

REPORT

TO: Chair & Members
Corporate Services Committee

FROM: Sharon R. Goerke
Clerk

DATE: November 12, 2018

RE: Accessibility – 2018 Municipal Election

Recommendation

THAT Corporate Services Report No. C18-024, dated November 7, 2018, with respect to the Accessibility for the 2018 Municipal Election be received;
AND FURTHER THAT this report be placed on the Township Website.

Background

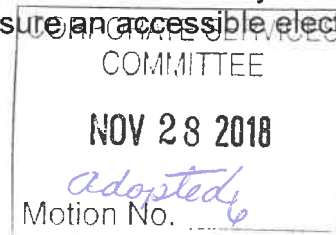
The following are excerpts from sections of the *Municipal Elections Act*:

- 12.1(1) A Clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities.
- 12.1(2) The Clerk shall prepare a plan regarding the identification, removal and prevent 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.
- 12.1(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.

In order to ensure accessibility for the 2018 Municipal Election, a comprehensive review of the election process, facilities and materials was undertaken as follows:

Legislation

The *Municipal Elections Act* and Reg. 429/07 with respect to Accessibility Standards for Customer Service were reviewed as background to ensure an accessible election for our voters.



The standard requires the following provisions (*see red for actions taken*):

- Allow for the use of service animals and support staff – included in our training.
- Provide notice of temporary disruptions of service – emergency policies included in Election Manual.
- Provide accessibility customer service training for all election staff, including election officials and third parties – included in training for all election staff.
- Establish procedures for responding to feedback – included in the Township's Corporate Customer Service Standards.
- Provide alternate format documents that are required by the Customer Service Standard – ballots in composite form with 16 font / magnifying sheets at Voting Stations.
- Provide notice of availability of the above documents – notice on website for accessibility needs and encouraging attendance at the Advance Vote held at the Administration Office for full access to the election.

All employees and election personnel were instructed to have regard to the Township's Accessibility Customer Service Policy. The Township of Severn has been committed to the following:

- ✓ The Clerk shall have regard to the needs of electors with disabilities and give consideration to the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*, as amended, while providing all eligible electors full access and the right to vote during the election
- ✓ All employees and election personnel shall be trained on accessibility policies and procedures to include:
 - How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities
 - How to interact with persons who use an assistive device or service animal
 - How to use equipment or devices available to assist with the provision of services
 - What to do if a person is having difficulty accessing the election

Training

The Clerk attended numerous training sessions hosted by AMCTO with respect to the 2018 Municipal Election. The Clerk also attended Workshops at the Annual AMCTO Conference on the Election and "Accessible Elections" to ensure a clear understanding of the election process and accessibility issues to address.

The training included tips to enable election personnel to become more aware of persons with disabilities, reviewed the 6 different disability categories and provided ideas to facilitate communication with persons with disabilities.

Election Procedures

The Clerk's Department completed a comprehensive review of the Election Procedures and Manual for each phase of the process ensuring that accessibility was a focus of the services to be provided. As a result, the following procedures were approved by the Clerk's Department:

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- 34-1 The Clerk shall have regard to the needs of electors with disabilities and give consideration to the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*, as amended, while providing all eligible electors full access and the right to vote during the election.
- 34-2 All employees and election personnel shall be trained on accessibility policies and procedures to include:
- ✓ A review of the purposes of the Act and the requirements of the accessible service Regulation 429/07.
 - ✓ How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities.
 - ✓ How to interact with persons who use an assistive device or service animal.
 - ✓ How to use equipment or devices available to assist with the provision of services.
 - ✓ What to do if a person is having difficulty accessing the service.
- The Clerk shall keep a record of those personnel trained for the election process.
- 34-3 All employees and election personnel shall have regard to the Accessibility Customer Service Policy enacted by the Township of Severn.
- 34-4 Each Candidate shall be provided with the Province of Ontario Candidate's Guide to Accessible Elections.
- 34-5 All designated Voting Places, including the Advance Vote, will be accessible to eligible electors with accessible parking spaces clearly marked. The Clerk shall give regard in each voting place for:
- ✓ A small seating area available for electors to rest a short time if needed.
 - ✓ Voting booths that are low and wide enough to enable wheelchair or scooter access.
 - ✓ Posting of a large print notice of the ballot and the method of voting.

