
TO: GENERAL COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: POST-ELECTION REPORT - 2014 MUNICIPAL ELECTION ACCESSIBILITY INITIATIVES

PREPARED BY AND KEY CONTACT: W. SUTHERLAND, ELECTION CO-ORDINATOR, EXT. 5077

SUBMITTED BY: D. MCALPINE, CITY CLERK/DIRECTOR OF LEGISLATIVE AND COURT SERVICES

GENERAL MANAGER APPROVAL: P. ELLIOTT-SPENCER, MBA, CPA, CMA, GENERAL MANAGER OF COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE SERVICES

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER APPROVAL: C. LADD, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

RECOMMENDED MOTION

1. That the Staff Report entitled "Post-Election Report – 2014 Municipal Election Accessibility Initiatives" be received for information purposes.

PURPOSE & BACKGROUND

2. Section 12.1 of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, states that

"a Clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities and shall within 90 days after voting day, in a regular election, submit a report to Council about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities."
3. The City Clerk is responsible for conducting Municipal Elections in accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.
4. The purpose of this report is to describe the procedures and measures established by the City Clerk to ensure that persons with disabilities had the opportunity to participate fully in the 2014 Municipal Election.

ANALYSIS

5. The City of Barrie is committed to providing exceptional and accessible service for its customers. Goods and services will be provided in a manner that is based upon the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity to all its customers. The City's 2014 Municipal Election Plan highlighted a number of initiatives that were undertaken by the City to provide an election that respected the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities while maintaining the integrity of the election process.
6. An overview of the actions taken to identify as well as remove and prevent barriers, comments regarding the actions and considerations for the 2018 Municipal Election has been included as Appendix "A" to this Staff Report.

7. As in past elections, staff approached the City of Barrie's Accessibility Advisory Committee and the Accessibility Coordinator early in 2014 to receive input on measures that could be undertaken in 2014. The Committee provided positive feedback of measures used in 2010. A demonstration of the equipment was provided in the City Hall Rotunda as part of Accessibility Awareness week in June 2014.
8. In general, there was little public feedback regarding election accessibility initiatives. The majority of the comments received regarding accessibility initiatives were very positive.

ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

9. There are no environmental matters related to the recommendation to receive this report.

ALTERNATIVES

10. As this report is being presented for information purposes only, no alternatives are presented.

FINANCIAL

11. There are no direct financial implications associated with the recommendation to receive this report.

LINKAGE TO 2014-2018 COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN

12. The 2014-2018 Council's Strategic Priorities have not been finalized as of the time of writing of this report.

Appendix "A"

Identification of Barriers

The following actions were undertaken to identify barriers that impact electors and candidates with disabilities:

Action	Comments	Considerations for 2018
Attended a meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee to discuss and receive feedback on the proposed 2014 Municipal Elections Accessibility Plan.	Committee provided advice and noted that measures used in 2010 should be continued for the 2014 Municipal Election. A touchscreen unit demonstration was provided during Accessibility Awareness Week in June 2014	Continue process of consulting with the Accessibility Advisory Committee for 2018 Municipal Election, particularly related to potential new voting methods or vote tabulation methods.
Consulted with the Accessibility Coordinator to discuss 2014 Municipal Elections Accessibility Plan throughout various stages of the election planning and delivery	The Accessibility Coordinator provided information, expertise and assistance throughout various stages of the election planning and delivery.	Continue to utilize the knowledge and expertise of the Accessibility Coordinator to improve the 2018 Municipal Election.
Utilized an accessibility checklist that was created with input from the Accessibility Advisory Committee and used in previous elections when conducting site visits of each voting location (Appendix "B").	Checklist was very effective for identifying any challenges with potential locations and determining the final voting locations as well as any measures that would be required to mitigate any accessibility concerns.	Continue to use checklist for review of 2018 voting locations with any additional insight on criteria as determined by best practices and the Accessibility Advisory Committee, specifically related to additional specifications.
Assessed voting equipment to ensure it met the needs of the electorate.	Issued Request for Information regarding alternative voting and vote counting technology. Reviewed technology options with the Committee. The Committee supported the continued use of touch screen voting equipment, as it provides the same method of voting for all electors.	A review of available technology will be completed in 2016/2017 to determine methods to be utilized for the 2018 Municipal Election.
Reviewed past election practices to identify any risk to accessibility of candidates and electors and identified the impact of the risk and developed measures to minimize the risk.	Evaluation of previous election assisted in determination of potential voting locations for 2014 as well as additional accessibility measures.	Post-election review meeting has taken place with the development of initial notes for 2018 Municipal Election.

