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| **Report Date:** | March 13, 2023 |
| **Meeting Date:** | April 18, 2023 |
| **From:** | Sundance Topham, Chief Administrative Officer |
| **Subject:** | Electronic Voting Consultation Results and Next Steps |

## Background

The electronic voting consultation has concluded, and this report presents the results of the community engagement and includes recommendations from the Governance and Human Resources Committee.

## Decision Requested

THAT the Board direct staff to propose amendments to the existing UNA Bylaws to allow for electronic voting for Director elections.

AND THAT staff consult with Director Holmes on the drafting of the proposed bylaw amendments;

AND THAT the proposed changes to the UNA Bylaws be brought forward for Board consideration, and if approved by the Board, advanced to the 2023 UNA Annual General Meeting (AGM) for consideration by UNA members.

## Discussion

At the September 20, 2022 meeting the UNA Board passed the following motion:

> *THAT the GHR Committee be the locus of activity to prepare information (including community consultation) for bringing forth electronic voting into the UNA elections cycle, and that the Committee make recommendations to the Board for its April 2022 meeting.*

The GHR Committee worked with staff to determine and undertake a community consultation process, which included the following elements:

- Website landing page (with background materials)
- Community Survey
- Public Open House

The consultation wrapped up on February 2, and the results of the community survey are attached to this report.

High level there is significant support for the move to electronic voting. There were a total of 186 respondents to the survey. Of the 63 respondents who did not vote in the last election, 87 per cent of the 60 that answered the follow-up question noted that the introduction of electronic voting would increase their likelihood of participating in upcoming election processes.

Of the 123 respondents who participated in the last election, 91 per cent of the 120 that answered the follow-up question noted that they would continue to participate if electronic voting was introduced.

A total of 177 respondents answered the question "Should the UNA recommend changes to the UNA Bylaws to allow for electronic voting for the 2024 Director election?" Of the respondents 161, or 91 per cent answered yes.

Most of the respondents to the survey came from the Wesbrook neighbourhood, followed by the Hampton, Hawthorn and Chancellor neighbourhoods.

In terms of comments received from survey participants, they ranged from support of the potential move - due to increased convenience and accessibility, to concerns about any change of process – mostly related to security. In general, there was more support shown in the comments than concerns raised.

As part of the consultation process the GHR Committee approved criteria that could be applied in assessing the move to electronic voting for Director elections. Several of these criteria require judgement calls.

The criteria and GHT Committee assessment are noted below.

- **Aggregate voter participation:** Is it likely that more or fewer residents will vote than at present?

  *Based on the consultation more residents would participate.*

- **Participation by specific groups:** Are specific groups of voters—e.g., younger voters, older voters, voters whose second language isn't English— more or less likely to vote?

  *Although the consultation did not ask for demographics or language information, the feedback indicated that more residents would participate then currently. Comments were received noting that having other languages as part of the process would be beneficial (which is achievable through electronic balloting, as other languages can be easily integrated into the voting process).*

- **Secrecy on the counting of ballots (ballot anonymity):** Is a voter's ballot secret when it is counted?

  *Yes – based on using a recognized electronic voting platform.*

- **Secrecy on completion of ballots:** Can any other person see how a particular voter is voting and hence be in a position to coerce the voter to vote in a particular way?

  *Utilizing a recognized electronic voting platform, the results are anonymous. In theory someone could watch the person voting, but that is no different then the current system where members vote via paper ballot and fill them in away from voting stations.*

- **Voter authentication:** Is the voter the person they claim to be (i.e., no voter fraud)?

  *The current system requires voters to receive their paper ballots by mail, sign a declaration declaring that they are eligible to vote, and will only vote once, and then return the ballot via either placing in a drop box or sending it in the mail. The electronic system would entail receiving the voting instructions through email, confirming an electronic declaration, and voting through a secure online portal. This system would eliminate several of the more convoluted steps in our current system. Regardless of the system - paper or electronic - any attempt by one person to usurp materials or attempt to take another person's vote are illegal actions.*

- **Technological uncertainty:** What is the risk of technological problems, initially and on an on-going basis?

  *Any technological uncertainty is minimized by using a recognized electronic voting platform. These platforms have received independent third-party audits and certification to confirm their reliability. The proposed process would include voting from computers and smart phones, or at in-person electronic voting kiosks – there would not be any utilization of telephone voting that add costs and complexity to the process.*

- **Process uncertainty:** What is the risk of process problems, initially and on an on-going basis (i.e., delays in receiving ballots)?

