Accessible Municipal Elections Guide

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Introduction

This guide is intended to provide information to Municipalities for the purpose of ensuring an accessible Municipal Election process.

The next Municipal Election is set to be held on Monday, October 24, 2022. For more information on important dates visit: AMCTO 2021-2023 Municipal Elections Calendar.

The election is governed by the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996.* The act details requirements the Municipality must follow to provide a fair and accessible election.

Municipal Elections Act 1996

The *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* outlines the legislative requirements and regulations that the Municipality must follow when conducting an election. The Act states:

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 (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.

12 (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.

41 (3) The clerk shall make such changes to some or all of the ballots as he or she considers necessary or desirable to allow electors with visual impairments to vote without the assistance referred to in paragraph 4 of subsection 52 (1). 1996, c. 32, Sched. s. 41 (3); 2001, c. 32, s. 30 (1).

45 (2) in establishing the locations of voting places, the clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities.

Who Can Vote

Anyone can vote in a municipal election who, on the day of the election, is:

- 18 years of age or older;
- a Canadian citizen; and,
- either a resident of the municipality or a property owner or tenant or the spouse or same sex partner of an owner or tenant in the municipality during a specified time just before the election.

Your name must be on the voters' list in order for you to cast a ballot.

Note: To ensure you are on the voters' list for the 2022 municipal and school board elections, visit VoterLookup.ca.

Who Can Be A Candidate

- Candidates must be a resident of the municipality or a non-resident owner or tenant of land in the municipality or the spouse of such non-resident owner or tenant;
- a Canadian citizen and at least 18 years old;
- not legally prohibited from voting;
- not disqualified by any legislation from holding municipal office; and,
- Candidates will need 25 signatures on your nomination form and must pay a fee of $100 ($200 for mayor)

In municipal elections in Ontario, candidates are not elected to represent a political party.

Municipal Accessible Election Plan

In addition to the above requirements, the Municipal Election Plan may outline:

- Voting Methods
  - Who can vote, type of voting, special voting provisions
- Voting Location
  - Availability of accessible routes, entrances and parking
- Voting Assistance
  - Role of support persons, service animals and election officials
- Information and Communication
  - Election Materials and alternative formats
  - Notice of temporary disruptions
- Customer Service and Staff Training
- Election Feedback
- Post-Election Report
  - Identifying, removing and preventing barriers

Election Principles

- **Dignity** – provide service in a way that allows the person with a disability to maintain self-respect and the respect of other people

- **Independence** – a person with a disability is allowed to do things on their own without unnecessary help or interference from others

- **Integration** – provide service in a way that allows the person with a disability to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in the same or similar way as other customers, unless a different way is necessary to enable them to access goods, services or facilities

- **Equal opportunity** – provide service to a person with a disability in such a way that they have an equal opportunity to access your goods, services or facilities as what is given to others

Development and Implementation

The plan was produced with the intent to include information relating to election and to provide information for municipalities, voters, candidates and third parties. The plan aligns with the commitment to identifying, removing and preventing barriers that may impact the accessibility of an election and ensure all voters are able to vote.

Definitions

See **Appendix A** for the complete list of definitions.

Disability as defined by the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, R.S.O. 1990, c. H. 19

Disability means,

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")

Information for Voters

The Government of Ontario created a [2022 Voters Guide -Ontario Municipal Election and School Board Elections](#).

The guide provides information on the following:

- Voter eligibility
- How to vote in your municipality
- Voters' list and identification

- Ballot questions
- Supporting candidate's campaigns
- What happens after the election
- Contributions to candidates and third party advertisers
- Enforcement and penalties
- By-elections
- Acceptable documents for voter identification
- Forms referenced in the guide

Sign Language Interpreters

Voters who require an American Sign Language Interpreter may book one through Canadian Hearing Services. Visit CHS Interpreting Services for more details.

Voters who require an Intervenor may book one through Canadian Hearing Services or the CNIB Deaf Blind Community Services (DBCS). Visit Intervenor Services for more details.

