

ACCESSIBILITY INITIATIVES FOR THE 2022 MUNICIPAL ELECTION
City of Windsor
Municipal Elections Act – Section 12.1(3)

This is a report from the City Clerk regarding the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers relating to electors and candidates with disabilities as described under section 12.1(3) of the *Municipal Elections Act* in relation to the 2022 municipal election that took place in Windsor Ontario on Monday, October 24, 2022.

The 2022 municipal election was for the following offices:

Office of Mayor – one position

Office of Ward Councillor – one position for each of the ten wards

Office of Trustee – Greater Essex County District School Board, Wards 1, 2, 9 – two positions

Office of Trustee – Greater Essex County District School Board, Wards, 3, 4, 10 – two positions

Office of Trustee - Greater Essex County District School Board, Wards 5, 6, 7, 8 - two positions

Office of Trustee – Windsor Essex Catholic District School Board – Wards 1, 10 – one position

Office of Trustee – Windsor Essex Catholic District School Board – Wards 2, 9 – one position

Office of Trustee – Windsor Essex Catholic District School Board – Wards 3, 4 – one position

Office of Trustee – Windsor Essex Catholic District School Board – Wards 5, 8 – one position

Office of Trustee – Windsor Essex Catholic District School Board – Wards 6, 7 – one position

Office of Trustee – Conseil Scolaire Catholique Providence, City of Windsor Ward 1 and Town of Lasalle – one position

Office of Trustee – Conseil Scolaire Catholique Providence, Wards 2, 3, 4, 5, 10 – one position

Office of Trustee – Conseil Scolaire Catholique Providence, Wards 6, 7, 8, 9 – one position

Office of Trustee, Conseil Scolaire Viamonde – County of Essex – one position

Under the *Municipal Elections Act*, the City Clerk is responsible for the proper legislative and administrative conduct of municipal elections in the City of Windsor. In compliance with the Act, the City Clerk is making available to the public this report on accessibility initiatives.

Applicable Sections of the *Municipal Elections Act*

Electors and candidates with disabilities

12.1 (1) A clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities.

Plan re barriers

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.

Report

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 an effort to make the 2022 municipal election in the City of Windsor accessible to electors and candidates, the City Clerk established a number of initiatives to ensure compliance with the Act. Under the *Act*, the City Clerk may provide for any matter or procedure that in the Clerk's opinion is necessary or desirable for conducting the election, including the establishment of procedures to ensure that persons with disabilities had the opportunity to participate fully in the 2022 municipal election. The City Clerk used the following parameters in establishing *Procedures Governing the Provision of Election Information and Services to Persons with Disabilities*:

1. Electors and candidates with disabilities have full and equal access to all election information and services.
2. Persons with disabilities have full access to voting places.
3. Persons with disabilities are able to independently and privately mark their ballot and have access to alternative methods of voting assistance.

These procedures made provisions for assistance to both candidates and electors with disabilities, a feedback process, staff training and election assistance, and posted on the official election website.

Using these procedures, the City Clerk identified barriers and then provided for their removal/prevention through the following actions:

Identification of Barriers

- Reviewed and solicited input on election accessibility initiatives with/from WAAC (Windsor Accessibility Advisory Committee).
- Obtained comments and recommendations from the Diversity and Accessibility Officer for the Corporation of the City of Windsor on methods to meet accessibility needs.
- Created an accessibility checklist for election team members to use when conducting site visits to setup potential voting stations and shared all finalized voting station information with the members of WAAC for their input.
- Assessed voting equipment to ensure it met the needs of the electorate.
- Assessed past election administrative practices with respect to accessibility, identified any potential risks to the accessibility of candidates and electors, identified the impact of the risk, and developed measures to mitigate or minimize the risk for the 2022 election.
- Established *Procedures Governing the Provision of Election Information and Services to Persons with Disabilities (attached hereto as Appendix "A")* made available to the public on the City's election website.

