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| TO: | CHAIR AND MEMBERS CORPORATE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING ON JANUARY 27, 2015 |
| FROM: | CATHY SAUNDERS CITY CLERK |
| RE: | ACCESSIBILITY OF 2014 MUNICIPAL ELECTION |

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| RECOMMENDATION |
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That, on the recommendation of the City Clerk, the following report on the accessibility of the 2014 City of London Municipal Election **BE RECEIVED** for information.

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| PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER |
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None.

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| BACKGROUND |
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In December 2009, amendments to the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* introduced a requirement that the Clerk have regard for accessibility in conducting an election, and report to Council on the actions taken within 90 days after voting day. The Act specifically states the following:

*“Electors and candidates with disabilities
12.1(1) A clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities.*

*Report
(2) Within 90 days after voting day in a regular election, the clerk shall submit a report to council about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.”*

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an overview of the actions taken during the 2014 Municipal Election to promote accessibility for all electors and candidates.

Process Overview

Accessibility was identified early in the election planning process as a focus area for the 2014 Municipal Election. In early 2014, staff from the Elections Team together with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) developed a strategy to identify, remove and prevent barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities during the election process.

The Accessible Municipal Election Plan (attached as Appendix A) was developed in March 2014. This document identified barriers that could be experienced by people with disabilities during an election, and identified actions to address each barrier. The Plan also established measurables by which to evaluate the effectiveness of the actions.

As outlined in the attached document, four main focus areas for improving accessibility emerged through this process: (1) general accessibility improvements, such as developing procedures and providing accessibility training to election workers; (2) outreach and information to promote the accessibility of the election to people with disabilities, including the creation of an accessibility section on the election web page; (3) ensuring the accessibility of voting locations through conducting an accessibility audit of all potential sites; and, (4) providing a range of voting mechanisms that allow for independent voting whenever possible.

Outcomes

As indicated through the measurables in the attached Accessible Municipal Election Plan, the accessibility initiatives incorporated into the election process were, in general, successful. A total of 1,249 election workers were given accessibility training and 133 election candidates were provided with material on running an accessible campaign. There were 1,670 hits to the elections web page. Most voting locations were deemed accessible according to the accessibility audit, and very few complaints were received regarding accessibility issues. Additionally, for the first time, the City offered an accessible ballot marking device at each advance poll which allowed independent voting through a tactile key pad, through “sip and puff” or with the use of paddles.

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| CONCLUSIONS |
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Civic Administration remains committed to making municipal elections accessible to all citizens of the City of London, including electors and candidates. The numerous accessibility features incorporated into the 2014 Municipal Election marked a positive step toward inclusion of people with disabilities in the elections process and provided a positive learning experience to identify other considerations that could be addressed during future elections.

Staff would like to acknowledge the efforts of Council’s Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC), who worked in collaboration with staff on the election process. This initiatives addressed in this report would not have been as successful without the efforts of the AAC.

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| PREPARED BY: | RECOMMENDED BY: |
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| SARAH CORMAN MANAGER, LICENSING AND ELECTIONS | CATHY SAUNDERS CITY CLERK |

- c. Accessibility Advisory Committee

APPENDIX A

City of London Accessible Election Plan 2014

1.0 Mandate

Voting is a fundamental right of all citizens in a democracy. The City of London is committed to making municipal elections accessible to all citizens of the City of London – including voters, candidates, and employees and volunteers who participate in the election administration.

The purpose of the City of London Accessible Election Plan 2014 is to identify, remove and prevent barriers affecting electors and candidates with disabilities during the 2014 City of London municipal election.

2.0 Process

The City of London Accessible Election Plan 2014 was developed by members of the Election Team in consultation with the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

The City Clerk will report to Council within 90 days following the election on the outcomes and measurables of the Accessible Election Plan 2014. Following the election the City Clerk will also review the outcomes with the Accessibility Advisory Committee to identify potential areas of improvement and any additional barriers experienced during the election that can be addressed in future election plans.

