



# Municipality of North Grenville

**Report No.**  
CS-001-2019

**File No.**  
C7-CS

<b>Agenda Date:</b>	<b>January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019 – Committee of the Whole</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>2018 Municipal Election Accessibility Report</b>
<b>Attachments:</b>	<b>Appendix 1: Accessibility of eVoting Services</b>

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The following recommendation is provided for the Committee of the Whole's consideration:

**That Committee of the Whole recommend to Council that the 2018 Municipal Election Accessibility Report (CS-001-2019) be received.**

## **BACKGROUND**

The 2014 Municipal Election was held on October 22, 2018. As in 2010 and 2014, the Municipality of North Grenville used eVoting (internet and phone) as well as paper ballots on Election Day. A report on steps taken to make the Municipal Election more accessible is required under the *Municipal Elections Act*.

## **ANALYSIS**

Section 12.1(1) of the *Municipal Elections Act* states that the clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities. The *Act* also states that the clerk shall prepare a report about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

eVoting has had the greatest impact on addressing accessibility concerns for voters. For the 2018 Municipal Election, North Grenville used the services of Intelivote Systems Inc. to provide eVoting services. Intelivote is fully compliant with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*. A report on the accessibility of eVoting services is attached. (**Appendix 1**) Those who cast their ballots by internet or phone represented 79.3% of those who voted, up from 75.2% in 2014.

The Municipality also offered eligible electors the opportunity to vote on Election Day using paper ballots. We used the Municipal Centre as our voting location which offers level access for entry to the building, wide doorways, push button door openers, bright lighting, no steps or stairs to access the voting place and has accessible washrooms. The ballots were printed in accordance with Provincial Information and Communications Standards which included an easy to read font, a mix of upper and lower case letters, large font size, bold letters and appropriate contrast. Provisions for assisted voting were provided in accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act*. All election staff received training in accessible customer service.

In general, the combination of eVoting and paper ballots offered electors choice regarding the method of casting their ballot. The flexibility and choice offered to electors with disabilities positively impacted their ability to participate in the election. The eVoting

system combined with election staff support provided an equal and dignified opportunity for electors to cast their ballot.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

1. Do not provide an Accessible Municipal Elections Report. This is not recommended as it is in conflict with the requirements of the *Municipal Elections Act*.

### **FINANCIAL/STAFFING IMPLICATIONS**

This item has been identified in the 2019 draft budget:    Yes ☐    No ☐    N/A **X**

This item is within the 2019 draft budgeted amount:        Yes ☐    No ☐    N/A **X**

All costs associated with the 2018 election were paid for in 2018, so there are not financial implications in 2019.

Staffing implications, as they relate to implementing Council's decision on this matter, are limited to the existing staff complement and applicable administrative policies as approved by Council.

### **LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN**

The Community Strategic Plan is silent on this matter. This report is mandated by the *Municipal Elections Act*.

**Prepared and submitted by:**

**Recommendation submitted for  
Committee of the Whole  
consideration by:**

Original signed \_\_\_\_\_  
**Cahl Pominville**  
**Director of Corporate Services/  
Clerk**

Original signed \_\_\_\_\_  
**Brian J. Carré**  
**CAO**

## Accessibility of eVoting Services

The use of technology has provided people the advantage of accessing information on demand and performing activities in a convenient and effective method. Everyday technologies including computers, telephones, smartphones, touchscreens, and other tools present opportunities for persons with disabilities to accomplish more while being consistent with standard principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity. Intelivote's eVoting technology strives to provide universal accessibility while promoting independence and empowerment in election participation.

### Internet Voting:

*Persons with disabilities access Intelivote's eVoting services over the Internet.*

The Intelivote system has been created ensuring it meets the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) requirements guaranteeing that persons with disabilities and older people with changing abilities due to aging can perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with the Web. Web Accessibility encompasses all disabilities that affect access to the Web to allow individuals to more actively participate in society – including the ability to vote independently in elections. The standards set in the WAI respect visual, auditory, physical, speech, cognitive, and neurological disabilities, with the goal of providing equal access and equal opportunity. Web Accessibility also addresses 'temporary disabilities' that people may experience due to an illness or health circumstance.

Intelivote has taken measures and has been proactive in accommodating persons with disabilities facilitating their comfort with the availability of eVoting services. Intelivote's online solution is compliant with the guidelines as listed by the W3C technologies website principles which include organization, functionality and readability of information provided, as well as alternative ways of representing information (audio). Additionally, the Intelivote system has full compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

In performing regular internal auditing against WCAG-2 and Section 508 standards Intelivote ensures the application is addressing the needs of disabled participants at all times. The Voter Module is coded with XHTML transitional document type and conforms to all W3C web standards. The Module also supports and is compatible with other accessible technologies such as screen reader software.

Online voting has afforded flexibility to many disabled persons across Canada in hundreds of elections conducted by Intelivote systems.

## Telephone Voting:

*Persons with disabilities may access the eVoting services over the telephone.*

Communication barriers can make it difficult for persons with disabilities to receive or convey information. Telephone barriers may come in the form of low volume, the use of language that is not clear or plain, and confusing or unorganized menus and menu options.

Intelivote Systems Inc has created the telephone voting service taking the following into consideration:

- The telephone eVoting service is offered on all types of touch tone phones and wireless devices including cell phones and smartphones.
- Clear natural language is used and is also offered in English or French.
- Menu options are clear and easy to follow, advising when to select options and providing confirmations of selections made.
- Standard volume is used to allow for adjustments dependent on the telephone or device.
- Users are given a generous amount of time to complete ballot activity and prompts are repeated when no action is detected.

Persons who suffer from a vision loss or vision disability including total blindness and legal blindness have the ability to use the Intelivote telephone eVoting service to cast a ballot in an election. Telephone voting has allowed many individuals the opportunity to cast a ballot remotely with little to no assistance required. The application is also capable to integrate with TTY (Teletypewriter) service for users who are deaf, Deaf, deafened, hard of hearing, or who are deafblind and do not have access to a computer.

## Advantages:

Election officials who are responsible for conducting an election must have regard for the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities. Municipal and school board elections must provide the public with equal access and equal opportunity in casting a ballot. By offering electors the choice of voting electronically through the Intelivote system, election officials are providing accessibility to the disabled persons in their community.

The Intelivote system is comprised of Internet and Telephone voting capabilities. Using the Intelivote system, disabled persons are given the capability to vote from the comfort of their own home. Voting from home facilitates the voting process for disabled persons who have mobility restrictions and/or have a difficult time with transportation due to physical disabilities, whereas these barriers would otherwise be difficult or cumbersome in traditional elections.

Remote voting from any location and from more than one eVoting channel benefits disabled persons in a multitude of ways. It gives disabled persons the same independence and privacy in participating in an election as other voters; where they can vote without any assistance. If assistance is still required, most municipal offices host a local Voter Help Centre or voting assistance locations where election staff may assist in the voting process.

The Intelivote system is also intended to accommodate the older population in the community. It is recommended election staff travel to senior citizen homes to assist in the voting process to maintain the high participation rates found in the 65 years+ age range. Voter Instruction Letters belonging to electors residing in senior homes or other such facilities are arranged to be mailed directly to the election officials for handling. Seniors may choose the telephone to complete their voting, or election staff may visit the facility with kiosk wireless Internet-enabled devices as a voting choice to cast their ballot. Devices may include laptops and tablets and can include touch-screen mechanisms to assist with coordination in voting.

The Intelivote application significantly improves the accessibility of elections without adding additional costs, simultaneously positively impacting election participation.