



ONTARIO, CA
COCHRANE
WONDERFULLY UNEXPECTED

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE ME-2026-14

ALTERNATIVE VOTING METHOD PROCEDURE

**(INTERNET & TELEPHONE VOTING, INCLUDING ACCESS THROUGH
VOTER HELP CENTRES)**

2026 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Approved by:

Cassandra Child, AOMC, Dipl.M.A.
Clerk/Returning Officer

Town of Cochrane

March 30, 2026

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1. Purpose

- a) The purpose of this procedure is to establish the requirements, safeguards, and control measures by which the Clerk shall ensure the integrity, security, reliability, transparency, and verifiability of the voting system used for the 2026 Municipal and School Board Election.
- b) This procedure applies to all components of the alternative voting method, including internet and telephone voting, and supports the Clerk's statutory responsibility for the proper conduct of the election.

2. Authority

- a) This procedure is established pursuant to the authority of the Clerk under the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, including:
 - i. Section 11 (methods of voting);
 - ii. Section 12 (procedures and forms);
 - iii. Section 53 (emergency powers).
- b) The Clerk retains full authority and responsibility for the administration, operation, and integrity of the voting system.
- c) All systems, services, and technical supports used in the conduct of the election shall operate strictly under the authority and direction of the Clerk and shall not exercise independent decision-making authority respecting the conduct of the election.

3. Application

- a) This procedure applies to:
 - i. The design, configuration, testing, deployment, operation, monitoring, and decommissioning of the voting system;
 - ii. All personnel authorized by the Clerk to administer, support, or interact with the voting system;
 - iii. All processes associated with elector authentication, ballot access, vote casting, vote recording, vote storage, and tabulation.
- b) Nothing in this procedure shall be interpreted as delegating or transferring the statutory authority of the Clerk.

4. General Principles

The voting system shall be administered in accordance with the following principles:

- a) Ballot Secrecy - The secrecy of each vote shall be preserved at all times. The system shall maintain a complete separation between elector identity information and ballot content.

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- b) Elector Authentication and Eligibility - Access to the voting system shall be restricted to eligible electors through authentication processes established by the Clerk.
- c) Single Vote Enforcement - Controls shall ensure that each eligible elector is permitted to cast only one ballot. Upon successful ballot submission, the elector record shall be locked to prevent duplicate voting.
- d) System Integrity and Security - The system shall be designed and operated to prevent unauthorized access, interference, tampering, duplication, or disclosure.
- e) Accuracy and Completeness - All votes shall be accurately captured, securely stored, and correctly included in the final tabulation.
- f) Transparency and Accountability - The system and associated processes shall be capable of being reviewed and verified by the Clerk through appropriate records and controls.
- g) Accessibility - The voting system shall support accessible participation in accordance with the Election Accessibility Plan.

5. System Controls and Safeguards

The Clerk shall ensure that the voting system incorporates appropriate administrative, technical, and procedural controls, including:

- a) Secure issuance, management, and, where necessary, reissuance of elector access credentials, including verification of elector identity prior to reissuance;
- b) Immediate invalidation of previously issued credentials upon authorized reissuance, with system controls preventing concurrent use;
- c) Authentication protocols to confirm elector eligibility prior to ballot access, including safeguards to limit repeated failed login attempts and terminate inactive sessions;
- d) Role-based access controls restricting administrative functions to authorized personnel, with all access subject to logging and review;
- e) Protections against duplicate voting, including automatic locking of an elector's voting status upon successful ballot submission;
- f) Encryption or equivalent safeguards for data transmission and storage consistent with recognized industry practices;
- g) System logging sufficient to record authentication attempts, ballot submission events, and administrative activity, without recording ballot selections;
- h) Monitoring tools capable of identifying irregular system behaviour, including abnormal login activity or performance issues;

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- i) Data backup, redundancy, and recovery processes sufficient to ensure continuity of operations;
- j) Safeguards ensuring that ballots, once cast, are final, immutable, and not capable of being altered, duplicated, or deleted;
- k) Continuous separation of elector identity data from ballot content within the system.
- l) Where a PIN is issued to an elector not originally appearing on the Voters' List, such issuance shall only occur following the elector's addition to the Voters' List in accordance with *ME-2026-08*.

6. Testing and Validation

Prior to the commencement of the voting period, the Clerk shall ensure that comprehensive testing and validation of the voting system is conducted, including:

- a) Logic and accuracy testing to confirm votes are recorded and tabulated as cast;
- b) Verification of ballot content, including candidate names and any questions;
- c) Confirmation that all vote totals are zero prior to activation;
- d) End-to-end testing simulating the full voting process;
- e) Testing of authentication controls, system lockout, and duplicate vote prevention;
- f) Testing of system response to interruption and recovery processes;
- g) Identification, correction, and documentation of all deficiencies prior to deployment;
- h) Retention of complete records of all testing activities and results.

