

## 2024 Municipal Election Report

### Introduction:

The 2024 Town of Antigonish’s Municipal Election was run in accordance with the Nova Scotia Municipal Elections Act. Preparations began in the spring of 2024 with the appointment of the Returning Officer (RO), Mr. Allan Armsworthy. Preparation continued in August with a review of the process with the RO, prepare nomination packages and required advertisements pertaining to the election process, nomination deadlines, etc...

The Town of Antigonish had two (2) candidates for the position of mayor and eleven (11) candidates for the six (6) council seats.

There were a number of community organized opportunities to meet candidates including one hosted by the Antigonish Chamber of Commerce where all candidates for mayor and council had the opportunity to participate. The StFX University Students’ Union and the Brian Mulroney Institute for Government hosted a meet the candidate event and a separate debate for the two candidates for mayor. Finally, an informal group (not registered with the Nova Scotia Joint Registry of Stocks) Let Antigonish Decide hosted a session to meet candidates, although there were some concerns raised that the organization was aligned with some campaigns and not impartial, resulting in low participation.

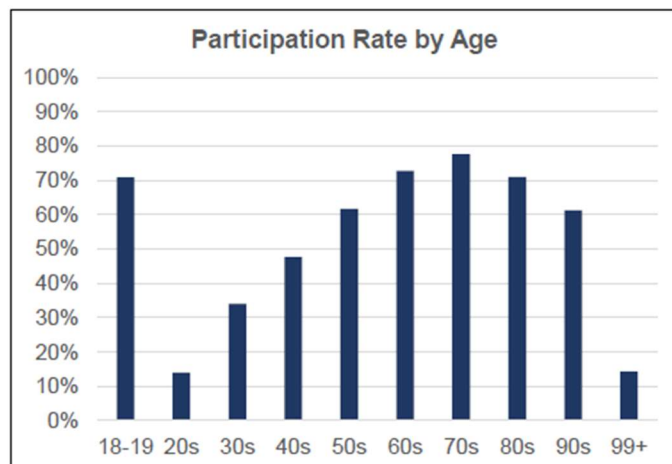
### Voter Turnout:

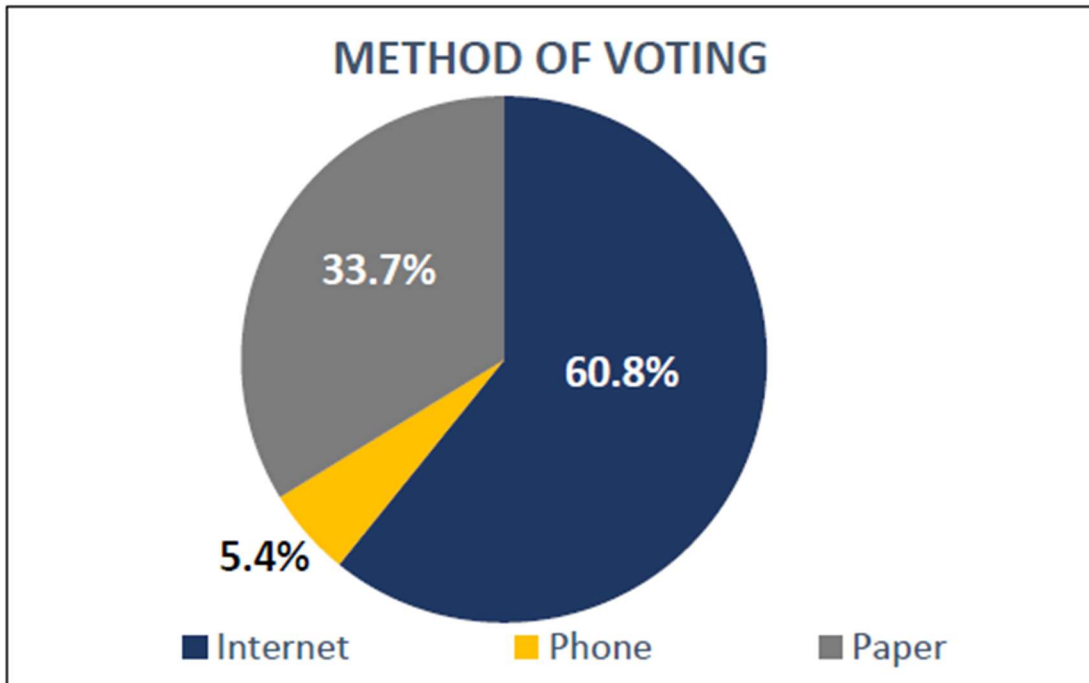
The election resulted in 3,919 eligible registered voters of which 1,948 cast ballots, for a voter turnout of 49.7%, an increase from 42.8% voter turnout in the 2020 Town of Antigonish Municipal Election.