Information for Candidates and Third Parties

The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario has released several quick reference documents to assist candidates with accessible elections considerations:

- Count Us In: Removing Barriers to Political Participation – Quick Reference Guide to Accessible Campaign Information and Communication

- Count Us In: Removing Barriers to Political Participation – Quick Reference Guide to Accessible Constituency, Riding Association, Central Party and Campaign Offices

- Count Us In: Removing Barriers to Political Participation – Quick Reference Guide to Accessible All Candidates Meetings

Note, an electronic PDF copy of the documents can be provided upon request.

The Ontario Government has produced two guides for candidates and third parties:

1. 2022 Candidates' Guide -Ontario Municipal Council and School Board Elections

   The guide contains the following information:
   - General information
   - Eligibility to run for election
   - Nominations
   - Campaigning
   - Third party advertising
   - Voting day
   - After voting day

- Campaign finance
- Compliance and enforcement
- Completing the financial statement
- Forms referenced in the guide

2. [2022 Third Party Advertisers' Guide](#)

This guide contains the following information:
- Third party advertising
- Registration
- Responsibilities of registered third party advertisers
- Finance rules
- Compliance and enforcement
- Completing the financial statement
- Information for broadcasters and publishers

Information for Municipalities

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) includes an [Integrated Guide](#) that covers the information under the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* (IASR) including:

- General Requirements
- Information and Communication
- Employment
- Transportation
- Design of Public Spaces
- Customer Service

Many of these are applicable to the Municipal Election process and are covered in the Municipal Accessible Election Plan.

Training

[Access Forward](#) provides various training modules online that go over the standards and requirements under the IASR. The training modules also cover information from the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and the AODA.

[General Requirements Training Module](#)

[Information and Communications Training Module](#)

[Employment Standard Training Module](#)

[Transportation Standard Training Module](#)

[Design of Public Space Training Module](#)

[Customer Service Standard Training Module](#)

Training is one of the most important ways to ensure awareness of accessibility and the ways in which the municipality can work to ensure all voters can participate in elections.

Election specific training may take place on the following topics:

1. **Accessible Tools and Assistive Technology or Devices**: staff working at elections should be made aware of, and trained on, the accessible tools, assistive technology or devices that may be used by voters, either with or without assistance. It is important to recognize that voters may require tools, technology or devices for them to be able to fully participate in a Municipal Election. People with disabilities have diverse and differing needs, and may require:

- Braille Listings including candidate names or braille ballots
- Large print ballot
- Magnifying sheet or magnifier
- Access to a cellphone or an election assistant
- Alternative format for notices of temporary disruptions
- Accessibility feedback cards or forms

2. **Signage**: signage should be in a highly visible place, and consider the voters that may be most impacted by a disruption. For example, if an elevator is out of service, signage should be made available at the front entrance of the building and throughout it, as well as be posted on the website and social media platforms to inform voters of the temporary service disruption. Signage should be posted at different heights to ensure everyone can access the information.

3. **Accessible Customer Service**: all staff and Election Officers should be trained in accessibility and have awareness on how to provide good customer service to voters and candidates with disabilities.

   The City of Toronto published an [Accessible Customer Service Handbook for Election Staff](#), which includes the following information:
   - Serving People with Different Disabilities
   - Assistive Devices
   - Service Animals
   - Assisting Voters with Disabilities in the Voting Place
   - Barriers to Accessibility

   Further information can be found at the [AODA Customer Service Guide](#). See also the Customer Service Standard Training Module from Access Forward.

Guide to Accessible Elections

The Association of Municipal Mangers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO) has provided the following document to assist with elections: Clerk's Guide to Conducting Accessible Elections

Additionally, the AMCTO provides training before the election. Training can be found at the 2022 Municipal Election Training webpage on the AMCTO website.

Accessible Polling Locations

The Ontario Government has a Site Accessibility Standards that is used to assess the suitability and accessibility of the polling locations.

