

Oakville votes

2018 Municipal Election

2018 Municipal Election
Accessibility Plan – Final Report

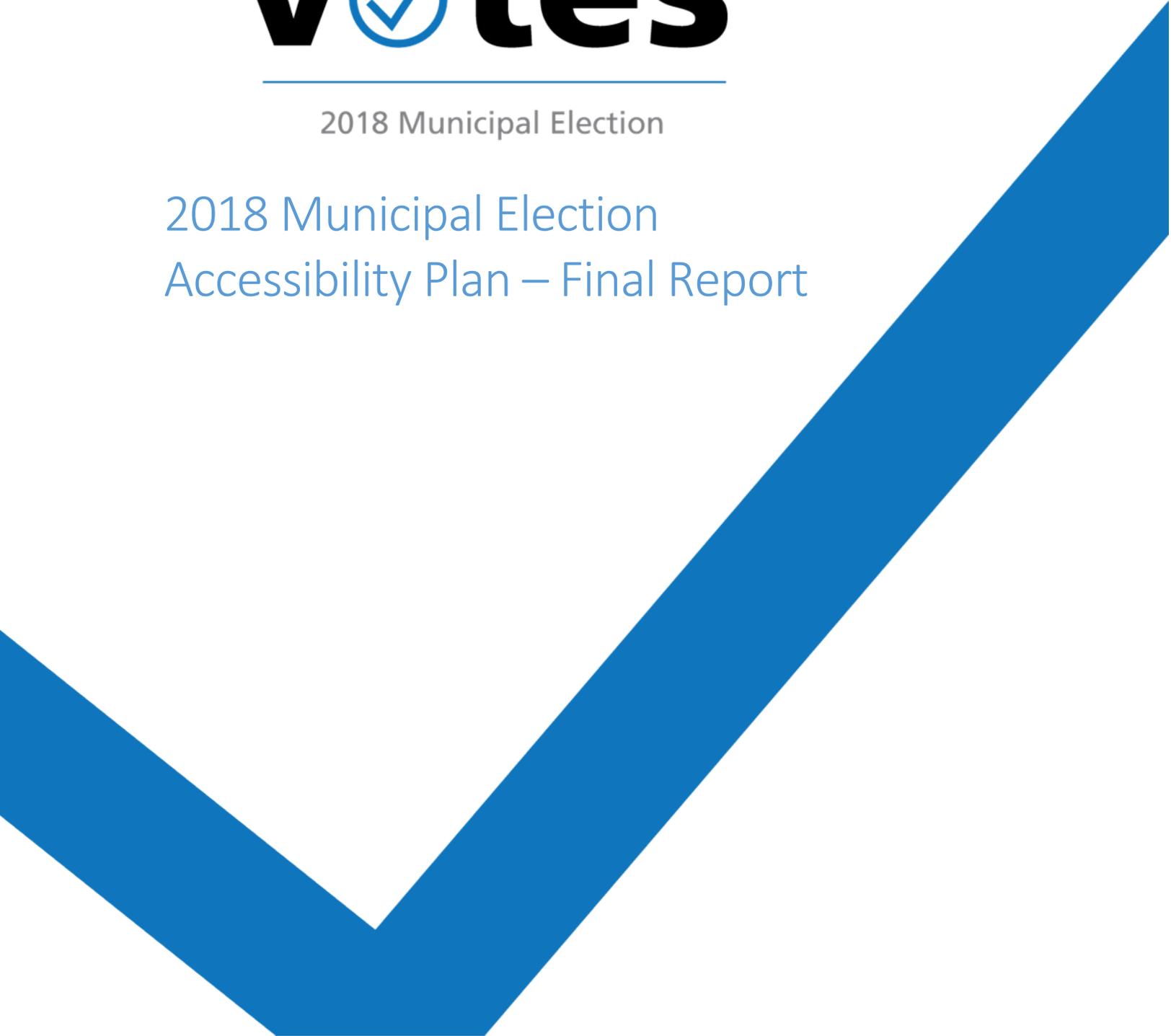


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Mission Statement

To provide all candidates and electors with equal opportunity and to ensure a positive involvement in the electoral process.

Goal

To establish objectives and actions to ensure the needs of electors and candidates of all abilities have been addressed.

Corporate Policy

The Corporation of the Town of Oakville (town) is committed to eliminating barriers and providing accessible programs, services and facilities towards achieving Council's vision to be the most livable town in Canada. This includes building an inclusive community where all individuals have equal access to the town's services, programs and facilities in a manner that is integrated and promotes dignity and independence.

Legislation

Municipal Elections Act, 1996, (the Act) as amended

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.
- 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.
- 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.

Post-Election Report date

January 2019

Should you require this information in a different format, please let us know.

Definition of Disability

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* defines “disability” as follows:

- (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*.

