

From: T grimes [REDACTED]

Sent: May 4, 2020 2:21 PM

To: Lyons, Lisa <llyons@newmarket.ca>

Subject: 2018 Newmarket election recap, Dr. Goodman report, and 2022 election planning

Ms Lisa Lyons:

I recently viewed the council meeting of May 14, 2019 dealing with the post election review, the report from Dr. Goodman from Centre for e-Democracy, and ranked ballots. I wish to provide my comments on these subjects and Dr. Goodman's report. I would like my comments to be incorporated into whatever taxpayer feedback you provide to council on these subjects.

Please confirm when my comments are presented to council.

As I am sure you recall, I had considerable verbal and email communications with my councillor, Councillor Twinney, expressing my displeasure with being disenfranchised last election by Newmarket's decision to only provide online voting.

Post 2018 election review

Democracy, by definition, implies franchising the broadest number of voters possible and not limiting this right to the privileged. Newmarket's decision to go all in and stream voting only through your online portal last time disenfranchised many residents who felt the online system was inappropriate for them.

In Newmarket's haste to become an early adopter and trailblazer, by refusing to include the option of paper voting, Newmarket failed to address the most important function of council- to provide meaningful service to all your taxpayers and citizens. Council fixed a problem that did not exist.

I have yet to see, or hear, any councillor provide a lucid, adequate answer to a simple question. What significant benefit does the Newmarket taxpayer/ citizen receive from this change? I am still waiting.

It might have been exciting for council to lead the way with this change. As someone who works hard to pay my taxes and who became disenfranchised through this process, I found it senseless to disenfranchise those of us who do not want to jeopardize personal information just to satisfy council's quest to be the first at something.

Including paper voting would have hurt nobody, and it would have given council a benchmark to honestly compare voter preference.

It appears quite evident from what I observed from your meeting that council is determined to continue with online voting only. If that is the case, then council must

address the glaring error of requiring citizens to provide their personal information on line. I am talking about birth dates.

If Newmarket is not capable of creating a security system that protects the voting documents without jeopardizing voter personal information, then Newmarket should wait until such a process exists before converting to online voting.

Just because other municipalities do the same thing is not a reason. It is an excuse.

Too much concern is raised about the possible occasional theft of pin numbers in the mail, and not enough concern is raised about the dangerous and needless practice requiring thousands of voters to enter personal information on line.

Any responsible organization never requests a person to provide their birth date online. In fact, responsible organizations specifically instruct people not to provide personal information online. Yet, Newmarket steadfastly demanded this information to allow people to vote.

Out of 56,748 eligible voters registered last election, only 34.65 % (19,662) voted. As a taxpayer, it is a poor turnout to rationalize such a dramatic procedural change with no predetermined and announced measure of success. Taxpayers have no way to value council's decision to go only online. There are many ways to peel an onion. Council merely replaced one with another without providing taxpayers with any measurable benefits. What did the taxpayer gain from this change?

Dr. Goodman report

I have observations on Dr. Goodman's report that I believe are worth raising. For clarity, I will refer to her page numbers in her slide presentation when I make my comments. My criticisms are not against her personally. Her goal was to rationalize online voting. I question if this is best for taxpayers and electors of Newmarket.

It is important to note almost all of Dr. Goodman's assumptions are based on feedback from online voters. Feedback from the disenfranchised is not included.

In my opinion, the entire tone of the doctor's presentation is slanted toward the online option. That is her job, but council's responsibility includes considering the opinions and concerns of the disenfranchised paper voters.

Page 8 Current Context

This slide highlights the municipalities that are moving towards online voting. The unstated fact is the vast majority of municipalities have not eliminated paper voting.

Page 11 Context - Data

This slide indicates feedback from well over 30,090 online voters and only 1,766 paper voters. This skews the findings towards the online voters, and I believe results must

be interpreted accordingly. No parallel study occurred with Newmarket paper voters because there was no paper voting.

Page 15 Information about survey completion

The slide indicated out of 17,871 online voters 7,048, or 39.43%, completed the survey.

It also means most voters, 60.57%, did not respond, which means this report and its recommendations do not include input from 10,823 actual Newmarket voters.

Disgruntled people rarely waste their time completing questionnaires.