Removal and Prevention of Barriers

The following actions were undertaken to remove and prevent barriers that impact electors and candidates with disabilities:

Communications and Information

Action	Comments	Considerations for 2018
Offered communication initiatives and information for candidates and electors were available in alternate formats.	There were no requests for information in alternate formats.	Continue process for the 2018 Municipal Election.
Posted all information to municipality's website including links to the Candidates Guide to Accessible Elections, produced jointly by the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerk's and Treasurer's of Ontario as well as other related material.	Website was updated to provide easier access to voter and candidate information and forms. Efforts were undertaken to improve the layout of website content to improve readability.	Continue to enhance and improve information available on the City's website for the 2018 Municipal Election.
Provided candidates and staff with information relating to accessible customer service	Information was made available for candidates on the City's website related to accessible customer service including a variety of quick reference guides. In consultation with the Accessibility Coordinator, accessible customer service guideline booklets were provided to all election staff. Election staff were required to sign and complete a form to confirm his/her reading and understanding of the booklet.	Enhance and improve information available on the City's website for the 2018 Municipal Election.
Provided information to candidates regarding campaign expenses and particular rules affecting disabled candidates	The City of Barrie's Candidates Guide included details regarding any election expenses incurred as a result of a disability. In addition, copies of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing's Candidate Guide contained detailed information related to expenses. Both documents were provided to candidates.	Continue to utilize the candidate information kits to provide details concerning election expenses incurred as a result of a disability.
Communications available to facilitate notice of service disruption	Web, media and signage at locations was available if service was to be disrupted at a voting location or if a voting location had to be closed or moved at the last minute	Same process will be used in 2018

Voting Locations

Action	Comments	Considerations for 2018
<p>Conducted site visits of all new voting locations to ensure accessibility based on checklist requirements. Sites that were used in 2010 and again in 2014 were revisited to ensure that accessibility standards were still met (Attached as Appendix "B").</p>	<p>Greeters were hired to provide assistance at all 20 voting locations on alternate voting days and two greeters were hired for final voting day.</p>	<p>Review alternative locations in 2018 that offer a push button automatic door opener at the building entrance, in addition to all other accessibility features. Review checklist criteria for 2018 to ensure it meets current accessibility standards. The use of different technology or voting methods may impact the number of in person voting locations required as well as the number of advance voting opportunities required.</p>
<p>Temporary ramp installed at Oasis of Hope Church to ensure level access.</p>	<p>Roads Parks and Fleet provided a temporary ramp for the voter entrance of Oasis of Hope Church that provided level access into the voting location.</p>	<p>Continue to look for locations that are fully accessible in 2018 or work with City staff /voting location staff to ensure location is accessible or made accessible for voters.</p>
<p>Provided accessible voting equipment at each permanent voting location, on all voting days.</p>	<p>Audio ballots were provided on every machine, at every location. In addition, the size of the text on the ballots was increased to enhance readability.</p> <p>A sign language interpreter was on "stand by" on Voting Day to ensure availability for electors requiring assistance.</p>	<p>2018 equipment/technology will be selected to ensure that accessible features continue to be available at each location, on all voting days.</p>
<p>Provided a voting opportunity at individual buildings or complexes with 75 or more dwelling units to increase accessibility and voting opportunities.</p>	<p>Offering a voting opportunity within the buildings or complexes with 75 units or greater was very well received. Previously voting locations were providing at buildings with 100 dwelling units or greater. A number of individuals commented that they would not have voted otherwise.</p>	<p>Continue with this initiative in 2018. Staff will work with staff at buildings/complexes on a more comprehensive communication strategy to improve awareness of voting opportunities.</p>
<p>Provided appropriate signage at voting locations.</p>	<p>Mobile signs were rented to identify voting locations as well as voting dates and times. The signs were highly visible and very effective.</p>	<p>Utilize mobile signage in 2018 with signs at each location.</p> <p>Provide additional signage to buildings/complexes with 75 units or more, particularly if units are in more than one building.</p>