Also consider reviewing the Elections Canada Polling Place Suitability Checklist when identifying accessible polling locations:

Public Transit

1. Public transit stop near the polling place? (Yes/No)

Parking

2. Parking available? (Yes/No)
3. Number of available parking spaces on the property:
4. Parking space(s) for persons with disabilities? (Yes/No)
5. Surface of parking firm and level? (Yes/No)
6. Parking lit? (Yes/No)
7. Pathway from parking lot to the entrance? (Yes/No)

Building Exterior

8. Sloping sidewalk (curb cut)? (Yes/No)
9. Surface of the pathway is firm and obstacle-free? (Yes/No)
10. Pathway is at least 920 mm (36") wide? (Yes/No)
    At the narrowest point the pathway measures (mm):
11. Pathway is free of a long slope? (Yes/No)
12. Pathway is free of a steep incline? (Yes/No)
13. Building provides a level access to the entrance? (no steps) (Yes/No)
14. Level access ramp is provided? (Yes/No)
15. If there is a level access ramp, it provides:
    o   Handrail? (Yes/No)
    o   Non-slip surface? (Yes/No)
    o   Clear width of 920 mm (36")? (Yes/No)
    o   What is the width of the ramp (mm)?
    o   A slope of no more than 4.80°? (Yes/No)
    o   Indicate the steepest result: (# of degrees)

16. Exterior building lighting? (Yes/No)
17. Building exterior is free of any protruding objects? (Yes/No)
18. There is signage to locate the level access entrance? (Yes/No)

Building Entrance

19. Exterior door has a clear opening width of 810 mm (32")? (Yes/No)
    Opening width of this door measures (mm):
20. Door handles are easy to grip? (Yes/No)
21. Door threshold meets maximum standard of 6 mm (1/4")? (Yes/No)
22. An automatic door opening device is provided (Yes/No)
23. Weight of the entrance door allows it to be easily opened? (Yes/No)
24. Door gives immediate access to the voting room? (Yes/No)

If yes, go to question 30.

Building Interior

25. Interior door(s) has a clear opening width of 810 mm (32")? (Yes/No)
    Interior door opening width measurements (mm):
26. Door handles are easy to grip? (Yes/No)
27. Automatic door opening devices are provided for interior doors? (Yes/No)
28. Weight of interior doors allows them to be easily opened? (Yes/No)
29. Door threshold meets maximum standard of 6 mm (1/4")? (Yes/No)
30. Corridors have a minimum width of 920 mm (36")? (Yes/No)
    Minimum width of the corridor(s) measures (mm):
31. Interior of the building is free of any protruding objects? (Yes/No)
32. Voting room is on the same level as the entrance? (Yes/No)
33. If no, electors can access the voting room using an elevator or a level access ramp? (Yes/No)
34. If use of an elevator is required, is a key necessary to operate it? (Yes/No)
    If yes, who is the contact person for the key?
35. If electors must use a ramp to access the voting room, this ramp provides:
    o   Handrail? (Yes/No)
    o   Non-slip surface? (Yes/No)
    o   Clear width of 920 mm (36")? (Yes/No)
    o   What is the width of the ramp (mm):
    o   A slope of no more than 4.80°? (Yes/No)
    o   Indicate the steepest result: (# of degrees)
36. Interior lighting works? (Yes/No)
37. Wheelchair accessible washroom (Yes/No)
    Are there any grab bars? (Yes/No)

Overall Evaluation

38. Does this site meet all the mandatory accessibility criteria? (Yes/No)
39. If not, is it possible to modify the site so that it will meet all the mandatory criteria? (Yes/No)

We All Win

We all win when there are more diverse voices involved in municipal council. To encourage diversity of genders and identities, ethnicities, sexual orientations, ages, races and abilities, there is a campaign called **We All Win** that is striving to create more inclusive and sustainable communities, and encourage more diversity in the 2022 election. There are various resources and supports available through the Association of Municipalities Ontario, and information on the role of municipal governments in Ontario.

Information on resources, supports, the role of municipalities, and the campaign can be found at: We All Win -Diversity on Council

Research Study

Elections Canada conducted a research study prepared by Michael J. Prince on Electoral Participation of Electors with Disabilities: Canadian Practices in a Comparative Context.

The study was produced in 2012 and investigates:

- Voter Turnout and Attitudes Towards the Electoral Process
- Barriers Faced by Electors with Disabilities
- Voting Methods International Developments
- Voting Methods Canadian Developments
- Best Practices in Electoral Administration and Outreach

The research study focuses on identifying ways to improve the accessible election process. The information can help ensure that voters and candidates with disabilities are being given the same opportunities to fully participate in the Municipal election.

