

2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan for the City of Quinte West

1. Introduction

The Accessibility plan will address the specific accessibility requirements in relation to the 2022 Municipal and School Board Election in the City of Quinte West. This plan has regard for the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that may affect electors and candidates with disabilities in the 2022 Municipal Election.

The City of Quinte West has made great efforts in promoting a barrier free community. In an effort to ensure that the 2022 Municipal Election is consistent with the core principles of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA), this planning document was developed in advance of the election in order to identify measures to be taken during the Election process and to be reported to Council following the Election.

2. Legislation

Municipal Elections Act, 1996 as amended:

Per Section 12.1

- A Clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities
- 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 report available to the public
- Within 90 days following 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.

Per Section 45(2)

- In establishing the locations of voting places, the Clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities.

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 coordination, 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 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;

3. Objectives

This plan is intended to highlight the measures that the City of Quinte West will be implementing to ensure equal opportunity for all electors and candidates. These objectives include:

- that persons with disabilities are able to independently cast their vote and verify their selection.
- that persons with disabilities have full and equal access to all information on where and when to vote.
- that persons with disabilities can fully participate in the Municipal Election as an elector, candidate, or election official.
- that efforts are made to ensure that electors with disabilities are aware of the accessibility measures available via such channels as the newspaper, media launches, the City of Quinte West website and social media.
- that all Voter Help Centre locations are accessible.

4. Development of the Plan

This plan is a “living” document which will be improved and updated as best practices are identified and new opportunities for improvement arise. In order to develop this plan, discussion and reviews have taken place to ensure that we meet statutory requirements and that the implementation of this plan is feasible. To aid the development of the 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan, the following steps will be implemented:

- Review and analysis of documents, policies and supporting materials from sources such as AMCTO, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH), neighbouring municipalities, technology suppliers and other stakeholder groups.
- Establish staff training standards and practices directly related to the Election to ensure that people with disabilities are able to vote in a positive customer service environment, and ensure that all Election Officials recognize that a voter’s needs shall be accommodated.

5. Voting Method

The 2022 City of Quinte West Municipal Election will be working with Simply Voting Systems to provide eVoting services to eligible voters. This includes the convenience and independence of voting from anywhere via internet or in-person at a Voter Help Centre location during the October 11 to October 24, 2022 voting period.

Everyday tools like computers, smartphones, tablets and other internet accessible devices can present accessible opportunities for persons with disabilities to accomplish

more, while being consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equal opportunity.

The Simply Voting system provides voters with the capability to vote from the comfort of their own home. Voting from home facilitates the voting process for persons with disabilities who may have mobility restrictions, visual impairments and/or have a difficult time with transportation. Additionally persons that have assistive devices set up in their homes can now use them to assist with casting their ballot privately and independently.

By allowing individuals to vote from any location, there is an increased opportunity for the voter to vote without any assistance. This provides persons with disabilities the same independence and privacy in participating in the election as other voters. If persons with disabilities do require assistance in the voting process, trained Election Officials will be present at in-person Voter Help Centre locations on specified dates throughout the voting period.

Voting opportunities will be provided on the premises of institutions and retirement homes where 50 or more beds are occupied by persons who are disabled, chronically ill or infirmed.

5.1 Internet Voting

Eligible voters may vote online, using a smartphone, tablet device or computer and any accompanying assistive devices or software, along with their PIN and qualifying information, to access the internet address provided in their Voter Information Letter (VIL). Eligible voters may also utilize computers at the Quinte West Public Library locations in City Hall, Trenton and at the Frankford Municipal Service Centre.

Simply Voting is committed to supporting electors with disabilities and making sure the ballot works with assistive technologies. The interface of Simply Voting websites are regularly audited against Section 508 and WCAG-2 accessibility requirements by the Bureau of Internet Accessibility, which provides a comprehensive compliance and remediation report. This ensures voting websites are compatible with screen-reading technology such as JAWS.

5.2 In-person Voting at the Voter Help Centres

For those individuals without means to access voting via internet, or those who require the assistance of a trained Election Official, Voter Help Centres will be open to provide in-person voting opportunities via municipally owned equipment.

Access to the Voter Help Centres interior and voting area shall be level and slip-resistant and well lit. Entrance corridors shall be clear of obstructions and tripping hazards and will allow sufficient space for the use and operation of a wheelchair or scooter.

An accessible voting area will be available at the Voter Help Centre locations to be determined. This area shall allow for individuals who use a wheelchair or scooter to vote independently and secretively.

Voters may attend the Voter Help Centre locations throughout the voting period on the dates identified as “Advance Voting” days.

6. Voting Locations

An accessibility assessment of each physical Voter Help Centre location will be conducted. The assessment will include, but not be limited to, consideration for ease of access, ease of entrance and exit and parking.

