

Public Meeting Information Report

Clerk's Division, Corporate Services

Public Meeting: April 15, 2025 at 7:00p.m., Hybrid Meeting / Council Chamber

The Purpose of a Public Meeting:

Public consultation is being conducted through a Public Meeting for Council's consideration of Alternative Methods of Voting for the 2026 Municipal and School Board Election. Notice of this Public Meeting was posted on the Town's [website](#) on March 27, 2025 and advertised in the Caledon Citizen on March 28, 2025. Staff are available answer or research into any questions the public or Council may have on this matter.

This matter of methods to elect Regional Councillors was scheduled for this public meeting to coincide with the public meeting on methods to elect Regional Councillors. Public consultation results from this public meeting are scheduled to come forward to General Committee on May 6, 2025. Deferral of considering alternative voting methods limits the Town of Caledon's competitiveness to effectively procure relevant vendors offering alternative voting method products and services.

Staff and Council will not make a recommendation or decision at a Public Meeting. The Staff Report that is to be brought forward and considered by Council at the May 6, 2025 General Committee will be made publicly available when the agenda is published by April 30, 2025. This report will provide public consultation results and address any outstanding questions which required further research.

Please contact the Clerk's Office at agenda@caledon.ca to request to be notified of any future Public or Council Meetings.

Legislative Considerations:

Under [Section 5](#) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, herein referred to as the *Act*, the next Municipal and School Board election will take place on Monday October 26, 2026. [Section 42\(1\)\(b\)](#) of the *Act*, authorizes the council of a local municipality to pass By-laws permitting electors to use an alternative method of voting that does not require the elector to be at a voting location.

The authorization granted under Section 42(1)(b) of the *Act* is limited by Section 42(2)(a) which stipulates that the By-law may only apply to the next regular election if it is passed on or before May 1 in the year of the election. It is best practice for a municipality to pass such a By-law well in advance of this legislative deadline. This practice is to ensure that the Town of Caledon can effectively maximize its bid in what becomes a competitive procurement process in terms of both value for money and vendor availability as the marketplace for alternative voting method products or services rapidly scales up approximately a year in advance of the May 1, 2026 legislative deadline.

The Municipal Clerk as Returning Officer for the Town of Caledon is preparing for the 2026 Municipal and School Board Election. Planning for municipal elections is conducted in a manner that reflects and upholds the principals of the *Act* which is generally recognized as follows:

- the secrecy and confidentiality of the voting process is paramount;
- the election shall be fair and non-bias;
- the election shall be accessible to the voters;
- the integrity of the voting process shall be maintained throughout the election;
- there is to be certainty that the results of the election reflect the votes cast;
- electors and candidates shall be treated fairly and consistently; and
- the proper majority vote governs by ensuring that valid votes are counted and invalid votes are rejected so far as reasonably possible.

Public Meeting Information Report

Clerk's Division, Corporate Services

Explanation of Different Voting Methods:

In keeping with the [Town of Caledon's 2023-2025 Strategic Plan](#) and the Municipal Clerk's legislative responsibility to conduct an accessible election, the progressive reduction of barriers through the embracing of alternative methods of voting is in line with the goal to increase service excellence, accountability, and an accessible election. In this context, it may be achieved by continuing the improvement of serving the differing needs of residents in the electoral process. The adoption and implementation of alternative voting methods in addition to in-person paper ballots is one of the most useful tools available to remove barriers for electors and candidates including those with disabilities. The following provides a general explanation of how each method would function and places it within the context of its use by other municipalities across Ontario.

In-Person Paper Ballot:

Historically, the Town of Caledon has utilized in-person paper ballot voting to conduct municipal elections. The process for voting is as follows. Prior to voting day, Voter Notification Cards (VNC's) are mailed out to residents who are listed as eligible to vote. Upon receiving their Voter Notification Card, electors proceed in-person to either an advance voting location or to a voting location on voting day to cast their ballot. Once their identification is confirmed and their ballot is issued by a Deputy Returning Officer, the elector is then struck off the voters list by the Deputy Returning Officer. After the elector marks their ballot behind the privacy screen, it is deposited into the electronic tabulator. There, the ballot is scanned, and the elector's choice is recorded. The ballot is then deposited into a secure ballot box. Once voting is closed, the tabulator provides the results of all votes cast.

Without the adoption of alternative methods of voting, the *Act* under [Section 44](#) permits a person who is entitled to be an elector in a local municipality to appoint another person who is also entitled to be an elector to be their voting proxy, to vote on behalf another voter. This process contains limitations on its use and requires the completion of a statutory form. Additionally, the person becoming the proxy voter is required to come to Town Hall to have the form commissioned. While the result of proxy voting is to allow an elector to vote, who is not otherwise able to get to voting locations on either the advance voting days or voting day. The multiple requirements and advanced planning required may not act to sufficiently remove a barrier to electors.

According to information collected by the [Association of Municipalities of Ontario](#) (AMO), across Ontario, the share of municipalities only offering in-person paper ballots is falling. The 2018 municipal election saw 35 percent of municipalities offer only in-person paper ballots. The 2022 municipal election saw 24 percent of municipalities do the same. Within the Region of Peel, both the City of Brampton and the City of Mississauga utilize paper ballots.

