Muskoka Clerks Report

TO: **Muskoka Lower Tier Councils**

FROM: **Muskoka Clerks**

SUBJECT: **Voting Methods for the 2018 Municipal Election**

RECOMMENDATION

1. That a By-law be prepared to authorize the use of internet/telephone voting for the 2018 Municipal Election.

2. That the Clerk be authorized to select vendors for the provision of internet/telephone voting services for the 2018 Municipal Election, subject to any budget approvals.

3. That the Mayor and Clerk be provided delegated authority to execute any agreements necessary to implement internet/telephone voting for the 2018 Municipal Election.

4. That no further action be taken with respect to ranked ballots for the 2018 Municipal Election.

ORIGIN

5. For more than a decade, the Muskoka Clerks have met on a regular basis to discuss existing and emerging issues and information in an effort to work collaboratively wherever possible to address areas of mutual interest, such as accessibility, information technology, legislative changes and municipal elections. Representatives from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) and the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) regularly attend meetings with the Muskoka Clerks.

6. In 2014, all Muskoka municipalities worked collaboratively to provide Vote-By-Mail (VBM) as the exclusive voting method. Optical scan tabulators were also utilized by all Muskoka municipalities for the purpose of vote counting. Common vendors for voters list management, VBM, and tabulators were engaged.

7. Due to the large number of non-resident electors, alternative voting methods in Muskoka have demonstrated to be ideal in ensuring that this segment of electors has the opportunity to vote. The following provides an overview of the resident and non-resident voting activity in 2014:

	Resident Electors		Non-Resident Electors	
	Eligible	**Voted**	**Eligible**	**Voted**
Bracebridge	10,698	5,327	4,243	969
Georgian Bay	1,823	1,139	7,191	2,896
Gravenhurst	7,460	3,161	5,964	1,664
Huntsville	12,846	7,004	5,005	1,207
Lake of Bays	2,200	1,219	5,763	1,933
Muskoka Lakes	4,985	2,851	11,948	4,526

8. In recognition of the large number of non-resident electors, and the past history of successfully providing alternative voting methods to voters across Muskoka, the Muskoka Clerks are continually reviewing opportunities to further modernize municipal elections, including exploring the market for internet/telephone voting systems for use in the 2018 Municipal Election.

9. It is important to note that the recent amendments to the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996,* (MEA) are very extensive, and will require a significant amount of preparation and planning by staff to prepare for the 2018 Municipal Election.

10. The significant changes to the legislation can be grouped under the following categories:

- Election calendar;
- Nomination period and process;
- Campaign finance;
- Third party advertising;
- Ranked ballots;
- Clerk's authority;
- Election signs and advertising; and
- Recounts.

11. In respect to the changes to the election calendar, one notable date change is the deadline to pass a by-law to authorize an alternative voting method, which was moved forward to May 1, 2017 from June 1, 2018.

12. In recognition of the sweeping changes to the *MEA*, one major decision point for Councils is to confirm an alternative voting method by May 1, 2017. Once confirmed, the Muskoka Clerks can begin planning activities and establish common procedures to support this voting method, while ensuring compliance with the amendments to the Act.

13. The Muskoka Clerks are seeking an internet/telephone voting solution that would provide convenient and accessible voting in addition to fast and accurate election results, while utilizing the latest in technological and security advances, in a manner that ensures confidence in the integrity of the voting process.

14. The purpose of this staff report is to seek Council approval to authorize internet/telephone voting for the 2018 Municipal Election by by-law, authorize the Clerk to select vendors for the provision of internet voting/telephone services in 2018, and confirm that no further action be taken on ranked ballots for the 2018 Municipal Election.

ANALYSIS

15. In 1996, the MEA was amended to permit the use of alternative voting methods and tabulation equipment in lieu of, or in addition to, the traditional ballot system of voting. This change was viewed by many Ontario municipalities as a positive change to enable greater opportunity and access for both resident and non-resident electors. Alternative voting methods include internet voting, mail-in voting, telephone voting and touch screen voting.

VOTE-BY-MAIL (VBM)

PROS:

16. Some of the benefits experienced by VBM included increased accessibility, increased voter participation, voter convenience, elimination of proxy voting and advance polls, greater accuracy and prompt election results.