Appendix A

Definitions

Ableism: as defined by the Ontario *Human Rights Code* S. 2.1, refers to attitudes in society that devalue and limit the potential of persons with disabilities. Ableist attitudes are often based on the view that disability is an "anomaly to normalcy" rather than an inherent and expected variation in the human condition.

Ableism may be defined as a belief system, and often perceives the person with a disability as less worthy of respect and consideration, less able to contribute and participate, or having less inherent value. It may be conscious or unconscious, and is embedded systemically in society. It may result in limited opportunities for persons with disabilities and reduce their inclusion in the community (Law Commission of Ontario).

Accessibility: means access. It refers to the absence of barriers that prevent individuals and/or groups from fully participating in all aspects of employment and service provisions.

Disability as defined by the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, R.S.O. 1990, c. H. 19

Accommodations:

1. **Universal Accommodations** -a proactive process of identifying and eliminating barriers for everyone. This can be done through the initial design and/or modifying facilities, policies, programs, procedures and practices, and ensuring potential barriers are identified and removed.

2. **Individual Accommodations** -an adaptation of adjustment that may be required to enable all voters to participate in a Municipal Election. This may involve one or more of the accommodations outlined in **Appendix B.**

The duty to accommodate requires the most appropriate accommodation be determined and then undertaken, short of undue hardship, and must respect the dignity of the individual, meet the individuals needs and promotes integration and full participation of persons with disabilities in the election process.

Disability means,

    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")

Temporary Disability: is defined as a disability that affects you for a short period of time. These conditions usually keep a person incapacitated for a few days, weeks, months, or years but typically result in the eventual recovery. This type of disability often includes illnesses or injuries and may temporarily prohibit a person from full participation. This person may require temporary accommodations.

Sporadic Disability: is defined as a disability that is the result of medical conditions or diseases that are prolonged and often lifelong but have unpredictable episodes of illness and disability. These episodes can vary in severity and duration and are often followed by periods of wellness. Examples may include episodically disabling arthritis, Crohn's and colitis, HIV/AIDS, multiple sclerosis (MS), cancer and other rare diseases. The person will require accommodations that are flexible and account for the sporadic nature of the disability.

Permanent Disability: is defined as a disability that is permanent and long-term, that impacts a person's ability to engage in routine activities such as, competing in the job market. The disability is often life-long and may be a result of injury, illness, or genetics. The person is not expected to recover and will require accommodations.

Disabilities differ in severity, maybe visible or non-visible, and the symptoms of the disability may come and go. Examples may include the following:

- A person with arthritis has a disability that over time may increase in severity
- A person with clinical depression has a disability that is not visible
- A person with an alcohol addiction has a disability that may result in periods when the condition does not have an effect on work performance, and other periods when it does
- A person with two broken legs may be wheelchair bound temporarily while they recover

Barrier: as defined by *Accessible Canada Act* S.C. 2019, C. 10, means anything — including anything physical, architectural, technological or attitudinal, anything that is based on information or communications or anything that is the result of a policy or a practice — that hinders the full and equal participation in society of persons with an impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation.

Braille Listings: list of candidates that are provided on a template for voters with visual disabilities.

Braille Ballot: a ballot template that is written in Braille for voters with visual disabilities. The Braille listing and ballot can be used together or the ballot can be used on its own.

Service Animal: For the purposes of this policy, an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability if:

1) the animal can be readily identified as one that is being used by the person for reasons relating to the person's disability, as a result of visual indicators such as the vest or harness worn by the animal; or

2) the person provides documentation from one of the following regulated health professionals confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability:

   i.   A member of the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario.
   ii. A member of the College of Chiropractors of Ontario.
   iii. A member of the College of Nurses of Ontario.
   iv. A member of the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario.
   v.   A member of the College of Optometrists of Ontario.
   vi. A member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.
   vii. A member of the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario.
   viii. A member of the College of Psychologists of Ontario.
   ix. A member of the College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario

Guide Dog: a guide dog as defined in the *Blind Persons' Right Act,* R.S.O. 1990, c. B.7 s. 1(1)

"guide dog" means a dog trained as a guide for a blind person and having the qualifications prescribed by the regulations. ("chien d'aveugle")

For all other definitions, refer to the *Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation* (O. Reg 191/11).