- ✓ The provision of magnifying sheets to assist a person with low visual impairment.
 - ✓ Corridors that are wide enough and easily traveled with a wheelchair or scooter.
 - ✓ Ensure that the voting place is clearly marked, well lit and visible.
 - ✓ Provide for curb side voting to ensure every elector is provided an opportunity to vote.
- 34-6 All Deputy Returning Officers will be provided with sight improvement implements to assist eligible electors with sight impairments.
- 34-7 The use of service animals and support people shall be accepted at all voting locations.
- 34-8 If requested, the elector shall be permitted to vote with assistance as provided in the Act by having the person to assist swear an Affidavit of Secrecy.
- 34-9 To allow an eligible elector to vote, a Deputy Returning Officer shall attend on the elector anywhere within the area designated as the Voting Place, if required.
- 34-10 When an elector is not able to attend at the Voting Station table:
- ✓ the Deputy Returning Officer shall secure the ballots and election material, place the Election Assistant in charge of the material, and attend to the elector with a ballot and the ballot box anywhere within the area designated as the Voting Place.
 - ✓ the Deputy Returning Officer shall also obtain the photo ID and name and address of the elector for stroking off the Voters' List.
 - ✓ The Deputy Returning Officer shall ensure that the ballot is placed in the ballot box in the presence of the elector and return to her station.
- 34-11 Feedback from our electors gives the Clerk opportunities to learn and improve the voting process with regard to accessibility. The Municipality recognizes the right of our electors to make a complaint, compliment or suggestions on ways to improve our election services.

To assist the Township of Severn in ensuring that the delivery of goods and services to those with disabilities is provided in an effective and timely manner, the elector is invited to provide their feedback in writing on the prescribed form as adopted within the Township's Customer Service Accessibility Policy at the following location:

Accessibility Co-ordinator
P.O. Box 159
1024 Hurlwood Lane
Orillia, Ontario - L3V 6J3
Phone: (705) 325-2315
Fax: (705)327-5818
E-Mail: mprophet@townshipofsevern.com

The prescribed form for feedback will be included on the Election Website and the *Township Clerk* will respond either in writing, in person, e-mail or telephone acknowledging receipt of feedback and will set out the action to be taken in response to any complaints or comments.

Election Vote Method

Staff received a decision of Council for a regular ballot voting method with the enhancement of tabulators and the Clerk's Department continued their review of accessibility for the voters.

RFP for Tabulators

The Clerk assisted in creating and organizing the RFP process for a combined proposal for the Township of Severn and the City of Orillia to lease the required tabulators for the election. There was considerable cost savings with this combined effort for shipping and training requirements. The RFP was distributed to three vendors who supplied election tabulators. The combined municipalities chose Dominion and were given a demonstration on tabulators.

Election Group

The Clerk participated in an Election Group comprised of election personnel from neighboring municipalities including the Township of Severn, Township of Ramara, City of Orillia, Township of Oro-Medonte and Township of Springwater who met monthly to assist each other with the election process including accessibility standards and issues to be addressed in order to ensure compliance with legislation. The group reviewed each section of the *Municipal Elections Act* as the process evolved ensuring compliance and to-do lists were updated.

During this process, the following steps were taken:

- ✓ Review of legislation/standards
- ✓ List of accessibility requirements for Voting Stations
- ✓ Various methods of voting
- ✓ Improvements required from the 2014 election process
- ✓ Advertising of "accessible locations"

- ✓ Reviewed CNIB standards for printed materials
- ✓ Reviewed use of braille cards for marking ballots which was not feasible due to it being cost prohibitive and the limited need within our respective areas (approx. \$200.00/template). Suppliers advised that the use of braille is being phased out by new technology for those with sight disabilities
- ✓ Review of various types of ballots, fonts and coloured paper supplies for voters with sight disabilities
- ✓ Review of policies for voters requiring assistance to vote
- ✓ Review of election tabulators / accessibility equipment

With the use of the technology available for the election process, there were barriers identified when printing Voter Notification Cards and ballots for alternative voting methods. For example, the suppliers were limited in providing larger font for sight disabilities due to the requirements for printing and paper size for tabulators. There have been no concerns expressed with disabled voters not having access to the election process.