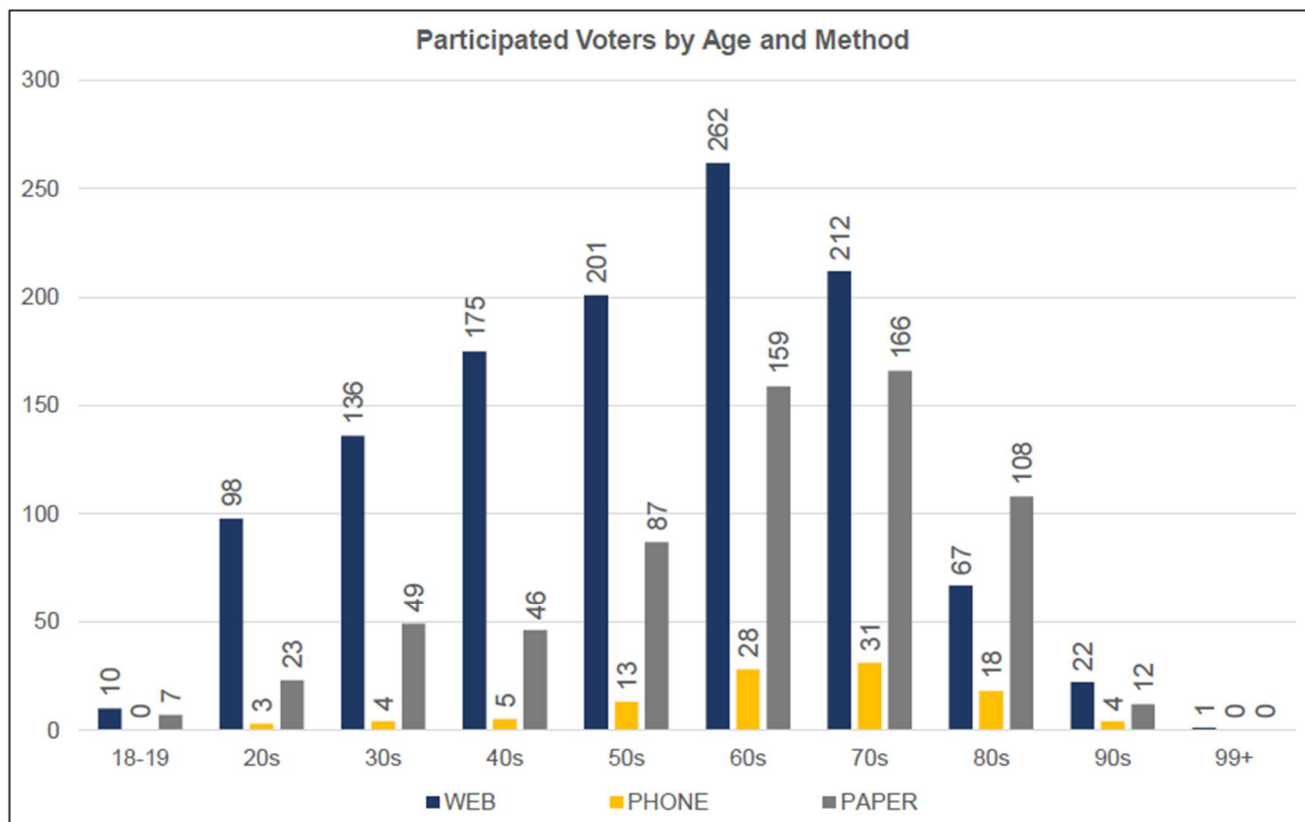
### 2024 Town of Antigonish Municipal CSAP Elections Age Statistics

