

Plans to build municipal voters list problematic

By **Jim Eadie**, Special to This Week

New arrangements to build an accurate voters list for the upcoming municipal election on Monday Oct. 27 have some local municipal clerks a bit nervous.

The voters list for municipal elections are prepared in Ontario by the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC), the same folks who evaluate properties to determine property tax assessments.

The lists are drawn up from their property records of people living in the municipality, and "other" lists according to Jennifer Cohen, clerk of the Township of Wollaston.

In the past, potential voters would receive an enumeration form, which they could check for accuracy of information, and which also confirmed they were on the voters list.

This year, MPAC will not be mailing enumeration forms, and leaves it up to individual residents to check a web site to see if they are on the list.

The new website www.voterlookup.ca allows individuals to check their status, and upgrade any new information or changes.

A check by Bancroft This Week found the website not particularly user friendly.

For example, among other problems, if the name you query is not exactly as it is on the MPAC file, it will not be located.

Cohen noted that anyone who has moved recently, or purchased new properties might not be on the list.

As voters must be Canadian citizens, many MPAC property records will not have that information recorded on property transfers, and the voter may be left off the list.

Although it will not prevent a voter from ultimately voting, there are several complications.

Potential voters will not receive "mail in" ballots in the mail unless they contact their municipal office in sufficient time after realizing they are not on the list.

On election day, a voter can bring suitable identification and proof of residency to the polling station, but the process will significantly lengthen the time at the polling station, or result in being sent to another polling station.

Cohen suggests that residents check the MPAC website immediately, and contact their municipal office if there is an indication they are not on the voters list.

In Ontario, anyone residing in the municipality who is at least 18 years old and is a Canadian citizen may vote in a municipal election.

There are a few exceptions, such as someone serving time in a correctional institution, or someone convicted of "corrupt practices" under the Municipal Elections Act.

Further information can be obtained by contacting your local municipal office.