Page 17 Voter Satisfaction

This is an overly simplistic question. 94% of respondents in Newmarket are satisfied with online voting. Satisfied compared to what? People wanted to vote and they voted. If that was the plan, 100% of respondents should have been satisfied. Is it better than paper voting? What would make them dissatisfied? It was a meaningless question that 94% of respondents said was satisfactory.

Page 19 Comparing satisfaction (Newmarket) with IVS Data (paper)

Another questionable piece of data slanted towards the Newmarket online option; however, after reviewing the data and stated another way, there is very little difference between satisfaction levels of IVS (paper) data and Newmarket data.

Page 20 Rationale for use and Page 21 Voter satisfaction & rationale

I question the rationale and actual value of the questions.

64.71% of users said they found online voting convenient. Anyone knows pushing a button is obviously more convenient than going to a polling booth; although it is interesting to note 35.29% did not cite convenience as a factor. What was the purpose of this series of questions? Is convenience the overriding reason council converted to only online voting?

Democracy is not always convenient, nor is a convenient vote necessarily an educated vote. Which vote is more important?

Of more significance is the fact 14% said they did it because it was the only option. That is a meaningful percentage that warrants further analysis.

The questions comparing online voting and phone voting on page 21 would have been more useful if the comparison was to paper voting; however, it was interesting to see less than 10% found internet voting more secure or private than telephone voting. I am sure if the question had been directed at paper voting the response would have been even more overwhelming.

Again, the survey was already slanted to favour online voting, so the emphasis and focus in this slide reflected this bias.

Page 27 Public Attitudes

More simplistic questions garnering confusion.

Elections with paper ballots are just as risky as elections where voting is electronic.

Risky for whom? The ballot process or the voters' personal information? Even with the ambiguity, less than half the online voters surveyed agreed with the supposition.

A more appropriate question would be do you feel your personal information (birth date) is secure on the internet?

The second survey item was- paper voting is not needed in municipal elections where internet voting is available. Surprisingly, only 50.34% agreed. The only people taking the survey were people using online voting. If such a poor response from a stacked audience occurred, what would the result be if paper voters were allowed to comment? Very telling.

Page 28 Concerns

Again, Dr. Goodman's message does not reflect the results. The pitch was 39.12% said they had no concerns about voting on the internet. This means 60.88% had concerns.

This is a red flag, not acceptance by the general voting public of internet voting.

The tone of the entire report de-emphasises security of voter data and emphasises the esoteric value of convenience.

Page 31 Voter profile

This very telling slide compares the profile of the paper voter and Newmarket's online voters. This is shocking. By prohibiting paper voting, Newmarket disenfranchised electors in this category. Unless it is Newmarket council's intent to winnow down the electorate in Newmarket, voters with the paper profile have been unfairly disenfranchised. In the US, this is referred to as Voter Suppression.

Furthermore, the slide implies that the IVS (paper) voter was a more consistent voter than the Newmarket online voter. Why disenfranchise such as voter?

Ranked Ballots

I am amazed this dead horse is still in the race.

According to what I heard in your meeting, one municipality in Canada uses ranked ballots. It cost London's taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars more than a conventional vote, and the results would have been the same. I wonder if London council clearly advised taxpayers before the election what this new voting method cost them and what they got for their money.

No federal or provincial government to my knowledge is currently actively even considering this as an option. Why would anyone think ranked ballots with all its complexity has application now for a small municipality such as Newmarket?

Newmarket is only 38.25 square kilometers. It has seven wards, a deputy mayor, and a Mayor. Newmarket has a ward system to further divide the duties of a councillor. Quite basic.

Most councillors have been in office for years. Changes seem to only happen if someone quits or dies.

Each ward has less than 10,000 eligible voters. Last election no ward had more than 3,600 votes cast. Two wards were won by acclamation. The only contests that showed any semblance of a close race were the 2 wards and deputy mayor positions that were vacant. New competitors were vying for the open positions.

I do not believe Newmarket is a hotbed of discontented voters pressing for ranked ballot elections.

What tangible benefit would residents in Newmarket gain by changing to the convoluted ranked ballot system? Remember, some taxpayers/voters actually prefer the existing first past the post system.

How many voters of Newmarket even care about the differences between first past the post and ranked ballots in a municipal election? Only 34.65% of the eligible voters even bothered to turn out last election.

