

Accessibility Report

Background

In accordance with section 12.1(3) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, (MEA) following the 2022 municipal election, the clerk shall prepare a report about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

The Ontario Human Rights Code and Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) define a disability as:

- Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impairment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device
- A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability
- A learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language
- A mental disorder, or
- An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*

Report Highlights

- The 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan (the plan), attached as Appendix 1, was created ahead of the 2022 municipal election outlining the steps to be taken by the City of Mississauga's Elections Office to mitigate concerns related to the accessibility of municipal elections and voting. As per the MEA, this plan was posted at www.mississaugavotes.ca for the public to review

- The plan was created by the City of Mississauga Elections Office in collaboration with the City of Mississauga Facilities and Property Management Division, Accessibility Section along with advice from the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC)
- This Accessibility Report is based on the plan and provides information on the steps taken to mitigate barriers to the 2022 municipal election

Comments

In addition to the action items outlined in the plan, the following measures were taken to ensure that persons with disabilities or limited mobility had the opportunity to participate fully in the 2022 municipal election.

Voting Methods

To provide accessible and independent voting for all electors, electronic ballot marking equipment known as the ExpressVote Universal Voting System (ExpressVote) was used at all voting locations on advanced poll days. The ExpressVote allowed the elector to mark their ballot by using a touch screen or other accessibility options such as an audio ballot, sip and puff device and rocker paddle. At the recommendation of the AAC, adjustable tables and touch screen pointers were made available to assist with voting.

On Election Day, electors marked their choices on traditional ballots with a pen. To assist electors with limited visibility, magnifying cards were provided at each voting location. The magnifying cards enlarged the text on the ballots to assist those with visual impairments. Election workers were also available to provide assistance to electors as required.

Voting Locations

All voting locations were inspected to assess whether or not they met the accessibility standards. This ensured that candidates, voters and election workers were able to access voting locations.

In accordance with section 45(7) of the MEA, voting locations were provided in:

- Long Term Care Facilities that met certain legislated requirements
- Retirement Homes that met certain criteria legislated requirements
- Hospitals

Bedside voting was provided at these facilities for persons with limited mobility to ensure those persons had an opportunity to vote.

Training

To aid persons with disabilities or limited mobility, election workers received the “May I Help You? – Understanding Accessible Customer Service” and “Breaking Down Barriers - Understanding the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation” reference materials. These documents included information on providing accessible customer service and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR).

Layout diagrams of voting rooms were also provided to election workers. This helped election workers:

- Maximize space
- Provide for proper flow for voters
- Ensure that voting booths were set up to ensure privacy when voting

In addition to the above, the Elections Office did the following which helped to ensure that election worker training was accessible:

- Election worker instructor led training was provided virtually eliminating the need for election workers to attend the Civic Centre in person
- Training videos were posted online so that election workers could learn at their own pace by re-watching the instructor led training if they wished
- In person drop-in sessions were provided for election workers who wanted hands on training with the technology they would be using in their role
- An online election worker module was created as another way to help election workers learn certain roles
- Election worker reference materials were provided electronically and in hard copy upon request
- Election worker manuals were provided both electronically and in hard copy

General

The following actions also helped ensure that the 2022 City of Mississauga municipal election was accessible for candidates, voters and election workers:

- Accommodations were provided to election workers upon request
- Election worker applications could be submitted online eliminating the need for election workers to attend the Civic Centre in person; applications could also be submitted in person if election workers preferred
- Candidates, voters and election workers could access election information online, by calling 3-1-1 or via direct phone numbers to the Elections Office; information would be provided in alternative formats upon request
- A Voter Notification Card containing voting options and information was mailed out to voters; the card also provided options for obtaining additional information if required
- Candidate information was provided electronically but was also provided in hard copy upon request
- An online financial filing system was provided to candidates to help with completing the legislated Financial Statement; alternatively, candidates could use an online PDF of the Financial Statement or could complete a hard copy of the Financial Statement
- Candidates were able to file their Financial Statement either in person, or electronically

Review

Prior to and during every election, the Elections Office looks for ways to prevent and remove barriers. Best practices and technological improvements are researched, considered and where practicable implemented. This is done to improve the election and voting experience for all users.

