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In accordance with Section 12.1(3) of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 (MEA), the clerk shall prepare a report about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities and shall make the report available to the public within 90 days after voting day in a regular election.

This report is made available electronically on the Town's website.

Prior to the 2022 Municipal Election, the 2022 Accessible Election Plan was created in accordance with Section 12.1 of the Municipal Elections Act. Each of the legislative requirements, in addition to services that were identified in the Plan, were offered and successfully carried out during the course of the 2022 Municipal Election.

Identification, Removal and Prevention of Barriers

1. Voting Location Accessibility

i. Identification of barriers

In order to be a suitable voting location, all buildings and respective voting rooms utilized by the Town for the municipal election had to be fully accessible to the public.

ii. Removal and Prevention of barriers

Staff performed multiple site visits to each voting location prior to holding the municipal election. The following barriers were reviewed at each voting location site visit to determine suitability of the location:

- Accessible washrooms;
- Accessible route from the parking lot to the entrance of the facility;
- Accessible parking spaces and appropriate signage clearly marking the spaces;
- Spacious and clear path of travel through interior of location;

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- Entrances well lit, easy to open and equipped with operating power assisted door button; and,
 - No trip hazards.

2. Voting Location Layout and Directional Signage

i. Identification of barriers

Some designated voting locations had less visible road signage or were located on a busy road where current signage could be easily missed. Further, once inside some locations, the voting room was not always located near the main entrance to the building.

ii. Removal and Prevention of barriers

All voting locations were assessed for signage. Where applicable, lawn and A-Frame signs, along with window wraps were used to provide clear direction and information to voters, both inside and outside the voting location.

Based on feedback provided by voters and election officials, staff made adjustments to directional signage during the voting period to further provide voters with a clear path to the voting room.

Adjustments were also made to a number of voting room layouts and chairs were placed as needed at voting locations for electors attending with mobility aids.

3. Special Mail-in Ballot

i. Identification of barriers

Not all electors have the same ability to attend a voting location in person through the traditional paper ballot voting method.

ii. Removal and Prevention of barriers

To ensure that every elector had an equal opportunity to cast a ballot, a special mail-in ballot was incorporated for electors who were unable to attend a designated voting location during the voting period.

4. Vote Anywhere

i. Identification of barriers

Electors are typically required to attend a specific voting location in their voting subdivision in order to cast their ballot in person.

ii. Removal and Prevention of barriers

A vote anywhere election was implemented so that voters could access the designated voting location that they deem to be most convenient and accessible to them.

5. Curbside Voting

i. Identification of barriers

Staff recognized that while a voting location may be fully accessible, some electors with mobility issues may still have difficulty accessing the building or the voting room to cast their ballot.

ii. Removal and Prevention of barriers

Allowing for curbside voting at all advance vote and Election Day voting locations allowed electors with mobility disabilities to request a ballot be brought out to their vehicle. An Election Official would first attend the vehicle to obtain the required elector information to ensure they are on the Voters' List and that they receive the correct ballot. Curbside voting was accessed regularly during the 2022 Municipal Election.

6. Accessible Customer Service

i. Identification of barriers

Accessible customer service must be ensured across all voting locations to establish an equal and fair voting experience for all electors.

ii. Removal and Prevention of barriers

All Election Officials who were hired to work the 2022 Municipal Election were required to attend a two-hour training session, of which a portion contained accessibility training including how accessible customer service is measured and what it means, key principles of accessible customer service, and how to serve electors with disabilities.

7. Accessible Voting Services, Devices, and Equipment

i. Identification of barriers

Disabilities are all different in nature and therefore various services, devices and equipment are required in order to meet the needs of electors.

ii. Removal and Prevention of barriers

Various assistive devices were made available to electors attending one of the designated voting locations. This included magnifying sheets and pads of paper provided to Election Officials should they require to communicate with electors in writing.

Both support persons and service animals were permitted to accompany an elector as required at all designated voting locations. Support persons for electors with disabilities were required to complete the Oral Oath of Elector Assistance (EL 27) prior to accompanying the elector behind the voting screen to assist in marking their ballot.

As noted above, electors also had the ability to vote from their homes using a Special Mail-In Ballot.

8. Communications Initiatives

i. Identification of barriers

In coordination with Corporate Communications & Creative Services, various types of communication mediums and formats were utilized so as to reach as many electors as possible with election messaging.

ii. Removal and Prevention of barriers

The Town's online presence was increased to ensure greater awareness of the voting process, including using informational videos. Additionally, branded assets and social media advertising were deployed, and "Plan Your Vote", an online tool was created to allow voters to be added to or correct their information on the Voters' List and to find information about candidates and their platforms. Voter Notification Cards were mailed to all eligible electors, and these cards incorporated a high contrast text to background for easy identification and reading content.

Roving Polls and Special Voting Locations

In accordance with Section 45(7) of the Municipal Elections Act, Special Voting Locations were established at eight (8) institutions/retirement homes across the Town on Voting Day. Although not legislatively required under the provisions of the MEA, nine (9) Roving Poll Locations were

established and were held on one of two days leading up to the Advance Vote period at certain residential building identified as having senior residents or residents with disabilities.

Election Officials worked with administrators at each Special Voting Location and Roving Poll Location to ensure that an appropriate notice of voting opportunities and space was available. This included allowing for bedside voting at each of the facilities, operating on multiple floors for ease of access, and at the Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences having a Deputy Returning Officer and Poll Clerk team go unit to unit throughout the facility.

Alternative Voting Method – Special Mail-in Ballot

As an alternative voting method to the in-person paper ballot, a Special Mail-in Ballot (SMB) option was provided to electors in Whitby for the 2022 Municipal Election. The SMB allowed an eligible elector to submit an application to receive an SMB kit which could then be completed and returned in accordance with the 2022 Municipal Election Procedures. The main advantage to providing this alternative voting method was to provide further opportunity for electors with disabilities, or anyone who was unable to attend a designated voting location during the voting period, to exercise their right to vote and participate in the democratic process.

To increase the means through which one could obtain an SMB, applications were accepted in-person, by mail and by email. Further, the deadline to submit an application for a SMB in-person was October 19, 2022 which allowed for electors to apply for a SMB right up until the beginning of the advance voting period (October 20-23, 2022). With respect to returning a completed SMB kit, electors were able to mail or drop off the kit to Town Hall. In total, 268 electors in the Town cast their ballot in the 2022 Municipal Election through the SMB process. This represents a 264% increase in SMB uptake versus 2018.

Accessibility Advisory Committee

The Office of the Town Clerk met and coordinated with the Town's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) regarding accessibility initiatives for the 2022 Municipal Election. On March 1, 2022, Staff from the Clerk's Office attended an AAC meeting to present the 2022 Accessible Election Plan to members of the Committee for the purpose of receiving feedback and suggestions for incorporation into the Plan.

Original Document Signed

Christopher Harris, Town Clerk

03/01/2023

Date (DD/MM/YYYY)