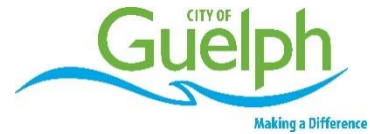


Standard Operating Procedure



Vote from Home Service Pilot Procedures

Department:	City Clerk's Office
Division:	ELE - Elections
Category:	AVM – Alternative Voting Methods
SOP Number:	024
Effective Date:	January 1, 2022
Last Revision Date:	September 8, 2022

Purpose

To establish procedures for the use of the vote from home service which is being piloted as an alternative voting method consistent with the principles and requirements of the Municipal Elections Act (MEA), 1996.

Application

This procedure applies to all eligible elector, candidates, scrutineers and election officials.

Procedure

In accordance with Sections 42 (1) and 42 (3) of the MEA, the Council of the City of Guelph passed By-law (2021) – 20620 on July 19, 2021, which authorizes the use of a vote from home service pilot for the 2022 Municipal Election.

Eligibility

The home vote service is available to eligible voters who are unable to vote using any other voting method due to illness, injury or disability.

This service is not available for other people in the home to vote at the same time if they are able to vote using any other voting method.

The home vote service is only available within the City of Guelph boundaries.

Pilot approach

A pilot approach is being used for the 2022 municipal election. A limit of 60 appointments is in place to ensure a high level of service delivery.

In the event that additional requests can be accommodated, the City Clerk will use their discretion in booking additional appointments.

Appointments will be available on a first come first served basis until the limit is reached.

Requesting a vote from home appointment

An eligible elector may only vote once in the City of Guelph, regardless of the number of properties they own, lease or rent. Eligible electors who own, lease or rent more than one property and reside in Guelph must vote where they reside.

To be eligible to vote from home, an elector must:

- Be on the voters' list or have applied to add themselves to the voters' list at the time of requesting an appointment;
- Affirm they are unable to vote by mail or attend a voting location in-person without unreasonable difficulty due to injury, illness or disability; and
- Be able to provide acceptable identification.

A vote from home appointment can be requested from September 12 to October 14 by:

1. Calling 519-837-5625; or
2. Emailing guelphvotes@guelph.ca.

Only the elector or an individual authorized by the elector may request to vote by mail. Candidates and third party advertisers cannot make requests or register on behalf of electors.

An elector requesting a home visit shall provide their name, contact information, qualifying Guelph address, date of birth and preferred date and time of visit.

Processing a vote from home service request

An election official shall verify that the elector is on the voters' list and, if found, they will confirm:

1. The elector is unable to vote by mail or attend a voting location in-person without unreasonable difficulty due to injury, illness or disability;
2. The electors' school support information is correct;
3. The elector has acceptable identification;
4. Whether any accommodations are required to support voting.

If the elector is not found on the voters' list, or if any of the information is incorrect, the election official shall:

1. Provide the elector with information on how to apply online to add themselves or update their information on the voters' list; or
2. If required, assist the elector in adding or updating their information on the voters' list.

If an elector is not on the voters' list or cannot be added at the time an appointment is requested, the request will not be approved. Revisions to the voters' list will not be made at the time of an appointment. All information must be correct and up to date at the time the request for an appointment is approved.

An election official may review the request and a scheduled date and time for an appointment may be provided at the time of the initial request or shortly after as a schedule is created.

The election official who approves a vote from home request will add a note for each approved elector stating "registered to vote from home" on the voter's list.

Once the registration period for the vote from home service pilot closes on October 14, 2022, any new requests may be considered at the City Clerk's discretion based on availability and capacity to support additional appointments.

Voting using the vote from home service

Home vote appointments will take place from October 11 to 14 during the advanced voting period during business hours.

Two (2) election officials will attend each appointment.

At the electors' place of residence, election officials shall:

1. Call the election team at City Hall to check-in, confirm their arrival and verify that the elector has not already been struck-off the voters' list as having voted;
2. Call the elector to give advanced notice of arrival;
3. Ask the elector for acceptable identification and confirm it matches their information on the voters' list.

Election officials will provide the election with the appropriate ballot and instruct them on how to mark it once information on the voters' list is confirmed and acceptable identification is received.

If the elector is on the voters' list but does not have acceptable identification at the time of the appointment, the election officials shall have the elector complete the Declaration of Identity and take the Oral Oath of Qualification.

An elector may request assistance from an election official, caregiver, family member or friend to mark the ballot. The person assisting would take an oral oath of secrecy to uphold the confidentiality of the vote.

To vote, the elector shall mark the ballot for their preferred candidate(s).

