

DATE: January 23, 2023
SUBJECT: 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility
SUBMITTED BY: Cindy Pigeau, Manager of Corporate Services,
Municipal Clerk/Treasurer

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Report is an accessibility analysis of the 2022 Municipal Election.

BACKGROUND

Section 12 of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, as amended requires that 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.

Barriers to accessibility can be:

- Physical barriers, such as the need to negotiate steps to enter a building;
- Communication barriers, due to vision or hearing impairments or learning disabilities; and
- Other barriers, such as a lack of information or understanding on the part of workers interacting with the persons with disabilities.

In order to identify barriers, prior to Voting Day, staff reviewed the types of barriers and the election process to help determine any potential or existing barriers that could impede persons with disabilities from accessing information, completing forms, understanding the process or exercising their right to run or vote in the election.

Measures to address barriers included:

Physical Barriers

The Municipality of Callander implemented 'Vote by Mail' as an alternative voting method for the 2022 Municipal Election. This allowed all eligible voters to have the option to vote using the ballot sent to them in the mail, making the process of voting more accessible and easier for all.

The Callander Community Centre was used as the Voting Place on Voting Day, because of its physical accessibility. Prior to voting day, staff checked exterior lighting to ensure adequate lighting after dark, which is especially important for those with vision impairments. Sufficient accessible parking spaces were already in place next to the entrance to the voting place. Staff did note however, for next

election, larger “voting poll station” would be of benefit, to increase visibility and awareness of the poll station.

Elections staff also checked the various features inside of the facility to ensure there were no accessibility concerns. Staff reviewed the internal traffic flow to the information/registration and forms tables, polling stations and privacy-screened voting areas to ensure enough space was available for the use of mobility devices.

In staff's opinion, there were also no issues with physical barriers to filing a nomination for Candidates, since the Nomination Paper forms were available online and the Nomination Papers could be filed either in person at the Municipal Office, which has accessible access, or by an agent.

Communication Barriers

Prior to the voting days, elections staff reviewed the potential barriers for electors with communication impairments. To assist those with communication impairments the following steps were taken:

- The Vote By Mail alternative method allowed all eligible voters to use any assistive devices as well as obtain any required assistance from support persons to read instructions and place their vote.
- At all Envelope Openings, the declarations were read out loud and placed on a large screen to allow any members of the public to follow along with the proceedings of the envelope openings.
- On Voting Day, large print copies of the ballot were displayed on the inside of the privacy shields and magnifier sheets were placed in the ballot marking stations.
- Printed instructions were available at the information and forms tables, and the polling stations to assist those who were hearing impaired.
- As much as possible, all notices, forms, etc. were posted online which gave both electors and candidates the opportunity to take any additional time needed or use assistive devices to read and understand them.

Other Barriers

Staff also ensured that all personnel involved in administering the election or providing information to the electorate and candidates had been trained in Accessible Customer Service. They also received specific Election Workers training, which educated the workers on how to assist people with different types of disabilities, and how to speak to individuals who utilize a support person and/or support animal. Assistance was provided, as needed, for completing required forms both prior to and on Voting Day. At the Voting Place, notices concerning Accessible Customer Service procedures were posted and Feedback Forms were available on site.

We will enrich the community by providing strong leadership and delivering inclusive and fiscally responsible services while maintaining the unique qualities that make Callander such a desirable place to live, work and play.

CORRESPONDENCE

Elaine Gunnell, Municipal Clerk (retired)

Carolyn Cundari, Deputy Clerk

Ashley Bilodeau, Senior Municipal Director

APPENDICES / SCHEDULES

N/A

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