17. The requirement of municipalities to ensure that voting locations are accessible can be costly, particularly in rural areas. Given that the use of alternative voting methodologies, including vote-by-mail and internet voting, requires fewer voting locations, capital expenditures to address accessibility issues can be better planned over the long term by municipalities.

18. In addition to improved convenience, the VBM option has demonstrated to be a less costly alternative to traditional internet polls in terms of human and other resources for municipalities of similar size to the Muskoka municipalities. Management of large numbers of poll staff together with facility and transportation logistics can be a barrier on voting day.

CONS:

19. Challenges to this method included significant processing time by election officials in striking names from the voters list, opening, preparing for tabulation, remarking, scrutineer education (i.e. traditional role v. alternative voting role), etc.

20. One key challenge with VBM is the timeframe required from mail out of ballots to return of ballots, which can be extensive. In many cases, non-resident electors may experience barriers to voting due to timeframes associated with the mailing process.

21. VBM is completely reliant on Canada Post, to not only disseminate blank ballots but also process completed ballots, making the implementation of various contingency measures much more difficult than internet/telephone voting in the event of a postal service disruption. Various collective agreements are expiring early January 2018, which may have an impact on mail delivery and is of concern.

22. Errors can also occur as a result of the mail distribution process. Inexact voters list data combined with VBM can result in prospective electors to not only mistakenly receive voter packages intended for other individuals, but also the actual blank ballots as well. In addition, there is room for error (risk) during the actual returning of completed voter's packages to the municipality. Although this is a potential risk associated with VBM, the Muskoka Clerks do not have any data to suggest that the integrity of any election process has been compromised in any way as a result of using VBM as a voting method.

23. With VBM, ballots can be improperly marked for tabulation purposes and/or the voter may inadvertently disclose their identity by returning their declaration form and ballot in the same envelope. Where possible, these issues have been addressed through the implementation of election procedures. These processes are labour intensive and requires election officials to handle ballots and in some cases remark ballots. Even though these processes are identified within procedures, scruitineers have been critical of the additional handling of municipal ballots.

24. The campaign period is affected by VBM as voters may feel pressured to complete their ballot and mail back as soon as possible to meet the tight timelines. Many individuals may have already voted by the time they have been visited by candidates or participated in all candidates' debates.

25. In situations where non-resident voters did not receive a voter kit, due to a variety of reasons, the timing of the mailing process leaves Election Officials with few options to ensure the elector can exercise their vote remotely.

CONCLUSION:

26. For Muskoka electors that are non-resident, together with those with diminished mobility and accessibility constraints, VBM has provided better opportunity for electors to exercise their right to vote and participate in the democratic process.

27. Building on the success of VBM, and to address its challenges, the Muskoka Clerks believe that the convenience and accessibility inherent in internet/telephone voting can provide enhanced opportunity for all electors to participate in the democratic process.

INTERNET VOTING

28. In 2014, survey data from the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO) indicates that the use of alternative voting methods by municipalities is growing with the most popular alternative method reported by respondents being vote-by-mail, followed by internet voting, phone voting and touch screen voting, respectively.

29. Internet voting is one part of the trend to modernize elections that has become popular in Europe, Latin America and North America. At the local level municipalities in Canada have deployed online voting in more elections than anywhere else in the world. Indeed, 97 municipalities in Ontario utilized internet voting during the 2014 municipal election (please refer to Appendix “A” for a list of the municipalities that utilized internet voting in 2014). This number has doubled with each election since 2003. Based on current projections and information provided by surveys conducted by the University of Toronto, the number of municipalities that will offer internet voting in Ontario is expected to reach approximately 200 for the 2018 municipal election.

PROS

30. With the advancement of technology, security and the expansion of internet availability, voting by internet (and telephone) is becoming increasingly popular, with the potential of reducing costs in numerous areas, such as training, administration, staffing, and resources.

31. After the 2014 Municipal Election, researchers from the University of Toronto and the Centre for e-Democracy conducted an in-depth study regarding use of internet voting as an alternative voting method. The goal of the project was to better inform governments, stakeholders, and the public of the effects of internet voting on elections. The report studied 47 Ontario municipalities that used internet voting in 2014, which included surveying internet voters, candidates, and election administration officials. Of the 47 Ontario municipalities that were surveyed, the primary rationale for adopting internet voting was to enhance accessibility, improve voter turnout and add convenience for voters. The report, as well as further information obtained from users and canvassing the public, has identified that internet voting is a desirable format for election stakeholders. Conclusions noted that overall users (administrators and electors) found the systems to be convenient and accessible.

