



**City of Kingston
Report to Council
Report Number 26-047**

To: Mayor and Members of Council
From: Jenna Morley, City Solicitor
Resource Staff: Janet Jaynes, City Clerk
Date of Meeting: January 13, 2026
Subject: Use of Optical Scan Vote Tabulators & Alternative Voting Methods for the Purpose of the 2026 Municipal Election, and 2026 Election Plan Enhancements and Considerations

Council Strategic Plan Alignment:

Theme: Regulatory & compliance

Goal: See above

Executive Summary:

The municipal election (the Election) will be held on Monday, October 26, 2026 (Voting Day). Section 42 of the [Municipal Elections Act, 1996](#) (the Act) provides that Council may pass a by-law (a) authorizing the use of voting and vote-counting equipment such as voting machines, voting recorders or optical scanning vote tabulators; and (b) authorizing voters to use an alternative voting method, such as voting by mail or by telephone, that does not require voters to attend at a voting place in order to vote.

This report recommends that Council approve a by-law to authorize the use of voting equipment, and to allow for alternative voting methods that do not require voters to attend at a voting place to vote. The Act requires that this by-law be passed by the municipality, no later than May 1 in the year of the election.

In addition, this report provides Council with an update on the plans for the Election and enhancements that are being considered to elevate the voter and candidate experience.

January 13, 2026

Page 2 of 10

Recommendation:

That the by-law attached to Report Number 26-047 as Exhibit A, being “A By-Law to authorize the use of Optical Scan Vote Tabulators and Alternative Voting Methods for the Purpose of the 2026 Municipal Election”, be approved; and

That Council direct Kingston Transit to provide free transit service to voters who show their Voter Card and are travelling to and/or from their voting place on any municipal election voting day.

January 13, 2026

Page 3 of 10

Authorizing Signatures:

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CITY SOLICITOR

Jenna Morley, City Solicitor

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CHIEF

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

**Lanie Hurdle, Chief
Administrative Officer**

Consultation with the following Members of the Corporate Management Team:

Paige Agnew, Commissioner, Growth & Development Services	Not required
Jennifer Campbell, Commissioner, Community Services	Not required
Neil Carbone, Commissioner, Corporate & Emergency Services	Not required
David Fell, President & CEO, Utilities Kingston	Not required
Desirée Kennedy, Chief Financial Officer & City Treasurer	Not required
Ian Semple, Commissioner, Transportation & Infrastructure Services	Not required

January 13, 2026

Page 4 of 10

Options/Discussion:

Background

Optical scan tabulators and internet voting have been successfully used during previous municipal elections, beginning in 2014, ensuring accurate and efficient vote counting. Internet voting was introduced to provide greater accessibility and convenience, with strong uptake by voters. The following is a breakdown of voting methods, by percentage, from the 2014, 2018 and 2022 municipal elections and the 2017 municipal by-election:

Table 1: Voting Percentages by Voting Method 2014 - 2022

Voting Method	2014	2017	2018	2022
Voting Day (in person)	64%	46%	49%	30%
Advance voting (in person)	8%	12%	12%	19%
Internet voting	26%	37%	37%	49%
Institutional voting	2%	0%	1%	2%

In 2014 there were 48 ballots cast by telephone voting which are not represented in the above table. For the 2017 by-election for Countryside District, seven ballots were cast by institutional voting but are represented as 0% in the above table due to rounding. Institutional voting occurs at long-term care facilities and retirement homes. The Act requires that municipalities provide dedicated voting places for residents of long-term care facilities and retirement homes on Voting Day.

The above figures demonstrate an upward trend in the number of voters choosing to cast their ballot online as opposed to in person. There is a downward trend in those choosing to vote in-person on Voting Day, with a subsequent upward trend in those choosing to vote in-person via advance voting.

2026 Municipal Election Plans

Building on lessons learned from previous elections, staff continue to explore innovations that improve voter accessibility, enhance security, and improve the election experience for both voters and candidates.

