



The Corporation of the Municipality of Arran-Elderslie

Staff Report

Council Meeting Date: July 8, 2024

Subject: SRCLK.2024.08 - 2026 Municipal Election – Telephone and Internet Service Provider Authorization with Simply Voting Inc.

Report from: Christine Fraser-McDonald, Clerk

Appendices: None

Recommendation

Be It Resolved that Council hereby,

1. Authorizes the use of an alternate voting method for the 2026 election pursuant to the provisions of the Municipal Elections Act;
2. Approves the use of telephone and internet as the preferred voting methods for the 2026 election;
3. Authorizes Simply Voting Inc. as the service provider of telephone and internet voting services for the 2026 Municipal and School Board elections;
4. Provides 2025 pre-budget approval to enter into a vendor contract with Simply Voting Inc.; and
5. Directs staff to bring forward a bylaw to bring force and effect to the same.

Report Summary

In order to secure a method for vendors that remains accessible, accountable, and adaptive, staff recommend that Council proceed in choosing a method of voting for the 2026 Election as soon as possible so arrangements can be made to obtain a vendor for voting services.

Background

The 2022 Municipal Election used telephone and internet as voting methods.

Simply Voting Inc. was retained for the 2022 Municipal Election and they provided services for telephone and internet voting.

Bruce County lower tier municipalities utilized the services of Simply Voting Inc., in 2022, and were extremely pleased with the support and service offered by this firm.

Analysis

In order to secure a method for vendors that remains accessible, accountable, and adaptive, staff recommend that Council proceed in choosing a method of voting for the 2026 Election as soon as possible so arrangements can be made.

Telephone/Internet Voting (on-line voting)

Benefits of online voting relate to voter convenience and improved accessibility, enhanced voter privacy, increases in voter turnout, reduction in ballot errors and spoiled ballots and improvements to the efficiency of elections. Recounts are not necessary.

In an on-line voting system, all electors are mailed a voter information package that includes an individual, secret Personal Identification Number (PIN) and voting instructions.

Electors may vote from home online or by phone or may choose to attend the voting help centre which could be located in the Arran-Elderslie Administration Building, as well as other locations throughout the municipality. This will allow voters without access to the internet a way to cast their ballot.

In addition, staff would attend all long-term care facilities and retirement homes with the necessary technology to enable those voters who may not have access to the internet or a telephone and may not have the ability to attend the voters help centre.

Regardless of the method used (phone or internet), once a voter has voted, the system will prevent them from being able to vote again.

In 2022, staff provided advanced voting areas and on the day of the election the municipal office remained open until 8:00 p.m. to provide support services for electors that required assistance. This seemed to be well received and voters that required assistance were pleased with the ease of the method.

Internet/telephone voting also requires less staff time. There was no need to spend two hours per day for two weeks before the election opening envelopes to prepare for election night and recording electors. Volunteers are not required to count ballots anymore which was also a cost savings for the Municipality.

2022 Election	
Total Electors	5,211
Total Voted	2,444
Turnout	46.90%

Bruce County Clerks and Simply Voting

The Bruce County Clerks met on Friday, June 21, 2024, and an election supplier report from Simply Voting Inc., was presented at the Clerk's meeting.

A quote was provided by Simply Voting Inc. for the Bruce County lower tier municipalities for the 2026 Election. This quote is only effective for a 45-day period. The quote includes estimates based on assumptions of the number of eligible voters for our municipality.

It was the consensus of the seven Bruce County municipalities in attendance at this meeting that, based on the groups' requirement and comfort level with security measures, we mutually agreed upon utilizing the services of Simply Voting Inc., for the 2026 municipal election.

For being first-time users, with both internet/phone as well as Simply Voting, our Municipality was pleased with the smooth and efficient election process and customer service support this company provided.

In order to secure the services of Simply Voting Inc. for the 2026 Municipal and School Board elections at the current estimate of approximately \$12,500 plus postage and HST., staff are requesting Council's approval.

The 2022 fee for Simply Voting Inc., was \$15,324.38; however, postage has increased since the 2022 election.

Simply Voting Inc. provided electronic voting services for over 50 municipalities in Ontario for the 2022 election period. It should be noted that Simply Voting will only commit to servicing a limited number of municipalities each election to ensure that they can provide the appropriate level of customer service and support.

Simply Voting is fully integrated with our DataFix VoterView, a web-based election management service designed to provide election officials with comprehensive tools for managing elector and elections related data. This integration enables secure, real-time electronic data transfer between VoterView and the Simply Voting system for voters list revisions.

Link to Strategic/Master Plan

6.6 Modernizing Services

Financial Impacts/Source of Funding/Link to Procurement Policy

The final billing is calculated using the per elector amount based on the final number of eligible voters with a minimum charge of \$12,500. The additional cost for the voter letter and postage will incur additional costs of approximately \$0.30 + \$0.98 per elector. This is estimated at \$6,400 for approximately 5000 electors.

Approximately, 30% of system fees will be due on January 1, 2026 and a postage deposit required by August 31, 2026. Postage will be based on 2026 fees. These fees will be paid from Election Account 01-1010-4354.

The 2024 budget estimate for the election reserve (01-0000-7312) is \$15,500 and with a budget contribution in 2025 and 2026 of \$8,000 each year, it is estimated that funds available in the 2026 budget for election expenses will be \$31,500 which should be sufficient to cover the expenses.

Approved by: Sylvia Kirkwood, Chief Administrative Officer