  *Any process uncertainty is minimized by using a recognized electronic voting platform. Results will be available in a timelier manner. Ballot distribution is dependent on having up-to-date member data, which is required for the current paper ballot process. By utilizing email instead of Canada Post for ballot distribution, the ballots can be distributed more cost effectively and timely.*
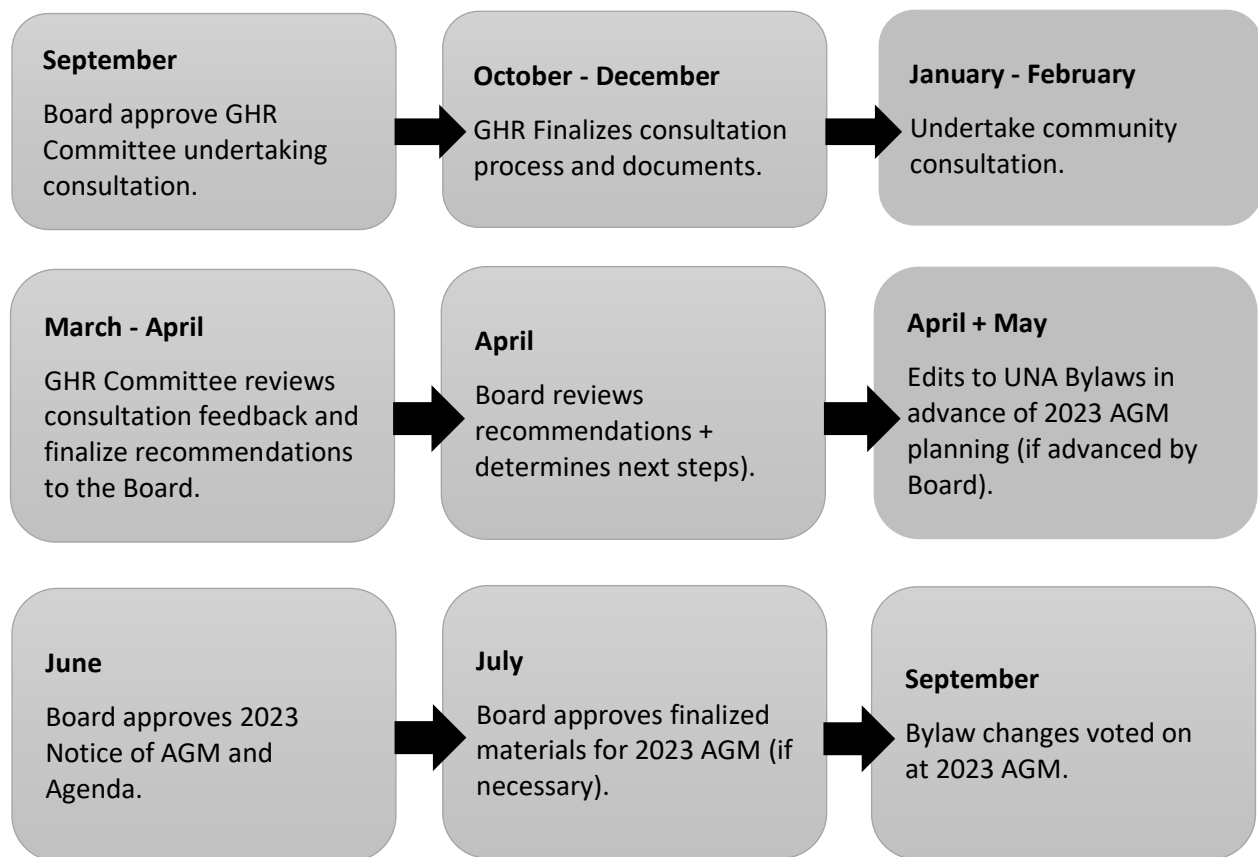
- **Implementation:** What is the cost and staff time for implementation?

  *The cost for the last election cycle was $33,000. Electronic Voting is estimated to cost between $15,000 and $30,000. Based on earlier electronic voting set-up the staff time required should be minimal.*

- **Administration:** How costly is it to administer the voting procedure?

  *Administering the last voting procedure was an administratively time-consuming process, with the final counting process being significantly time-consuming. The proposed process would include voting from computers and smart phones, or at in-person electronic voting kiosks – there would not be any utilization of telephone voting that add costs and complexity to the process.*

As per the timeline below, the next steps include review of GHR Committee recommendations by the UNA Board.

| **September**<br><br>Board approve GHR Committee undertaking consultation. | **October - December**<br><br>GHR Finalizes consultation process and documents. | **January - February**<br><br>Undertake community consultation. |
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| **March - April**<br><br>GHR Committee reviews consultation feedback and finalize recommendations to the Board. | **April**<br><br>Board reviews recommendations + determines next steps). | **April + May**<br><br>Edits to UNA Bylaws in advance of 2023 AGM planning (if advanced by Board). |
| **June**<br><br>Board approves 2023 Notice of AGM and Agenda. | **July**<br><br>Board approves finalized materials for 2023 AGM (if necessary). | **September**<br><br>Bylaw changes voted on at 2023 AGM. |

If the Board recommends amending the UNA Bylaws to implement electronic voting in advance of the 2024 elections, the potential changes to the Bylaws will first go to the UNA Board for approval; if they're approved by the Board, they will advance to the UNA members at the 2023 UNA AGM.

Due to Director Holmes' involvement in the drafting of the UNA Bylaws, it is recommended that staff consult with Director Holmes in the drafting of any proposed amendments – making sure that any edits reflect the process as outlined in the consultation documents.

The wildcard in this entire process is that the ultimate decision rests with the membership, not the UNA Board, so until any contemplated changes are brought forward for review, it is unknown what will be decided.

**Financial Implications**

None

**Operational Implications**

Moving forward with any changes to the UNA Bylaws will require assistance from the Administrative and Communications Departments.

**Strategic Objective**

Community and Stakeholder Relations

**Attachments**

1. Schedule A – Electronic Voting Consultation Results

**Concurrence**

1. Glenda Ollero, Communications Manager

Respectfully submitted,

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Sundance Topham
Chief Administrative Officer