

2018 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan

Post-Election Review Report



Accessibility Plan for the 2018 Election

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

After the 2014 Election, staff reviewed the accessibility initiatives undertaken during the course of the Election and compiled a report summarizing the findings. This report aimed to identify barriers that affected electors and candidates, as well as measures that were taken to increase accessibility.

For the 2018 election, Election Officials used this report to guide new initiatives to further increase accessibility while once again implementing measures that were used in the 2014 Election. The post-election report reviews the initial plan and includes comments from the Brantford Accessibility Advisory Committee (BAAC) obtained at their December 6th Committee meeting. For ease of reference, the review has been added to the initial plan document.

In support of compliance with the Act, staff reviewed the Accessibility for Ontarians' with Disabilities Act, 2005 S.O. 2004 c. 11 (AODA) and noted with attention the key definitions of 'barrier' and 'disabilities' 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.

"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 were noted as key aspects of the election where consideration was given to identify, remove and prevent barriers:

Communication and Information

Pre-Election Plan Noted Items

All pre-election plan items were achieved:

- Communication initiatives and information for candidates and electors are available in alternate formats upon request;
- Information pertaining to accessibility is posted on the City's Election web site including facility notes that were collected when inspecting Voting locations (lighting, ramps, door access, etc);
- Advertisements to be made in a variety of ways including in the Civic News, Utility billings, mobile road signs and social media platforms;
- A link to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 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 radio announcements, computer messaging in public locations (Sanderson Centre, Wilfrid Laurier notices, physician offices);
- Candidates were provided with an information kit including relevant election information materials and age-friendly campaigning tips;
- Election staff members were 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.

Post-Election Review:

- Facility audit provided location details and information to the public relating to a variety of items. In addition to the notes on the website, the inspection forms may be helpful information and should also be considered for inclusion on the website.
- Voter Information Notices should include description of the type of accessible equipment or features available in future elections to ensure electors are aware of their options. This information should be enhanced on the City's website as well.
- Keep utilizing multiple communication platforms to increase the breadth of information access (i.e. website, facebook, paper).
- Ensure that continuous information is posted on the City's website to reflect the most recent information, including any disruptions.
- Candidates were provided with an electronic voters list that contained the most current data. This helps ensure they were able to assist the public with the most up to date information as possible and should be continued for future elections.

Voting Locations

Pre-Election Plan Noted Items

All pre-election plan items were achieved:

- Conducted 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 are both “vote anywhere” format;
- Provide a central accessible voting location at City Hall on Election Day, which will be a “vote anywhere” poll;
- Set up designated voting area booths to be low and wide enough to enable 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;
- Assistance to be provided as needed.

Post-Election Review:

- Continue to provide a “Vote Anywhere in your Ward” process on Voting Day. This allowed voters to choose the location that was the most accessible.
- Increase the exposure of what accessible devices are available and where. The BAAC can and should be enlisted to assist in outreach initiatives.
- Evening lighting inspections provided details to the public on outside perimeters of voting locations and should be continued in future elections.
- Secure additional signage for voting locations, including outdoor signs.
- Send reminders to all city departments regarding utilizing the location as a voting place and to ensure maintenance, repairs or construction will not prevent full accessible use of the facility well in advance in order to prevent last minute changes to the locations.

Staff Training

Pre-Election Plan Noted Items

All pre-election plan items were achieved:

- All election worker training sessions incorporate provisions to meet the Accessible Customer Service standards;
- Election officials are trained on the City's Accessibility Policy and 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.

Post-Election Review:

- Continue to include Sensitivity to Disabilities training in the Election Worker process.
- Positive feedback was noted regarding workers utilizing sign language and physical assistance at certain voting locations. (i.e. offering an elbow/arm to guide around a voting location). In the recruitment process, any additional assistance services would be encouraged, tracked and offered to the public.

Voting And Voting Equipment Methods

Pre-Election Plan Noted Items

All pre-election plan items were achieved:

- Council approved alternative voting method of internet voting;
- 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 are established with a “vote anywhere” format offering enhanced voting opportunity for all voters;
- Proxy voting available for the Election;
- Staff are 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 two occasions at 15 locations (Advanced period and on Election Day).

Post-Election Review:

- Continue to provide online voting opportunities for the extended time period.
- Continue to welcome the use of support persons and service animals in voting places. Educate elections staff on appropriate communication with voters and service animals.

Other Post-Election Items Noted

- Staff should look for increased opportunities for voters to add or amend their records beyond City Hall. Possible inclusions could be the Public Library locations, extended hours opportunities, community centers, etc.
- Enlist the BAAC to communicate when the Voters List Revision process is underway as well as the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation Enumeration process to aid in the accuracy of individual voter records.

2018 Pre-Election Plan – Publically Available

The Pre-Election Plan was completed in advance of the October 19th deadline. The Plan was included on the City's website and available in print at City Hall as requested.

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