



Report to Council

To: Mayor & Members of Council
From: Ann Rooth, Deputy Clerk
Date: December 20, 2022
Re: 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Report

Recommendation:

That Council receives the report from the Deputy Clerk regarding 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Report for their information.

Financial Implications

None.

Background:

The Municipal Elections Act includes provisions regarding accessibility in Municipal Elections:

Electors and candidates with disabilities

12.1 (1) A clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities. 2009, c. 33, Sched. 21, s. 8 (8).

Plan re barriers

(2) The clerk shall prepare a plan regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities and shall make the plan available to the public before voting day in a regular election. 2016, c. 15, s. 11.

Report

(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 electors and candidates with disabilities and shall make the report available to the public. 2016, c. 15, s. 11.

This report was prepared pursuant to Section 12.1(3) of the Act and will be made available to the public on the Trent Lakes website.

Reporting:

Efforts were made in preparing for, and throughout, the 2022 Municipal Election to identify, remove and prevent barriers that may affect electors and candidates with disabilities. The 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan, attached as Appendix A, outlines the municipality's key accessibility objectives and initiatives. The Plan was prepared and posted on the municipal website and was provided to all municipal candidates.

Voting Methods:

Alternative Voting, in the form of both internet and telephone voting provided electors with the ability to cast their ballot at any time, or in any place, convenient to them. Alternatively, electors were able to cast a ballot at the Help Centre throughout the Voting Period, or by paper ballot on Voting Day only. This hybrid approach allowed flexibility for electors with disabilities to select the method of voting that best suited their needs, allowed for the use of accessibility supports, and increased the ability of an elector to vote privately and independently.

Help Centre/Voting Place:

A Help Centre/Voting Location was at the municipal administration office in the Council Chambers. The Council Chambers are located on the main level of the building and have flat access from the parking lot and accessible parking spaces. Door openers were confirmed working and interior doors were propped open for ease of access. External and internal signage was used to direct electors to the Help Centre/Voting Place. In determining the set-up of the room, consideration was given to safety, voter privacy, flow of 'traffic', the need for extra seating, and table height, knee and toe clearance and turning radius for voting stations. Wires were covered and/or secured to prevent tripping hazards.

Voting Assistance:

Election Officials were available at the Help Centre throughout the Voting Period to provide support and assistance to any elector requesting support. Processes were in place to allow for support by either a person/friend of the voter or an Election Official upon request. Magnifying sheets and pen/paper were also available to support voting and effective communication for electors with hearing impairments or low vision.

Election Official Training:

Three (3) municipal staff acted as Election Officials. All staff are trained in accessibility, including accessible customer service.

Communication:

A Communication Plan was developed for the 2022 Municipal Election to ensure clear, timely, and effective communication throughout the election. Information was communicated via various channels and formats including newspaper, website and social media, giving consideration to key audiences. The municipal website is compliant with Web Content Accessibility Guideline (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA and the Election pages were designed to be organized, informative and accessible with clear, simple language.

Feedback:

Election related feedback and questions could be directed to election@trentlakes.ca or by contacting the Election Help Centre by phone.

One (1) accessibility issue was identified by a member of the public on Election Day regarding accessibility of the Voter Information Letter (VIL). The identified issue was related to the colour of font for the PIN number – which was a mid-grey colour on a white background and that it didn't meet the 4.5:1 colour contrast ratio. Staff reached out to Simply Voting who prepares the VIL for our approval and they advised that they chose a dark grey instead of black for the PIN for security reasons so the PIN would not show through the page/envelope as easily. The shade of grey used on a white background may not have reached a contrast level of 4.5:1, especially with any variations introduced during printing. WCAG AA standards indicate a contract ratio of 3:1 is required when using large text and define large text as text that is 18 point and larger. The PIN on the VILs was set to 24 point font and they confirmed their template showed a ratio of 3.48:1. The member of the public was advised of our findings and that the Municipality will give consideration to this issue when preparing for the 2026 election.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Municipality of Trent Lakes 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan

Submitted by:



Ann Rooth, Deputy Clerk

Approved by:



Donna Teggart, CAO/Treasurer

Appendix A



2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan

Date: June 30, 2022

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Introduction

The Municipality of Trent Lakes is committed to ensuring equal access and participation for people with disabilities. This Plan is intended to support and strengthen the Municipality's commitment to the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that may affect electors and candidates with disabilities throughout the 2022 Municipal and School Board Election.

As per Section 12.1 of the Municipal Elections Act, a clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard for the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities. This Plan was developed to align with the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA).

This plan may be amended from time to time as best practices are identified and opportunities for improvement arise.

Objectives

The key objectives of the Plan are to ensure that:

- persons with disabilities are able to independently cast their vote.
- persons with disabilities have full and equal access to all election information that is made publicly available by the Municipality.
- persons with disabilities have full and equal access to municipal facilities made available to the public for the purpose of conducting the election.