Objectives

1. Review the election process to identify barriers through consultation.
2. Remove barriers identified through effective communication and information for candidates and electors.
3. Ensure all voting locations are physically accessible.
4. Ensure equal opportunity for all electors to vote as independently as possible.
5. Ensure all election officials receive the required training, incorporating accessible customer service training, to provide a positive voting experience.

1. Consultation

Consultation with individuals and groups provide greater knowledge and understanding in conducting elections that are accessible to all. Reviewing the election process and consulting with individuals and groups ensures the goals and actions in providing services to persons of all abilities and backgrounds are relevant and implemented effectively and establishes actions that provide accountability and ensure accessibility initiatives are implemented.

Accessibility Advisory Committee

The accessibility initiatives for the 2018 municipal election were presented to the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) for review and comment in February of 2018. Feedback was solicited from the group on accessibility initiatives not identified in the plan and to raise awareness of the upcoming municipal election. The initiatives were reported a second time to the committee in September of 2018 and the presentation included detailed location information and a demonstration of accessible voting options. Reports to the committee are included under **Appendix A** to this report.

Other groups

The Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) was consulted in 2014 to review the equipment. The same equipment reviewed by the CNIB in 2014 in this consultation was used for the 2018 municipal election.

Staff attended senior recreation facilities, long-term care facilities, and retirement homes in advance of voting dates to provide relevant voting information and to collect accurate and up-to-date elector information.

Information was provided to various groups through communication material sent to recreation and fitness centers within Oakville, including libraries.

Accessibility Coordinator

The town's Accessibility Coordinator was regularly consulted to provide comments and recommendations on methods to meet accessibility needs and assess accessibility of tools and resources provided to electors and candidates.

Post-election Evaluations

Post-election evaluations, which included accessibility initiatives or concerns, were conducted with staff to solicit feedback on all areas of the election and continually improve our process. While there were no concerns raised in regards to barriers as all locations were physically accessible, one response will initiate a review of one location to improve its accessibility if used for a future election with regard to distance and navigation to the voting location room.

Positive feedback was also received on the team's ability to accommodate a member of the public who expressed interest in working voting day. Accommodations were made to the standard shift time in order to allow this individual to work and attend the mandatory training session, in an effort to provide all with equal opportunity.

2. Communications and Information

Effective communication initiatives for candidates and electors is critical in ensuring election information is accessible, as well as ensuring all documentation and information is available in alternative formats upon request.

Website

All relevant election information pertinent to both candidates and electors was posted to the election website (elections.oakville.ca). All information provided included accessible links and was offered in alternative formats, including paper copy, when requested. The majority of the web content was posted as text-based content only; accessible PDFs were posted where possible. Results, including past election information, are provided on the website and also on the town's Open Data portal.

Candidates

Candidates were provided supplementary information to ensure a positive campaign for both candidates and electors and resources were provided relating to running an accessible campaign. The following resources were provided on the town's election website:

- the town's Candidate Guide;
- the Candidates Guide to Accessible Elections, produced jointly by the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerk's and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO) and the Province;
- the provincial accessibility website; and
- the town's Accessible Customer Service handbook.

Multiple candidate information sessions were held in 2018 which covered the candidate accessibility requirements and the legislation related to candidates with a disability.

All documentation and forms were available in large print, if required, to assist visually impaired and were offered in alternate formats upon request. Where possible, forms and documents required to be posted in PDF format were provided as accessible PDFs.

3. Voting Locations

In accordance with legislation, all voting places were physically accessible to all electors.

Accessibility Checklist

An established accessibility checklist was reviewed and updated, with input from Building Services staff and the town's Accessibility Coordinator, for election personnel to use when conducting site visits of each voting location.

The comprehensive checklist ensured each facility had:

- working door operators / accessible doors;
- barrier free parking;
- accessible ramps and thresholds;
- a barrier free path of travel from the parking lot;
- adequate lighting;
- seating, should the distance of travel from the entrance to the voting location require it.

Site Visits

Site visits were conducted of all voting locations, including parking lots and paths, to ensure full physical accessibility. As part of the accessibility plan, location owners (Town, school boards and churches) were notified should any accessible modifications be required. None were required.

Signage

Where required, staff ensured that all voting locations and access areas were clearly identified and that any particular accessibility requirement (i.e. use of an elevator) had clear signage.

Voting location set up

Staff were instructed to ensure all voting locations were set up to ensure maximum accessibility. In 2014, a member of the Accessibility Advisory Committee assisted in reviewing a mock voting location set up to assess maximum accessibility (i.e. distance between voting booths, height of tables, etc.). The same set up established in 2014 was utilized for 2018 and this formed part of the staff training.

