

# **MOVING FORWARD**

**COVID-19  
By-Election Safety Measures  
August 2020**



### **BACKGROUND:**

The Clerk for the Town of Pelham declared an emergency under Sec. 53 of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, in July 2020.

With a Provincial order declaring an emergency on March 17, 2020, and the Town of Pelham declaring an emergency on April 3, 2020, the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, provides that the Clerk is responsible for the municipal election's conduct and may declare such an emergency to enact any measures the Clerk deems necessary or desirable to conduct the election.

The Ward One by-election voting day is on September 15, 2020, and declaring the emergency gives the Clerk and staff the ability to identify new and safe approaches to conducting the election.

The necessary adaptations to the by-election voting process must be consistent with the *Act's* principles.

### **SAFETY MEASURES:**

#### **Vote by Mail: On-demand special ballot**

Ensuring voters and election staff's safety and the ability for those affected by COVID-19 to cast a ballot, the Town of Pelham is offering a vote by mail option for the September 15, 2020, by-election.

On-demand ballots are available to those in isolation or self-quarantine, cannot leave their residence to vote because they have been in close contact with a positive COVID-19 case, are awaiting test results, or live with someone who has tested positive.

The on-demand ballot allows voters to complete their ballot at home and submit in a secrecy envelope via Canada Post. Alternatively, a friend or relative can drop off the secrecy envelope with a completed ballot in the ballot drop box located at Town Hall or the Maple Acre Library during operating hours.

#### **Two Advance Polls**

Two advance polls are scheduled to offer the ability to spread out the number of voters at the polls at any given time. It is recommended that voters with even-numbered homes vote in the first advance poll on September 3, 2020, and voters with odd-numbered homes vote in the second advance poll on September 12, 2020.

#### **Extra Staff**

In addition to the regular election staff, three additional positions have been created to ensure electors have a seamless and safe voting experience. New positions include a physical distancing officer to help guide and remind voters of spatial requirements, a poll station cleaner to ensure readily available and consistent cleaning of high touch points and ballot casting areas, and a health assessment officer who will screen electors as they enter the polling station.



### Health Assessment

When electors arrive at the polling location, they will be asked health assessment questions provided by Niagara Region Public Health. These questions ensure the safety of the elector and election staff. The questions will be placed outside the polling locations so electors can review them while in line.

### Entry and Exit

There will be separate entry and exit points at the polling stations. Electors will be guided through the pre-determined lines by election staff. Electors are asked to immediately vacate the polling station area after voting to minimize the risk of gatherings.

### Face coverings

Under the Regional mandatory mask bylaw, those entering the polling station are required to wear a face covering. It is asked that electors bring their own masks, however, there will be masks available for those who require them.

### Hand sanitizer

Hand sanitizer will be available throughout the voting location and electors are encouraged to use it before and after voting.

### Physical Distancing

Signage, floor stickers, and guidance from the Physical Distancing Officer will be prevalent at all voting locations. There is a maximum number of people permitted in the polling station at a time and all electors are asked to remain two metres apart at all times. Election staff will also remain two metres apart from one another at all times.

### Voting

Electors will vote in alternating voting booths. There will be six in total. The first round of voters will go to booths 1, 3, and 5. As the second round of voters goes to booths 2, 4, and 6, the alternate booths will be cleaned.

### Cleaning

A polling station Cleaning Officer will be on-site to clean voting booths after each elector casts their ballot. The Cleaning Officer will remain distanced from voters to protect the integrity of their vote and will only clean the booth once they have vacated the area and it is safe to do so. The Cleaning Officer will use spray cleaner approved for disinfection and single-use paper towels, continuously wiping down high-touch surfaces, logging their activity throughout the day.

### Pens

Each elector will be provided with a pen to cast their vote. They are encouraged to take their pen home with them; however, a disposal bin will be available.

### If you fail the screening

If someone fails the screening, they are to contact Niagara Region Public Health and Emergency Services at 905-688-8248. Press 7 then 2 to speak with a nurse. Alternatively, they can contact their health care provider. People who fail the screening assessment cannot vote in-person. Proxy voting, and special ballot requests for those directly affected by COVID-19, are available.



### COMMUNICATION STRATEGY:

#### INTRODUCTION:

This plan addresses key messages as we deploy information about the 2020 by-election to fill the vacant Ward 1 council seat.