Home Voting Service as an Expansion to In-Person Paper Ballots:

The addition of a limited "home voting service" would be available subject to guidelines established in advance. For example, the service would be available only during a set period and be available upon the receipt of a request for the service. Only an elector who is not able to leave their home due to illness, injury or disability may contact the Municipal Clerk or designate to schedule the service. No specific reason would have to be provided by the requesting elector, but they would have to be required to sign an acknowledgement form stating they are not able to leave their home due to illness, injury or disability and are choosing to access this service as a result.

The process for a "home voting service" would proceed as follows. The elector calls the clerk's office to request the service. Before scheduling a time, the clerk's office would inform the elector of the eligibility requirements of the service and inform them they would have to sign the acknowledgement form

Public Meeting Information Report

Clerk's Division, Corporate Services

confirming their eligibility. Then the clerk would get the electors address and schedule a time during the allotted period where the two Deputy Returning Officers would arrive at the elector's residence to facilitate voting. Ideally, this service could be conducted with a member of the clerk's team as one Deputy Returning Officer and one member of the By-law enforcement team acting as the second Deputy Returning Officer. The benefit of By-law enforcement being present as they are more familiar with the regulations and procedures surrounding the entrance into a resident's home to facilitate the service, while the clerks team understands the home voting procedures.

Internet Voting:

The exact process for internet voting varies depending on the platform contracted to provide the service and the levels of additional security measures desired by the contracting municipality. Therefore, the following process for internet voting serves to provide a general description of the process.

As in past elections, Voter Notification Cards are mailed out to all eligible electors. Included with the VNC's, there would be detailed voting instructions for all available voting methods offered by the Town of Caledon. There would also be contact information should the elector require further assistance and information. Each VNC's would be printed with the link the website clearly indicated and an individual PIN. To access the internet voting website, the elector would need to enter the individual PIN on the webpage provided in there VNC, and their date of birth. Additional levels of security may be added which would grant access to the voting platform once entered along with the date of birth of the elector associated with the PIN. The system will then run the entered information against the information contained on the voters' list and determine that they are eligible to vote. After being deemed to be eligible, the elector will be asked to accept an "elector declaration statement" indicating that they understand the offences and penalties for fraudulent or corrupt acts (which would be listed for the elector to review) prior to them being issued a ballot.

The elector is then present with instructions on how to mark the ballot and how to navigate to the different races (Mayor, Ward Councilor, School Trustee, etc.). After the elector makes their selection, they are present with a confirmation screen to allow them to review their selections before the elector selects to cast their ballot. It is important to note that should the elector be disconnected at any point prior to casting their ballot, they would be able to log back in and cast their ballot. Once the ballot is cast, just like when voting through in-person paper ballot, it cannot be retrieved or altered, and the elector is struck off the voters' list, meaning they are not able to vote again either online or in-person. Once voting is closed the results are provided to the Municipal Clerk.

Across the province, Internet voting is being adopted as an alternative voting method in a growing number of municipalities. AMO has found that internet voting is used by 51 percent of municipalities in Ontario representing 217 municipalities during the 2022 Municipal Election. This represented an increase from 42 percent that used it in the 2018 Municipal Election. Geographically similar communities to the Town of Caledon utilized internet voting such as Haldimand County and the Municipality of Clarington. Furthermore, the neighboring municipalities of the City of Vaughan, the Town of Halton Hills, the Township of East Garafraxa, the Town of Mono, the Township of Adjala-Tosorontio and the Town of Tecumseth all utilize internet voting.

Telephone Voting:

Resembling the process for internet voting, telephone voting involves mailing the VNC's to all eligible electors. Along with the VNC's, there would be instructions on how to vote by telephone and their individual ID number and PIN. The elector would then call the number provided and enter the provided ID number and PIN along with their date of birth prior to be able to vote. The elector would subsequently listen to and agree to an "elector declaration statement" confirming they are eligible to vote and are casting their own

Public Meeting Information Report

Clerk's Division, Corporate Services

ballot. After confirming their eligibility, an audio version of the ballot is read to the electors who then enters and confirms their selection. Once the vote is cast, the electors name is struck off the voters' list. Once voting polls are closed the results are provided to the Municipal Clerk.

AMO indicates that telephone voting is often provided alongside internet voting. 42 percent of municipalities offered this voting method for the 2022 Municipal Election. The Municipality of Clarington, as a comparator, provides telephone voting alongside internet voting. The neighboring municipalities of Township of Adjala-Tosorontio, the Town of Mono and the Township of East Garafraxa also provide telephone voting in addition to internet voting.