| Age Breakdown of Who Voted |              |              |              |            |            |         |
|----------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|---------|
| Age                        | ELIG.        | VOTED        | WEB          | PHONE      | PAPER      | % Part. |
| 18-19                      | 24           | 17           | 10           | 0          | 7          | 70.8%   |
| 20s                        | 890          | 124          | 98           | 3          | 23         | 13.9%   |
| 30s                        | 557          | 189          | 136          | 4          | 49         | 33.9%   |
| 40s                        | 475          | 226          | 175          | 5          | 46         | 47.6%   |
| 50s                        | 488          | 301          | 201          | 13         | 87         | 61.7%   |
| 60s                        | 617          | 449          | 262          | 28         | 159        | 72.8%   |
| 70s                        | 527          | 409          | 212          | 31         | 166        | 77.6%   |
| 80s                        | 272          | 193          | 67           | 18         | 108        | 71.0%   |
| 90s                        | 62           | 38           | 22           | 4          | 12         | 61.3%   |
| 99+                        | 7            | 1            | 1            | 0          | 0          | 14.3%   |
| <b>Total</b>               | <b>3,895</b> | <b>1,930</b> | <b>1,174</b> | <b>106</b> | <b>650</b> |         |





**2024 Town of Antigonish Municipal CSAP Elections  
Age Statistics**



**Methodology:**

The election was conducted in a hybrid format providing the option of electronic or paper ballots for voters. Electronic voting was administered by IntelliVote Systems, which conducted electronic voting for a majority of municipal units in Nova Scotia. The electronic voting provided the option to vote via phone or web and was available from October 5<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 am to the closing of polls on October 19<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm. Paper ballots were distributed in person at one of the two advance voting days, October 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, at the returning office or on election day, October 19<sup>th</sup>, at the polling station at the Dr. John Hugh Gillis Regional High School.

In 2024, the IntelliVote system was used as the official source for the electoral list of eligible voters. The system was initially populated with the digital elector list provided by Elections Nova Scotia. The Deputy Clerk, in her role as Assistant Returning Officer (ARO), reviewed the preliminary list for any identified anomalies and updated accordingly. Advertisements were published advising the public that they could register to vote at Town Hall and the ARO verified identities, took affirmations, and updated the voter list accordingly. As candidates completed their filings and associated affirmations, they were provided with a digital encrypted version of the initial voter list. Candidates could then verify if residents were not registered and advise eligible residents of the process to register with either the ARO at Town Hall or the RO at the returning office. Once candidates received training on the IntelliVote system they were provided access to the system and had real-time access to the most recent voter list through a web interface. This access also allowed all candidates the opportunity to identify if an eligible voter had voted or not. This information has historically been made available to candidates on election day, although with an electronic system the information was available in real time.

**Results:**

The number of electronic ballots cast in the 2024 Town of Antigonish Municipal Election was 1,290 (66.2% of ballots cast). Paper ballots were available for two advance poll dates at the Returning Office on [October 12<sup>th</sup> noon to 8:00 pm and Oct 15<sup>th</sup> noon to 8:00 pm) and on election day at the Dr. John Hugh Gillis Regional High School October 19<sup>th</sup> 8:00 am to 7:00 pm. Each advance poll day resulted in a poll (Advance Poll 1 and Advance Poll 2) and election day had two polls (Poll 1 and Poll 2) at the high school voting location. Advance Poll 1 contained 104 ballots, Advance Poll 2 had 112 ballots, election day Poll 1 had 215 and Poll 2 had 227 ballots, for a total of 658 paper ballots or 33.8% of ballots cast. For comparison of the 1,686 votes cast in 2020, 1,322 (78.4%) were electronic and 364 (21.6%) paper ballots, however 2020 was peak COVID and as such an increased participation in electronic voting was to be expected.