Let other municipalities walk through this minefield and spend their hard earned taxpayer money to determine if it is even a worthwhile alternative.

Newmarket just converted to online voting. Newmarket taxpayers do not need to go through more expensive gyrations next election just to be another trailblazer.

Conclusions

If you still choose to have only an online election in 2022, as a disenfranchised taxpayer, I expect council to provide me with an explanation confirming the meaningful benefit to taxpayers.

More important, use of personal, confidential voter information online should stop. There are many ways voter accuracy can be provided without requiring voters to jeopardize their confidential information. Newmarket should use an alternate method of confirming voter credibility rather than voter birthday information.

In case I was not clear, as a taxpayer, I believe council is wasting time and money analyzing ranked ballots. Wait for the federal and provincial governments to test drive this one and sort out the kinks. There is no hurry, and as London proved, it is a very expensive experiment.

There are many, many more pressing issues for council to consider than ranked ballots. Look for ways to improve the environment, make services more streamlined and efficient. It cost a fortune in time and money for the Davis Drive and Yonge st.corridor expansions. Use your time to sell the benefits of these improvements to prospective businesses. Find ways to attract these businesses and jobs, not just condominiums, to Newmarket, This unfortunate covid-19 situation has created very real problems and needs for Newmarket residents and businesses. Council and staff should focus time and attention on these things, not ranked ballots.

I also believe soliciting input from voters at this time on this very complex and potentially contentious issue of ranked ballots can only waste more time and money. There is not even consensus within Canadian politicians on ranked ballots. Asking open ended questions of the voting public now will serve no useful purpose.

In addition, a telephone survey of a few hundred residents does not properly determine a consensus when there are almost 57,000 eligible voters. A true referendum would be required to determine if the electoral base in Newmarket was as interested in this experiment as council appears to be. Not one family member, friend, or neighbor has even mentioned ranked ballots to me. I know of no groundswell of Newmarket residents pushing for this change. Pursuing this political dream would waste of a lot of time and taxpayer money that could be better spent on important issues.

Wait until there is a clear, successful, logical, proven process by other governments and municipalities, with obvious benefits to electors, before Newmarket considers this concept. Newmarket voters do not need to be Guinea pigs again.

As one voter and taxpayer who was disenfranchised last election, I hope you consider my suggestions and agree with my conclusions.

Thank You

Tom Grimes

Current context

- 209 municipalities used online voting in 2019.
 - 176 (179 before acclamations and unexecuted contracts)
- Many of them (100+) eliminated paper voting.
- Newmarket one of the early adopters of digital election model

Context: Data

Where relevant, this report compares survey results with findings from two sources of data:

1. 2018 Internet Voting Study data from 31 municipalities.
2. The 2014 Internet Voting Project (IVP) surveys of online voters in 43 municipalities and paper voters in 4 communities.
 - 30,090 online voters completed a survey.
 - 1,766 paper voters completed surveys in the municipalities of Guelph, Markham, Springwater and Sudbury referred to as 'IVP data' in the report.

Information about survey completion

- 52,914 surveys completed.
 - Largest voting study ever carried out in Canada.
- 7,048 of these were completed in Newmarket out of 17,871 online voters.



- Extremely high response rate.
- Open for completion in Newmarket from October 13th to 22nd.
- Average length of time to complete a survey was 8 minutes.

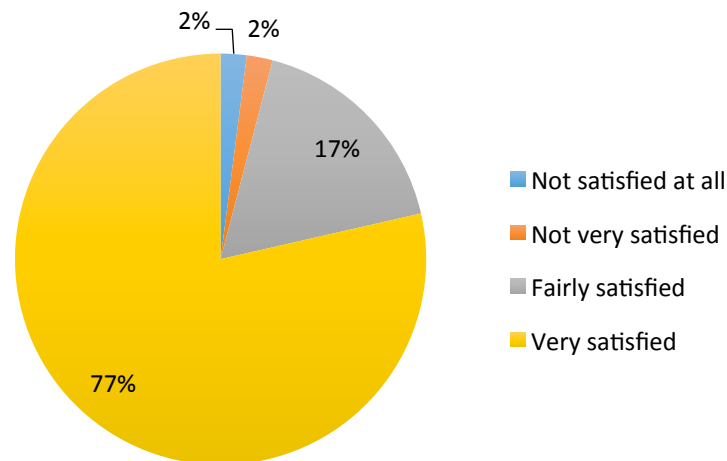
Voter satisfaction

94% of respondents in Newmarket are satisfied with online voting.

