

Dear Councilors, Mayor and Deputy Mayor:

We are looking to comment on concerns raised by local taxpayers regarding Alternative Voting Methods for the 2026 Election.

The Municipal Elections Act, 1996, S.O. 1996, c.32, Sched., was written to follow a strict procedure based solely on **paper ballots**. These include designated [Scrutineers](#) on election day (Municipal Act 46), strict guidelines regarding in-person Voting Procedures ([Municipal Act 46.](#)), including the physical, in-person [Counting of Votes](#) (Municipal Act 54), and physical, in-person [Recounts](#) (Municipal Act 56) -if required - among other clauses subject to hard-copy Paper ballots. It wasn't until the 2018 election that our municipality began to implement the loophole in Section 42(1b) of the Act.

We do not have 100% confidence that any prior or future election using Digital, Telephone voting or tabulator machines are accurate, nor are we convinced that these methods are without potential for fraud or error. It is impossible to provide the public with certainty that their vote is being counted, in good faith, with any of these options; once implemented, there is no clear way to enact the procedures set out by the Municipal Election Act that ensure transparency and accuracy, as well as a physical chain-of-custody for each ballot. This [recent report](#) speaks to the serious concerns regarding the use of alternative methods for elections from Western University, but to summarize:

Online voting is increasingly prevalent in Ontario's municipalities, despite a lack of regulated technological and procedural safeguards. Individual municipalities, lacking deep knowledge of online voting technologies, are responsible for procuring technology from private vendors which make security and privacy claims that are difficult to verify. These reasons, among others, have contributed to an anomalous environment where election technology, security, and procedures diverge greatly from other robust democracies that use electronic voting...

The entire system must be reliable and verifiable in a way that is convincing to the voting public. As members of the voting public, we want to put it on record that many are not convinced in municipal election reliability; in fact, trust in elections and institutions has never been lower. With alternative voting methods there is no guarantee that each ballot is being safeguarded, counted accurately, designated properly or can ultimately be verified after the election has been determined. There is a concern that the outcome of the election is already decided behind the scenes before any vote is cast.

From the public viewpoint, what occurred during the 2022 Election night created ample suspicion about the use of alternative methods of voting. A pre-designed PowerPoint with the "winning" candidates was flashed onscreen to the audience at Council chambers well before the vote was even officially confirmed and announced. This was promptly removed by the Clerk. Later, the official results were not announced by municipal staff until well after they were posted publicly by the media. How did the clerk have time to prepare a presentation with the winning candidates before the results were confirmed? And how far in advance did staff know who was going to win? And why did they not produce the Presentation that was already accidentally revealed on-time when

the election was officially called? In spite of the clear discrepancies, there was no recourse for any candidate to object to the results as there was no ballots to count or deliberate on, as required by the Act: (3) A scrutineer or certified candidate may object to a ballot, or to the counting of some or all votes in a ballot, on the ground that the ballot or votes do not comply with the prescribed rules. 1996, c. 32, Sched., s. 54 (3).

Election's Canada website states this succinctly: "The ballot is at the heart of the electoral process and of the elector's right to vote". Each ballot fulfills a written intention by a registered and legitimately identified voter with a signature that can be tracked, traced and followed through a chain-of-command from 10am on election day to the final scrutineered vote after polls close at 8PM - by real people in the community; this is irreplaceable with telephone and digital voting. Let's not pretend to confuse technological progress with increased accountability. They do not correlate.

(Note: Tabulators were not used for the recent Federal election; ballots were hand counted. Why are tabulators even being put forward as an option for hard-copy ballots for our small municipality? This is not transparent and an unnecessary use of our tax dollars.)

We also take objection to the presumption that the method of voting needs to take into account leisure or convenience: the data from the 2006 - 2014 elections, well before the introduction of online options, do not show that constituents were more willing to vote because of ease of access by digital or telephone options – there was almost the same number of voter turnouts with paper ballots, even higher in 2006, but a negligible difference across the board in comparison to the years with digital options. Effort is a requirement of a healthy Democracy, and it is disingenuous to suggest that the taxpaying people of this community are not willing to assert even a small amount of effort (like traveling to a designated election facility to physically vote on election day) to elect their future leaders. The data says otherwise.

Digital elections may have served a purpose during Emergency orders. We are no longer in an Emergency, we no longer want the community to be segregated and disjointed that they cannot come together, in person, to elect their next Council. We stand on tradition over convenience, the physical gathering of community over the disjointed use of technology and a clean chain of custody of our intentional vote for the 2026 municipal election - and the procedures in the Municipal Elections Act to be enacted, as was originally intended, with paper ballots counted by human hands. No Alternative methods required.

Thank you for your time,

Douro-Dummer Local Taxpayers

Please see Section 47 of the Municipal Elections Act and confirm with Staff how Alternative Voting Methods can comply to these procedures:

## **Municipal Elections Act, Section 47**

### **Rights of candidates and scrutineers**

(5) The persons described in clauses (1) (b), (c), (d) and (e) are each entitled,

- (a) to be present when materials and documents related to the election are delivered to the clerk under subclause 43 (5) (b) (ii) and clause 55 (1) (d);
- (b) to enter the voting place 15 minutes before it opens and to inspect the ballot boxes and the ballots and all other papers, forms and documents relating to the vote (but not so as to delay the timely opening of the voting place);
- (c) to place his or her own seal on the ballot box, immediately before the opening of the voting place, so that ballots can be deposited in the box and cannot be withdrawn without breaking the seal;
- (d) to place his or her own seal on the ballot box immediately after the close of voting on each day of an advance vote under section 43, so that ballots cannot be deposited or withdrawn without breaking the seal;
- (e) to examine each ballot as the votes are being counted by the deputy returning officer under section 54 (but not to touch the ballot);
- (f) to object to a ballot or to the counting of votes in a ballot under subsection 54 (3);
- (g) to sign the statement of the results of the election prepared by the deputy returning officer under clause 55 (1) (a); and
- (h) to place his or her own seal on the ballot box after the counting of the votes, when the deputy returning officer seals the box under clause 55 (1) (c), so that ballots cannot be deposited or withdrawn without breaking the seal. 1996, c. 32, Sched., s. 47 (5).