Voting Methods

For the 2022 Municipal and School Board Election the Municipality will be working with Simply Voting Inc. to offer both internet and telephone voting options and will also offer in-person voting using traditional paper ballots (on Voting Day only), with votes cast by paper ballot being tabulated via a Vote Tabulator provided by Election Systems & Software Canada. This hybrid approach to voting methods includes the convenience and independence of voting from anywhere via internet or telephone throughout the voting period and the option to vote in-person at an accessible Voting Place (The Trent Lakes Municipal Office) on Voting Day only.

The ability to vote from any location and by a selection of methods increases the ability for an elector to vote without any assistance. Internet and telephone voting presents

opportunities for those who have assistive devices set up in their homes to use them to assist with accessing election information and casting a ballot privately and independently. For electors without a means to access internet/telephone voting from the comfort of their own home, or who require the assistance of a trained Election Official, the Help Centre will be equipped with areas for in-person internet voting opportunities via a laptop or tablet or telephone voting.

Internet Voting

Internet voting allows any elector with access to a web-enabled smartphone, tablet, or computer to independently cast a ballot at any time, or in any place that is convenient to them. Instructions are available on screen, allowing eligible electors to move through applicable positions, and electors make their selections when prompted using a laptop or tablet. Website font can be adjusted within the browser to aid the user in reading the information.

Telephone Voting

Telephone voting allows any elector with access to a telephone or smartphone (excludes rotary phones) to independently cast a ballot at any time, or in any place that is convenient to them. This will provide eligible electors with an audio voting option. Instructions, such as listing candidate names in alphabetical order, are heard through a handset and electors make their selections when prompted using the keypad. The elector hears the audio ballot and uses the telephone keypad to select the candidates they wish to vote for.

In-Person Voting with Paper Ballots (on Voting Day only)

In-person voting by traditional paper ballot will be available on Voting Day only and electors can attend the Voting Place to cast their ballot. The Municipality will be using a composite paper ballot on which electors choose their preferred candidate(s) by placing a mark, with a pen or pencil, in the circle next to the name of the chosen candidate(s). Votes cast by paper ballot shall be tabulated using a Vote Tabulator.

Election Officials will be available at the Voting Place on Voting Day to assist an elector who requests assistance in casting their vote by paper ballot. Electors requiring voting assistance may also be accompanied by a support person/friend or service animal.

Help Centre/Voting Place

The Help Centre and Voting Place (on Voting Day only) will be set up having regard for accessibility needs.

For the 2022 Municipal and School Board Election, both the Help Centre and Voting Place are located at the Trent Lakes Municipal Office, located at 760 Peterborough County Road 36, Trent Lakes ON K0M 1A0.

Entrance and Exit

Every effort shall be made to ensure that the path of entry and exit to the Help Centre/Voting Place is unobstructed and accessible. The path shall be wide enough to allow for an individual using a wheelchair, mobile equipment, other assistive device or service animal to pass through safely. An easily navigable route will be marked for entry into the Help Centre/Voting Place.

Doors into the Help Centre/Voting Place shall be accessible and easy to open or shall remain propped open during Help Centre/Voting Place hours. Routine checks of entrance and exit routes will be made throughout the hours of operation.

Interior

Access to the interior voting area and voting tools shall be level and easily traversed, wherever possible. Any doormats or carpeting shall be level with the floor to prevent potential tripping hazards. Interior paths of travel shall be wide enough to allow for an individual using a wheelchair, mobile equipment, other assistive device or service animal to move safely from area to area. All areas will be well lit, and seating shall be made available.

At least one voting area, where an elector may mark their ballot, will be high enough to accommodate wheelchairs.

Signage

Signage in the Help Centre/Voting Place shall be clear and understandable and have regard for accessibility, with consideration given to matters such as font, font size and contrasting colours.

Parking

Designated or reserved parking for individuals with disabilities will be provided close to the entrance of the Help Centre/Voting Place. Accessible parking spaces will be clearly posted and marked with the International Symbol of Access.

Voting Assistance

Support Person/Friend of the Voter

An elector requiring assistance to vote may be accompanied by a support person to the Help Centre/Voting Place. Both the elector and the person assisting the elector will need to make an oral oath with an Election Official prior to providing any such assistance.

Service Animals

Electors are entitled to be accompanied by a service animal. Service animal identification should be clearly visible to staff and other electors to avoid confusion.

Election Officials

Election Officials are available to assist an elector who requests assistance in casting their vote either online, by phone or in person at the Help Centre during the Voting Period or by paper ballot at the Voting Place on Voting Day. Election Officials are formally appointed and administered an oath of secrecy in advance of the voting period. The Election Official assisting the elector will also make an oral oath prior to providing assistance.

Prior to entering the voting area, where the ballot is to be marked, the Election Official shall, in conjunction with the elector, determine the extent to which they need assistance and the best way in which this assistance can be provided. This may include the actual marking of the ballot as directed by the person with the disability. In order to maintain the secrecy of the vote, the Election Official will not proceed with providing assistance until the Election Official and the Elector making the request are the only persons in the Help Centre/Voting Place.