Support Person: means, in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies him, her or them in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods, services or facilities.

Large Print Ballot: is a large replica of a ballot that may be used as a guide for voters with visual disabilities.

Magnifying Sheet: is a sheet that is 4x Page Size Magnifier Sheet recommended by the CNIB that can be used to read ballots and/or any other election materials.

Appendix B

Disability Categories

According to the Government of Canada and the *Accessible Canada Act 2019*, disabilities can be categorized in the following ways:

Acquired disability: an acquired disability is one that has developed during a person's lifetime as a result of injury (e.g. spinal cord or acquired brain injury) or illness. The term is used to draw a distinction between impairments acquired during one's lifetime from those present from birth, particularly with respect to lived experience. Acquired disabilities may result from various types of impairments listed in the Accessible Canada Act, including physical, mental, cognitive, communication and sensory.

Chronic illness: Chronic illnesses such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, arthritis and other musculoskeletal diseases that tend to have disabling effects are another type of impairment. The definition of disability used by the World Health Organization includes explicit reference to chronic illnesses.

Episodic disability: Episodic impairments refer to those related to conditions or diseases that result in discrete periods of disability. The underlying conditions or diseases are lifelong but their effects, which can vary in intensity and duration, are different from those of permanent or progressive disabling conditions.

Invisible disability: Invisible disability is an umbrella term for impairments that are not immediately apparent. It includes cognitive, behavioral or learning impairments as well as mental health conditions.

Types of Barriers, Examples, and Prevention

1. **Attitudinal**
   Attitudinal barriers are behaviors, perceptions, and assumptions that discriminate against persons with disabilities. These types of barriers often are due to a lack of understanding, which can result in people ignoring, judging or having negative misconceptions about a person with a disability.

   Examples of attitudinal barriers include:
   - Assuming a person with a disability is inferior
   - Assuming someone with a speech related disability cannot understand you
   - Forming ideas about a person based on stereotypes or lack of knowledge
   - Making a person feel as though you are doing them a "special favour" by providing accommodations

   Tips for preventing attitudinal barriers:

   - Avoid making assumptions about a person's disability or capabilities

- Encourage people with disabilities speak with you about possible accommodation needs and/or areas needing improvement during the Election process
- Respect the privacy and right to confidentiality of persons with disabilities
- Create an inclusive and knowledgeable Election process through training and awareness regarding people with disabilities, barriers, and accommodations
- Engage in the accommodation process in good faith and implement appropriate accommodations in all aspects of the Election process

2. **Organizational or Systemic**
Organizational or systemic barriers are policies, procedures, or practices that unfairly discriminate and can prevent individuals with disabilities from fully participating in an Election. Organizational or systemic barriers are often put into place unintentionally.

Examples of organizational or systemic barriers include:
- A training program or requirement for an Election Official that is not in an accessible format (ex: no closed captions on videos)
- Access to voting is only available in person and does not allow people to vote by phone or e-mail
- Having poor defined or unclear Election policies and procedures, especially the ones that directly impact people with disabilities
- Inflexible voting hours that does not account for individual accommodations
- Lack of awareness on how to manage accommodation needs for people with disabilities

Tips for preventing organizational or systemic barriers:

- Ensure policies, procedures and practices are clearly stated and account for people with disabilities (ex: watch out for ableist language)
- Provide flexibility and accommodation options to voters with disabilities
  - Ensure Election Officials are properly trained on and are aware of accessibility requirements (IASR, AODA, OHRC)
- Encourage all voters to speak up about accessibility barriers in the policies, procedures and practices used during the Election process
- When revising or developing new Election facilities, services, policies, processes, or procedures ensure that the design is inclusive and considers the diverse needs of all voters
  - Consult with the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee and/or Accessibility Coordinator, where applicable

3. **Architectural or Physical**
   Architectural or physical barriers are elements of buildings or outdoor spaces that create barriers for persons with disabilities. These barriers relate to elements such as: the design of a building's stairs, doorway, washrooms, room layout, width of halls, doorways and sidewalks, elevator, signage, and so forth.