January 13, 2026

Page 5 of 10

Voting Options

For 2026, voters will have the choice to vote:

- In person on Advance Voting Days, Friday, October 16, 2026, and Saturday, October 17, 2026;
- In person on Voting Day, Monday, October 26, 2026; and
- By internet between 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, October 14, 2026, and ending at 8:00 p.m. on Voting Day.

Voting Place Staff Roles

Each voting place will have the following staff:

- Site Supervisor: Responsible for overseeing operations at the voting place, issuing ballots to the Deputy Returning Officer(s), and ensuring ballot account statements balance at the end of the day.
- Deputy Returning Officer(s): Responsible for issuing ballots to voters and maintaining the official Voters' List, including assisting voters whose names are not on the Voters' List or whose information on the Voters' List needs to be revised.
- Machine Operator: Responsible for operating the Optical Scan Vote Tabulator and administering the Accessible Voting Sessions.
- Greeter: Responsible for directing voters and managing flow within the voting location.

Advance Voting

Advance voting will be held on Friday, October 16, 2026, and Saturday, October 17, 2026, at six voting places, with varying hours to accommodate different schedules. To maximize convenience and encourage participation, voters will be able to vote at one of two voting places, with Countryside District (District 1) residents able to vote at one of three locations.

Voting Opportunities on Voting Day

Each District will have one voting place, except for Countryside which will have two voting places due to its large geographic area. Voting places will be open from 10:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. on Voting Day. Targeted messaging will be prepared to inform voters of advance voting and internet voting opportunities to help reduce line ups on Voting Day.

January 13, 2026

Page 6 of 10

Internet Voting

During the 2014 municipal election internet voting was available for advance voting only (i.e. internet voting was not available on Voting Day), and 26% of voters used internet voting to cast their ballot. Beginning with the 2017 by-election, internet voting was available for advance voting and continued until the close of voting places on Voting Day. Refer to Table 1: Voting Percentages by Voting Method 2014 - 2022 on page four of this report for internet voting turnout percentages.

For the 2026 municipal election, the internet voting period will be 13 days, beginning at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, October 14 and continuing until 8:00 p.m. on Voting Day. Voters will need to be registered for internet voting prior to 5:00 p.m. on Voting Day.

Voting Places

Staff has begun the process of identifying potential voting places. City-owned facilities, including public libraries, will be used, where feasible, because of their proximity to transit and overall level of accessibility. Staff will collaborate with the Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee to review potential voting places using the Federal Polling Place Suitability Checklist. This checklist contains 37 accessibility criteria, of which 15 are mandatory. A voting place must meet the 15 mandatory criteria, at a minimum, to be considered accessible.

Free Transit on Advance Voting Days and Voting Day

Staff has consulted with Kingston Transit and Kingston Access Bus Services and both are supporting free transportation to voting places during the advance voting period and on Voting Day. Voters using Kingston Transit will need to show their Voter Card. Free transportation on Kingston Access Bus will be for registered users of that service only and, when reserving their transportation, the voter will have to identify the voting place to which they are going.

Online Voter Services

Online Voters Services (OVS) is an online portal which allows voters to determine if they are on the Voters' List and/or confirm their information is correct. If the voter is not on the Voters' List, or needs to make revisions to their information, the voter may submit the required application and documentation through the OVS portal to either register to vote or update their information.

Voters checking to see if they are on the Voters' List will be prompted to enter their name, property address and optionally their birthdate. A real-time lookup is then performed against the list of eligible voters, and a single positive or negative response is provided.

If the voter is on the Voters' List, the OVS portal will display the appropriate voting dates, times and locations applicable for the voter. An optional service being considered is the provision of the list of candidates applicable to the voter based on the supplied property address.

If the voter is not on the Voters' List, the OVS portal will provide the voter with the messaging

January 13, 2026

Page 7 of 10

necessary to have their name added to the list. The registration process can be undertaken by the voter through the OVS portal. The voter will be prompted to enter all of the required information: name, birth date, property address, mailing address, school support, occupancy status and residency status. The voter will also have the option to upload required identification, such as a photo of their driver's licence or other authorized identification. Once the data is captured, the applicable form is generated that contains the supplied information. The form can then be submitted through the OVS portal or printed by the voter and brought to the Election Office or to a voting place to complete the process of adding the voter to the Voters' List. Registration requests submitted through the OVS portal will be reviewed and processed by staff who will either add the voter to the Voters' List, decline the request, or ask for additional information.

