

# Internet Voting: Will Communities Decide?

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*cpi* Centre for  
Public Involvement



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Qual è la ricerca o prassi  
obiettivo di questo lavoro?

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*“Come possono i  
cittadini informati  
modellare le decisioni  
che li riguardano?”*

What is the research/praxis  
objective of this work?

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*“How can informed  
citizens shape decisions  
that affect them?”*

# What will we discuss today?

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- Why is Internet voting now an important topic for communities?
- How was the community informatics paradigm used in designing the Citizen Jury on Internet Voting?
- What lessons can be taken from the Citizen Jury?

# Why Internet voting now?

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- Carries the promise of new access to democratic process (Norris 2005).
- Internet voting is often argued to be a method for increasing voter turnout.
- However, such increases do not always occur (Alvarez & Hall, 2008).

# Why Internet voting now?

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- *Nel maggio 2013, i cittadini di Martignano e Melpignano nella regione del Salento, nel tacco dello stivale nel sud Italia, hanno votato in un'elezione in cui solo una opzione e-voting è stato fornito agli elettori.*
- Internet voting is being adopted by some jurisdictions internationally.
- Estonia is a leader in Internet voting.

# Why Internet voting now?

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- Approximately 60 municipalities in Ontario and Nova Scotia have adopted an online ballot system for municipal (city) elections.
- The majority of the 3,700 municipalities in Canada have not adopted Internet voting.
- Five provinces have approved enabling legislation.

# What is the Centre for Public Involvement?

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- Partnership led and supported, equally, by the University of Alberta and the City of Edmonton (800,000 people)
- Demonstrates and recommends new methods of public involvement
- Carries out research, provides training, and shares information and resources

# What is the Centre for Public Involvement?

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- ◉ Neutral, third party
- ◉ “Hothouse” for new methods – reduces risk
- ◉ Action research

# How is a Citizen Jury different from a public hearing?

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- Representative group of citizens – gender, geography, income, age
- Citizens commit to becoming informed about issues
- Deliberative, rational discussion of policy alternatives – creating a “mini-public”
- Direct communication with elected representatives, with emphasis on feedback loops (Habermas 2006)

# How was CI used in the design of the Citizen Jury?

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- Participation of citizens based on broadly inclusive principles.
- Information technology was incorporated with emphasis on adaptivity and innovation.
- Community capacities explored, uncovered, and developed further.

# What was the Citizen Jury on Internet Voting?

- Representative group of 17 citizens
- Met for 20 hours on the weekend of 23 to 25 November 2012
- Provided a verdict on the following question on behalf of *all* citizens of Edmonton: “Should the City of Edmonton adopt Internet voting as an option for future general elections?”

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The public-involvement plan will include three components:

- Citizen's Jury for evidence-based citizen deliberation
- Roundtable advisory meetings with stakeholders
- Online public engagement to gather input and advice from the broader public

**Watch the video on the Citizens Jury process**



## What is a Citizen Jury?

A Citizen's Jury is a viable decision-making model, which promotes the direct involvement of citizens in decisions about strategic planning, policy development, or technology assessments. It is usually made up of 12- 24 jurors, who are randomly selected members of the general public. The jurors hear evidence and proposals from experts, review the information presented, question the expert witnesses and engage in deliberation, to make recommendations on the issue or problem under consideration. Unlike focus groups and surveys, this method of public engagement allows the participants to represent their views directly to decision-makers.

**Table 1: Demographic Targets Met for Recruitment**

	TARGET	ACTUAL	MET
<b>Gender (M/F)</b>	9, 9	9, 8	Yes
<b>Age groups (3)</b>	5, 7, 7	4, 4, 9	Two out of three
<b>Education levels (3)</b>	8, 5, 5	6, 7, 4	Yes
<b>Ethnic groups (4)</b>	2, 2, 1, 14	1, 2, 3, 14	Yes
<b>Disability</b>	3	6	Yes
<b>With children</b>	7	3	No
<b>Income (3)</b>	9, 5, 3	5, 7, 3	Two out of three
<b>Wards (12)</b>	12	8	Two-thirds

**Table 2: Attitudes of Jurors: Citizen Efficacy and Internet Voting – Actual Composition**

	NOT MUCH	SOME	A LOT
<b>Trust in municipal government</b>	11% (24%)	33% (33%)	50% (41%)
<b>Politicians care about my opinion</b>	6% (38%)	39% (32%)	50% (29%)
<b>I am well qualified to participate</b>	6% (28%)	11% (32%)	78% (38%)
<b>Would use Internet voting</b>	17% (28%)	11% (4%)	67% (67%)
<b>Confident voting online</b>	11% (27%)	33% (18%)	50% (55%)
<b>Confident using a computer</b>	11% (25%)	11% (19%)	72% (56%)
<b>Tax dollars for Internet voting</b>	6% (28%)	33% (27%)	56% (43%)
<b>Ready for Internet voting</b>	0% (23%)	11% (30%)	83% (46%)
<b>Vote must be private</b>	6% (9%)	6% (12%)	83% (77%)
<b>Internet access before voting</b>	22% (17%)	17% (26%)	56% (56%)
<b>Anti-fraud</b>	6% (4%)	0% (13%)	89% (81%)
<b>Cost must be worthwhile</b>	6% (10%)	0% (23%)	89% (65%)

# What were the outcomes?

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- Citizen Jury was acknowledged and recognized by senior administrators and elected representatives.
- City Clerk, supported by the verdict of the Citizen Jury, recommended a plan to allow citizens to vote using the Internet, in advance polls only, in 2013.
- City Council voted against the recommendation.

# Quali sono state le lezioni apprese?

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- Il metodo usando ha permesso per un gruppo rappresentativo di cittadini.
- *Considerazioni diverse da un'opinione pubblica informata, come ad esempio gli interessi dei soggetti interessati e l'influenza dei mezzi di comunicazione di massa e in linea nella definizione di questioni, continuerà a influenzare le opinioni degli el degli amministratori e alti rappresentanti eletti.*

# What were the lessons learned?

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- Recruitment method allowed for a representative group of citizens
- Considerations other than informed public opinion, such as the interests of stakeholders and the influence of mass and online media in the framing of issues, will continue to influence the opinions of elected representatives.



2012 Citizens Jury on Internet Voting  
November 23 - 25, 2012 • Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

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**I miei colleghi della Centre for Public Involvement:  
Fiona Cavanagh and Dr. Kalina Kamenova**