

V  te 2018



New Tecumseth
Alliston · Beeton · Tottenham

New Tecumseth Municipal Elections Accessibility Plan Report

January 2019

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Goal

To review and record feedback and lessons from the 2018 Municipal Election process that can inform future by-elections and elections in the Town of New Tecumseth (“the Town”) such that:

1. Candidates and Voters with disabilities have full and equal access to all election information and services.
2. Persons with disabilities have full access to voting.
3. Persons with disabilities are able to independently and privately mark their ballot and, should they desire, have access to voting assistance.

Corporate Policy

The Town is committed to providing accessible municipal services. The Town reviews its Accessibility Plan on a regular basis and is in the process of updating that plan. The Town works in partnership with its Accessibility Advisory Committee to eliminate barriers, improve accessibility, and provide integrated programs and services wherever possible.

Legislation

Excerpts from the *Municipal Elections Act*, 1996, as amended:

Section 12.1

- 1) A Clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of Voters and Candidates with disabilities.
- 2) The Clerk shall prepare a plan regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect Voters and Candidates with disabilities and shall make the plan available to the public before Voting Day in a regular election.
- 3) Within 90 days after Voting Day in a regular election, the Clerk shall prepare a report about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect Voters and Candidates with disabilities and shall make the report available to the public.

Section 45 (2)

In establishing the site of Voting places, the Clerk shall ensure that each Voting place is accessible to Voters with disabilities.

Feedback

Election Staff accepted feedback about the manner in which election services were provided to persons with disabilities throughout the Election Period and has compiled that feedback to help inform the delivery of future elections. Forms were available at all Voting Places for staff and voters and the feedback collected during the Advance Vote and on Voting Day has been presented as Appendix A.

Communication and Information

One of the Town's goals for the 2018 Municipal Elections was to increase awareness of accessibility initiatives and accessible voting opportunities available to voters. The Town communicated regularly with the residents through print and social media the availability of accessible voting opportunities and regularly updated its website with this information and information from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, including their Voters' Guide.

Highlights

- Implemented an Online Voter Registration portal which allowed voters, in the weeks ahead of the election, and right up until Voting Day, to update their voter information in the comfort of their own home and utilizing accessibility devices they are familiar with to navigate web pages.
- Communicated to all Election Staff the importance of accessible voting and required those staff to familiarize themselves with accessibility standards.
- Used radio advertisements, social media, and print advertising to inform the public about the opportunity to participate in the election both as candidates and as voters. Print media included solicitation for candidates in both official languages.

Voting Places

During Municipal Elections the Clerk is responsible for establishing Voting Places that she considers accessible to voters with disabilities. The Clerk and her designates incorporated Voting Place accessibility feedback from the 2014 Municipal Elections and inspected all selected locations twice (once in spring 2018, and again in the late summer of 2018) to assess potential locations for their suitability as Voting Places. The locations were inspected utilizing a standardized form.

Highlights

- Voting place Evaluation Forms were made available at all voting places to Voters and to Election Staff.
- Provided, where necessary, additional signage at voting places where accessible entrances were not apparent or obvious.
- Two advance voting all-wards voting places (one in Alliston, one in Tottenham) were equipped with additional accessibility devices (hand or foot paddle ballot navigation, sip and puff device ballot navigation, and audio ballots).
- Magnifying sheets were made available at all Voting Places to assist voters who had difficulty reading the election material and ballots at their printed font sizes.
- Processes and appropriate forms were available at all Voting Places for voters to request and receive assistance from a friend, family member, or election staff member.
- Proxy voting was again made available to voters who could not attend to a voting place during normal voting hours. In-home and curbside voting opportunities during the course of normal voting hours were made available to those voters who requested this accommodation. The use of all these accommodations increased in 2018.
- The Town included accessibility accommodation questions in its recruitment for Election Staff and informed all interviewed applicants that the Town would work to find roles for any successful applicant who made an accommodation request.
- Accessible voting was provided by staff even when the elevator broke down at one of the voting locations as staff was quick to provide ballots on the lower level to voters and run them upstairs to the tabulators.