32. Users of online voting identified that they found the method to be easy, simple, straight forward, convenient and private. 95% of the respondents to the survey identified that they were satisfied with the online voting process.

33. There are only two municipalities in Ontario (the Town of Huntsville and the Township of North Glengarry) that have adopted internet/telephone voting since 2003 and stopped using it in a subsequent election. One of the two, the Township of North Glengarry, re-introduced it in the 2014 election.

34. Internet voting allows an elector to cast an electronic ballot from their personal computer, tablet or smartphone from anywhere there is an internet connection (wifi or cellular).

35. With internet voting, voters would still have the option of voting with the assistance of Election Officials, if assistance is deemed to be required by the elector. Similar to vote-by-mail, the Municipal Office can be established as a voting place. Other locations, such as public libraries or other community facilities can be used to provide internet access for individuals that do not have access to a computer device and/or internet services by establishing voting kiosks.

36. Internet voting can be designed to fully verify voter intent by disallowing unintentional spoiled ballots and, if so desired, provide warning prompts in relation to offices which may be under-voted or left blank. Completing an online ballot is similar to marking a hard copy ballot; voters click on the check box next to the candidate(s) of their choosing for each office appearing on the ballot.

37. Upon completion, and prior to submission, the voter has an opportunity to review his/her selections and make changes. When the ballot has been submitted, the voting data is stored in a secure database and is not tabulated until voting has been closed. This database is designed to encrypt the voting data in order to ensure there is no way to link a voter with his/her ballot after the electronic ballot has been submitted. Permissions also limit administrative access levels to authorized Election Officials.

38. The primary benefits offered by internet and telephone voting are convenience and accessibility, with the potential for a minimal to moderate increase in voter turn-out. Although Voter turnout is complex and a number of factors influence whether electors turn out to vote, internet voting is associated with a 3% increase in voter participation in Ontario. Based on research, voters over 50 years of age are the most likely to vote by internet but voter participation of youth is not increased.

CONS

39. According to research, Ontario communities that have not adopted internet/telephone voting have not proceeded for a variety of reasons, including, but not limited to:

- Lack of support for implementation of new voting system by elected officials;
- Insufficient administrative backing;
- Financial restraints or inadequate resources required to support the change;
- Concerns about security and fraud;
- Hesitation to adopt the technology too quickly without first learning from other municipalities; and,
- Reluctance to modernize.

40. With internet voting, there are two basic models to use: one-step and two step voting. In one-step internet voting, an eligible elector on the voters list receives a Voter Information Letter in the mail. The Voter Information Letter will include a PIN, and other unique voter identification information (i.e. Voter ID number) that the voter will use to access a website and vote. As noted above, the voter may also be requested to enter their birth date or other information as an additional security step, as determined by the municipality.

41. With two step internet voting, the voter will first receive a Voter Information Letter in the mail. They will then register online and receive, through a separate email or regular mail, a unique PIN and voter ID. These additional steps create additional barriers and makes Internet voting more of a challenge for voters (less convenient). Electors surveyed expressed frustration with having to wait too long for their PINs to arrive after registering, and made the whole process too long and complicated for electors with low levels of internet literacy. Results show that when there is no registration requirement, 35% more electors choose to cast a ballot by internet.

42. Some reject internet voting for various reasons from fraud, security, privacy concerns, perceived lack of an auditing trail, software bugs, malicious activity, hacking, viruses, and the inherent problems of the internet beyond the control of any municipality or internet voting vendor. Objections are often based on hypothetical situations or the possibility of threats or security risks.

43. In 2014, the City of Toronto retained IT professionals to provide a security assessment of various internet voting vendor proposals. The assessment confirmed that internet voting does provide the greatest amount of risk compared to traditional voting, and that any internet voting system adopted by the City must be rigorously evaluated. The assessment concluded that should a vendor be able to satisfy all of the requirements specified in the RFP issued by the City, their solution would have to provide a "reasonable set of security assurances". In 2014 the City of Toronto was unable to implement internet voting for persons with disabilities due to time constraints and the inability of certain vendors to meet various security and accessibility requirements that were requested by City officials.