   Examples of architectural or physical barriers include:

   - Sidewalks, doorways and hallways are too narrow for a wheelchair, scooter, walker or other mobility devices
   - Desks or voting stations are too high for a person using a wheelchair or other mobility device
   - Poor lighting makes it difficult to see for a person with low vision or a person who lip-reads
   - Doorknobs are difficult to grasp for a person with arthritis
   - Signage is not used and/or is not clear when used for identification or directions (ex: no signage indicating how to find the washroom or directions on how to find voting stations)
   - The building does not contain an accessible elevator or barrier-free universal washroom

   Since it is not always possible to immediately (if at all) make adjustments to the physical environment in Municipal buildings, it is still important to draw attention to potential barriers with respects to the build environment. It is important to recognize that the required changes may be outside your scope of responsibility and have significant costs that need to be phased in over time through building renovations or purchase of new equipment. Despite these challenges, voters can participate in intermediary solutions that help overcome architectural or physical barriers, which includes:

   - Looking for alternative voting places available to accommodate a person who requires a different desk height, office size, door width etc.
     - Account for this when deciding where voting will be held
   - Determining the routes that can accommodate a person using a mobility device
   - Make lighting adjustments that eliminate glare, and install blinds or drapes
   - Turn off noisy machinery when it is not in use (ex: projectors)
   - Ensure rest area chairs can accommodate people of all sizes and abilities
   - Check that automated door openers are in proper working condition
   - Ensure signage in building is clear, easy to follow, and accounts for different needs (ex: Braille)

4. **Information or Communications**
   Information or communications barriers occur when sensory disabilities, such as hearing, seeing, or learning disabilities, have not been considered. These barriers relate to both the sending and receiving of information.

Examples of information or communications barriers include:

- Electronic documents that are not properly formatted and cannot be read by a screen reader (must meet the WCAG 2.0 Level AA requirements)
- Election materials or training documents that are confusing and poorly organized
- Language that is not clear or uses ableist terminology
- Print that is too small, issues with colour contrast, or a font that is difficult to read
- Videos that are not captioned and/or do not offer transcription
- Inconsistency in document layout or format for policies and procedures
- PDF and Word documents are not accessible
- Social media posts are inaccessible and use images without Alt Text

As the content creator, you have a significant amount of autonomy in selecting, creating and distributing materials that are accessible and account for the needs of persons with disabilities. When possible, ensure that all content created and distributed by the Municipality is available in multiple formats, made accessible, and adheres to the WCAG 2.0 Level AA requirements under the IASR. Examples of this may include:

- Make all Election materials legible and easy to follow
- Use accessible templates when creating or revising Election documents
- Use the built-in accessibility checker in Microsoft and Adobe documents to ensure all content is in accessible format
- Train all employees on creating accessible documents and social media posts
- Encourage employees to review the following resources:

Accessible Web Content Requirements:

- o [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0](#)

Accessible Social Media Posting:

- o [Tips for Making Social Media More Accessible -Ryerson University](#)
- o [Social Media Accessibility -University of Guelph](#)
- o [Accessible Digital Media Guidelines -GBH](#)

Accessible Adobe Documents:
- o [Create and Verify PDF Accessibility (Acrobat Pro)](#)
- o [Creating Accessible PDFs](#)
- o [Three Steps to Creating an Accessible PDF file (without Adobe Acrobat)](#)
- o [Adobe Accessibility Resources](#)

Accessible Microsoft Documents:

- o [Microsoft Accessibility](#)
- o [Microsoft Accessibility Overview Guidelines](#)
- o [Creating Accessible Office Documents](#)
  - o [Make Your Word Documents Accessible](#)
  - o [Make Your Excel Spreadsheets Accessible](#)
  - o [Make Your PowerPoint Presentations Accessible](#)

5. **Technological**

Technology barriers occur when a device or technological platform is not accessible to its intended audience and cannot be used with an assistive device. Technology can enhance the user experience, but it can also create unintentional barriers for some users. Technology barriers are often related to information and communications barriers.