Accessibility Training for Election Officials and Staff

Election Staff were provided and required to familiarize themselves with training material detailing expectations for accessible customer service with respect to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (“AODA”) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (“IASR”) that govern such standards in Ontario. Election staff were required to provide signed documents indicating that they had read and understood such materials.

Staff were also provided training on the availability of various accessibility equipment and accommodations that could be offered to voters upon request and the training manuals provided to each staff member reinforced the availability of these accommodations.

Review of Town Objectives

Consultation

Initiative	Actions	Outcome
Consultation with stakeholders, groups, and persons knowledgeable in accessibility topics.	Accessibility Plan for the 2018 Municipal Elections was presented to the Town's Accessibility Advisory Committee for feedback.	Accessibility Plan prepared, presented to Advisory Committee, and posted on the Town's Election website in the spring of 2018.
	Feedback provided by community groups in the post-Election 2014 Accessibility Report was reviewed.	

Communications and Information

Initiative	Actions	Outcome
Provide Voters and Candidates with information in an accessible manner.	All relevant election information was posted to the election website (elections.newtecumseth.ca).	All actions performed within the timelines detailed in the Accessibility Plan. Voting place accessibility difficulties (including out of order elevator at New Tecumseth Recreation Centre) on October 11, 2018 were also communicated via the Town's website and through social media.
Provide Candidates and Election Staff with information relating to accessible customer service.	The Town's Election website provided links or content for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Town's Candidates' Guide and Voters' Guide The Town's Accessibility Plan. 	
Provide Voters with information related to accessible voting.	A media campaign was launched to encourage Voters with disabilities or accessibility issues to vote during the Advance Voting period to reduce waiting in line and to allow them to vote unassisted.	

Voting places

Initiative	Actions	Outcome
Ensure Voting places are accessible to all Voters.	Prepared an accessibility checklist to evaluate potential Voting places and used that checklist to evaluate locations under consideration. The checklist included:	Accessibility Checklist used to evaluate all 2018 voting places. Two separate inspections conducted for each

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible doors and entryways. • Entrance to the Voting place sufficiently wide for wheelchair or scooter access. • Adequate lighting in and around the Voting place. • Barrier-free parking. • Level access to the interior voting area and voting booth and accessible elevators if the voting area is not on the main floor of the Voting place. • Accessible ramps at entrances where level access is not available. • Barrier-free path from site parking to entrance of Voting place. • Seating for Voters within the Voting place. • Service animals permitted within the Voting place. 	voting place (spring 2018 and late summer 2018)
	During Advance Voting and on Voting Day staff ensured accessible entrances and exits were clearly marked and unobstructed throughout voting hours.	Election Staff placed appropriate signage inside and outside facilities. Large weighted signage placed in locations evaluated as particularly challenging to navigate.
	Provided sufficient space around voting booths within Voting places for Voters using mobility equipment to access.	Voting place layouts allocated to provide sufficient clearance at each location around voting booth.
	Provided voting opportunities at institutions and retirement homes for the residents of those facilities, and bedside voting for those residents who requested it.	Provided on Voting Day October 22 nd
	Posted clear and unambiguous election signage around Voting places.	Signage displayed at all locations included large fonts.

Voting

Initiative	Actions	Outcome
Provide voting aids and supplies and instructions for their use.	Provided opportunities for Voters to use hand or foot paddles, sip and puff devices, and audio ballots during the Advance Voting Period and made note of that availability through the Town's Election website and other distributions. Provided staff with instructions and visual aids on the use of the accessible voting devices/equipment.	Accessibility devices provided (and that opportunity advertised to public) at October 15 th and October 17 th Advance Voting days.
	Magnifying sheets were available at every voting place. Magnifying sheets assisted Voters to read instructions, oaths, and the ballot.	Made available at all Advance Voting and Voting Day locations.
	Note pads and pens made available to assist Election Staff in communicating with Voters who were deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.	
Convenient Advance Voting Opportunities.	Advance voting opportunities scheduled to include weekend and weekday evening opportunities.	Advance Voting Opportunities were offered October 11 th , 13 th , 15 th , and 17 th . These opportunities included a weekend option and two evening options.
Provide staff with instructions and visuals aids on the use of the accessible voting devices/equipment and accessible voting options.	Curbside voting, facilitated by a Deputy Returning Officer meeting the Voter at their vehicle with a ballot, was available to Voters with limited mobility (upon request).	Both curbside voting and at home voting opportunities were provided during the Advance Vote and on Voting Day.
	By appointment and request made to the Clerk, Election Staff attended the Voter's residence to allow a Voter to cast their ballot from home. This accessibility option was offered if staff resources permitted and on a limited basis for those with mobility limitations.	
	A person with a disability who was unable to attend a Voting place could appoint another person to act as a	Proxy appointments were available at the Town's