- **Maximum Accessibility** - Voting locations will be set up to allow for maximum accessibility. This will include ensuring the distance between voting machines, location of power cords, lighting, signage, etc. are all considered in the set up of the room.
- **Accessible Route** - an easily navigable route will be marked for entry into the voting location and into the voting area within the location. The voting area shall be identified with clear and understandable signage. Seating areas shall be provided throughout the Vote Help Centre for individuals needing a rest.
- **Entrance and Exit** - the route to the entrance of the Voter Help Centre shall be unobstructed and accessible. The route shall be wide enough to allow for an individual using a wheelchair, scooter or other assistive device or service animal to travel safely. Doors into the voting location and voting area shall be accessible and easy to open or shall remain propped open for the duration of voting location hours. Routine checks will be made to ensure all entrances remain barrier free throughout the course of the day.
- **Parking** - Accessible parking shall be available at the Voter Help Centre location. The designated parking spaces shall be clearly marked with the international symbol of accessibility and will be on firm and level ground, close to the entrance of the voting location.

7. Voting Assistance

- **Support Person / Friend of the Voter** - Individuals that require assistance may be accompanied by a designated support person and/or “Friend of the Voter”. The designated support person and/or “Friend of the Voter” will be administered an oath of secrecy / confidentiality by an Election Official prior to them providing assistance to the eligible voter.
- **Service Animals** - individuals requiring service animals are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at the Voter Help Centre locations.
- **Election Officials** - at the in-person Voter Help Centre locations, upon request, Election Officials are available to assist any voter who requires assistance in casting their ballot. All individuals working in the capacity of an Election Official are formally appointed as such and administered an oath of secrecy and confidentiality prior to voting day.

8. Staff Training

All Election staff shall be trained on Accessible Customer Service prior to performing their duties. This training will assist staff in recognizing individual needs to ensure that persons with disabilities are served in a way that best meets their individual requirements.

Accessible Customer Service training will include but not be limited to the following:

- How to interact / communicate with persons with various types of disabilities
- How to interact with persons with disabilities who use assistive devices, require the assistance of a support person or a service animal
- How to clearly explain the voting process
- How to provide voter assistance if requested.

9. Communication

The 2022 Quinte West Municipal Election Accessibility Plan will be made available on the municipal website at www.quintewest.ca as well as at City Hall, 7 Creswell Drive, Trenton ward and the Frankford Municipal Service Centre at 22 North Trent Street, Frankford ward. Alternative formats will be made available upon request.

9.1 Alternate Formats

Alternate formats are other ways of publishing information besides regular print. Some of these formats can be used by everyone while others are designed to address the specific needs of a user. The City of Quinte West and the person with a disability may agree upon the format to be used for the document or information requested. In the event the requested information is not generated by the City of Quinte West or is supplied by a third party, the City of Quinte West will make every effort to obtain the

information in an alternate format and/or will attempt to assist the Elector to ensure equal voting opportunities.

9.2 Candidates

Candidates must also have regard to the needs of electors with disabilities. Campaign offices, election materials and canvassing should all be reviewed in order to ensure that they are fully accessible. 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 All Candidates Meetings](#)
- [Count Us In: Removing Barriers to Political Participation - Quick Reference Guide to Accessible Constituency and Campaign Offices](#)

10. Service Disruptions

From time to time and/or for unforeseen circumstances beyond the City's control, temporary service disruptions may occur. In the event of a temporary accessible service disruption, the City of Quinte West Election Officials will commit to making reasonable efforts to ensure that services are reinstated as quickly as possible and that alternative services are provided where feasible.

In the instance of service disruptions, the City will provide reasonable notice in the event of a planned disruption in the facilities or services usually used by persons with disabilities.

In the event of disruptions to service or unforeseen circumstances that affect the accessibility of Voter Help Centres during the voting period, Notices of Disruption will be posted in real time:

- on the City's website and election website
- on the City's social media pages (ie: Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- posted at the site of disruption; and
- where applicable, a media advisory will be issued.

11. Reporting

Pursuant to Section 12.1 of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, within ninety (90) days after voting day, the City of Quinte West Clerk shall submit a report to Council about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

12. Feedback

The City welcomes feedback to identify areas where changes can be considered and ways in which the City can improve the delivery of accessible election services.

Feedback can be provided by any of the following methods from October 11th to November 6th:

- E-mail: clerk@quintewest.ca
- Written submissions to: The City of Quinte West
Clerks Department
PO Box 490
Trenton, ON K8V 5R6

The feedback process provides the City of Quinte West with an opportunity to take corrective measures to prevent similar recurrences, address training needs, enhance service delivery and provide alternative methods of providing election information and service.