If sufficient information is not provided to complete the voter registration (e.g. no identification provided) it is possible for election staff to add the voter to the Voter's List as a provisional voter. Such voters are not considered to be an eligible voter until their identification is verified at the Election Office or at a voting place. Once verified, election staff can update the voter's eligibility on the Voter's List from provisional to eligible.

Candidate Access Portal

The Candidate Access Portal (CAP) provides a mechanism for candidates to access the portion(s) of the Voters' List that they are entitled to, using a self-serve portal. The CAP allows candidates to download documents or forms and view real-time data for eligible voters using a basic search function. Once a candidate has registered for the CAP, they will receive an e-mail with the necessary details for accessing the CAP. Documents and forms can be posted by the Election Office in the CAP for download by the candidate, such as the form to appoint Scrutineers, the Scrutineer information sheets and the generation of maximum expense certificates.

Candidates will be able to view and download the Voters' List, revisions to the Voters' List and determine which voters have voted. The CAP will provide candidates with enhanced access to the Voters' List and other important forms and documents and can be used by Election Staff to ensure that all candidates have access to the same information at the same time.

The CAP streamlines administrative tasks for staff, including the need for staff to prepare and securely distribute individual digital copies of the Voters' List to each candidate, and the need to prepare the Certificates of Maximum Campaign Expenses for each candidate.

The CAP was used for the first time as part of the 2022 municipal election and received very favourable feedback from candidates. Staff anticipate that this tool will be used again in the 2026 municipal election.

January 13, 2026

Page 8 of 10

Public Engagement

Communications Regarding the Voters' List

The Voters' List contains the names of all persons who are eligible to vote in the municipal election. A person must be on the Voters' List to vote in the 2026 municipal election.

Previously, the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) was responsible for providing municipalities with a Preliminary List of Electors (PLE). As of January 1, 2024, MPAC is no longer responsible for collecting voter information for local elections and providing the PLE, although MPAC remains responsible for collecting information about school support.

The PLE will be provided by Elections Ontario in mid-August, and it is the responsibility of the Clerk to apply further changes or corrections based on information in the Clerk's care and control to create the final Voters' List. Elections Ontario has an online voter confirmation and update service at RegisterToVoteON.ca. This service is available now through August 12, 2026, and the link can be accessed from the [City website](#). Specific communications will be developed to promote the use of this service to ensure that as many electors as possible are included on the PLE when it is provided to the City.

The key to a quick and easy voting experience is to be on the Voters' List. Voters who are on the Voters' List will receive their Voter Card a few weeks before Voting Day. The Voter Card provides the location(s) where the voter can vote, and their unique Voter Identification Number, which allows them to register for internet voting. For in-person voting, the voter simply provides their Voter Card and appropriate identification to a Deputy Returning Officer, and they will be issued their ballot. While it is not a requirement for a voter to have a Voter Card to vote in person, it will streamline the voting process. A Voter Card is required to use internet voting.

Communications will be issued to inform voters when the Voters' List will be available for viewing, how it can be accessed and to encourage residents to check the list and to confirm their information (e.g. date of birth, address and school support) is correct.

Voters will be able to make revisions to the Voters' List beginning on September 1, 2026, up to and including Voting Day. Revisions can be made using the OVS portal described on pages six and seven of this report, or in person at the Election Office. Voters will be encouraged to update their information as soon as possible. Waiting to make changes may result in the change not being made in sufficient time for the voter to receive their Voter Card. Waiting to make revisions at a voting place will result in delays because the voter will need to complete an application form at the voting place to update their information.

Post-secondary students make up a sizable portion of the city's population. Many students are not from Kingston and the September timing for their school registration is after the PLE has been delivered to the City. Election Office staff will work with post-secondary institutions and student organizations to develop messaging to ensure the students are aware of the 2026 municipal election and encourage students to ensure that their names are on the Voters' List.