3.0 Action Plan

| 3.1 General Barriers | | |
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| Barrier | Action(s) Taken | Measurables |
| Lack of consistent understanding of the needs of people with disabilities during an election (election staff) | Provide Accessible Customer Service training to all employees and election day workers who participate in the election and deal with members of the public. | 1,249 # of individuals who receive training |
| Lack of consistent understanding of the needs of people with disabilities during an election (candidates) | Provide information to each candidate about running an accessible campaign at the time of their filing nomination papers, and during the candidates' information session. Exploring internet-based information segments. | 133 # of candidates who receive materials; 0 # of inquiries from candidates regarding campaign accessibility |

| 3.2 Outreach and Information | | |
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| Barrier | Action(s) Taken | Measurables |
| People with disabilities may not be aware of accessibility features available during an election | Include an accessibility section on the City's election webpage, providing information on accommodations available for people with disabilities. Exploring internet-based information segments. | 1670 # of website hits; |
| | Host a media promotion event (September 2014) on accessible voting technology and generally on election accessibility. | 5 TV/10 Radio interviews Media coverage |
| | Present information about election accessibility to disability-focused organizations. | 4 # of presentations |
| | Make accommodation request form available through website. | 0 # of accommodation requests received |
| Candidates may not be aware of accessibility accommodations available for people with disabilities during an election | Provide information to candidates regarding accommodations available for people with disabilities during the election. | 100 % of candidates provided with information about accommodation |
| All candidates meetings are not always accessible for people or candidates with disabilities | Provide information document on running an accessible all candidates meeting to organizations hosting such meetings. | 142 # of documents provided |

| 3.3 Voting Locations | | |
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| Barrier | Action(s) Taken | Measurables |
| Inaccessible voting location for people who do not drive or do not have access to a vehicle | Review all potential voting locations with consideration for public transit access; provide information to voters on public transit access. | 177 # of voting locations located directly on or within 500m of a public transit route; 1 > 500 m but less than 1000m. |
| Inaccessible voting location for people with mobility disabilities | Review all potential voting locations for accessibility including 2 accessible parking spots near the closest entrance to the voting room. | 153 # of voting locations that meet accessibility requirements (10 with only 1 spot and 10 with none marked or no parking) |
| Voting location difficult to navigate for people with physical disabilities | All voting locations to be inspected prior to Election Day to ensure accessible to all voters. If there was difficulty entering a building plans were established to build ramps. | 0 # voting locations requiring ramps to be built |
| Voting location difficult to navigate for people who are blind or have low vision | Use large-print signage at voting locations; train election workers to communicate with people who are blind or have low vision. | 56 / 1528 Signs; 3827 Voting Arrows # of training sessions and # of signs utilized |
| Voting location difficult to navigate for people who are deaf / hearing loss | Create clear written and pictorial way finding signage for each voting location. | 680 Signs, 3827 Voting Arrows # of signs produced |
| Lack of awareness of accessibility features at voting locations | Provide details of accessibility features of each voting location on the Barrier Free Election section of the City's website. | 178 # of locations listed on website with accessible features |

| 3.4 Voting | | |
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| Barrier | Action(s) Taken | Measurables |
| Voting process is inaccessible for people with certain types of disabilities | Provide an accessible ballot marking device at all advanced polls for independent voting via “sip-and-puff”, the use of paddles, or a tactile device. | 11 # of uses or votes cast |
| | Provide voters with the option to vote by mail. | 107 # of vote by mail ballots |
| | Voters to be able to Proxy their vote to another elector if they were away Election Day or unable to vote at an Advance Vote or at their polling station. | 47 certified/used # of proxy forms distributed and # certified/used |
| | Provide magnifiers at all poll locations. | 100 % of polling stations with magnifier |
| | Provide pen and paper at all voting locations for communications. | 100 % of polling stations with pen and paper |
| | DROs to be trained to assist voters with voting process on request when required. | 100 % of DROs trained |
| | Provide/ensure tables for voting screens are of a minimum height to allow voters with wheelchairs the ability and comfort to mark their ballot. | 1 # of complaints regarding table height |
| Voting process inaccessible for people who cannot read English | Provide pictorial instructions on voting process at all voting locations. | 100 % of voting locations with pictorial instruction |
| ID and/or signature requirement can be a barrier | Enable voters to swear an oath if they are unable to provide ID and/or documentation with a signature. | 100 % of polls providing this service |