Advertising

The Township of Severn ensured that notice was given on the Township Website commencing in January 2018 that the Advance Votes to be held at the Administration Office will be “fully accessible” for the voters and requesting anyone with a special need to contact the Clerk’s Office so special arrangements could be made (**see Appendix “1”**).

Voting Stations

Additionally, the Clerk’s Department visited each Voting Place to ensure that the facility was accessible and appropriate for any elector with disabilities. Staff toured each facility to ensure proper lighting, accessibility entrances and parking.

The following is a review of findings:

Administration Office

- fully accessible for the Advance Vote

Ward 1 – Matchedash Community Heritage Centre

- the access ramp at the front door is inefficient and should be smoother with a flat approach and railing
- the washroom door is not wide enough and the sink is too low for wheelchair access

Ward 2 – Coldwater Community Centre

- the front entrance is to be lowered and a railing should also be added
- the washrooms and elevator are accessible
- handicap parking is sufficient

Ward 3 – ODAS Park

- The washrooms have had extensive improvements but access to the washrooms are not accessible and there are no accessible stalls for a wheelchair
- The washroom access doors are quite heavy and there are two doors to access which is cumbersome
- The designated accessible washroom in the storage room is not available due to storage items and the wheelchair could not get in the door or turn for suitability
- There are no push buttons on the outside access doors

Ward 4 – Cumberland Beach Public School

- The new school is totally accessible and suitable for an Election Voting Place.

Ward 5 – Washago Community Centre

- This facility is accessible and adequate for an Election Voting Place.

Greeters

Additional “greeters” were hired for election day to ensure full assistance for the voters at each Voting Place.

Candidate's Guide to Accessible Elections

This guide produced by AMCTO was provided to each candidate when filing their nomination papers to ensure that they were conducting their campaigns with accessibility in mind. This guide included suggestions for their campaign offices, election materials and understanding electors with disabilities.

Assistance to Vote

While the legislation provides that all electors shall have the ability to vote unassisted, the election staff were given instructions on assisting voters, if required, to ensure that all electors were given the opportunity to vote. The following methods were provided to the election staff:

- ✓ Allow a friend/relative to assist with the ballot
- ✓ Attend outside the Voting Station to assist an elector to vote if they cannot access the facility
- ✓ DRO may assist an elector to vote as they have taken an Oath of Secrecy
- ✓ Acceptance of service animals and support persons

Conclusion

The Municipal Election was successful in meeting accessibility standards with locations that are available in a rural municipality. While we are limited to the facilities available within each ward and with the provision of Advance Votes, each elector was given every opportunity to vote for their respective candidates.


Financial Impact

The financial impact was minimal in our attempt to meet accessibility requirements for the 2018 Municipal Election.

Strategic Plan Impact

- Service Excellence

Respectfully submitted,


Sharon R. Goerke, CMO
Deputy Clerk

/srg
Encl.



Chief Administrative Officer

Director of Corporate Services



2018 MUNICIPAL ELECTION

VOTING PLACE LOCATIONS



Advance Vote

**Township Administration Office
1024 Hurlwood Lane**

**Saturday, October 13, 2018
10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.**

**Wednesday, October 17, 2018
10:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.**

Total Accessible Location

ELECTION DAY

**MONDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2018
10:00 A.M. TO 8:00 P.M.**

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| Ward 1 | Matchedash Community Heritage Centre
2095 North River Drive |
| Ward 2 | Coldwater Community Centre
11 Michael Anne Drive |
| Ward 3 | ODAS Park
4442 Fairgrounds Road |
| Ward 4 | Cumberland Beach Public School
2746 Cumberland Road |
| Ward 5 | Washago Community Centre
4361 Hamilton Street |