- 77% are 'very satisfied'

This is comparable to data from other Ontario municipalities.

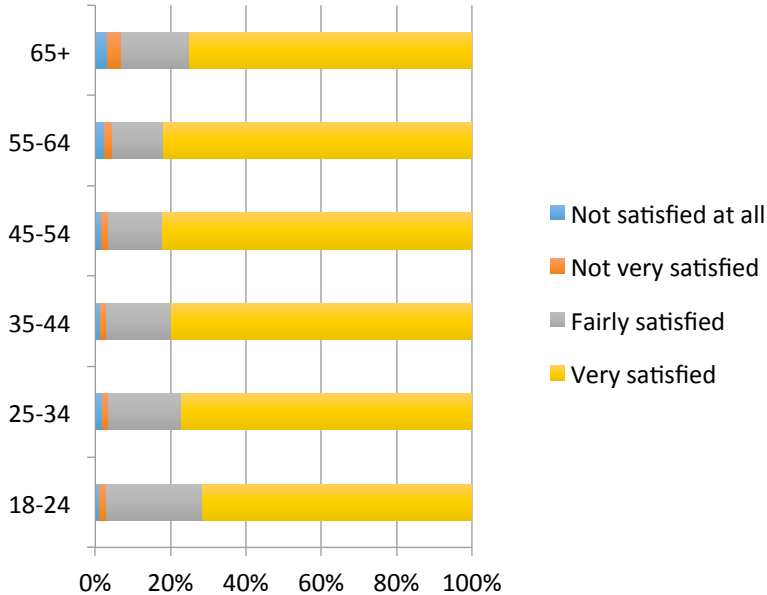
Of the 31 communities that took part the 96% of voters report being satisfied.



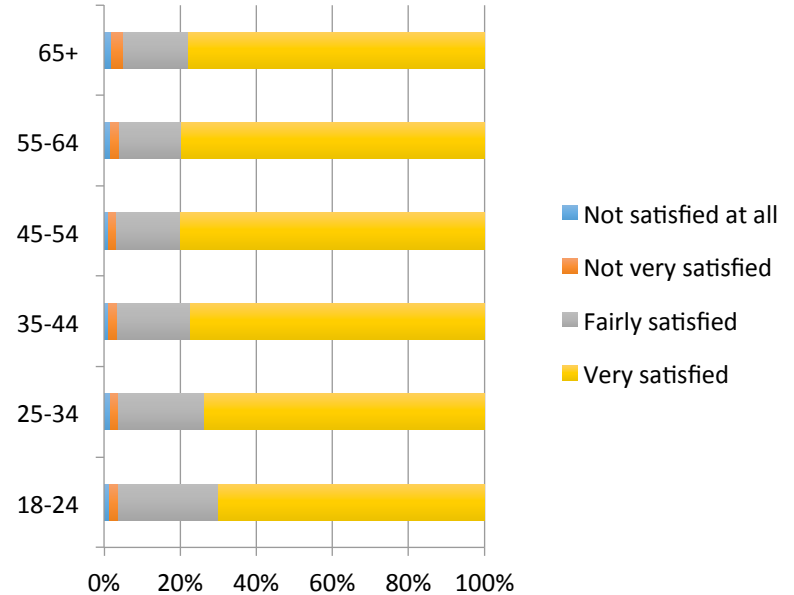
Comparing satisfaction with IVS data

Newmarket respondents under 64 report being slightly more satisfied than the rest of the sample.

