

Municipality of Lakeshore – Report to Council

Strategic & Legal Affairs

Civic Affairs



To: Mayor & Members of Council
From: Brianna Coughlin, Division Leader – Civic Affairs
Date: January 3, 2023
Subject: 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Report

Recommendation

This report is for information only.

Background

The 2022 Municipal Election took place on October 24, 2022. The method of vote for the Municipality of Lakeshore was in-person voting with the use of optical scanning tabulators.

Under the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, (the Act) the Clerk is responsible for conducting municipal elections and establishing policies and procedures to ensure that all electors have the opportunity to participate fully in the election.

The Act 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. The Clerk is also required, within 90 days after a regular election, to prepare a report on the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities and make the report available to the public.

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the accessibility of the electoral services offered to all electors and candidates in the 2022 Municipal Election. This report outlines the various initiatives undertaken during the course of the election regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities and how these actions impacted their voting experience.

Comments

In preparation for the 2022 Municipal Election, Administration reviewed the relevant legislation and implemented a number of initiatives to ensure compliance. The following is a brief overview of the efforts made to identify, remove and prevent barriers for accessibility.

Accessibility Plan

As required under the Act, Administration prepared a plan regarding the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities. The Plan is included as Attachment A to this report.

Administration met with members of the Accessibility Advisory Committee and received feedback prior to the finalization of the 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan.

The plan was made available to the public before Election Day by posting it on the Municipality's website.

Voting Method

At the August 10, 2021 meeting, Council approved in-person voting as the method of vote for the 2022 Municipal Election. Further, on November 23, 2021 Council authorized the use of vote tabulators and accessible voting equipment.

Advanced voting took place on Wednesday, September 28, 2022 at the Comber Community Centre and on Saturday, October 8, 2022 at the Atlas Tube Recreation Centre – Renaud Room. Both locations were also designated locations for accessible voting assistive devices on Election Day on October 24, 2022.

Optical scanning tabulators were used at all voting locations. Assistive voting technology was also used at the two locations noted above, which included an audio tactile interface, foot paddles and sip n' puff technology.

Election officials were trained in the use of the assistive technology and were prepared to assist as needed.

Voting Places

Voting took place at 12 locations throughout the municipality, with two locations selected for each of the six wards. Each location was inspected prior to its selection to ensure barrier-free access. In particular, Administration ensured that each location had:

- Accessible parking
- Accessible and identifiable entrances/exits
- Clear paths of travel into and within the location;
- Adequate lighting and identifiable signage; and
- Accessible washrooms.

A voting location accessibility checklist can be found in Schedule C of the attached 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan.

Following the first advance vote, the Accessibility Advisory Committee requested that additional temporary accessible parking be made available at the Comber Community Centre. This was implemented for Election Day.

In addition, some electors expressed confusion in relation to the hours of the advance vote (starting at noon instead of 10 AM) and that this was not clear on the Voter Information Card. Administration has taken note of this and will make amendments for the next municipal election.

Both of the advance voting locations had significant lineups early in the day. Although all election equipment was working and voters were processed quickly, the volume of traffic contributed to longer wait times. Election officials and facility staff ensured that chairs were made available for those that needed to rest.

Administration made note of the lineups and made several changes for Election Day, including the rental of two additional tabulators for the busiest locations. Election officials were provided further training for line management and wait times were communicated to voters throughout the day.

At the opening of voting on Election Day, the VoterView electronic voters' list system had a province-wide slowdown that cause delays in the use of the software. Lakeshore election officials transitioned to the contingency plan and the impact to lineups at the voting locations was minimized. The software system was restored to all locations by the afternoon and no further software delays were observed. Administration will be following up with Datafix, the VoterView technology provider, to remediate this issue.

Candidates

Candidates were provided with a copy of the Election Accessibility Plan as well as AMCTO Candidate's Guide to Accessible Elections.

No candidates identified with the Clerk as requiring any accommodation for accessibility.

Communication and Engagement

Administration worked to ensure regular, ongoing and proactive election communication to ensure voters were engaged during the election process. Notices were provided on the municipal website and social media platforms, in the Lakeshore Waves newsletter, Lakeshore Splash feature (in the Lakeshore News Reporter newspaper) and posted at municipal facilities.

All election plans were reviewed for accessible formatting and plain language prior being posted to the municipal website.

Election Officials Training and Voter Assistance

A guiding principle for the 2022 election was to ensure that all voters were able to participate in the election process in a positive customer service environment and to ensure that voters' needs are accommodated whenever possible and in compliance with the Act.

As part of the training process, election officials were provided accessibility training. This included:

1. How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disability;
2. How to interact with persons with disabilities who use assistive devices or require the assistance of a service animal or support person;
3. How to use voting equipment and assistive devices to deliver election services; and
4. What to do if a person is having difficulty accessing election information or services.

Members of the Public Service Unit were also available to provide general voter assistance throughout the election period.

Financial Impacts

The cost for communications, training and assistive voting technology were included in the overall election budget.

Attachments

Attachment A – 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Report.docx
Attachments:	- Attachment A - 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Jan 5, 2023

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

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