Examples of technology barriers include:
- Electronic documents without accessibility features, such as alternative text (Alt Text) that screen readers read to describe an image
- Documents are only available in print (hard) copies (ex: voter ballot)
- Requiring Election Officials to use a website or training platform that does not meet accessibility standards
- Websites are not compatible with screen-reading software
- Out of order equipment:
  - o Lifts / Elevators
  - o Description headsets
  - o Microphones
  - o Automatic door openers
  - o Universal washroom(s)
  - o Closed captions on videos
- Touch screens without screen reader software or tactile keyboards
- Not enough accessible equipment or assistive devices available to voters who are voting in person
  - o Magnifiers, low-height voting station, etc.
- Limited accessibility features:
  - o Hardware such as guards, trackballs, large monitors, headsets
  - o Software such as screen readers, screen magnification, speech recognition programs

Tips for preventing technological barriers:

- Make documents accessible and available in a print and/or electronic copy
- Ensure all hardware, software and equipment is available and in working order
- Screen web pages relating to the Election for accessibility (internal and external)
  - o [WAVE Browser Extension](#)
- Consider use of web applications or widgets to improve accessibility

o   UserWay Accessibility Widget (free version)
- Offer assistive technology in person and for online/phone voting, when available, that is up-to-date and functional

List of Potential Accommodation Options

The Job Accommodation Network provides an extensive list of disabilities and accommodations that can be provided at A to Z of Disabilities and Accommodations. This information is based on the United States, but it does contain information that may be helpful in identifying accommodation options for individuals. **Note, the individual will be the best source for identifying potential barriers and accommodations.**

Accommodation will be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities. There are countless options for accommodating persons with disabilities (whether in the workplace or when accessing goods, services, or facilities). The following includes a non-exhaustive list of possible accommodation options:

- Adjusting organizational policies and practices that are inconsistent with Human Rights obligations and consider voters with disabilities
- Allow Support persons or support animals
- Provision of materials and communications in alternative format and/or with communication supports
- Allowing use of assistive devices and technical aids, which may include but is not limited to:
    o   Electronic equipment -large computer screens, specific software etc.
    o   Mobility or hearing aids
    o   Technical aids
    o   Computer, laptop or table with specialized software
- Ensuring individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing can make inquiries via email or through other appropriate forums
- Building modifications
    o   Modified or ergonomic workstation
    o   Adapted or accessible parking
    o   Accessible elevators
    o   Handrails, ramps, widened doorways or hallways
    o   Other equipment, help or work arrangement
- Ensure all changes to schedule (example in the event of a Temporary Service Disruption) is communicated in various ways to all voters

References

Guidelines for Accommodating Disabilities -City of Toronto

Understanding Barriers to Accessibility -Council of Ontario Universities

Systemic Barriers to the full Socio-Economic Participation of Persons with Disabilities -Government of Canada

Appendix C

Legislative Authority

Municipal Elections Act, 1996, S.O. 1996, C. 32

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, S.O. 2005, c. 11

Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation (O. Reg 191/11)

Ontario Human Rights Code, R.S.O. 1990, c. H. 19

O.REG. 332/12 Ontario Building Code Act

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom S. 3

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Canadian Human Rights Act R.S.C., 1985 c. H-6

Accessible Canada Act S.C., 2019, C.10

Supporting Documents

Plans

Accessible Municipal Elections Plan 2022

Policies

Accessibility Policy

Guides

Clerk's Guide to Accessible Elections -AMCTO

Candidates Guide to Accessible Elections -AMCTO

A Guide for Women Candidates -Municipal Elections in Canada

2022 Voters Guide -Ontario Municipal Election and School Board Elections

2022 Candidates' Guide -Ontario Municipal Council and School Board Elections

2022 Third Party Advertisers' Guide

Count Us In: Removing Barriers to Political Participation – Quick Reference Guide to Accessible Campaign Information and Communication

Count Us In: Removing Barriers to Political Participation – Quick Reference Guide to Accessible Constituency, Riding Association, Central Party and Campaign Offices

Count Us In: Removing Barriers to Political Participation – Quick Reference Guide to Accessible All Candidates Meetings