Action	Comments	Considerations for 2018
Permitted service animals and support persons in all voting locations.	Election staff were trained to ensure that service animals would be permitted. Confirmation received from each voting location regarding access for service animals.	Continue process for the 2018 Municipal Election.
Ensured designated or reserved parking for persons with disabilities at each voting location.	Confirmed accessible parking spaces were available as part of site checklist.	Continue process for 2018 Municipal Election.
Provided Barrie Transit/BACTS passes to attend voting location as part of voter notification information letter.	Posted information on buses and on some transit shelters regarding voting and promoted free transit as an alternative means to reach voting locations.	Continue process for 2018 Municipal Election.
Voting locations set up to allow for maximum accessibility.	Distance between voting machines, location of power cords, lighting, signage (internal), etc. all considered in the set up of the room, as feasible. Additional seating was provided, where feasible at voting locations.	Continue to consider the interior set up of voting room for maximum accessibility.
Election Supervisors provided with cell phones	Election Supervisors were each provided with a corporate issued cell phone so they could contact the Deputy City Clerk and Election Coordinator with any questions to ensure expedient customer service and minimize disruptions to voters.	Phones will be provided to Election Supervisors again in 2018, as the immediate contact between the voting location and election staff at City Hall, to ensure consistent messaging is provided to voters and minimize any disruptions.

Voting

Action	Comments	Considerations for 2018
<p>Provided accessible equipment at all voting locations (Advance Voting and Voting Day)</p>	<p>Touch screen equipment was utilized for every voter. The equipment provided a larger text size and the availability of an audio ballot on each machine, at every voting location, every voting day.</p>	<p>Ensure that technology utilized in 2018 provides accessible voting and for same voting method to be used by entire electorate. The use of different technology or voting methods may impact the number of in person voting locations required as well as the number of advance voting opportunities required.</p>
<p>Provided instructions on use of accessible voting equipment including notice of availability of the Accessible Customer Service Policy.</p>	<p>Signs posted at each voting machine. Video demonstration provided on the City's website and through Rogers Television. Information on all voting opportunities was included in insert in the newspaper (special pull out feature).</p>	<p>Continue to enhance communication regarding accessibility features for the 2018 Municipal Election.</p>
<p>Magnifying sheets available at voting locations</p>	<p>Magnifying sheets were available if an elector required one for viewing forms or the ballot on the touchscreen (beyond the enhanced font size already provided by the touchscreen). Magnifying sheets provide enhanced capability for those who are visually impaired to read and complete paperwork and vote more independently.</p>	<p>Continue to use magnifying sheets in 2018.</p>
<p>Scheduled extended advance voting opportunities including the Saturday of the Thanksgiving weekend</p>	<p>Voting was held over a six day period of time in addition to Voting Day itself.</p>	<p>Continue to offer multiple advance voting dates for the 2018 Municipal Election and review the feasibility/need for additional voting locations on Thanksgiving weekend.</p>
<p>Promoted advance voting opportunity for electors with disabilities</p>	<p>Notices for the entire voting period included a promotion to encourage voting early for all electors and information about accessible voting.</p>	<p>Continue to promote earlier voting for the 2018 Municipal Election.</p>
<p>Provided vote anywhere in the municipality at advance voting dates and on Voting Day</p>	<p>Promoted vote anywhere, on any voting day.</p>	<p>Continue to promote vote anywhere, on any voting day, if technology permits, for the 2018 Municipal Election.</p>