44. To date, there are past examples of malicious activity, or suspected security breaches, to an internet voting election, and these occurrences are often cited by individuals or groups opposed to internet voting to support their position. The following are the known or often cited examples related to internet voting and security issues or malicious activity:

- A denial of service occurred at an N.D.P convention (2012) where electors were prohibited from voting due to a restrictive program put in place by an outside source.
- A suspected hacking of the online voting system used to elect Jim Prentice as Alberta Tory party leader and premier-designate (2014).
- An internet voting program test conducted by the City of Washington, D.C. (2010) (to provide voting options for overseas voters) that was reprogrammed by University of Michigan students to play the University of Michigan - Fight Song.

45. The decision to utilize internet voting should be based on an assessment of what is a 'reasonable' threat or risk, while balancing the need for voter engagement and accessibility in the local democratic process. The Muskoka Clerks, supported by Muskoka IT professionals in regards to our systems, must be satisfied that a "reasonable set of security assurances" are in place to ensure the integrity of the voting process in Muskoka. The only effective option to eliminate the potential risks that are specifically associated with and unique to alternative voting methods, including vote-by-mail or internet voting, is to return to a traditional voting method. Unfortunately, this would disenfranchise the electorate in Muskoka, many of whom do not reside in the area during the voting period.

46. As has been demonstrated in this staff report, internet and telephone voting offers even greater enhancements to voter convenience and accessibility over vote-by-mail. After monitoring the experiences of other municipalities across Ontario, and in response to the growing trend of internet voting, which is further supported by substantial research and highly sophisticated security systems, the Muskoka Clerks recommend the use of internet and telephone voting in the 2018 Municipal Election to further modernize municipal elections in Muskoka.

RFI – Internet Voting Systems

47. With the intention of collecting a greater understanding of internet voting, the Muskoka Clerks issued a Request for Information (RFI) for an internet voting system. Four submissions were received and were used to gather the most up to date information available in today's marketplace regarding internet (and telephone) voting systems. They provided an enhanced understanding of internet and telephone voting methods to support a recommendation to their respective Councils that internet and telephone voting be used as an alternative voting method.

48. Any internet voting system being considered must be directly consistent with the principles guiding municipal elections, as contained in the *MEA*, as follows:

- The secrecy and confidentiality of the individual vote is paramount.
- The election should be fair and non-biased.
- The election should be accessible to the voters.
- The integrity of the process should be maintained throughout the election.
- There be certainty that the results of the election reflect the votes cast.
- Voters and candidates should be treated fairly and consistently within a municipality.

49. The Muskoka Clerks and IT personnel from the District of Muskoka, the Town of Huntsville, the Township of Lake of Bays, and the Township of Georgian Bay reviewed the submissions and participated in demonstrations from the prospective vendors. Four Muskoka IT Departments are providing the Muskoka Clerks with knowledge base support.

50. Once a vendor is selected, the Muskoka Clerks will consider the feasibility of hiring a third party external auditor, who specializes in internet voting security, to test the overall security of the voting system and monitor the system during the pre and post-election period.

51. In general, all of the internet and telephone voting systems available offer similar services, with some differences in visual presentation, processes, security systems, additional modules /services, etc. Various product solutions available can be customized to support process requirements unique to the voting jurisdiction or municipality, as desired.

Security of Internet Voting

52. There are several concerns expressed with respect to the security of internet voting, including but not limited to: denial of service attacks (a type of attack on a network that is designed to overwhelm a network by flooding it with useless internet traffic), fraudulent activity, viruses, and other technical threats associated with any system or activity that uses the internet to receive and transmit personal information.

53. Working in conjunction with internet voting experts (vendors), procedures are established by municipalities to address, mitigate, and in some cases eliminate, potential risks by employing both technical and process related security measures designed to support system administration and control user access.

54. Technological advances in protective measures such as firewalling (a part of a computer system or network that is designed to block unauthorized access while permitting outward communication), and user authentication techniques (requiring passwords, etc), all decrease the likelihood and effectiveness of these threats.

55. Proper testing and auditing throughout the various implementation phases also serves to protect the voting system from external threats. As part of the testing phase, Municipal Clerks, in addition to the vendors, conduct thorough logic and accuracy testing prior to the election to test the system. During the logic and accuracy testing phase, the Muskoka Clerks can test the system by running a mock election, and may investigate the feasibility of including candidates and scrutineers in this process to help electors gain confidence in a new voting method.

56. Internet voting platforms utilize the same stringent access methodologies and encryption principles which protect internet banking sites and Electronic Medical Records (EMR) systems, which are extensive and technologically complex.