7. Independent Review

- a) The Clerk may, at their discretion, retain an independent and qualified third party to review aspects of the voting system and election processes, including:
 - i. Observation or validation of testing processes;
 - ii. Review of system safeguards, controls, and security measures;
 - iii. Post-election validation of system performance and results.
- a) Any such review shall be conducted independently and shall not interfere with the administration of the election.
- b) The findings of any independent review may be considered by the Clerk; however, such review does not replace or limit the Clerk's statutory authority or responsibility.

8. Monitoring During Voting Period

During the voting period, the Clerk shall ensure:

- a) Continuous monitoring of system availability, functionality, and performance;

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- b) Ongoing review of system activity to identify irregularities, anomalies, or potential security concerns;
- c) Monitoring of authentication activity, including repeated failed login attempts or unusual access patterns;
- d) Investigation of all reported issues affecting elector access or system operation;
- e) Maintenance of an incident tracking record documenting issues, actions taken, and resolution;
- f) Implementation of corrective measures required to maintain system integrity;
- g) Coordination of technical responses under the direction of the Clerk.

9. Incident Management

Where a disruption, irregularity, or potential compromise of system integrity is identified, the Clerk shall:

- a) Assess the nature, cause, and scope of the issue;
- b) Determine the potential impact on electors and election integrity;
- c) Determine whether the circumstances constitute an emergency under section 53 of the Act;
- d) Take such action as is necessary to protect the integrity of the election, including modification, suspension, or continuation of voting;
- e) Ensure actions taken are reasonable, proportionate, and documented;
- f) Document all decisions, timelines, and rationale;
- g) Provide public communication where appropriate.
- h) This section shall be read in conjunction with:
 - i. ME-2026-03 (Emergency Procedure);
 - ii. ME-2026-15 (Cybersecurity Response Procedure).

10. Access Control

- a) Access to the voting system, including administrative functions, shall be strictly limited to individuals authorized by the Clerk.
- b) Electors may access the voting system remotely or with assistance through Voter Help Centres established under *ME-2026-07*.
- c) Access permissions shall be assigned based on role and necessity and shall be subject to monitoring and audit logging.

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- d) No candidate, scrutineer, or unauthorized individual shall have access to the voting system, system administration functions, or tabulation processes, except as expressly permitted under the Act or these procedures.

11. Records and Retention

The Clerk shall ensure that:

- a) System logs, testing records, audit records, and incident documentation are preserved;
- b) Records are retained in accordance with ME-2026-13 (Election Records & Retention);
- c) Records are maintained securely to prevent unauthorized access, alteration, or destruction;
- d) Records are sufficient to support verification, audit, recount, or legal proceedings.

12. Post-Election Verification

Following the close of voting, the Clerk shall:

- a) Confirm that the system has properly closed and no ballots were accepted after the prescribed time;
- b) Verify that vote tabulation has been completed accurately;
- c) Reconcile ballots cast with system records and elector participation data;
- d) Review system logs, reports, and incident records;
- e) Investigate and document any discrepancies;
- f) Confirm that no irregularity has affected the integrity of the results;
- g) Consider any findings from independent review, where applicable;
- b) Certify results in accordance with the Act.

13. Reliance

- a) In administering this procedure, the Clerk may rely on:
 - i. Technical systems and services used to support the voting process;
 - ii. Professional, technical, or audit expertise retained for the election;
 - iii. Established industry practices for secure electronic voting systems.
- b) Such reliance does not transfer or diminish the Clerk's statutory authority or responsibility.

14. Interpretation

- a) This procedure shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the Municipal Elections Act, 1996.

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b) In the event of conflict, the Act and any applicable regulation shall prevail.

15. Integrity Assurance

- a) The Clerk affirms that the voting system used for the 2026 Municipal and School Board Election has been established, tested, and administered in accordance with the Act and the procedures adopted by the Clerk.
- b) In carrying out this responsibility, the Clerk has ensured that appropriate safeguards, controls, and validation measures have been implemented to preserve:
- i. the secrecy of the vote;
 - ii. the integrity of the voting process;
 - iii. the security of the system; and
 - iv. the accuracy and reliability of the election results.
- c) The Clerk further affirms that all reasonable and necessary steps have been taken to monitor system performance, address issues as they arose, and verify the accuracy of the tabulated results.
- d) Nothing in this procedure shall be interpreted as guaranteeing the absence of all technical or operational issues; however, the election has been conducted in a manner that is reasonable, secure, and consistent with the requirements of the Act.