The Town of Antigonish also administered the election for eligible Conseil Scolaire Acadien Provincial (CSAP) school board representatives from this region. There were two candidates resulting in 119 electronic ballots and fewer than 10 paper ballots in each of the advanced and election day polls.

The official results of the 2024 Town of Antigonish municipal and Town of Antigonish CSAP school board elections, as signed off by the RO, are posted to the Town's website at:

<https://www.townofantigonish.ca/town-documents-1/1684-official-election-results-2024/file.html>

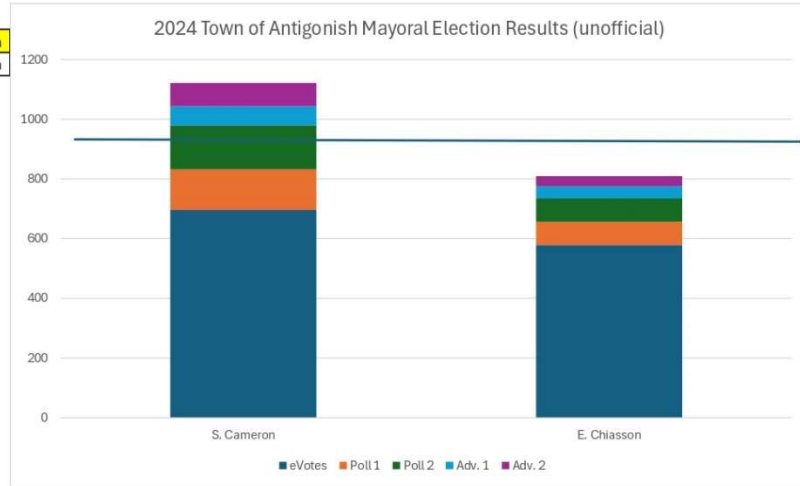
Unofficial election results, published to the Town's website on election night, are consistent with the official results and are as follows:

2024 Town of Antigonish Mayoral Election Results (unofficial)

| Candidate     | Votes       | S. Cameron  |            | E. Chiasson |            | Declined  |             | Spoiled  |             |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|-----------|-------------|----------|-------------|
| eVotes        | 1290        | 695         | 53.9%      | 579         | 44.9%      | 13        | 1.0%        | 3        | 0.2%        |
| Poll 1        | 215         | 137         | 63.7%      | 77          | 35.8%      | 0         | 0.0%        | 1        | 1.3%        |
| Poll 2        | 227         | 148         | 65.2%      | 78          | 34.4%      | 0         | 0.0%        | 1        | 1.3%        |
| Adv. 1        | 104         | 63          | 60.6%      | 41          | 39.4%      | 0         | 0.0%        | 0        | 0.0%        |
| Adv. 2        | 112         | 78          | 69.6%      | 34          | 30.4%      | 0         | 0.0%        | 0        | 0.0%        |
| <b>Totals</b> | <b>1948</b> | <b>1121</b> | <b>58%</b> | <b>809</b>  | <b>42%</b> | <b>13</b> | <b>0.7%</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>0.3%</b> |

| Mayoral Results (unofficial) |      |             |
|------------------------------|------|-------------|
| 1                            | 1121 | S. Cameron  |
| 2                            | 809  | E. Chiasson |

| Election Turnout |       |
|------------------|-------|
| Reg. Voters      | 3919  |
| Votes Cast       | 1948  |
| Turnout          | 49.7% |



