately not the result.

An important aspect when using electronic voting, is to make sure that only eligible electors received voting PINs. When staff initially reviewed the voters' list in August, the Clerk's department made the decision to remove approximately 308 tenants/grown children from the preliminary elector list. An additional 100 were deleted throughout the election period, on election day, or the following weeks as updated information was received by the Clerk's department. In total there were 408 electors that were originally on the list that have since been removed. This demonstrates how important it is for the Clerk's department to continually review and update the list throughout the election period to help ensure that the list is as accurate as possible.

Between August and October 22, 2018, 307 eligible electors were added to the voters' list. When making additions/deletions/changes/amendments to the voters' list, most municipalities will follow the best practice of requiring the voter to attend the Clerk's office in person to make the declaration of eligibility before a designated staff member, along with providing proof of identity and proof of residency. Staff tried to be as flexible as possible in order to ensure that those eligible and wishing to be added, were able to be added to the list, so long as they provided us with proper identification and their signature on the required form. Staff prepared a full page on the Township website dedicated to the 2018 election, which included the required EL15 form for electors to pre-fill before they arrived at the Township office. The form was also available at the municipal office, municipal libraries, and through links on the website and social media.

Additional steps were taken this year to provide additional assistance for electors wishing to be added to the list. Staff set up a voter assistance morning, in mid-October at the Cardinal Ingredion Arena to assist those who were unable to make it into the Town Hall office during regular business hours. During the voter assistance event in Cardinal, staff provided general election information and processed 21 elector additions/changes/deletions. Throughout the election period, staff utilized the local newspapers with ads with respect to the nomination period, updating of the voters' list, when electors were expected to receive their voter information letters, and how electors were able to vote for the election, just to name a few. Some of these newsprint ads were shared with other municipalities in the UCLG for cost savings.

For the first time the Township utilized the local Coast FM radio station with multiple ads aired during the months of September and October to give electors friendly reminders to

confirm that they are on the voters' list, how to get in touch with Township staff, confirm that electors received their voter information letter, when voting was available, and how electors were able to vote during the voting period (internet, telephone, paper). Staff received numerous calls and electors coming into the office as a direct result of them hearing the ads on the local radio. This demonstrates that the use of alternative advertising, other than the regular newspapers and social media, did positively affect the outreach to potential electors. When the electors called into the office, as a result of hearing the radio ad, staff were able to provide the individual with additional election information and confirm that their information was correct on the voter's list.

Staff completed all corrections, additions, deletions to the voter's list through the electronic list management system VoterView, which is a module available through Intelivote and Datafix. While the preliminary list which was provided by MPAC was far from accurate, the access to VoterView assisted staff with completing the necessary revisions to the voters' list throughout the election period, and the hope is that MPAC was incorporating those revisions into their database for future years.

Paper Ballot Voting:

Voters were offered three locations to cast their ballots by paper (Cardinal, Johnstown, and Spencerville). Similar to the 2014 election there was no advance poll for paper ballots as during the 2010 advanced poll, only 48 people attended. All three polling locations were steady throughout the day, with the Cardinal poll experiencing the heaviest voting traffic.

Each polling station was equipped with 4 election workers, which included a greeter, 2 election assistants, and a deputy returning officer. With the additional election assistant to help with adding and amending elector information, the voters were processed relatively quickly. Chairs were made available at each location for electors who were unable to stand in line to cast their ballot. Voters were advised through their voter information letters, social media, radio ads, Township website posts, speaking with Township staff, and newspaper ads with respect to what forms of ID would be required for paper ballot voting, which assisted the greeters to direct each voter in the right direction during the voting process.

Electronic Internet/Telephone Voting:

Advanced internet/telephone voting began on October 15 at 10:00 a.m. and was available 24 hours a day until the polls closed at 8:00 p.m. on election day. The internet/telephone voting supplier Intelivote was selected by the Clerk's group

throughout the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville. There were no major technological errors or delays during the advanced electronic voting or during election day. Overall staff were satisfied with how the electronic voting system functioned during the advanced voting period and on election day for the voters. Staff were able to receive the final electronic counts through the auditor shortly after 8:30 p.m., with the paper ballot counts having a record final time of approximately 9:45 p.m.

Accessibility:

There was an overall voter turnout rate of 53.1% for the 2018 election. With the availability of electronic internet and telephone voting, disabled and out-of-area voters were able to cast their ballot and the municipality was able to meet their obligations under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). All three voting locations were on ground level, making them easily accessible for the disabled. Greeters and additional election assistants were hired for each location to assist any voters requiring additional help during the election day process.

Intelivote ensures that the electronic internet voting meets the web accessibility requirements which guarantees that persons with disabilities and the elderly can easily understand, observe, navigate and interact with the internet voting. In addition, the telephone voting offered those electors with visual impairments that aren't able to see the internet or paper ballots to access the telephone voting system with ease.

Next Steps:

- As per the Municipal Elections Act, election materials are to be destroyed 120 days after election day, which would allow staff to destroy the materials after February 20th
- Candidate Election Campaign Financial Reporting filing deadline is March 29th on or before 2:00 p.m.
- Notice of default, if applicable (those who haven't submitted their financial reporting) shall be issued by the Clerk to the Township website as soon as practicable after the filing deadline date of March 29th
- The last day for the Clerk to review the financial statements submitted by the candidates and report on anyone that exceeded the limits is April 29th