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# Report to Council

From: Sue Bates  
CC: Jason Young, Leah Fraser, Department Heads  
Date: December 1, 2022  
Meeting: Committee-of-the-Whole – January 9, 2023  
Re: 2022 Post-Election Accessibility Report

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## Background

The *Municipal Elections Act*, 1996, as amended (MEA), requires the Clerk to have regard for the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities and to ensure that all voting places are accessible to electors with disabilities.

In accordance with Section 12.1(3) of the MEA, the Clerk shall provide a report, within 90 days after voting day in a regular election, about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with accessibility needs. This report will be available to the public and posted on the Town's website. Leading up to the election, an Election Accessibility Plan was developed. The Plan is attached to this report. This Plan was designed to respect the dignity and independence of electors and candidates and ensure that practices and procedures are consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration, and equality of opportunity.

This report does not seek to identify the overall success of the 2022 Municipal Election and does not look to address the examination of the results based on demographic information, turnout rates, and general complaints or inquiries during the voting process.

The following identifies the actions and initiatives taken during the administration of the 2022 municipal election to identify, prevent and remove accessibility barriers.

The municipal election was conducted over a 11-day voting period (October 14 to 24, 2022) as a vote-anywhere, vote-anytime, paperless voting election. Voters were not required to attend a specific voting place and instead could vote remotely by telephone or online 24 hours a day from anywhere or at the Voter Help Centre during hours of operation.

The use of computers, telephones and other aids presented accessible opportunities for persons with disabilities to accomplish more, while being consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration, and equal opportunity. This is demonstrated through the opportunity to vote from home which facilitates the voting process for persons with disabilities who may have mobility restrictions, visual impairment, and/or have a difficult time with transportation. Additionally, persons who have

assistive devices set up in their homes could use them to assist with casting a ballot privately and independently.

Election-related assistance was available both in-person and remotely. More specifically, electors were able to receive assistance from an Election Official at the Voter Help Centre, could call the designated phone number or send an email to the designated Election Assistance email address.

Election information was communicated through various channels and alternative formats including the newspaper, website, and Facebook. For election-related inquiries or feedback, all residents were able to contact the Clerk's Department in-person during normal working hours and during the advertised Voter Help Centre hours of operation, or via telephone or email. The Clerk's Department ensured that all information was made available to candidates and voters in alternate formats upon request. No such requests were received.

We also offered the Specialized Transit Van free of charge on in-person voting days for those who did not have transportation to and from the Voter Help Centre.

### **Telephone Voting**

Eligible voters could vote using a touch-tone telephone, and the toll-free telephone number and PIN (Personal Identification Number) contained in their Voter Information Letter to access an audio ballot.

### **Internet Voting**

Eligible voters could vote online, using a smart phone, tablet device or computer and any accompanying assistive devices, along with their PIN to access the internet address provided in their Voter Information Letter.

The Scytl System was created to meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines so that persons with disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with the online voting system.

### **In-Person Voting at the Voter Help Centre**

For those individuals without means to access voting via telephone or internet, or who required the assistance of a trained Election Official, the Voter Help Centre was open to provide in-person internet voting opportunities via a laptop.

Consistent with the objectives of the Accessibility Plan, the Voter Help Centre was set up at the Municipal Office (Town Hall) on Tuesday, October 18, 2022, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Thursday, October 20, 2022, from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and on voting day Monday, October 24, 2022, from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Throughout the voting period, rest area seating was provided for, doors were maintained unobstructed, and all technology cords were tucked away to prevent tripping hazards.

Accessible voting areas were available. These areas were low in height and had a wide area to allow for individuals who use a wheelchair or scooter to vote independently and secretively. All areas were provided with magnifying sheets, and a privacy kiosk to ensure content could be enlarged by the user depending on visual requirements while privacy was maintained. We also had a touchscreen tablet/laptop for those who were unfamiliar with using a mouse.

The entrances, corridors, parking, egress and ingress of the Voter Help Centre was in accordance with the Municipality's Election Accessibility Plan which provides for appropriate width to

accommodate mobility device entry, designated parking spaces, and power door openers. In addition, two Election Officials were hired for the in-person voting days to provide assistance.

For those who visited the Voter Help Centre during the in-person voting days, methods of assistance were provided. Voters were permitted to be accompanied by a support person who could be administered the “Friend of the Voter Oath” by an Election Official in order to grant them authority to accompany and assist a voter behind the privacy screen. Election Officials were also authorized to provide assistance to any voter on request.

### **Special Voting Provisions**

An Election Official was also on-site at our Long-Term Care facility during various times in the voting period to provide onsite access to online voting via a tablet/iPad.

### **Conclusion**

The 2022 Municipal Election was a fully hosted electronic election provided through Scytl. By allowing persons with disabilities to vote from any location and from a selection of methods, there was an increase in the capability for the voter to vote without any assistance. This provided persons with disabilities the same independence and privacy in participating in the election as other voters.