

Report to Council from Municipal Clerk Regarding Accessibility Initiatives Undertaken for 2018 Municipal Election

Section 12.1 (3) of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, 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.

This post election report will be posted on the municipal website and provided to individuals as requested.

Identification and Removal of Barriers

In 2018, the Municipality of Kincardine election process identified accessibility barriers and staff worked to both remove and prevent those barriers.

The process began with the selection of vote by internet and telephone as the method of voting. Internet/telephone voting helped the Municipality to ensure that persons with a variety of disabilities would be able to cast their ballots with independence and privacy using the assistive tools that they have on their own computer or telephone. For many it also removed the barrier of having to attend a physical location to cast their ballot.

Once the method of voting was selected, the Municipality developed the Election Accessibility Plan for the 2018 Municipal Election. This plan identified key barriers in the election process for electors, candidates and third parties. It also laid out the process for preventing and removing those barriers. The Accessibility Advisory Committee reviewed the plan and provided valuable input on the various barriers. The plan encompassed barriers such as provision of election information, accessible voting locations (including parking, entrance, interior), accessible voting booths, service animals/support persons and notices for temporary disruptions.

All staff assisting with the election were trained in accessible customer service. They were able to assist in removing barriers for electors on a one on one basis. For example, as the completion of the election forms can prove to be a barrier for many electors, staff utilized the Voterview Election program to input the elector's data directly into the system and aided electors in completing and understanding the forms. This greatly reduced that barrier for many individuals.

Staff also assisted electors by offering to explain in detail the process of using vote by internet/telephone. For example, a barrier for some individuals was logging on to the vote by internet site with the existing instructions. Staff provided demonstrative instructions to electors in person and worked with them step by step on the telephone to complete their

ballots. The Municipality also provided a video on the municipal website for anyone wanting a visual demonstration.

The internet voting system chosen also helped to reduce barriers by allowing the font size to be enlarged and the colours could be changed for greater contrast. In addition, the site itself was designed for ease of use for individuals using a screen reader.

Election information was made available to candidates and electors in alternate formats where requested and all information was posted in a variety of mediums including the website, social media, the radio, newspapers and community channels. In addition, staff provided three Internet/Telephone Voting Method Information Sessions at Malcolm Place, Tiverton Park Manor and Trillium Court. These sessions provided an opportunity for the residents of those facilities to learn how to cast their ballots and ensure they were on the Voters' List. We were able to remove the barrier of these residents coming to the municipal office for assistance by taking the information to their location.

In addition, the municipal office was available throughout the voting period as a voter help centre to allow individuals to attend if they had any issues or needed help.

The Municipality of Kincardine will review the strategies employed during the 2018 Municipal Election prior to the next election to ensure that any additional barriers are identified, and the accessibility plans are updated and revised to ensure the next election is as accessible as possible.