Vote anywhere within your ward

On voting day, eligible electors could vote at any one location within their ward. Offering this voting model provided flexibility for electors and enhanced the accessibility of elections to all involved. This voting model was implemented in 2014 and was offered again for the 2018 election.

Voting location with accessible voting equipment

One central voting location (Town Hall) on voting day and during advance voting offered accessible voting equipment, in addition to being physically accessible. This was a location that any person could vote at, during advance voting or on voting day, regardless of their voting ward.

Service Animals / support persons

Service animals were permitted in all voting locations. No documentation that the animal was a support animal was to be requested by election staff.

Support persons were able to assist individuals in the voting process, as required, providing they took an oral oath of secrecy, administered by an election official.

Election staff training incorporated information and processes related to service animals, support persons, and interpreters.

Emergency Notices / Accessibility information

While no last minute voting location changes occurred, a process was established to facilitate this notice, should an emergency occur.

In addition to social media outlets, information was made available on the following web pages:

<http://www.oakville.ca/accessibility.htm>

<http://elections.oakville.ca/accessibility.html>

4. Accessible Voting Opportunities

Ensure equal opportunity for all electors to vote as independently as possible.

Accessible voting equipment

Provide accessible voting equipment and proper instructions on using the equipment in the manner suitable for the voter.

Accessible equipment was made available at one location (Town Hall) during all advance voting days and on voting day. Equipment supplied with the capability to provide for an audio ballot with the use of the following devices: Braille control, hand or foot paddles, and a sip and puff device. The voter had the ability to choose the device used.

Staff from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (C.N.I.B.) assisted in 2009 by providing feedback and testing of accessibility components of voting equipment during the RFP stage. Representatives tested accessibility components and confirmed that they were accessible for those with visual impairments and individuals in wheelchairs. The same accessible voting technology was used in 2014 and for the 2018 Municipal Election.

Procedures were provided on the town's website and available in print at Town Hall. Election staff trained on use of equipment were available when the use of the equipment was requested.

The accessible equipment was used by one voter for the 2018 municipal election. A ballot was marked successfully using the audio tactile device and the ballot was accepted by the tabulator. Once accepted by the tabulator, the ballot marked by the accessible device could not be identified from hand-marked ballots.

Advance voting opportunities

Advance voting opportunities were provided prior to voting day including both evening and weekend options at multiple locations. The full list of advance voting opportunities were to the town's website and provided on elector information notices.

Notice of advance voting and the Town Hall voting day location was provided to electors through various methods, including Oakville transit, with public notices, newsletters, advertisements, and social media.

Curbside voting

Curbside voting may occur if a voter is unable to access the established voting area. The election official may attend to the elector anywhere within the voting place, which includes the parking lot. Once the elector identity and declaration has been confirmed, the ballot will be brought to the voter for marking and, once marked, securely returned to the tabulator for processing. This opportunity was available to all electors at all voting locations, when requested.

Assisted voting

A friend, companion, support person, or election official, may assist a voter in the voting process. Election staff were trained to offer this option to any voters who attended with another individual or required assistance. Any individuals assisting a voter, other than an election official, were required to take an oath to assist an elector.

Proxy voting

Proxy voting is a legislated option for voters who wish to appoint another eligible elector to vote on their behalf. Proxy voting information was provided to voters through notices and on the town's website. Staff was trained on providing information on voting by proxy and processing proxy voters.

Resources available to electors

Magnification screens were made available at all voting locations.

Transit

Transit passes were made available for electors who required assistance getting to a voting location.

Reduced hour voting locations

In accordance with section 45(7) of the *Municipal Elections Act*, resident only voting opportunities were provided at institutions and retirement homes. Resident only voting was provided on a reduced hours basis for 1 to 6 hours (depending on size of facility and number of residents) to allow eligible residents of the facility the opportunity to vote in their own home. This included voting at the Oakville-Trafalgar Memorial Hospital.

Election staff provided bedside voting where required.

Vote from Home Program

A new pilot program was offered in the 2018 election called the vote from home program. This was introduced to enhance the town's commitment to creating accessible voting for all electors, allowing them to vote independently from their home. The vote from home service was designed to provide a service for electors who cannot leave their homes due to illness, injury or disabilities.

The vote from home service was offered by scheduled appointments throughout the advance voting time period.

For the 2018 election, the service was successfully utilized by roughly 20 voters. As a result of the success, there are plans to use and expand the program for future elections.

5. Staff Training

Comprehensive staff training was critical in ensuring legislative requirements and the town's accessibility goal was met. All election officials who worked were required to attend a mandatory training session. While the training sessions varied based on the position, all election official training incorporated an accessible customer service component.

Accessible Customer Service handbook

Accessible Customer Service handbook was provided to all external election officials. After training, external staff were asked to sign off on an "Accessibility Compliance Registration Card" for the town's records.

