100 John West Way
Aurora, Ontario
L4G 6J1
(905) 727-3123
aurora.ca

Town of Aurora
2022 Post-Election Accessibility Report
Corporate Services

Objectives

The Election Accessibility Plan was developed by the Town's Accessibility Advisor and was intended to highlight measures that the Town implemented to ensure equal opportunity for all electors and candidates. These objectives included:

- That all voting locations were accessible;
- That persons with disabilities were able to independently cast their vote and verify their selection;
- That persons with disabilities had full and equal access to all information on where and when to vote and on eligible candidates;
- That persons with disabilities could fully participate in the Municipal Election as an elector, candidate or election official; and,
- That efforts were made to ensure that electors with disabilities were aware of the accessibility measures available via channels such as the newspaper, media launches, the Town's website and social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram).

General Election Information

The 2022 Town of Aurora Election was conducted over an 10-day voting period (October 14 - 24, 2022). The Town of Aurora offered both traditional methods of voting using a paper ballot that's counted by vote tabulators as well as internet voting. Voters were required to attend a specific voting location based on their eligibility to vote, or were able to vote online from October 14 – 23. Internet voting was not available on Election Day.

Identification of Barriers

The Town of Aurora is committed to providing excellent customer service to all residents and visitors, and treating everyone with dignity and respect. To make the 2022 Town of Aurora Election accessible there had to be recognition of the diverse needs of all potential voters, including the needs of people with disabilities.

Highlights:

- Implemented previous Accessibility Advisory Committee recommendations on election accessibility initiatives.
- Gathered comments and recommendations from the municipality's Accessibility Advisor on methods to meet accessibility needs.

- Accessibility Advisor developed an election site audit and completed all audits for election sites.
- Accessibility tools kits were provided for Advanced Voting and Voting Day at each location.
- Provided additional temporary accessible parking spots at locations that required them.
- Continued online voting, which made it accessible to vote for a large majority of residents
- Worked with long term care homes and retirement homes to conduct on-site voting for residents

Moving Forward:

- Consideration for equipment or a voting booth to be set up for those with sensory processing issues, such as being highly sensitive to noise.
- Create elections map per election site, specifically schools, to assist with accessibility flow, traffic flow, parking and site setup. Work with school administration to confirm these plans to ensure involvement with all interested parties.

Communication and Information

A goal for the 2022 Election was to increase use of the accessibility initiatives available. Internet Voting and the Election Accessibility Plan were both posted on the Town of Aurora's website to provide voters an opportunity to participate in a more accessible and convenient method of voting. The availability of alternative formats on request was ensured in communication initiatives and information for candidates and electors to break down barriers.

Highlights:

- Posted all information on the election website to ensure information was presented and accessible in an easy to navigate manner, using clear language.
- Ensured communication initiatives and information for candidates and electors was available in alternative formats.
- Provided multiple communication channels for persons with disabilities to interact with staff including the election website, newspaper advertisements, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, phone, teletypewriter (TTY), fax, email and in person.
- Established a web link dedicated to receiving feedback on the Municipal Election and Accessibility, in addition to having a printed feedback form available at all election locations for voting day.
- Conducted outreach to community agencies supporting voters with disabilities to market disability support available for Advanced and Internet Voting.

Moving Forward:

- Consideration to provide captioning on all election related video posted publicly online.
- Continue to include notion relative to "availability of alternative formats on request" on Voter Information Letter and all promotion materials.
- Provide detailed accessibility information about each voting location through the election website.

Voting Locations

Staff conducted site visits of all potential voting locations to ensure full accessibility to the best of our ability. As the Clerk does not have the power to compel building owners to ensure that accessible amenities are installed, finding fully accessible locations are a challenge. Accessible routes, entrances and parking were all important portions of the accessible checklists when voting locations were chosen.