	Voting Proxy to cast a ballot on his or her behalf. The appointment was made in advance of voting on the prescribed form available at the Clerk's office.	Administration Office from July 30 th through to Voting Day.
	The following fully accessible voting equipment was available to Voters on two (2) Advance Voting Days at the Alliston Fire Station #1 and Tottenham Fitness & Community Centre: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audio-Tactile Interface (ATI). • Sip 'n' Puff. • Paddle Buttons. 	This accessible voting equipment was provided on October 15 th and October 17 th Advance Voting days (both all-ward voting places)
	Assisted Voting: Persons with disabilities could be accompanied by a support person within the Voting place. Election Staff was also available in each Voting place to assist Voters with voting (upon request).	Option made available throughout Advance Vote and on Voting Day.

Staff Recruitment

During recruitment, the Town notified applicants for election staffing roles, when they were individually selected to participate in the interview and technology exercise process, that accommodations were available upon request in relation to the materials or processes to be used.

Staff Training

Training of Election Staff included:

- Information on the various accessibility options and accessibility equipment available to voters.
- Information on how to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities.
- Maintaining a friendly and approachable demeanor regardless of how tired, upset, or hassled Election Staff may feel.
- Encouragement for Election Staff to monitor their Voting place and offer assistance wherever they felt necessary.
- Ensuring that voters who have self-identified as desiring a curbside voting or residence attendance by appointment option were served in a timely manner.
- Reference material provided, including a link to the Accessibility of Ontario Directorate website.

- Checking and monitoring the access doors frequently to offer assistance and watching for Voters unable to easily enter a voting place.

Appendix A: Accessibility Feedback (Public and Staff)

Do you have any suggestions on how we can improve the voting or election process with regard to accessibility?

- *Improve directions for voting*
- *Make sure all parking to entrances has disabled spaces allocated on voting day*
- *Keep voting area parking clear of cars to be used only for voters*
- *Handicapped must be dropped off very inconveniently instead of being dropped in front of building*
- *Put all 'express lanes' together to reduce confusion & speed up the process; Use large arrows &/or colour to identify 'express lanes'; use large arrows on floor to help direct voters through the stations at each voting place to reduce confusion & speed up the process; use large font for signs posted on walls to help direct voters especially those with vision limitations*
- *No. Everything seemed rather smooth. Maybe make minor changes to voters' software*
- *More parking spaces are need for handicapped parking, there was only one and it was taken*
- *Parking woefully inadequate. No wheel chair parking*
- *Poor location for parking – you forced a disabled person to walk from the mall!*
- *Get staff to park at the Mall*
- *There is not sufficient parking for this to be a polling place*
- *Best to use a main floor if possible; elevator necessary for accessibility*
- *No. Well Done*
- *Have a table close to the entrance for voters with walking limitations along with voting booth and tabulator. Maybe marked a 'disability only'. Tottenham Rec Centre gym was very large and people with walking issues struggled with the distance to each of the stations to vote*

Please provide details of your customer service experience in terms of accessibility.

- *Put signs up for wheel chair accessibility*
- *Voters expressed they had difficulty finding & reading signs indicating voting stations such as 'express lanes' or 'regulation' signs on back walls behind EA & DRO. Large sized font would help solve issue, as well as bold print; Voters expressed difficulty navigating voting places because of unfamiliarity of locations, so arrow indicating a path to follow would be helpful*
- *The customer service was excellent*
- *All good once Deputy Clerk started running up and down stairs to allow people to vote during elevator break down; perhaps use 54 Club room – if it is large enough*
- *Assisted a person in scooter to help vote; Assisted person from group home & PSW to vote away from crowd*