The marked ballot will be placed directly into a sealed ballot box by the elector or handed to election officials in a secrecy folder so they can place the ballot in a sealed ballot box to be to maintain confidentiality of the vote.

Marking the elector as having voted

After leaving the electors' place of residence, election officials shall:

1. Call the election team at City Hall to check-in;
2. Confirm completion of the appointment; and
3. Verify that the elector has voted so that they are struck-off the voters' list.

Return of vote from home ballots

Once all scheduled vote from home appointments are completed for the day, election officials will deliver sealed ballot boxes containing ballots and all other election supplies to a secure location designated by the City Clerk.

Home vote appointments will conclude by the end of the advanced voting period.

Candidates and scrutineers

Candidates and scrutineers cannot accompany election officials or attend vote from home appointments.

Candidates and scrutineers are permitted to attend the opening and tabulation of ballots at the end of the advanced voting period. The City Clerk shall provide notice to candidates of the schedule time and location of tabulation.

Tabulating returned vote from home ballots

The City Clerk will pre-determine dates, times and locations for vote from home ballots to be tabulated.

Candidates and scrutineers are permitted to attend the tabulation of the vote from home ballots. The City Clerk will provide advance notice to candidates of the scheduled times and the location.

Election officials will open the sealed vote from home ballot boxes and tabulate the ballots. Ballots will be fed face down into the tabulator.

Should a vote tabulator reject a ballot during the tabulation process, it will be re-fed through the tabulator a second time. If the tabulator rejects the ballot again, the ballot will be placed in a box labelled "For Adjudication".

Adjudication of ballots

An election official will remove ballots from the "For Adjudication" box for examination.

1. If the election official concludes that the elector intent is unclear, or if the ballot is unmarked, known as a blank ballot, or over-voted, the ballot will be re-fed into the tabulator and will be counted as marked. The ballot will be tabulated but a blank or over-voted office will not be counted.
2. If the election official concludes that elector intent is clear, they will prepare a replacement ballot in full view of any candidates or scrutineers, mark the ballot in accordance with their interpretation of the elector's intent, and initial the replacement ballot.
3. The original and replacement ballots will be displayed side-by-side for candidate and scrutineer inspection.
4. The original ballot will be placed in a box labelled "Adjudicated Ballots – Original" and the replacement ballot will be fed through the tabulator.

If a candidate or scrutineer objects to the designated election official's interpretation of elector intent, the City Clerk or designate, in consultation with legal counsel, if required, will:

1. Examine the ballot and make the final determination of elector intent.
2. Write "candidate or scrutineer objection" on the back of the original ballot and, if necessary, the replacement ballot.

Continue with the tabulation process.

When all ballots have been fed through the vote tabulator, all tabulators, memory cards, ballots, and other election supplies will be returned to secure storage.

The vote from home results will not be accessed or generated until after the close of voting on election day. These results will be incorporated into broader advanced voting results to ensure confidentiality of the vote and published using the City's results system on election night.

Storage and security

All tabulators, memory cards, ballots and election supplies will be securely stored at the designated location upon arrival. They will be secured in the same way before and after use in tabulation in line with requirements of the Act for the keeping of election records.

Retention of election documents

The City Clerk will securely store ballots, documents and related materials and retain them in the same manner as is provided for in the Act for the keeping of election records.

Recounts

If a recount is held, the votes will be counted in the same manner as the votes were initially counted or in accordance with recount requirements under the Act.

Definitions

"Acceptable identification" means identification showing name and qualifying address to vote as listed in [Ontario Regulation 304/13: Voter Identification](#).

"Act" means [the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, S.O. c 32](#) as amended.

"Ballot" means a ballot prepared under subsections 41 (1), 41(2) and 41(6) of the MEA.

"Candidate" means a person who has been nominated under section 33 of the Elections Act.

"City Clerk" means the Clerk of the municipality, responsible for conducting election duties as outlined in the Elections Act.

"Election official" means any individual appointed by the City Clerk, where powers and duties in relation to an election are delegated.

"Election website" means guelph.ca/vote.

"Elector" means a person who meets the qualifications as determined under the Act and appears on the voters' list or is added to the list during the revision period.

“Memory card” means a removable device where all tabulated ballot totals are stored.

“Vote tabulator” means a machine that digitally scans the ballots to read the votes and tabulate results on a memory card.

“Election day” means the day on which the final votes will be taken in accordance with Section 5 of the Act. This Municipal Election voting day is October 24, 2022.

References

[Municipal Elections Act, 1996.](#)