Newmarket 2018



IVS data



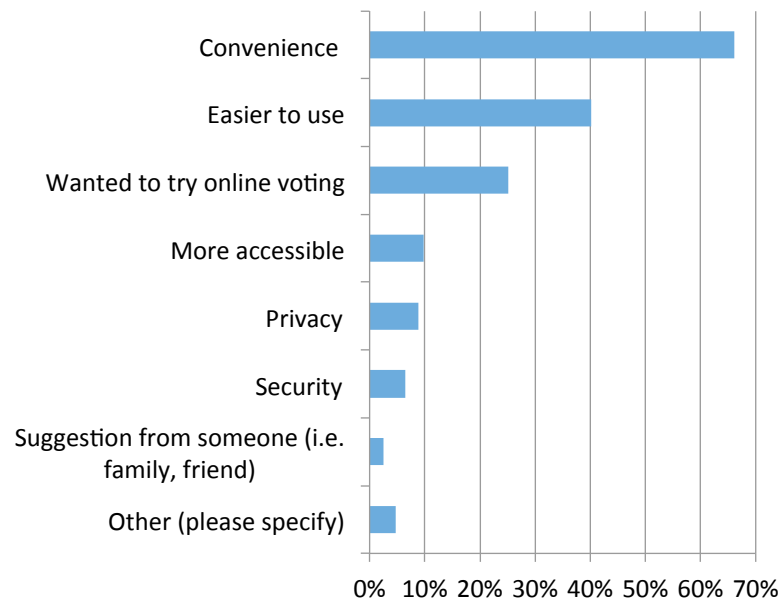
Rationale for use

Rationale	Newmarket 2018	IVS 2018
Convenience	64.71%	69.02%
Accessibility	5.58%	6.69%
Found it interesting/wanted to try something new	8.51%	6.78%
Suggestion from friend(s) or family member(s)	1.57%	1.09%
Suggestion from a candidate	0.34%	0.31%
Positive past experience with voting online	0.70%	2.07%
Privacy	1.73%	1.21%
Internet and telephone voting were my only choices	10.13%	7.27%
Internet voting was the only method offered in my municipality	3.58%	2.59%
Other (please specify)	3.15%	2.97%

Voter satisfaction & rationale

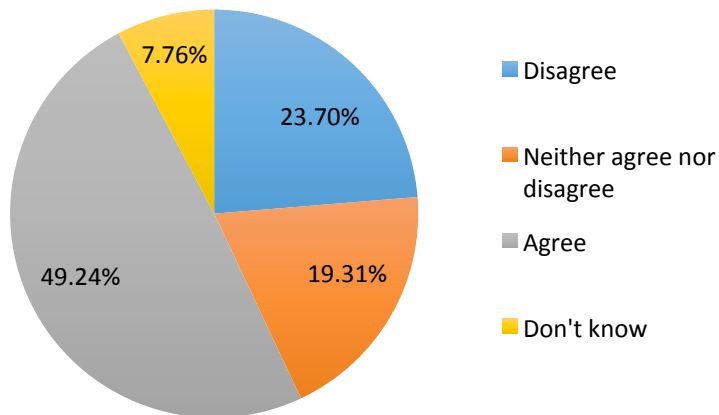
- Online voter satisfaction in Newmarket is strong.
 - Younger voters more satisfied than the IVS average.
- Online voting model changes well received by these voters.
 - There is a small group, 14%, who says this was their only option.
- Convenience main reason for use.
- Convenience, ease of use and interest main reasons for choosing online over telephone.

What made you decide to vote online instead of by phone?