2024 Town of Antigonish Council Election Results (unofficial)

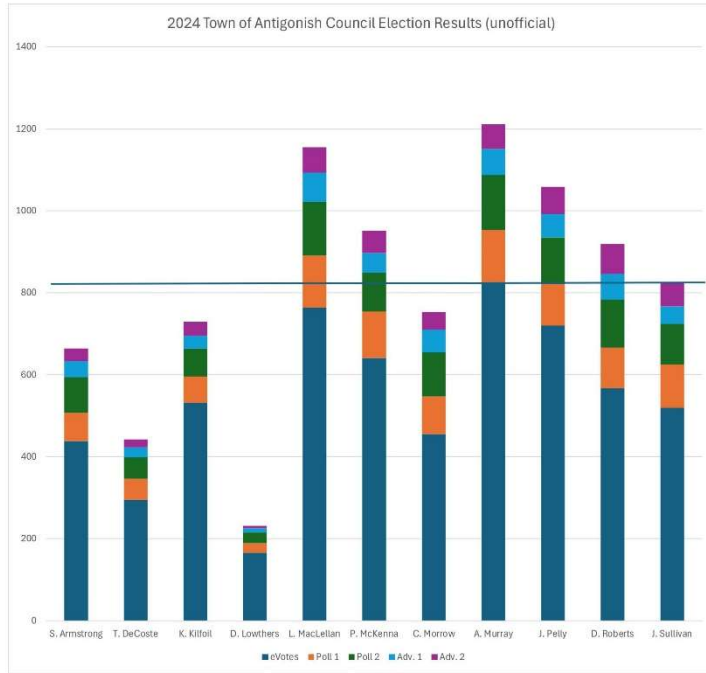
| Candidate | S. Armstrong | T. DeCoste | K. Kitfoil | D. Lowthers | L. MacLellan | P. McKenna | C. Morrow | A. Murray | J. Pelly | D. Roberts | J. Sullivan | Declined | Spoiled |
|-----------|--------------|------------|------------|-------------|--------------|------------|-----------|-----------|----------|------------|-------------|----------|---------|
| eVotes    | 438          | 295        | 531        | 166         | 764          | 641        | 455       | 825       | 720      | 567        | 519         | 8        | 8       |
| Poll 1    | 69           | 51         | 65         | 23          | 127          | 113        | 92        | 128       | 101      | 99         | 106         | 0        | 3       |
| Poll 2    | 87           | 52         | 68         | 26          | 131          | 95         | 107       | 134       | 114      | 117        | 99          | 0        | 4       |
| Adv. 1    | 39           | 25         | 31         | 10          | 71           | 48         | 56        | 64        | 57       | 63         | 43          | 0        | 0       |
| Adv. 2    | 31           | 19         | 34         | 6           | 62           | 54         | 43        | 60        | 66       | 73         | 57          | 0        | 0       |
| Totals    | 664          | 442        | 729        | 231         | 1155         | 951        | 753       | 1211      | 1058     | 919        | 824         | 8        | 15      |

Council Results (unofficial)

|    |      |              |
|----|------|--------------|
| 1  | 1211 | A. Murray    |
| 2  | 1155 | L. MacLellan |
| 3  | 1058 | J. Pelly     |
| 4  | 951  | P. McKenna   |
| 5  | 919  | D. Roberts   |
| 6  | 824  | J. Sullivan  |
| 7  | 753  | C. Morrow    |
| 8  | 729  | K. Kitfoil   |
| 9  | 664  | S. Armstrong |
| 10 | 442  | T. DeCoste   |
| 11 | 231  | D. Lowthers  |

Election Turnout

|             |       |
|-------------|-------|
| Reg. Voters | 3919  |
| Votes Cast  | 1948  |
| Turnout     | 49.7% |