January 13, 2026

Page 9 of 10

Communications Regarding Internet Voting

While the specific reasons for the continued upward trend in internet voting remain multifaceted, it is likely due to factors such as the availability of internet voting on Voting Day and growing comfort levels with digital voting methods. Staff do not anticipate a decrease in the demand for internet voting and will prepare targeted communications to highlight its benefits, including:

- Easy and Convenient – Internet voting offers a straightforward, accessible way to participate in elections.
- Vote Anytime, Anywhere – Voters can cast their ballot from any location with internet access - home, work, on public transit, or while traveling - by using their Voter Card.
- No Line-Ups – Reduces wait times at physical voting locations, providing a smooth voting experience.
- Secure and Confidential – The City's internet voting system uses advanced security, including two factor authentication, to protect voter information and privacy. The voting platform is hosted on a secure server, accessible only through a unique registration process using a Voter Identification Number and a Personal Identification Number (PIN) and is compliant with the Canadian Digital Governance Standards Institute 111-1 Online Voting Standards.
- Reduced Rejected Ballots – The system is designed to prevent accidental invalid or spoiled ballots, ensuring each vote counts as intended, with options for voters to review and confirm their selections before submission.
- Increased Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities – internet voting provides a convenient and secure manner for persons with disabilities to vote without having to attend an in-person voting location.

Internet voting reduces wait times at in-person voting locations and improves overall voter accessibility. These enhancements aim to create a more efficient, secure, and inclusive voting process for 2026.

January 13, 2026

Page 10 of 10

Indigenization, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Accessibility (IIDEA) Considerations

Recognizing that residents who are members of equity seeking and equity deserving groups have traditionally had a lower voter turnout, staff are planning engagement opportunities such as participating in community events in key areas of the city where residents can drop in to obtain information about voting options and locations, who the candidates are in their District, check to see if they are on the Voters' List and make changes if needed. Elections staff will work with staff in Community Development, Wellbeing & IIDEA, Recreation & Leisure Services, Housing & Social Services, and community partners, to arrange appropriate locations, community outreach and awareness, and amenities.

Alternative voting methods will provide for more options to voters who may experience difficulties accessing a physical voting location. All voting locations will be equipped with accessible voting equipment to provide all voters participating in the Election with the opportunity to cast their vote independently and confidentially.

Existing Policy/By-Law

Municipal Elections Act, 1996

Financial Considerations

Sufficient funds for the Election have been included in the 2026 budget for the City Clerk's Department.

Contacts:

Janet Jaynes, City Clerk, 613-546-4291 extension 1262

Derek Ochej, Deputy City Clerk, 613-546-4291 extension 1252

Other City of Kingston Staff Consulted:

Blair Johnson, Manager, Corporate Records & Information

Exhibits Attached:

Exhibit A - A By-Law to Authorize the Use of Optical Scan Vote Tabulators and Alternative Voting Methods for the Purpose of the 2026 Municipal Election

By-Law Number 2026-XX

**A By-Law to Authorize the Use of Optical Scan Vote Tabulators and
Alternative Voting Methods for the Purpose of the 2026 Municipal
Election**

Passed: Meeting date
(Month day, year)

Whereas the 2026 municipal election will be held on October 26, 2026, together with an advanced voting period as established by the Clerk; and

Whereas Section 42(1)(a) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* provides that a municipality may pass a by-law to authorize the use of vote-counting equipment, such as optical scan vote tabulators, for the purposes of casting ballots and counting votes at municipal elections; and

Whereas Section 42(1)(b) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* provides that a municipality may pass a by-law to authorize the use of alternative voting methods, such as internet voting, that do not require electors to attend at a voting place in order to vote; and

Therefore, Council enacts:

1. Optical Scan Vote Tabulators shall be used to count the ballots cast in the 2026 municipal election.
2. Internet voting shall be used as an alternative voting method to cast ballots in the 2026 municipal election.
3. The Clerk shall be authorized to take the necessary steps to implement the use of said systems.
4. This By-law shall come into force and take effect on the date of its passing.

Given first and second readings on January 13, 2026

Given third reading and passed on January 27, 2026

Janet Jaynes
City Clerk

Bryan Paterson
Mayor