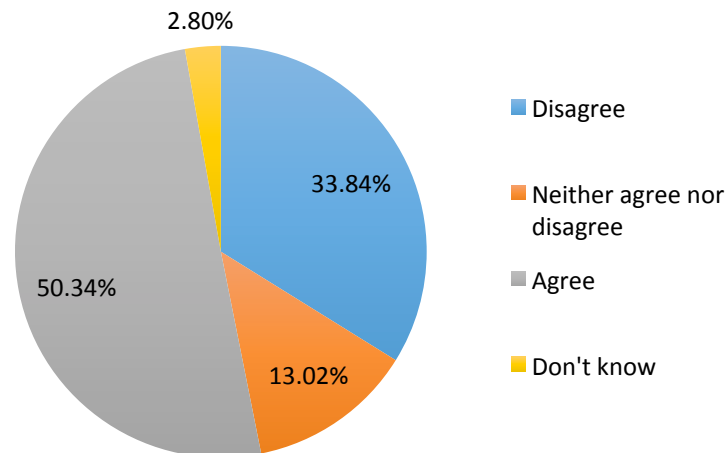


Public attitudes

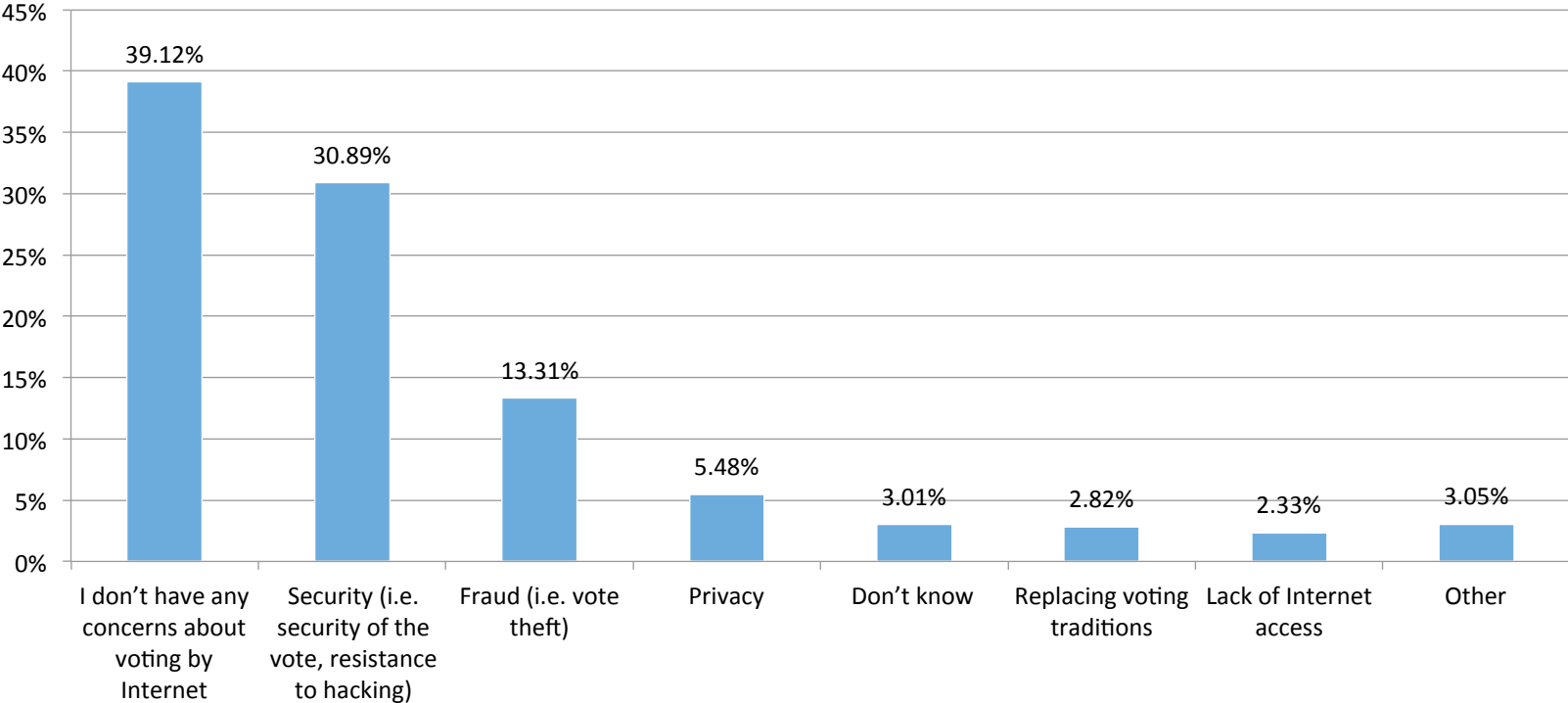
Elections with paper ballots are just as risky as elections where voting is electronic.



Paper voting is not needed in municipal elections where internet voting is available.



Concerns



Voter profile

Profile	Characteristics	Online voter Newmarket, 2018	Paper voter IVP data, 2014
Socio- demographic	Age	52 years	44 years
	Annual household income	\$75,000 to \$99,999 before taxes	\$60,000 to \$79,999 before taxes
	Community density	Urban to Suburban	Urban to Suburban
	Education	Some university	Completed technical, community college
Attitudes	Voting history	Habitual	Very habitual
	Interest level in politics	Moderate	Moderate