57. It is important to note that although there have been documented attempts designed to compromise an online voting system, there are no known controverted elections resulting from the use of an internet voting system.

58. There have been concerns raised that internet voting may violate privacy concerns, such as voter coercion, including family members exercising illegitimate and unlawful authority over another compelling them to vote a certain way. This kind of concern is also relevant with all alternative voting methods. The only way to significantly reduce or eliminate these types of concerns would be to return to a traditional voting method.

59. Validating the identification of voters is a concern regularly cited with internet voting. To respond, internet voting includes voter authentication practices which can be customized to include personalized security questions and/or unique identification codes (Voter IDs and PINs). Municipalities can request that the vendor include the requirement for an elector to enter an additional verification along with the provided voter ID and PIN (such as a birth date). This step helps alleviate concerns associated with the risk of an individual obtaining a Voter Information Letter intended for another elector.

60. Only electors on the voters list receive credentials in the mail which will be used to vote online. As with past practices electors must complete a form and/or provide ID to be added to the voters list.

61. Through the RFI, the Muskoka Clerks have confirmed that the electronic distribution of PINs (and Voter ID) can be achieved using an electronic method (i.e. email) in the event of a labour disruption at Canada Post.

TELEPHONE VOTING

62. Telephone voting allows voters to complete a ballot using any point-to-point telephone connection. Electors receive a Voter Information Letter containing instructions on how to dial in to access the system as well as how to navigate the audio ballot. This method can also adopt similar security processes, such as requiring the elector to enter their date of birth, PIN, etc.

63. Most interactive telephone voting systems rely on the voter to interact with the audio ballot by way of dialing on the key pad in relation to response requests, however, the potential exists from some vendors to use voice activated responses to navigate and complete an audio ballot. In addition, voters will have the ability to slow down the instructions, increase the volume, and utilize at home accessibility resources and tools.

64. Telephone voting is commonly employed as part of a multi-channel voting solution in conjunction with internet voting. Telephone voting provides for an enhanced level of convenience as it allows voters to cast a ballot remotely from anywhere they have access to a phone line within a defined voting period.

65. One of the main concerns with telephone voting is the significant amount of time to navigate through and complete an audio ballot. Depending on the amount of candidates, etc, a lengthy audio ballot can serve to disengage and confuse voters. In addition, the sound levels and pronunciation of certain names can create additional challenges with telephone voting.

66. Telephone voting is generally regarded as an option to complement internet voting, rather than offered as a standalone voting method. According to vendors, when telephone voting is offered in conjunction with internet voting, approximately 5 - 10% of voters will utilize the telephone option.

67. Notwithstanding the above concerns regarding telephone voting processes, vendors have been improving their telephone voting methods. Based on the recent demonstrations, it is recommended that the provision for telephone voting be included to complement and increase accessibility and convenience.

CASE EXAMPLES OF INTERNET ELECTIONS

A. <u>Town of Huntsville – 2010 Municipal Election</u>

68. The Town of Huntsville introduced internet/telephone voting during the 2010 Municipal Election. There were three issues that had to be addressed. The first issue was the method in which the Voter Information Letters were mailed out, resulting in some PINs being exposed in the envelope window. Staff immediately followed-up with the service provider, who was instructed to disable all of the PINs and to mail out a second printing of the Voter Information Letter with new PINs utilizing an alternate folding process.

69. The second issue was the telephone number to call and vote was not printed on the second Voter Information Letter mail out. Staff immediately followed-up with the service provider and postcards were mailed to all electors as a reminder that included information on how to vote, which included an explanation on using the PIN from the most recent voter letter, hours of voting, the internet address to vote online, the voting telephone number to call and also Information on the Voter Help/Revision Centre.

70. The third issue happened on election day at 6:30 p.m. and is described here in a quote from a press release from Huntsville's internet voting provider, Intelivote: "During the heavy load the Intelivote System experienced a hardware server error that resulted in the entire load on the system being switched to the redundant load sharing server. A combination of the heavy voting activity and the administrative activity resulted in the system reducing the capacity to process voter activity over a 57 minute period." As a result, voting hours were extended until 9:00 p.m. to compensate for the slow system response.