Training

The following material was presented to all staff during the election official training to ensure staff were trained on how to offer accessible customer service:

- Do not ever assume an individual needs assistance, always ask;
- Monitor voter concerns and ensure their needs are met, i.e. if an individual with a walker is in a long line, staff are to observe, and if it is felt that the elector is having difficulties, offer a chair and ensure that their place is saved in the voting line-up;
- Offer magnifiers, ensure voters know they are available, if required;
- Watch for language difficulties and work with voters in ensuring they are comfortable and understand the process. Election officials were able to act as interpreters if possible and if the voters wanted the assistance;
- Ensure voters were aware of the accessible facilities are (where applicable) and provide greeters to assist and/or direct them should the voter request it;
- How to identify a service animal and to not ask questions pertaining to documentation or a reason why the service animal is required;
- Maintain a friendly and approachable demeanour;
- Check the access doors frequently and ensure all voters can easily enter the building;
- Ensure signage to the location is adequate and identifies the best route;
- Ensure voters who have self-identified as voting curb side are met in a timely manner;
- Ensure the minimum required distance of 5 feet between the tables used for the privacy screen;
- If required, ensure there is seating for rest spots leading from the entrance to the building into the voting location room.

Feedback received

Feedback on all areas of the election process was welcomed and appreciated. Feedback on accessibility was particularly important as indicated by the plan.

A web page on oakville.ca is dedicated to receiving feedback on accessibility initiatives. The established town page was utilized and linked from the elections accessibility page to allow the election team to ensure efficiencies of service:

www.oakville.ca/residents/accessibility.html and <http://elections.oakville.ca/accessibility.html>

The Town Clerk welcomes feedback to identify areas where changes can improve the delivery of an accessible election. This document reports how the Town of Oakville acted on the established plans of ensuring an accessible election for all involved. Feedback on improvement in areas that may be identified as requiring improvement with respect to administering the election is welcomed and will be carefully reviewed in the planning and implementation of future elections.

Email: elections@oakville.ca

Phone: 905-815-6015

By Mail: Town of Oakville
 Clerk's department
 1225 Trafalgar Road
 Oakville, Ontario L6H 0H3

Should you require this information in a different format, please let us know.



ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING DATE: FEBRUARY 8, 2018

FROM: Clerk's department
DATE: January 15, 2018
SUBJECT: 2018 Oakville Municipal Election - Accessibility Initiatives
LOCATION: Town wide

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this item:

- The 2018 Oakville municipal election will be held on Monday, October 22, 2018.
- The accessibility goal for the 2018 municipal election is to ensure the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities continue to be addressed and to provide all candidates and electors with equal opportunity to ensure positive involvement in the electoral process.
- The Town of Oakville is committed to eliminating barriers and improving accessibility for persons with disabilities to afford equal opportunities and the provision of integrated programs and services where possible, in a manner that respects dignity and independence.
- Sections 12.1 (1) and (2) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, as amended, state:
 - 12.1(1) A clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities.
 - 12.1 (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.
- To assist with seeking committee input and identifying areas where changes can improve the delivery of an accessible election, the 2018 Election Accessibility Plan and the initiatives outlined in the plan will be presented to the Accessibility Advisory Committee at its meeting on February 8, 2018.
- More information and the 2018 Election Accessibility Plan is available on the town's election site: <https://elections.oakville.ca/accessibility.html>

Appendix A – 2018 Election Accessibility Plan

Prepared by:
Andrea Zampieri
Election and Special Project Coordinator
Clerk's department



ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING DATE: SEPTEMBER 13, 2018

FROM: Clerk's department
DATE: August 21, 2018
SUBJECT: 2018 Oakville Municipal Election - Accessibility Initiatives
LOCATION: Town wide

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this item:

- The 2018 Oakville municipal election will be held on Monday, October 22, 2018.
- The accessibility goal for the 2018 municipal election is to ensure the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities continue to be addressed and to provide all candidates and electors with equal opportunity to ensure positive involvement in the electoral process.
- The Town of Oakville is committed to eliminating barriers and improving accessibility for persons with disabilities to afford equal opportunities and the provision of integrated programs and services where possible, in a manner that respects dignity and independence.
- Sections 12.1 (1) and (2) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, as amended, state:
 - 12.1(1) A clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities.
 - 12.1 (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.
- To assist with seeking committee input and identifying areas where changes can improve the delivery of an accessible election, the 2018 Election Accessibility Plan and the initiatives outlined in the plan was presented to the Accessibility Advisory Committee at its meeting on February 8, 2018.
- More information and the 2018 Election Accessibility Plan is available on the town's election site: <https://elections.oakville.ca/accessibility.html>

Appendix A – Voter information handout

Prepared by:
Andrea Coyne
Election and Special Project Coordinator
Clerk's department