Attachments

Appendix 1: 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan



2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan



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Introduction

This Accessibility Plan outlines the steps that the City of Mississauga's Elections Office will take to address accessibility concerns related to municipal elections and voting. It is a living document, which was created by the City of Mississauga Elections Office in collaboration with the City of Mississauga Facilities Planning and Accessibility Section and will be updated as new opportunities for improvement arise.

Requirements Under the Municipal Elections Act

The Municipal Elections Act, 1996, as amended (MEA) states the following:

Section 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).

Section 12.1 (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.

Section 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.

Section 45 (2)

In establishing the locations of voting places, the clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities.

In addition, the City of Mississauga's Corporate Policy and Procedure regarding accessibility states:

The City of Mississauga is committed to implementing, maintaining and enhancing accessibility with respect to employment and the use of all City goods, services, programs and facilities in a timely manner for all persons with Disabilities in a manner that:

- Respects their dignity and independence
- Ensures reasonable efforts are made to provide an opportunity equal to that given to others, and
- Allows persons with Disabilities to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way to others, to the greatest extent possible

The measures outlined in this document are intended to ensure that the 2022 City of Mississauga Municipal Election is in compliance with the applicable legislation and the City of Mississauga's corporate policy and procedure.

Mandate

It is the goal of the City of Mississauga's Elections Office to ensure that persons with disabilities have the opportunity to participate fully in the 2022 Municipal Election. Section 2 of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 defines a disability as:

- a. any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device
- b. a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability
- c. a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language
- d. a mental disorder, or
- e. an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*; ("handicap")

With the above in mind, staff will work to address barriers that effect electors and candidates with disabilities during the 2022 Mississauga General Election.

Locations

The City of Mississauga primarily uses school board and City owned facilities as voting locations for the general public. If an accessibility concern is identified, all reasonable measures will be considered to remove the barrier or an alternative location will be considered within the ward if possible.

The following actions will be taken to address barriers to accessibility at voting locations:

Action

Conduct site visits to assess if barriers exist and determine how they can be addressed or removed.

Action

Develop templates for voting location set-up that:

- Allow voters to maneuver as easily as possible through the voting location
- Ensure voting booths are positioned so that voters have an adequate space to privately mark their ballot

Action

Provide appropriate signage at voting locations so that information is clearly visible to those with low vision.

Action

Provide notification of last minute disruptions in service or voting location changes in the event of an emergency. This includes posting signage and having Hall Monitors relay information to voters upon entry to the voting location.

Action

Ensure there is designated or reserved parking for persons with disabilities at each voting location.

Action

On voting day, a voting place shall be provided on the premises of institutions, such as hospitals, and retirement homes according to the criteria outlined in the MEA. Bedside voting will be provided at these locations for persons that are unable to leave their beds.

Voting Methods

The City of Mississauga will provide various methods of voting to ensure that persons with disabilities or limited mobility have the opportunity to participate fully in the 2022 Municipal Election.

Action

Provide easy to grip and open markers to make it easier for voters to mark paper ballots.

Action

Provide magnifiers to help voters with low vision read the ballot.

Action

Provide advance poll voting locations with electronic ballot marking equipment so that all voters have the opportunity to independently mark their ballot on multiple days. Elections poll workers will also be available to assist further upon request. In addition, the Elections Office is exploring the use of pointers to assist with the use of the touch screen.

Action

Advance poll electronic ballot marking equipment will be positioned on tables. The Elections Office is also exploring the use of height adjustable tables at each advance poll location.

Action

Provide assistive devices such as sip and puff and rocker paddles for use with the accessible ballot marking equipment.

Training

To aid persons with disabilities or limited mobility, Election Officials will receive training that will include information on providing accessible customer service and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR).

Action

Provide reference materials including:

- May I Help You? - Understanding Accessible Customer Service
- Breaking Down Barriers - Understanding the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation

Action

Provide virtual training that includes information on providing accessible customer service.