It is the responsibility of the Clerk's Department to carry out the election and its components. Communications fall within in the Clerk's Department and are critical to ensure residents are informed about their right to vote and the by-elections precautions due to COVID-19.

This plan outlines messaging for the Clerk's Department, highlighting communications to get the message out about the by-election and the critical information and key dates therein.

#### PURPOSE:

Create a comprehensive information campaign outlining the rules, dates, and important information for the 2020 Pelham by-election.

#### OBJECTIVES:

1. Communicate important by-election information
2. Educate residents about voting options during COVID-19
3. Highlight measures the Town is taking to successfully and safely execute the by-election

#### THEME:

Safely providing electors their right to vote

#### KEY MESSAGES:

1. The 2020 by-election will take place Sept. 15.
2. Safety is of the utmost importance. Precautions are being taken to keep everyone safe.
3. Encourage engagement in the voting process while being responsible.
4. Slight variations between regular and by-election
5. Importance of voting voice



### STRATEGIES & TACTICS

TACTIC:	DETAILS AND SUPPORTING MATERIALS	TIMELINES
Web page set up	Create web page on Pelham.ca for the byelection: forms, key dates, etc.	May 2020
Social Media Kit	Create Social Media kit with by-election branding and messaging of key dates	June 12
Social Media Post	Nomination period open	June 16
Website feature six	Create feature box on main page of Website	June 16
News Brief	Notice to electors	June 16
Social Media Post	Where to find info – Website (weekly)	June 18
VOP ad	Notice to electors – 1/2 page ad	June 24
Social Media Post	Where to find info – Website (weekly)	June 25
TOP Newsletter	Notice of election and key dates included in July edition of online Newsletter	July 1
VOP ad	1/4 page ad – by-election Website	July 1
News Brief and SM Post	Third party advertising information	July 2
Social Media Post	Where to find info – point to Website	July 2
News Brief and SM Post	What nominees need – signatures, forms filled out, etc.	July 6
Social Media Post	Where to find info – Website (weekly)	July 9
News Brief and SM Post	Information for voters	July 14
VOP ad	1/2 page ad – Website, deadlines, what to know	July 15
Social Media Posts	Nomination day reminder	July 15
Social Media Post	Where to find info – Website (weekly)	July 16
SM Post	Withdrawal date reminder	July 20
Social Media Post	Where to find info – Website (weekly)	July 23
Press Release	Declaration of Emergency	July 28
SM Post/News Brief	Last day to register/withdrawal	July 29
Social Media Post	Where to find info – Website (weekly)	July 30
Social Media Post	Final list of candidates	July 31
VOP ad	1/2 page ad – list of candidates	August 5
NTW ad	1/2 page ad – list of candidate	August 6



### STRATEGIES & TACTICS

News Brief and SM Post	On the voters list info	August 4
Social Media Post	Where to find info – Website (weekly)	August 6
News Brief and SM Post	On-demand special ballot	August 7
Social Media Post	Where to find info – Website (weekly)	August 13
Social Media Post	Voting day reminder	August 14
VOP ad	1/2 page ad Voting day/advance polls	August 19
Social Media Post	Where to find info – Website (weekly)	August 20
Press Release	Advance polls	August 20
VOP ad	Full page - Advance polls, election day	August 26
Social Media Post	Advance polls	August 27
Social Media Post	Where to find info – Website (weekly)	August 27
Press Release	What precautions are taking place for COVID-19	August 31
News Brief and SM Post	Advance poll 1	September 1
Website	Main banner image – voting day	September 1
VOP ad	1/4 page ad – advance polls, voting day	September 2
NTW ad	1/4 page ad – advance polls	September 3
Social Media Post	Advance poll 1 – today	September 3
Social Media Post	Where to find info – Website (weekly)	September 3
VOP ad	1/2 page ad – advance polls 2, voting day	September 9
NTW ad	Advance poll 2	September 10
News Brief and SM Post	Advance poll 2	September 10
Social Media Post	Where to find info – Website (weekly)	September 10
Social Media Post	Advance poll 2 – today	September 12
Social Media Post	Countdown to election day	September 14
Social Media Post	Unofficial election results	September 14/15
Social Media Post	Today is election day	September 15
Website	Main banner image – voting day	September 15
Web/SM/Press Release	Declaration of results	September 16