Printed 2024-10-19

**2024 Town of Antigonish CSAP Poll Election Results (unofficial)**

| Candidate     | Votes      | F. Clement-Fraser |            | R. Deveau |            | Declined  |              | Spoiled  |             |
|---------------|------------|-------------------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|--------------|----------|-------------|
| eVotes        | 119        | 42                | 35.3%      | 55        | 46.2%      | 20        | 16.8%        | 2        | 1.7%        |
| Poll 1        | < 10       |                   |            |           |            |           |              |          |             |
| Poll 2        | < 10       |                   |            |           |            |           |              |          |             |
| Adv. 1        | < 10       |                   |            |           |            |           |              |          |             |
| Adv. 2        | < 10       |                   |            |           |            |           |              |          |             |
| <b>Totals</b> | <b>119</b> | <b>42</b>         | <b>35%</b> | <b>55</b> | <b>46%</b> | <b>20</b> | <b>16.8%</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>1.7%</b> |

**CSAP Town of Antigonish  
Results (unofficial)**

|   |    |                   |
|---|----|-------------------|
| 1 | 55 | R. Deveau         |
| 2 | 42 | F. Clement-Fraser |

Printed 2024-10-19

**Expenses:**

Running the 2024 Election fell below the budgeted \$55,000, coming in at just over \$40,500 net.

| <b>Expense Type</b> | <b>Balance</b>        |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| eVoting             | \$ (8,766.01)         |
| Ads                 | \$ (2,187.18)         |
| Hardware            | \$ (1,298.89)         |
| Office Exp          | \$ (2,898.59)         |
| Ballots             | \$ (1,067.14)         |
| Staff               | \$ (14,318.60)        |
| Council Setup       | \$ (10,140.98)        |
| Admin               | \$ 150.00             |
|                     | <b>\$ (40,527.39)</b> |

The primary expense was staffing costs for the RO, returning office staff, and poll workers for the advanced and election day in person polls. Council setup, which included laptops for new council members, official photos of new council, and the swearing in ceremony and eVoting services round out the top three expenses for the election.

The Town of Antigonish spent just over \$58,000 on election expenses, but about \$18,000 was recoverable from the Municipality of the County of Antigonish and the Conseil Scolaire Acadien Provincial (CSAP) for shared election services.

**Campaign Candidates and Staff Feedback:**

The Town of Antigonish posted an online survey using Microsoft Forms to solicit feedback from candidates and their teams (volunteers and/or staff). The survey was anonymous and received 13 responses. Of the responses 7 identified themselves as a candidate for mayor or council, which represents almost 54% of candidates who participated. The remaining 6 respondents identified as election staff, 1 with the Town of Antigonish, 2 with a campaign, and 3 with the returning office / polling station.

The questions in the survey were categorized in three main categories, feedback on the RO, feedback on RO Staff, and general feedback on the election. For all scale questions covering topics from efficiency to professionalism for the RO and RO staff were net positive and averaged above 4/5. For general feedback the results were net positive, but slightly below 4/5 with the overall election operation rating 3.92/5, staffing level at the returning office 3.85/5 and staffing level at the polling stations 3.77/5.

There was overwhelming support for the practice of the ARO and three (3) election staff workers visiting senior residences to help facilitate voting with 12/13 (92%) yes responses, with 1 no and no responses of unsure or indifferent.

When it comes to the method of election delivery the following question was asked:

The Town of Antigonish had a hybrid election, with anytime electronic voting (online and phone) and in-person paper ballot voting at advanced polls and on election day. Other municipalities ran traditional paper ballot only elections and others electronic voting only. What format of election would you prefer in 2028?

The options and results were:

- 0 - Electronic (electronic ballots remote only)
- 0 - Electronic (electronic ballots with polling stations)
- 10 - Hybrid (electronic & paper ballots)
- 3 - Traditional (paper ballots only)
- 0 - Unsure
- 0 - Indifferent

When it comes to preparing for the 2028 election, from the selection of candidates and staff that worked the 2024 election, continuation of the hybrid election model (with electronic and paper ballots) is strongly favoured with about 77% support.

