



2022 Post-Election Accessibility Report

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INTRODUCTION

The *Municipal Elections Act, 1996 (MEA)* sets out several important responsibilities for the Town Clerk to ensure municipal elections are accessible. In planning and implementing the election, the Town Clerk must have regard to the needs of both electors and candidates with disabilities.

Section 12.1 (2) of the *MEA* requires that the Clerk prepare a plan to identify, remove and prevent barriers which may affect electors and candidates with disabilities. Further, within 90 days after voting day the Town Clerk must report on the identification, removal and prevention of barriers.

Staff in the Legislative Services Division took action to ensure the 2022 Municipal Election was accessible and inclusive. As detailed below, this report first sets out how potential barriers were identified and various ways they were removed or prevented.

IDENTIFICATION OF BARRIERS

- The Town's previous Accessible Election Policy from 2018 was reviewed and comprehensively updated for the 2022 Municipal Election. Through this process, a significant number of potential barriers were identified to be addressed for 2022.
- To identify barriers not considered in 2018, Accessible By-Election Policies from other municipalities, used since the previous municipal election, were reviewed. Several points were incorporated into the Town's policy to ensure it was up to date and consistent with best practices.
- An updated draft of the Accessible Election Policy for 2022 was presented to the Town's Accessibility Advisory Committee. Members provided feedback to identify any further barriers not already considered and the policy was updated based on the advice received. For example, provisions were included to ensure extra chairs were available for residents at all voting locations.
- Accessibility inspections were conducted for all new voting locations not used in a previous election as well as for facilities used in the past but for which there was no record of an inspection. A checklist was used to ensure a comprehensive and standardized accessibility review was completed of each facility. This included inspecting items such as:
 - the width of doors for access by scooters and wheelchairs;
 - adequate lighting at voting location entrances;
 - ensuring power door operators were available and in working order;
 - availability of accessible parking located near entrances;
 - confirming paths of travel on both the interior and exterior of voting places were unobstructed; and
 - availability of accessible washrooms.
- Following the 2018 Municipal Election, a document detailing lessons learned was produced. This report was reviewed at the beginning of the election process to assist in identifying other potential barriers and guide planning. For example, the document noted that feedback was received through the 2018 election advising that curbside voting should be provided for those not able to enter a voting location. Therefore, this was added to the updated 2022 Accessible Election Policy and curbside voting was provided.



REMOVAL AND PREVENTION OF BARRIERS

Information and Communication

- Key information on accessibility was communicated prominently on the Town's main webpage for the election. This ensured that information was clearly advertised and easy to locate. For example, consistent with the Accessible Election Policy, a note was included that information would be made available in an alternate format upon request.
- The Accessible Election Policy was made available to residents by being posted prominently on the Town's website. This clearly indicated the Town's commitment to ensuring an accessible election for the public and the steps to be taken to achieve that.
- Staff volunteering for the election were all trained on how to respectfully communicate with an individual who may have a disability such as by not making assumptions about whether a person requires assistance. Further guidance was provided on how to communicate in a respectful manner when a support person is present by focusing attention on the individual receiving service.

Voting Locations

- Signage from the 2018 election which adhered to accessibility guidelines was again used and posted at all voting locations. This ensured locations were clearly navigable. As required by the Accessible Election Policy, signage was placed on exterior doors to indicate the entrance to a voting location and internal directional signage was used for wayfinding.
- As indicated in the Accessible election policy, service animals and support persons were permitted in all voting locations.
- All voting locations had accessible parking available.
- Election staff acted as greeters at all voting locations and monitored doors to ensure that entrances remained unobstructed and barrier free. Greeters were available to assist with opening doors for electors as necessary.
- The layout and flow of voting locations was carefully designed and set up using maps to ensure a minimum 2 metres of clearance between voting stations. This provided adequate space for wheelchairs or scooters to approach. As per the Accessible Election Policy, locations were carefully set up to avoid tripping hazards being within paths of travel, such as cords from voting equipment.
- Pads of paper were available for communication by those with hearing impairments and as per the Accessible Election Policy voting booths were low in height to ensure those in a wheelchair or scooter were not impeded.
- Consistent with the provisions of the *MEA*, voting was offered at several qualifying retirement facilities and group homes within Caledon. On election day, roving staff traveled to each location with voting equipment to provide an opportunity for those living at the facility to cast a ballot.
- Staff at retirement facilities and homes were contacted in advance to schedule convenient times for residents to vote and ensure all health protocols for safe entry were followed. Further, residents were provided the opportunity to be added to the Voters' List in advance to ensure an efficient voting experience.



Voting Methods

- As noted above, curbside voting was added as a new method to improve service from the 2018 election. An individual requesting this was accommodated with a ballot brought to their vehicle by election staff at the voting location. Once marked, ballots were taken in a secrecy folder and inserted into the ballot box by an individual acting on the voter's behalf. The process was observed by election staff.
- All locations had accessible voting equipment available on both advanced voting days and election day. This included various options for casting a ballot such as a standard controller, paddles for limited dexterity as well as a sip and puff device. The accessible voting was carefully tested by staff to ensure the audio prompts were clear. The equipment used a library of marking styles so the ballot could not be identified and secrecy of the voter was maintained.
- Each voting location had magnifying sheets available to ensure those with visual disabilities were able to more easily read their ballot.
- As outlined in the Accessible Election Policy, election staff were permitted to assist an individual in casting their vote if requested. In conjunction with the voter, the extent of assistance would be determined which could include marking a ballot as direct by the person with the disability. Staff were first required to take an oath to ensure the secrecy of the vote was fully maintained.
- As permitted by the *MEA*, voting by proxy was offered if a person was not able to attend a voting location. A person was able to appoint another individual to cast a ballot on their behalf. This ensured a secondary option for voters unable to attend to complete curbside voting.

Staff Training

- All election staff were trained on key accessibility requirements being made aware of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and Integrated Accessibility Standards. Other aspects were covered such as how to interact with support persons and clarifying that support animals were permitted in all voting locations.
- Demonstrations of how to set up and use accessible voting equipment were provided for all staff acting as tabulator operators. This ensured accessible voting was available at all times.

NEXT STEPS

- As required by Section 12.1 (3) of the *MEA*, this report shall be made available to the public. Therefore, as a next step this report will be posted on the Town's website for reference. Any feedback received will be recorded and used in planning for the next municipal election.

APPLICABLE LEGISLATION

[*Municipal Elections Act, 1996*](#)

[*Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*](#)

[*O. Reg. 191/11: Integrated Accessibility Standards*](#)