Removal and Prevention of Barriers

Communication and Information

- Ensured communication initiatives and information for candidates and electors was available in alternate formats.
- Posted all election-related accessibility information on the municipal election website.
- Established an election website page with a special dedication to accessibility and allowed for feedback on accessibility initiatives.
- Provided a link to “*Procedures Governing the Provision of Election Information and Services to Persons with Disabilities*”, along with information provided by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Province of Ontario website, the City of Windsor website, and any other resource-related materials.
- Documentation and forms available upon request in large print to assist the visually impaired.
- Created and distributed brochures outlining the assistive devices used on Voting Day and other pertinent election information targeting disability groups such as the Canadian National Institute for the Blind.
- Provided candidates and staff with information relating to accessible customer service.
- Provided to all candidates via electronic and paper means the Ministry of Municipal Affairs document entitled “*2022 Candidates’ Guide for Ontario Municipal and School Board Elections*” regarding their campaign contributions and expenses and rules affecting disabled candidates in both electronic and paper format.
- 2022 Municipal Election Communications Plan contained information for residents with disabilities who would benefit from receiving information regarding assistance to vote.
- Using the Election Communications Plan, mailed out the election brochure “*It’s Your Time to Vote*” to each household within the City of Windsor and placed the brochure at reception counters at City Hall and other City facilities, Customer Care Centres, nursing homes, and libraries.
- Distributed the flyer “*Take the Bus to Vote*” which also described the assistive devices for use by voters at Advance Vote locations to groups that were associated with persons with disabilities
- Created a series of videos on the election website and social media sites called “*Don’t Miss the Vote*” to show voters various aspects of voting.
- The City’s 311 Call Centre was setup to assist with election-related calls including calls from persons with disabilities.
- The Office of the City Clerk reached out to the homeless and persons without a permanent residence to allow them to register to vote.

Voting Locations

- Conducted site visits of all voting locations used during the election to ensure full accessibility as provided for on the *Accessibility Voting Station Checklist*. If the checklist was not fully compatible with legislation, that location was not used and a new location was secured.
- Formulated a setup of voting locations to determine maximum accessibility.
- Provided all in-person Advance Vote locations with two AutoMark ballot-marking machines in addition to being physically accessible.

- Addressed accessibility concerns with all buildings utilized as voting stations and hired Accessibility Officers to ensure accessibility at every voting station.
- Accessible locations were taken into consideration when setting voting subdivision boundaries in each of the wards.
- Provided appropriate signage at all voting locations for easy identification of accessible entrance.
- Permitted service animals and support persons in all voting locations.
- Established a process using the “2022 Election Communication Plan” to facilitate notification of any last minute voting location changes, should an emergency occur.
- Ensured designated or reserved parking for persons with disabilities at each voting location.

Voting

- Provided two fully accessible AutoMark ballot-marking units at all in-person advance voting locations and at one location (Lions Manor) on Voting Day, October 24th.
- Provided election officials instructions on how to assist voters if requested by the voter, as well as instructions on how to assist voters in the use of the AutoMark machines.
- Promoted advance voting opportunities for electors with disabilities.
- Provided voters with the ability to vote at any one advance vote location in the City of Windsor.
- Provided voting opportunities on the premises of any institution in which 20 or more beds were occupied by disabled, chronically ill or infirm persons. Also provided voting opportunities on the premises of any retirement home in which 50 or more beds were occupied.
- Provided ballot magnifiers at each voting station to assist voters with visual disabilities.
- Provided instructions on the voting screens which explained how to vote.
- Deputy Returning Officers stationed at the voting stations received instructions on how to assist voters who needed assistance to vote and had the legal ability to give the voter any assistance they needed in order to exercise their right to vote.
- Provided the Deputy Returning Officer with the “Oath of Friend of Elector” allowing a friend to assist the voter at the poll.

Staff Training

- Incorporated customer service standards into the staff training for election officials.
- Provided Area Managers/Supervisors/Deputy Returning Officers for each voting station to look out for the needs of persons with disabilities and assist, if necessary.
- Encouraged election workers to approach an elector if it appeared that the elector required assistance to get around in the voting location and to offer assistance to help but not to assume a voter needed this.
- Trained election officials to be aware of the needs of the voters and informed them that they could offer their assistance in any way they deemed necessary.
- All Deputy Returning Officers were appointed and authorized to assist voters with disabilities in any way they needed assistance at the voting station.

To ensure compliance with section 12.1(1) of the *Municipal Elections Act* where the City Clerk shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities, this report has been prepared as an outline of accessibility initiatives undertaken for the 2014 Municipal Election.

This report provides Council with the initiatives provided by the City Clerk during the recent municipal election, within the framework of the *Municipal Elections Act* with regards to identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.