

Oakville votes

2022 Municipal Election

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Accessibility Plan

Table of Contents

MISSION STATEMENT	3
GOAL.....	3
CORPORATE POLICY	3
LEGISLATION	3
DEFINITION OF DISABILITY.....	4
FEEDBACK	4
OBJECTIVES.....	5
CONSULTATION.....	5
COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION	6
VOTING LOCATIONS	8
VOTING	10
STAFF TRAINING	13

Mission Statement

To provide all candidates, electors, and staff with equitable 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 improving accessibility for persons with disabilities through equitable opportunities and the provision of integrated programs and services where possible, in a manner that respects their dignity and independence.

Legislation

Municipal Elections Act, 1996, 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.

Last updated

Version 1 – May 2022

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*.

Feedback

The Town Clerk welcomes feedback to identify areas where changes can improve the delivery of an accessible election. This plan is a living document and will continue to undergo changes. Please provide us with your feedback on how we can make changes to this plan:

Email: elections@oakville.ca

Phone: 905-815-6015

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

Objectives

Consultation

Consultation with individuals and groups provide greater knowledge and understanding in conducting elections that are accessible to all. Review election process to establish actions that provide accountability and ensure accessibility initiatives are implemented.

Initiative	Actions	Status
<p>1. Consultation to take place with individuals and groups knowledgeable in providing services to persons of all abilities and backgrounds to ensure goals and actions are relevant and implemented effectively.</p>	<p>Accessibility initiatives to be presented to the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) for review and comment.</p> <p>Other groups to consult/inform include: C.N.I.B., Halton Multicultural Council, senior and youth facilities.</p>	<p>2nd quarter 2022</p> <p>On-going</p>
	<p>Attend meetings and events to demonstrate accessible voting options and raise awareness of the 2022 election.</p>	<p>On-going</p>
	<p>Conduct post-election evaluation of feedback on accessibility initiatives.</p>	<p>On-going</p>
	<p>Town's Corporate Inclusion Advisory Group to provide comments and recommendations on methods to meet accessibility needs.</p>	<p>On-going</p>

Communications and Information

Ensure effective communication initiatives for candidates and electors to ensure election information is accessible and available in alternate formats and languages.

Initiative	Actions	Status
1. Ensuring all relevant election information pertinent to voters and candidates is posted to the election website (elections.oakville.ca).	Access to information will be provided and made available in alternate formats, where requested. Accessible PDFs will be posted where possible. Information posted on the website and all candidate documents provided with accessible links, with paper copy of the information available upon request.	On-going
	Results and past election information provided in Open Data.	On-going
2. Provide candidates and staff with information relating to Accessible Customer Service and Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation training.	<p>The town's election website will provide candidates links to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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; • the town's Accessible Customer Service and Integrated Standards Training booklets; • any other related material. <p>Accessible Customer Service Etiquette and Integrated Accessibility Standards handbooks provided to every election worker in addition to in-person training. The handbooks are also made available in an accessible pdf (electronically) and in paper format for all registered candidates.</p>	On-going

Initiative	Actions	Status
3. Establish a web page dedicated to receiving feedback on accessibility initiatives.	<p>The established town page will be utilized, election team to ensure efficiency of services:</p> <p>Town of Oakville's Accessibility & Inclusion webpage and Accessibility for the Municipal Election webpage</p>	On-going
4. Provide all documentation and forms in large print to assist visually impaired individuals.	<p>All documents and forms are available in alternate formats upon request. Where possible, forms and documents will be provided in accessible pdf format on the website.</p> <p>Providing electors with a “How to Vote” video that uses American Sign Language (ASL) Interpretation and captioning for the website, this allows electors to familiarize themselves with the voting process</p>	On-going
5. Outreach to stakeholder groups to request assistance with broadcasting election information to members. Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB), Canadian Hearing Society, Community Living.	Educating electors of the voting options available to them.	On-going
6. Provide candidates with supplementary information to ensure a positive experience for both candidates and electors.	<p>Candidate information sessions to be held in 2022, which will cover candidate accessibility requirements and the legislation related to candidates with disabilities.</p> <p>Make candidate's guide available in accessible formatting, and that accessible accommodations are made upon request.</p>	2022

Voting Locations

Initiative	Actions	Status
<p>1. Ensure all voting places are accessible to electors with disabilities.</p>	<p>Review and update existing accessibility checklist, with input from Facilities and Construction Management staff, as required, for election personnel to use when conducting site visits of each voting location.</p>	<p>1st Quarter 2022</p>
	<p>Checklist to ensure each facility has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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. 	<p>1st Quarter 2022</p>
	<p>Conduct site visits of all voting locations, including parking lots and paths, to ensure full accessibility.</p>	<p>2nd Quarter 2022</p>
	<p>Contact and advise voting location owners (town, school boards and places of worship) to make accessible modifications as necessary. Modifications made to voting locations to make them accessible.</p> <p>Address any location-related accessibility concerns with school board representatives.</p>	<p>2nd Quarter 2022</p>
	<p>Staff to ensure that voting locations and access areas are clearly identified.</p>	