B. <u>Regional Municipality of Halifax</u>

71. The largest municipality in Canada to use telephone voting was the Regional Municipality of Halifax. This election was used as a case study by Elections Canada and the study indicated that this election is a particularly valuable model to review as:

- It did not require electors to pre-register to vote on-line (i.e. two-step internet voting);
- Offered a "decline to vote" button enabling electors to refuse a ballot;
- Offered telephone and internet voting simultaneously;
- Allowed voting for the whole election period in its most recent by-election; and,
- Implemented a candidate module that allowed for the maintenance of candidates' representatives for electronic ballots.

72. Elections Canada concluded that this combination of features had the goals of reducing barriers to voting, maintaining the traditional integrity of the voting process, and increasing ballot accessibility. The absence of pre-registration in Halifax makes the remote internet and telephone voting options of the best possible utility.

73. Elections Canada further concluded that the incorporation of a telephone voting system enhances accessibility, as many rural areas may experience limited connectivity and affordability of internet access.

Voting Devices

74. Offering internet kiosks in public places such as the municipal office, library and community centres is one method of making remote internet voting more widely accessible to groups of citizens that have no computers, internet access, or reduced computer literacy. It can be said that having to travel to an electronic polling location (a kiosk) may very well present a similar barrier as traveling to a traditional polling station, which electors are already accustomed to do when voting in the provincial and federal elections.

75. Furthermore, anyone with a mobile device with a cellular connection (and a data plan) will have the ability to use this device to cast their ballot online. The user interface will automatically scale to the screen size of whatever device they are using.

76. A Kiosk, such as the example provided, is adjustable and uses a WiFi internet connection. If WiFi were to become unavailable, the device would automatically revert to a cellular connection. In the situation of a power outage, the device could continue to operate on battery power for several hours, while utilizing a cellular internet connection.

Role of Scrutineers

77. Similar to VBM, the incorporation of a candidate module, which allows candidates or their representatives to exercise the same scrutineer function they do in traditional polling places, helps maintain tradition as well as the integrity of the voting process. Candidates are provided access to see updates in real-time.

Accessibility

78. One of the primary benefits of internet voting is increased accessibility. Advocates allege that internet voting is the only method that allows for some voters with disabilities to completely mark a ballot, in private, without the assistance of a designated friend or Election Official.

79. Any internet/telephone voting solution selected by the Muskoka Clerks would need to fully comply with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*. The amended *MEA* requires municipal clerks to prepare accessibility plans to identify, remove and prevent barriers that could affect electors and candidates with disabilities, and make the plan available to the public prior to voting day.

Auditing Internet/Telephone Voting

80. Internet voting vendors can provide a Voter Verified Audit Trail (VVAT), which is an independent verification system designed to allow voters to verify that their vote was cast correctly, to detect possible election fraud or malfunction, and to provide a means to audit the stored electronic results. Municipalities can choose and customize the extent of the VVAT.

81. All vendors that responded to the RFI have confirmed that they would cooperate with any municipalities or clients that wish to hire an independent, third-party auditor to oversee their election.

Ranked Ballots

82. In the past, municipalities were required to conduct elections using the plurality or first past the post system, where the candidate who receives the highest number of votes wins. This system does not require a certain percentage of votes to be achieved to win a contest. As per the amended MEA, municipalities are being provided the option to pass a by-law to use ranked ballots to elect members of council starting in 2018. It is not an option for school board elections, at this time. Ranked ballots allow a voter to rank candidates in order of preference, instead of just voting for one candidate in the traditional first past the post system. The internet voting/telephone voting vendors have confirmed that their products could provide ranked ballots and be fully compliant with the MEA, and associated regulations. As the Muskoka Clerks are proposing to introduce a new voting method, together with the significant changes to the MEA, the simultaneous introduction of ranked ballots is not recommended. It is anticipated that this would cause significant confusion across the electorate. The Muskoka Clerks will monitor the experiences of other municipalities that opt to introduce ranked ballots and may report back to Council before the 2022 Municipal Election regarding this method.

Communications

83. Perhaps the most significant challenge to implementing a new voting method is developing a communications plan to educate the public and reduce voter confusion. Survey data indicates that the majority of the voters who utilized internet voting learned about how to vote primarily through Voter Information Packages (letters) - although other formats including traditional advertising (radio, newspaper etc.) and social media efforts produces results. Over the course of the past two municipal elections the Muskoka Clerks have worked very closely to share best practices and develop common Election Procedures where possible to ensure consistency and reduce voter confusion. They will be working together again on joint advertising initiatives to help educate the public on internet/telephone voting, as well as the changes to the MEA. To help address the concerns of voters of all ages and digital literacy levels regarding this process, the Muskoka Clerks will conduct a comprehensive education and marketing campaign throughout the election year.

