

Shelburne bring in electronic voting

By Peter Richardson

Shelburne Council has voted to bring in electronic voting in time for the next municipal election.

The Town has now joined the ranks of numerous Ontario municipalities who have opted to move to digital voting from the old fashioned paper ballot.

The move, to be inaugurated for the 2018 Elections, will see voters using their computers, tablets or smart phones to cast their ballots, rather than the traditional polling stations of previous years.

As outlined in a report from Deputy Clerk Jennifer Willoughby, the move should improve voter turnout, facilitate more accurate vote counting and eliminate the human error factor completely.

This new approach will make it easier for persons with mobility issues to cast their ballot, as well as those who commute.

Statistics from some of the 97 municipalities currently using the electronic voting method show a dramatic increase in voter turnout, with some numbers as high as 66 per cent. Compared to Shelburne's 2014 turnout of only 35.56 per cent of eligible voters, this would be a significant increase.

Electronic voting features many benefits, such as eliminating long line-ups at polling stations, allowing for voting at any time, from anywhere that is convenient for the voter, reducing staffing and administration costs, and being environmentally friendly.

Each eligible voter will be sent a personal PIN number, via Canada Post, which they will enter before being allowed to cast their vote.

Once used, the PIN is no longer able to be re-entered.

Locally, both Guelph and Mulmur are utilizing alternative voting, with great success.

Statistics from Mulmur in 2014 showed that the average voting time via the internet was 54 seconds, while by telephone it was one minute and 36 seconds, and that the busiest voting time was from 9 a.m. until 7 p.m.

More women than men voted, 51 per cent versus 49 per cent, while 33 per cent of voters cast their ballot on election day.

In order to ease the transition for those voters who might find the change daunting, there will be several locations, including Town Hall, where staff will be on hand to walk them through the process.

Laptops will be provided at these locations for the voters to use.

Mono, Mulmur and Melancthon will all be utilizing electronic voting in 2018 and both Amaranth and East Garafraxa are considering the switch as well.

The voting services will be re-supplied and administered by Intelivote Systems Incorporated, a Canadian company and a leader in electronic voting services.

In addition to elections throughout Canada, they have also supplied their services for elections in the United States and the United

Kingdom.