Assistive Personal Equipment

For the purpose of casting their ballot, electors with disabilities may use assistive personal devices including, but not limited to, wheelchairs, walkers, canes, note taking devices, portable magnifiers, recording machines, assistive listening devices, personal oxygen tanks and devices for grasping at the Help Centre/Voting Place.

Vision Loss

The Help Centre/Voting Place will be equipped with magnifying sheets to assist an individual with low vision.

Hearing Impairment, Deafness and Hearing Loss

The Help Centre/Voting Place will be equipped with a pad of paper and pen to communicate with electors with hearing impairments, if required.

Candidate and Third Party Advertisers

Candidates and third party advertisers should have regard for the needs of electors with disabilities. Consideration should be given to accessibility in regard to campaign offices, campaign materials, and canvassing to ensure that they are accessible to all electors, including those with disabilities.

AMCTO has released a Candidate's Guide to Accessible Elections to assist candidates with accessible election considerations. The Guide has been included in the Municipality's 2022 Municipal Election Candidates' Guide.

Candidates and scrutineers are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at the Help Centre/Voting Place.

The Municipality shall strive to provide clear, effective and accessible communications and will work with candidates and/or registered third parties who require mandatory election documents, forms and materials in an alternate format.

In accordance with Section 88.19(3) of the Municipal Elections Act, expenses directly related to an individual's disability which would not have been incurred if not for the election, are not subject to the spending limit if they are incurred by a candidate or a registered third party who is an individual with a disability.

Election Official Training

Election Officials shall have regard for persons with disabilities and are committed to the identification, removal and preventions of barriers.

The Municipality will make every effort to utilize Municipal staff to be Election Officials. As a requirement under the AODA, all staff members have taken accessibility training, including accessible customer service. Staff appointed as Election Officials shall review accessibility training in advance of the Voting Period.

Should any additional Election staff be recruited, part of the onboarding process will be the completion of accessibility training, including customer service, the Human Rights Code and the AODA.

Communication

The Municipality has developed a Communication Plan for the 2022 Municipal Election and shall strive to provide clear, effective and accessible communications.

Election Materials

The Municipality will provide a copy of any election document, or the information contained in the document, in an alternate format that takes into account the person's disability, upon request.

Alternate Formats

Alternate formats are other ways of publishing information besides regular print. Some of these formats can be used by everyone while others are designed to address the specific needs of a user. Accessible formats and communication supports are available upon request. The Municipality and the person with a disability may agree upon the alternate format to be used for the document or information.

In the event the information was not generated by the Municipality or is supplied by a third party, the Municipality will make every effort to obtain the information from the third party in an alternate format.

Large Print

Printed material generated by the Municipality will be provided in Arial font, minimum 12 point, and is available in a larger font upon request.

Web Content

Information published by the Municipality on the municipal website in relation to the election, or any digital information in relation to online voting, will be compliant with Web Content Accessibility Guideline (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA, and allow for assistive software to be utilized. In addition, website font can be adjusted within the browser to aid the user in reading the information.

Videos

Promotional and educational videos created for the 2022 municipal election shall incorporate audio and captioning when available.

Service Disruptions

Unforeseen circumstances beyond the Municipality's control may result in temporary service disruptions. Where service is disrupted, Election Officials will make reasonable efforts to maintain services or to provide alternative services until normal operations can resume.

In the event of disruptions to ordinary service or unforeseen circumstances that affect the accessibility of voting during the Voting Period or on Voting Day, notices of disruption will be posted in a conspicuous place at the site of the disruption and on the Municipality's website. This notice shall include information about the reason for the disruption, the services affected, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available. Where applicable, a media advisory will be issued.

In the event of disruptions to service or unforeseen circumstances that affect the accessibility of the Voting Place on Voting Day, notices of disruption will be posted in real time on the Municipality's website.

In the event of any circumstance that, in the opinion of the Clerk, compromises the integrity and/or execution of the election, an emergency shall be declared. In the event of an emergency, the Clerk shall to the best of their ability advertise that the election has been delayed or extended as the case may be. In the event of an emergency, the Clerk shall make such arrangements as they consider advisable for the conduct of the election.

Reporting

Pursuant to Section 12.1(3) of the Municipal Elections Act, within 90 days after Voting Day 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.

Feedback and Contact Information

This Plan is intended to support the Municipality in providing the best possible customer service throughout the election and you are encouraged to submit feedback about any aspect of your voting experience. This feedback will be gathered and presented in the Clerk's post-election report on the success of efforts made to improve accessibility.

All election related feedback and questions should be directed to election@trentlakes.ca or 705-738-3800 ext. 245.

Contact Information

Municipality of Trent Lakes

Website: www.trentlakes.ca

Mailing Address (Municipal Office):
760 Peterborough County Road 36
Trent Lakes ON K0M 1A0

Phone: 705-738-3800
Toll Free: 1-800-374-4009
Fax: 705-738-3801

Election Officials

Jessie Clark
Clerk/Returning Officer

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