84. The vendors can also provide instruction videos that can be posted on the municipal websites and shared through social media to assist voters. Some vendors can also provide Help Centres, if desired, to help walk any electors through the process that are experiencing difficultly.

EXISTING POLICY

85. Municipal Elections are conducted in accordance with the *MEA*. As outlined in Section 11 of the Act, the Clerk is responsible for conducting elections in the municipality, which includes:

- Preparing for the election;
- Preparing for and conducting a recount in the election, if required;
- Maintaining peace and order in connection with the election;
- Preparing and submitting reports, including a report on the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities;
- To prepare accessibility plans to identify, remove and prevent barriers that could affect electors and candidates with disabilities, and make the plan available to the public prior to voting day; and,
- To provide for any matter or procedure that is not otherwise provided for in an Act or regulation; or in the Clerk's opinion, is necessary or desirable for conducting the election.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

86. Utilizing internet/telephone voting may result in cost savings on Election Day, with a reduction in staffing required, and the reduction in postage costs associated with VBM (only one mail-out). The challenges inherent with introducing a new election method, in addition to the changes to the *Municipal Elections Act*, are expected to require additional resources to enhance communication efforts that may increase budgets for 2018.

87. Based on the experiences of other municipalities of a similar size who introduced internet voting from a vote-by-mail method, the costs are expected to be similar to 2014. As the municipality and voters become more familiar with internet voting, there is potential for cost reductions and efficiencies utilizing internet/telephone voting.

APPENDIX "A"

List of Municipalities that Utilized Internet Voting for the 2014 Municipal Election

Note: 59 of the 97 municipalities listed below ran fully electronic elections, offering electors either internet voting only or a combination of internet and telephone voting.

Township of Addington Highlands
The Township of Adelaide Metcalfe
Town of Ajax
Township of The Archipelago
Town of Arnprior
Township of Augusta
City of Belleville
City of Brantford
Municipality of Brockton
City of Brockville
City of Burlington
City of Cambridge
Township of Carling
Village of Casselman
Town of Cavan Monaghan
Central Frontenac Township
Municipality of Central Huron
Township of Champlain
Municipality of Chatham-Kent
City of Clarence-Rockland
Township of Clearview
Town of Cobourg
Town of Deep River
Township of East-Hawkesbury
Township of Edwardsburgh/Cardinal
Township of Elizabethtown – Kitley
Township of Frontenac Islands
Town of Gananoque
Town of Greater Napanee
Municipality of Greenstone
Town of Grimsby
City of Guelph
Hamilton Township
Town of Hawkesbury
Municipality of Huron East
Township of Huron-Kinloss
Town of Innisfil
City of Kenora
City of Kingston
Town of Kingsville
Township of Laurentian Valley
Municipality of Leamington
Township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands
Loyalist Township
Township of Lucan Biddulph
Town of Markham
Municipality of McDougall
Township of McKellar
Town of McNab/Braeside
Town of Meaford
Village of Merrickville – Wolford
Municipality of Middlesex Centre
Township of Minden Hills
Town of Mississippi Mills
Township of Montague
Township of Mulmar
The Nation Municipality
Township of North Dundas
Township of North Frontenac
Township of North Glengarry
Township of North Grenville
The Municipality of North Middlesex
Township of North Stormont
Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula
Town of Parry Sound
City of Pembroke
Town of Penetanguishene
Town of Perth
Town of Peterborough
Town of Port Hope
Town of Prescott
County of Prince Edward
City of Quinte West
Town of Renfrew
Township of Russell
Township of Seguin
Township of Shuniah
Municipality of South Bruce
Township of South Dundas
Township of South Frontenac
Township of South Glengarry
Township of South Stormont
The Municipality of Southwest Middlesex
Town of Springwater
Town of Stone Mills
City of Stratford
Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc
City of Greater Sudbury
Township of Tay Valley
Town of Tecumseh
Municipality of Thames Centre
City of Timmins
Town of Wasaga Beach
Municipality of West Elgin
Municipality of West Perth
Municipality of Whitestone
Township of Whitewater Region