Action	Comments	Considerations for 2018
<p>Provided two voting opportunities on the premises of institution in which 20 or more beds were occupied by persons who are disabled, chronically ill or infirmed and retirement homes in which 50 or more beds were occupied</p>	<p>An advance voting opportunity was provided at each of the institutions and retirement homes defined in the column to the left, as well as on Voting Day itself.</p>	<p>Continue to offer an advance voting opportunity at each of the institutions/retirement homes defined in the legislation.</p> <p>Improve communication of alternative and Voting Day opportunities to electors throughout complexes, particularly those buildings with a mix of life lease, seniors apartments, institutions and retirement homes.</p>
<p>Reviewed additional facilities eligible for reduced hours voting</p>	<p>Provided a voting opportunity at individual buildings/complexes with 75 or more dwelling units to increase accessibility</p>	<p>Expand in 2018 if feasible, to smaller buildings.</p>
<p>Added tools to assist with ensuring accessibility as identified</p>	<p>Provided American Sign Language interpreters at a facility occupied by the hearing impaired.</p> <p>An American Sign Language interpreter was also on standby on final voting day and a staff member with knowledge of Amercian Sign Language was available for alternate/advance voting days.</p>	<p>Continue to offer this service for the 2018 Municipal Election.</p>

Staff Training

Action	Comments	Considerations for 2018
Staff training incorporated provisions to meet accessible customer service standards – including a section of the staff manual.	Manual included information on accessible customer service. Staff were required to read an Accessible Customer Service Handbook and sign an acknowledgement form in this regard. During training, election staff were trained on how to assist voters with any abilities.	Continue to enhance training and information available to election staff for the 2018 Municipal Election.
Encouraged election staff to monitor elector's concerns and needs to ensure they were met, i.e. if an individual with a walker was in a long line, staff observed, and if felt that the elector was having difficulties, offered a chair and ensured that their place was saved in the voting line-up or offered assistance to help (did not assume assistance was required)	Election staff attempted to address needs where feasible. Additional seating was limited at some locations.	Review alternative locations in 2018 that offer sufficient room for additional seating.
Election staff was trained to identify a service animal and followed the Municipality's Accessible Customer Service Policy	Details related to service animals were included as part of the Accessible Customer Service Handbook provided to staff. Staff were advised during training that service animals were permitted in voting locations.	Continue to include details related to service animals in training for the 2018 Municipal Election.
Checked the access doors frequently to offer assistance and watch for electors unable to easily enter the building	Greeters opened doors at locations without push button automatic door openers for every elector.	Review voting locations for the 2018 Municipal Election to determine if all locations could be fully accessible.

Appendix "B"

City of Barrie – Voting Location Accessibility Checklist

Name of Voting Location: _____

Address: _____

Inspection Date: _____

	Yes	No
Inside Building		
Is the parking lot well lit?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the voting location on a bus route?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the name and address of the building clearly visible from the street and sidewalk?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a pedestrian sidewalk nearby?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is accessible parking available?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the accessible parking clearly marked with the International symbol of Accessibility?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the parking space firm and level, in good condition?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are curb cuts provided at sidewalks, near parking and along the route to the primary entrance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the accessible parking large enough to meet the needs of an elector using a wheelchair lift?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the route to the entrance accessible?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
free of obstruction?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
well maintained?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
no stairs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
wheelchair ramp?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
wide enough for a wheelchair or scooter?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the building clearly identified by signage easy to read and understand?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Entrance to Building

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Does it have a self-opening door? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A power button? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A doorbell with signage? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Entrance area well kept - free of obstacles? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| An elevator if stairs are present? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Ramps if stairs are present? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Interior doors with lever handles? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Glass doors marked at eye level? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Inside Building

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Wide entrance into proposed unit space? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Floors - slip free and free of trip hazards? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Well lit? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Stairs involved? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |