

2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan



Accessibility Plan for the 2022 Election

It is the goal of the Election Team to ensure that electors with a disability are provided with the opportunity to vote as independently as possible in the 2022 Brantford Municipal Election. The 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan is an extension of the City's commitment to providing open and accessible government.

After the 2018 Election, staff reviewed the accessibility initiatives undertaken during the course of the Election and compiled a report summarizing the findings. The report aimed to identify barriers that affected electors and candidates, as well as measures that were taken to increase accessibility. For the 2022 election, Election Officials will use the findings and recommendations identified in the report to guide new initiatives to further increase accessibility while once again implementing successful measures that were used in the 2018 Election.

In support of compliance with *the Municipal Elections Act*, staff reviewed *the Accessibility for Ontarians' with Disabilities Act, 2005 S.O. 2004 c. 11 (AODA)* and noted the key definitions of 'barrier' and 'disability' as follows:

"Barrier" means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice; ("obstacle")

"Disability" means;

- (a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
- (b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- (c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- (d) a mental disorder, or;
- (e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997; The following items were noted as key aspects of the 2018 election where consideration was given to identify, remove and prevent barriers as well as additional measures which will be implemented in the 2022 election

Communication and Information

- Communication initiatives and information for candidates and electors are available in alternate formats upon request;
- Accessibility information to be posted on the City's Election website including facility notes that were collected when inspecting voting locations (lighting, ramps, door access, etc);
- A link to *the Ontarians with Disabilities Act* will be provided under the Election Related Links tab of the Election site;
- Timely and relevant information on the election, including introduction of internet voting, to be delivered through a series of social media, print, radio announcements, and computer messaging in public locations (ex. Laurier University, Conestoga College, Brantford Public Library);
- Candidates to be provided with an information kit including relevant election information materials and age-friendly campaigning tips;
- Election staff members to be provided with training on how to interact and communicate with persons having various types of disabilities and with persons who use an assistive device or service animal.

Voting locations

- Conduct site visits of all potential voting locations to ensure compliance with the established check list which looked to review accessibility of locations;
- Where possible, ensure designated or reserved parking for persons with disabilities at each voting location;
- Provide seating at voting stations for individuals who have difficulty standing;
- Provide appropriate signage at all voting locations with extra signage at locations with alternate accessible entrances;
- Provide accessible voting, both facility access and accessible voting equipment, at each of the Advance Voting facilities, which were both "vote anywhere" format;
- Provide a central accessible voting location at City Hall on Election Day, which is a "vote anywhere" poll;
- Provide a low/wide voting area and/or clipboards to assist a wheelchair or scooter user to vote independently and securely;
- Voting stations to be equipped with large print voting instructions to aid persons with low vision.
- Assign an Election Greeter to each location to offer assistance to voters throughout the voting process where needed.

Staff training

- All election worker training sessions incorporated provisions to meet accessible customer service standards;
- Election officials to be trained on the City's Accessible Customer Service Standards and the AODA accessibility regulations;
- Reference material to be included in each training manual;
- Special training to be provided to staff working the Advance Vote on the proper use of the accessible voting equipment;
- Clerk's staff dedicated to help-desk for call-in assistance during advanced voting period and internet use.

Voting and voting equipment methods

- Council approved alternative voting method of internet voting reducing barriers connected to travelling to/from a physical voting location.
- Provide fully accessible voting equipment at both Advanced Voting locations and at City Hall on Election Day (ImageCast accessible audio voting equipment with assistive devices – audio tactile interface, sip and puff, pound paddles);
- All Advanced Voting locations and the accessibility poll at City Hall on Election Day were established with a “vote anywhere” format offering enhanced voting opportunity for all voters;
- Proxy voting to be available for the Election;
- Staff to be trained to administer the accessible voting equipment to electors;
- Promote Advanced Voting opportunities for electors with disabilities in all election advertising materials;
- Provide voting opportunities specifically for institutions and retirement homes on Election Day.

Post-Election Report

Following the 2022 Municipal Election, the Clerk shall prepare a report to Council reviewing the initiatives outlined in this plan and their effectiveness in increasing the accessible voting options as well as removing/reducing barriers to voters. The report will include feedback from the City's Accessibility Committee and seek to identify areas of improvement for the next election.

Feedback, recommendations, or suggestions can be forwarded to the Election Management Team at election@brantford.ca or by calling the Clerk's office at 519-759-4150