Initiative	Actions	Status
2. Voting location set up to determine 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, and used in 2018, will also be used for 2022 and will form part of the training of election officials.	3 rd Quarter 2022
3. Provide one central voting location on voting day and during advance voting with accessible voting equipment, in addition to being physically accessible.	Town Hall will serve as the central voting location with accessible voting equipment to provide an opportunity for eligible voters with accessibility needs.	4 th Quarter 2022
4. Allow voting at any location within a ward to provide flexibility for voters and to enhance accessibility.	Voting at any one location within a voter's ward was first implemented in 2014 and will once again be offered for the 2022 election.	On-going
5. Service animals and support persons to be permitted in all voting locations.	Election staff training to address service animals and support persons in addition to customer service. Support persons able to take an oral oath of secrecy prior to assisting an individual in the voting process.	On-going
6. Set up a process to facilitate notification of any last-minute voting location changes, should an emergency occur.	In addition to social media outlets, information available on the following web pages: Town of Oakville's Accessibility webpage and Accessibility for the Municipal Election webpage	On-going

Voting

Ensure equitable opportunity to all electors to vote as independently as possible.

Initiatives	Actions	Status
<p>1. Provide accessible voting equipment and proper instructions, ensure it meets the needs of electors.</p>	<p>Provide accessible equipment 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.</p>	<p>On-going</p>
	<p>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 are accessible for those with visual impairments and individuals using wheelchairs. The same accessible voting technology was used in 2018 and will again be used for the 2022 municipal election.</p>	<p>On-going</p>
	<p>Provide instructions on use of accessible voting equipment. Procedures provided on the town's website and available in print at Town Hall. A voter may listen to the audio directions on how to use the equipment. Election staff are trained on use of equipment, should assistance be required.</p>	<p>On-going</p>

Initiatives	Actions	Status
2. Schedule extended advance voting opportunities.	Advance voting provided prior to voting day, including both evening and weekend options at multiple locations. Full list of advance voting locations will be posted on the website and will be provided on voter information notices.	3 rd /4 th Quarter 2022
3. Promote advance voting opportunity for electors with disabilities.	Notice of advance voting and the Town Hall voting day location to be provided to all Care-a-Van and transit users via public notices, newsletters, and social media. CNIB, Canadian Hearing Society and other assistive groups will be requested to broadcast election information to members.	On-going
4. Provide accessible voting options.	Provide curbside voting at all voting locations, if requested. 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.	3 rd /4 th Quarter 2022
	Facilitate assisted voting by friends, companions, support persons or election officials. Individual assisting voter will be required to take an oath to assist an elector.	3 rd /4 th Quarter 2022
	Ensure election officials are trained to permit the use of service animals.	3 rd /4 th Quarter 2022

Initiatives	Actions	Status
	Provide supplies to enable voting for visually impaired individuals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • magnification screens available at all voting locations • supplies to include notepads and pens to communicate with voters who are hearing impaired 	3 rd /4 th Quarter 2022
	Ability to vote by proxy. Communications and website to contain information on voting by proxy. Staff to be trained on providing information on voting by proxy and processing proxy voters (including requirement to take the oath of secrecy).	On-going
	Transit passes to be available for voters who require assistance getting to a voting location.	On-going
5. In accordance with section 45(7) of the <i>Municipal Elections Act</i> , provide voting opportunities at institutions and retirement homes.	Voting 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. Election staff to facilitate bedside voting where required.	On-going

Staff Training

Ensure all election officials receive election training, which incorporates Accessible Customer Service and Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation training to provide a positive voting experience.

Initiatives	Actions	Status
1. Staff training to incorporate provisions to meet accessible customer service and integrated accessibility standards.	Training components as noted below. All staff to complete an “Accessibility Compliance Registration Card” for the town’s records.	On-going
	Reference materials to be provided. An Accessible Customer Service Etiquette handbook will be provided to every staff member. Link to Accessibility of Ontario Directorate website provided to all election staff. Have a contact if an accessibility issue occurs elections@oakville.ca	On-going

Training includes:

- a) A requirement to monitor electors’ concerns and to ensure that 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;
- b) A requirement to ensure that electors are aware that magnifiers are available, if required;
- c) Direction for election staff to observe electors during discussions with them, and if it appears that the voter is having difficulty understanding, work with the voter in any manner they are comfortable with, to ensure their needs are met;
- d) Encouraging election workers to approach an elector if it appears that the elector requires assistance to get around in the voting location. Offer assistance to help, do not assume an individual needs help;

- e) Ensuring that electors are aware of where the accessible facilities are (where applicable) and provide greeters to assist and/or direct them should the elector request;
- f) Election staff will be trained to identify a service animal and to follow the town's Accessible Customer Service Procedure;
- g) Maintaining a friendly and approachable demeanour;
- h) Checking the access doors frequently to offer assistance and watch for electors unable to easily enter the building;
and
- i) Ensuring that voters who have self-identified as voting curbside are met in a timely manner.