The survey included several open-ended response questions including:

***What are some things that were handled well during the election?***

8 of 13 respondents provided feedback, almost unanimously noting staff support being very positive. This is consistent with the scale responses referenced above rating on average over 4/5. One response noted “

Everything was handled well except the "the let Antigonish decide" forum. Returning Officer should have been more publicly vocal about complaints about it as whether or not they were valid."

***What are some things that were handled poorly during the election?***

8 of 13 respondents provided feedback, ranging from "nothing I can think of" and "Did not hear complaints" to a variety of specific concerns noted as follows:

"Being asked to randomly buzz apartments and allowing superintendents to refuse entry to apartment buildings without consequence."

"The "the let Antigonish decide forum". Also, Town needs a true debate among Mayoral candidates with only the topics and not the questions known in advance. Mayoral candidates need a true debate, and an open forum where audience does not have to submit questions in advance. Also, the vobile [sic] counting delaybat [sic] Mall poll should never have happened and no public explanation given or widely published if it wrre [sic] given."

"I would suggest that software training for the electors list be scheduled earlier in the campaign and should have flexible times with a call-in service. I was a one person team for most of it."

"Some candidates had signs on Town property Present elected officials showing bias towards candidates. They still are under the Code of Conduct but staff did nothing"

"Communication Training at polls - I spoke to many people who were not asked for ID and they didn't know the person working at poll Very little communication about voter cards, etc. Residents didn't have a lot of info When [redacted] said students couldn't vote and was watching 14,000 times - it wasn't clarified publicly"

"Counting the vote took to long"

***What can we do to improve the election experience?***

8 of 13 respondents provided feedback ranging from "nothing I can think of at this time" to "Improve communications Have protocols around complaints and the turn around There was a lot of focus on students and their vote. Since the Returning Officer didn't enumerate students, there should be tables for adding them to the list and polls on campus and communications about this happening. The process to be added to the list is a huge barrier. Seniors in homes are not users of our town, they do not pay taxes and also can be from other places. If there are voting stations at seniors [sic] homes - there should be the same on campus. I heard and witnessed bias and obviously [sic] sidedness. I found the election overall very frustrating."

3 of the 8 responses indicated the need to count the paper ballot votes faster. Two raised concerns or issues respecting clarification and enforcement of rules around advertisements and signage and a desire to "improve access to software training for electors' list." One response expressed concern over the use of birth date as part of the electronic voting validation, suggesting Social Insurance Number (SIN) be used instead. This suggestion is not viable as the SIN is not collected as part of enumeration and does not form part of the elector list data.

**Conclusions and Recommendations for 2028**


Based upon the information reviewed following the 2024 Town of Antigonish's municipal election the only conclusion that can be drawn is that it was a successful initiative. The election staff were well regarded by candidates and their team and valued their support throughout the election process.

With any election, there were areas for improvement identified specifically focused on improved communication or training and enforcement on the rules for candidates and more efficient counting of paper ballots on election night. The RO was asked about the delay of the Advanced Poll ballot count and the only issue noted was how loud the shared space was at the returning office where these polls were counted.

There appeared to be overwhelming support of the hybrid election model, with two thirds of ballots cast electronically and one third via paper ballot. While the majority (66%) of the public chose to vote electronically, about one third (34%) of voters exercised their preference for a paper ballot. This is slightly above approximately one quarter (23%) of candidate and staff respondents, to the post-election survey, who indicated a preference for a traditional (paper ballot only) election in 2028. Based upon the voting behaviour of the electorate and feedback from those involved in the election it is highly recommended that the Town of Antigonish continue with a hybrid election format in 2028.

To increase voter turnout, budgeting to advertise and promote the election, election process, enumeration process, etc... should be considered. Although the Town cannot, and should not, advertise or promote individual candidates, the Town should play an active role in encouraging the public to exercise their democratic right to vote – perhaps with a little more effort the Town may surpass 50% voter participation in 2028.

Prepared by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Randy Delorey, CAO  
Town of Antigonish

2024-01-14  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date