Vote-by-Mail:

To access a vote-by-mail service, the elector submits a request to the clerk's office before a set date in advance of voting day to ensure the request can be processed and the vote-by-mail kit can be sent to the elector in advance of the deadline to return the completed ballot. Typically, a vote-by-mail kit would contain the ballot, a secrecy envelope, elector declaration statement and a return envelope with postage pre-paid up to the cut-off date along with step-by-step instructions on how to vote-by-mail. After receiving their kit, the elector would mark their ballot and seal it inside the secrecy envelope. Next, the elector would sign their "elector declaration statement" and seal it inside the return mailing envelope along with the already sealed secrecy envelope. The elector declaration statement acts as an affidavit or oath that must be signed for the ballot to be counted. Upon receiving the completed kit, election officials open the vote-by-mail package and sperate the elector declaration statement and the sealed secrecy envelope. The elector declaration statement is reviewed, the elector is struck off the voters' list, and the ballot is cast. The secrecy envelope is then placed in a sealed ballot box and kept safe until voting day when it is opened and counted by election staff where they may be watched by scrutineers if desired by candidates and when permitted by law.

Vote-by-mail represents a method of voting that has been adopted by about 16 percent of municipalities in Ontario according to AMO. The neighboring municipality of the Town of Erin is the only nearby municipality that utilizes the vote-by-mail method.

Options for Consideration:

Staff have identified the following alternative voting method options as the most promising for consideration. They all contain a balance of features and implications. It should be noted that Internet voting and Telephone voting would be services that could be offered to all electors. Vote-by-mail would be more limited service that would be available to all electors upon the receipt of a request. Finally, a home voting service would be more limited still owing to the personalized nature of the service, having limited availably to only those electors that are too injured, ill, or otherwise unable to leave their home subject to capacity limitations.

Option 1 - Expanded Traditional:

This model for conducting the 2026 Municipal and School Board Election principally involves finding ways to build on the in-person paper ballot approach utilized in previous elections. This option would involve utilizing the in-person paper ballots as the primary method for both advance voting and voting day. The expanded traditional option would further include the provision of a limited home voting service for electors who are not able to leave their home due to illness, injury, or disability on the condition that they sign an acknowledgement that confirming their eligibility to receive the service as describe previously in the report. It is important to note that owing to the personalized nature of this service, it would be limited in nature based on meeting the eligibility criteria and be offered first come first served until the capacity limit for the service is reached.



Public Meeting Information Report

Clerk's Division, Corporate Services

Option 2 - In-person, Online and/or Telephone Advance Vote:

This model for conducting the 2026 Election would involve operating in-person paper ballot voting for both advance voting and voting day. It is the traditional model but without the provision of a home voting service. Accessibility of the voting locations and voting booths would be offered along with additional voting aids. The principal difference under this option would be that during the period for advanced voting, electors would also have the option to use internet voting. This time frame would be over a period of approximately two weeks and would conclude on the Friday before voting day. An elector could vote at any time which provides greater flexibility and reduces barriers to access. Voting support would be provided and accessible through the Clerk's Division and potentially at available municipal facilities located across the Town during business hours. Internet voting provides for accessibility improvements since (depending on the service the Town selects) it often has accessibility features built into the platform. These features include the ability to make text sizes larger, integration with screen readers, and the ability for residents to exercise their right to vote without having to leave their home.

Option 3 - In-person and Vote-by-Mail:

This model for conducting the 2026 Election would see the utilization of in-person paper ballots for advance voting and voting day. In-person voting would also occur in the same manner as the traditional model but without the home voting service. The accessibility of voting locations and booths at both advance voting and voting day would be provided along with voting additional voting aids. In addition to the traditional voting service, there would also be a vote by mail service provided to electors. This service would have a clearly identifiable last date to post the completed ballot for it to be returned in time to be counted. Additionally, there would be locations around the Town at Town-owned facilities for residents to drop off their vote-by-mail packages up to the Friday before voting day. This method availability would improve accessibility by giving electors a method of voting that does not require them to be present at the voting locations, allowing electors to vote from their home.

Consultation:

In accordance with best practices, a notice of this meeting was placed in the Caledon Citizen on March 28, 2025. In addition, the meeting information was made available on the Town's website in advance of the meeting date. Additionally, a survey has been made available to the public and will be open until April 27, 2025. The survey is available on ['Have Your Say' Caledon website](#).

Consultations were held with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) on March 31, 2025 in the form of a presentation to the AAC based on the accompanying [Staff Report 2025-0185](#). The feedback received from the committee will be included in the report to the General Committee on May 6, 2025. The AAC has recommended to Council the adoption of option 2 (In-person, Online and/or Telephone Advance Vote) as the alternative voting method for the 2026 Municipal and School Board Election.

Next Steps:

The consultation gathered at this public meeting will be minuted and included on the April 22, 2025 Council agenda and considered alongside feedback received from the survey in the report to the General Committee on May 6, 2025. The received public consultation is used to inform Council's decision on the alternative voting methods for the 2026 Municipal Election. Council's decision on this matter is scheduled to formally occur at its May 20, 2025 meeting.

Public Meeting Information Report

Clerk's Division, Corporate Services

Contact:

Town of Caledon Contact: Kevin Klingenberg, Municipal Clerk, Returning Officer at 905.584.2272 x. 2366 or via email to elections@caledon.ca.

Attachments:

- Schedule A: Presentation