



Township of Scugog Staff Report

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Report Number: CORP-2022-026

Prepared by: Becky Jamieson, Director of Corporate Services/Clerk

Department: Corporate Services

Report To: Council

Date: December 19, 2022

Reference: Strategic Plan Directions # 4: "Municipal Services"
Strategic Plan Directions # 6: "Community Engagement"
Municipal Elections Act, 1996

Report Title: **Accessibility Initiatives Undertaken for the 2022 Municipal Election**

Recommendations:

1. **That** Report CORP-2022-026, Accessibility Initiatives Undertaken for the 2022 Municipal Election, be received.
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1. Background:

Section 12.1 (1) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, as amended, provides that a Clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities.

Section 12.1 (2) further states that 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 regular election.

Section 12.1 (3) further states that 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.

The 2022 Municipal Election took place on October 24, 2022 with an advance voting period occurring from October 17, 2022 – October 23, 2022. A hybrid voting method of internet voting and in-person paper ballots using vote tabulators was used. An Election Debrief report on all aspects of the 2022 Municipal Election will be provided in early 2023.

Prior to the election, staff developed and implemented a number of initiatives to improve accessibility for the 2022 Municipal Election. These initiatives were detailed in the 2022 Accessible Election Plan (Attachment No. 1) which was posted on the Township's website, provided to all Candidates, Election staff, and made available to anyone upon request. The Township of Scugog's Accessibility Advisory Committee provided input into the Accessible Election Plan.

The accessibility initiatives undertaken for the 2022 Municipal Election Report required as per Section 12.1 (3) must be made available to the public by no later than Monday, January 23, 2023.

2. Discussion:

2.1 Overview

As per our 2022 Accessible Election Plan, the Township of Scugog was committed to making the 2022 Municipal Election accessible by working to accommodate the needs of its electors through effective procedures and processes.

The 2022 Municipal Election will be conducted in such a manner to ensure that:

- Have regard for the needs of electors, candidates and election officers with disabilities
- Ensure that voting places are accessible to persons with disabilities
- Prepare accessibility plans to identify, remove and prevent barriers that could affect electors and candidates with disabilities, and make the plan available to the public prior to voting day
- Publish a report about the identification, removal and prevention of election barriers that affect persons with disabilities within 90 days after Voting Day

The Township implemented various measures to ensure equality opportunity for all electors and candidates based on the following objectives:

- That all Voter Assistance Centre locations are accessible
- That persons with disabilities are able to independently cast their vote and verify their selection, and that assistance is available if desired
- That persons with disabilities have full and equal access to all information on where and when to vote and on eligible candidates
- That persons with disabilities can fully participate in the Municipal Election as an elector, candidate, election officer, or registered third-party advertiser

2.2 Identification of Barriers

- The Accessible Election Plan was reviewed with the Scugog Accessibility Advisory Committee (SAAC) and their input and endorsement of the plan was received.
- Reviewed various potential facilities for voting locations to ensure accessible ones were selected
- Offered a hybrid voting method of in person-paper ballots using vote tabulators and internet voting

2.3 Communications

- All election related information for candidates and electors was made available in alternate formats, upon request
- Created a communication plan that included advertisements promoting accessibility initiatives
- Posted all election information on the Township of Scugog website and created a dedicated Elections News feed
- Provided candidates with copies of the 2022 Accessible Election Plan and the AMCTO's "Candidate's Guide to Accessible Elections"
- Utilized different methods to promote the Election through social media, posters, and attendance at events

2.3 Voting Process and Actions

- Council authorized the use of a hybrid voting method for the 2022 Municipal Election which included traditional paper ballots cast in-person at an advanced voting location using vote tabulators or internet voting from anywhere, anytime.
- The Internet Voting option was available for eight (8) days straight that facilitated an opportunity for electors with disabilities to vote at their leisure in a place of their

comfort during the voting period. Additionally, persons who have assistive devices could use them to assist with casting a ballot privately and independently.

- Voter Assistance Centers were set up that provided a physical location for electors to seek assistance and support with internet voting from an Election Official if requested
- Voting Locations
- Service animals and supports persons were permitted in voting locations
- Provided voting assistance to electors who asked for help, in the voting locations
- Provided magnifying sheet at the voting location to assist the visually impaired for in person paper ballots
- Provided voting opportunity at the retirement and nursing homes as well as some seniors apartments
- Provided accessible transit or taxi to the voting location if requested
- Provided home visits to assist electors if requested

3. Financial Implications:

The majority of expenses associated with accessible election initiatives were absorbed within the overall election costs for our equipment and software, in addition to advertising and communications.

It is important to note that campaign expenses that are incurred by a candidate with a disability that are directly related to the disability and would not have been incurred but for the election to which the expenses relate are excluded from the permitted spending limit for the candidate.

4. Communication Considerations:

The 2022 Accessible Election Plan was posted on the website and made available to all candidates and election officials. As per the plan, all election documents, advertisements and communications were available in an alternate format upon request for those in need of accommodation.

The Accessibility Initiatives Undertaken for the 2022 Municipal Election Report will be posted to the Township of Scugog's website and promoted via the Township's media channels.

An all-encompassing election wrap-up report will come in Spring of 2023 and be posted to the website.

5. Conclusion:

The use of a hybrid voting method of internet voting and in-person paper ballots using vote tabulators provided an accessible 2022 Municipal Election in the Township of Scugog. Internet Voting is arguably one of the most accessible voting method because it allows a person to vote across a variety of devices such as smartphones, tablets, and computers and allows voters with the capability and convenience to vote from the comfort of their own home. Voting from home facilitates a voting process for persons with disabilities who may have mobility restrictions, visual impairment, and/or have a difficult time with transportation to access a physical voting location or voter assistance centre. Additionally, persons who have assistive devices can use them to assist with casting a ballot privately and independently. However, ensuring that we were able to offer electors an alternate to internet voting via in-person paper ballots just reinforces the Township's commitment to ensuring we were delivering an accessible election to our electors.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Becky Jamieson
Director of Corporate Services/Clerk

Reviewed By:

Kenneth Nix
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachments:

Attachment No. 1: Township of Scugog 2022 Municipal Election Accessible Plan

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Accessibility Initiatives Undertaken for the 2022 Municipal Election.docx
Attachments:	- 2022 Accessible Election Plan.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Dec 14, 2022

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:



Kenneth Nix