Highlights:

- Conducted site visits and follow ups at all voting locations.
- Where full accessibility could not be achieved we put in extra support such as door wedges, extra election staff for assistance, etc.
- Provided a fully accessible central voting location during Advanced Polls.
- Addressed accessibility concerns with the School Boards and put in extra support as needed.
- Provided appropriate and additional signage at voting locations.
- Permitted service animals and support persons in all voting locations.
- Set up processes to facilitate notification of any last minute voting location changes, should an emergency occur (Disruption of service notices available for all voting locations via the Accessibility Advisor).
- Ensured designated or reserved parking for persons with disabilities at each voting location.
- Replaced locations that were identified as inappropriate or too challenging for accessibility reasons.

Moving Forward:

- Continue to monitor the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations and include any established building standards into voting place inspection checklists.
- Consideration to build maps for all voting locations to be available online.
- Provide additional accessible signage as required.

- Consideration for additional temporary accessible parking spots at locations with limited parking spots.

Voting Methods

The 2022 Town of Aurora Municipal Election offered both internet voting and in-person paper ballot options. Having the option to vote in a variety of methods increased accessibility, convenience, and independence, while allowing voters to vote from anywhere as long as they were connected to the internet. Voters were provided with the opportunity to vote online using personal devices alongside any accompanying assistive devices or software required.

Voters who preferred traditional methods of voting had both the Advanced Voting period as well as the actual Voting Day available to them. Assistance from trained election officials and accessibility tool kits were available at all voting locations.

Highlights:

- Accessibility tools kits were provided for Advanced Voting and Voting Day at each location.
- Processes were in place at each voting place that allowed a support person or election official to assist a voter with marking their ballot, if needed.
- Promoted Advance voting opportunity and internet voting for electors with disabilities.
- Traditional paper ballot with large text were used at all voting places (magnifying sheets available if needed).
- Accessibility Advisor visited each voting location to speak with MDROs for any accessibility related feedback.

Moving Forward:

- Continue to investigate new technologies available and alternative forms of voting to better meet the needs of electors with disabilities.
- Continue with online voting to meet the needs to electors that are home-bound and hospital-bound.

Election Officials

As an equal opportunity employer, the Town of Aurora abides by all current legislation relating to individual rights to employment, and are committed to recognize and celebrate diversity, talent and expertise that make each person unique. In preparation for the 2022 Election alternative formats were available through the Human Resources department for those interested in applying to be an election worker.

To provide a fully accessible voting experience for persons with disabilities, successful election officials had to understand the importance of providing excellent customer service to all voters. All election staff received training on the provision of accessible customer service to persons with disabilities in the context of the municipal election and voting place locations.

Highlights:

- Provided accessibility customer service training for all election staff prior to elections day.
- Provided tips on providing accessible customer service to all voters in trainings and manuals.
- Provided accessibility manuals and guides to hired election staff.
- Directed election staff to observe electors during discussions with them, and if it appeared that the voter was having difficulty with a language barrier to offer assistance where available (via gesture, demonstration or pictures).
- Encouraged election workers to approach an elector if it appeared that the elector required assistance to get around in the voting location. Offered assistance to help, did not assume an individual needed help.
- Election staff was trained to identify a service animal and followed the Municipality's Accessible Customer Service Policy #63.
- Ensured that voters who would self-identify as needing transportation or transfer assistance from the vehicle to voting location were accommodated.

Moving Forward:

- Continue to build awareness of the importance of Human Rights, accessible customer service and how to best service persons with disabilities.
- Continue to review and enhance training sessions to ensure voting place staff are provided with tools and resources needed to provide excellent customer service to all voters.

Feedback

The Town of Aurora is committed to providing customer service to all of our citizens. We value all of our customers and strive to meet everyone's needs. Voters and candidates were encouraged to provide feedback on accessibility if any areas of improvement were identified. A web link was dedicated to receiving feedback on the Municipal Election and Accessibility, in addition to having a printed feedback form available at all election locations for voting day.

Additional feedback regarding the accessibility of the Town of Aurora Municipal Election can be submitted through regular mail, email, telephone, or by using the Town's Accessibility Feedback Form, which is available to everyone via the Town's website.