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# ACCESSIBLE ELECTION REPORT 2022

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City of London  
2022 Municipal Election

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January 12, 2023

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VOTES  
London

## **ACCESSIBLE ELECTION REPORT 2022**

### **Introduction and Legislative Requirements**

The City Clerk is responsible for the proper legislative and administrative conduct of municipal elections in the City of London. In accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, the City Clerk is authorized to establish procedures and provide appropriate measures to identify, remove and prevent barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities to ensure they have the opportunity to participate fully in municipal elections. Accordingly, municipal elections are conducted in such a manner to ensure that:

- Electors and candidates with disabilities have full and equal access to all election information and services;
- Persons with disabilities have full access to voting places; and
- Persons with disabilities are able to independently and privately mark their ballot and have access to alternative methods of voting

This report describes the legislative requirements under which municipal elections are required to operate in Ontario, provides an overview of the City of London Election Accessibility Plan, and highlights how barriers were identified, removed and prevented in the conduct of the 2022 City of London election.

The City Clerk's Accessible Election Plan was posted on the City's website on May 26, 2022 in accordance with section 12 of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*. Following the election, the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* requires the City Clerk to provide a public report concerning the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect voters and candidates with disabilities.

### **Plan Development and Review**

The City of London's Accessible Election Plan 2022 ("the Plan") was developed in early 2022 and guides the provision of election related services to persons with disabilities. This plan was developed by members of the City Clerk's Elections Team, in consultation with the City's Accessibility and Inclusion Advisor. Leading up to the election, the proposed Plan was submitted to the Accessibility Community Advisory Committee (ACCAC) for review and comment.

The Accessible Election Plan was designed to ensure that municipal election practices and procedures are consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity and strengthens the City's policies, strategic plan and commitment to respond to the needs of persons with disabilities.

As outlined in the Accessible Election Plan, four main focus areas for improving accessibility: (1) outreach and information to communicate the accessibility of the election to voters and candidates with disabilities; (2) general accessibility improvements, such as developing procedures and providing accessibility training to election workers; (3)

ensuring the accessibility of voting places through conducting an accessibility audit of all potential sites; and, (4) providing a range of voting mechanisms that allow for independent voting whenever possible.

## **Process Overview**

Accessibility was identified early in the election planning process as a priority for the 2022 Municipal Election. Beginning in 2021, staff from the Elections Team developed strategies and initiatives to identify and remove barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities during the election process. The Plan established goals and strategies to evaluate the effectiveness of each initiative.

## **Outcomes and Improvements**

As indicated through the attached update to the Accessible Election Plan (Appendix 'A'), there were numerous accessibility initiatives undertaken by the Elections Office leading up and into the 2022 election. In general, the outcomes of these initiatives were successful and positive.

Identified in the post-2018 Election Accessibility Report were improvements to the communication regarding and signage of alternate accessible entrances to voting places as well as improvements to the selection of voting places to account for and identify possible barriers for 2022. Both of these improvements were implemented successfully during the 2022 Municipal Election.

A total of 1,465 election workers were given accessibility training and 119 candidates were provided with accessible campaign guidelines and materials. All voting places were deemed accessible according to the accessibility audit and checklist developed by the Elections Office and reviewed by the Accessibility Community Advisory Committee (ACCAC). For the first time, the Elections Office offered American Sign Language (ASL) services during the Advance Vote period. Additionally, for the second time, the City offered ballot instructions and candidate lists in braille and large print at each advance and voting day voting place.

## **Feedback**

Civic Administration remains committed to making municipal elections accessible to all electors and candidates in the City of London. The numerous accessibility features incorporated into the 2022 Municipal Election marked a positive step forward in improving the accessibility of elections process and provided a learning experience to identify other considerations that could be addressed during future elections.

The Elections Office would like to acknowledge the efforts of Council's Accessibility Community Advisory Committee (ACCAC), the Elections Communications Specialist as well as the City's Accessibility and Inclusion Advisor who assisted in the production and review of accessibility procedures, videos, and outcomes.

## Appendix 'A' – 2022 Accessible Election Plan Update and Outcomes

1. Elections Communication and Information
2. Voting Places
3. Voting Methods
4. Recruitment and Selection of Election Workers
5. Assistance for Candidates

### **Elections Communication and Information**

#### **Provide an informative and accessible election website**

- Provide election information is available in clear, simple language.
- Continuously update election information posted on the City's website to reflect the most recent information, and temporary disruptions.

London.ca/elections was continuously updated to reflect any new updates.

- Enhance the City's "Where Do I Vote?" web application to provide information about voting options, voting places and accessible transportation options

The "Where Do I Vote" web application was able to provide information to voters by simply providing their street address. Advance voting options were also provided on the same search.

- Establish and continuously update a dedicated accessibility section on the election's website that provides information on voting methods, accessible voting tools, and accessibility feedback.

An accessibility request form was available on the website for any voters that require additional accommodations. Through this form we were able to provide voters with At Home Voting visits, in addition to assisting them apply for vote by mail.

#### **Provide election information in alternative formats and through multiple channels**

- Present information about election accessibility to stakeholder and community organizations.

Accessibility documents integral to the Election process were presented to and reviewed by ACCAC.

- Produce an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreted and closed-captioned "How to Vote" video and accessible pamphlet. Provide easy access QR code to video at the voting place.

A four (4) page "Voters' Requiring Assistance" packet was created and provided to all Registration Officers to put on their desk for display. In this package, QR codes for all 3 ASL transcripts and videos was provided, Advance Voting Places were listed, a list of

acceptable voter identification in addition to information on accessible voting, the voters list and who can vote were also listed.

- Produce a city-wide mail out that outlines key election information, including accessible options on Advance and Voting Day and accessible transportation information.

Mailed a Voter Notification Card to all registered voters on the list in September.

- Provide election information in braille at voting places on Advance Vote and Voting Day.

All Registration Officers and Poll Supervisors were provided with a “How to Vote” braille book consisting of headings labelled ‘Marking the Ballot’, ‘Transporting the Ballot’, ‘Making your ballot count’, ‘Oath or Affirmation of Qualification’, ‘Oral Oath of Friend of Elector’, ‘Oral Oath of Interpreter’, and ‘Statutory Provisions Regulating Voting Procedures’.

## **Voting Places**

### **Ensure Voting Places are accessible to all voters**

- Review and update Voting Place Accessibility Checklist 2022.

The Voting Place Accessibility Checklist was updated and reviewed for 2022. All voting places booked were inspected using this accessibility checklist.

- Review all potential voting places with consideration for public transit access; provide information to voters on public transit access.

Upon booking, all voting places for the 2022 Municipal Elections were easily accessible by public transit. All Public Transit routes were within walking distance of approximately 5-7 minutes.

- Clearly identify two (2) accessible parking spots near the closest entrance to the voting place(s) during voting place review.

All voting places were provided with a minimum of 2 accessible parking signs closest to the entrance of the building. If they had under 2 accessible spots at the voting place, dedicated spots and signage were created by the Elections Office for use on Voting Day.

- In the event of disruptions to service or unforeseen circumstances that affect the accessibility of voting places during the Advance Vote or on Voting Day, notices of disruption will be posted as soon as possible:
  - on the City's website;
  - on the City's social media;
  - at the site of the disruption; and
  - when applicable, a media advisory will be issued.

No unforeseen circumstances that affected accessibility of voting places on Advance Vote and/or Voting Day.

### **Ensure all Voting Place access routes and entrances are clearly identified**

- Ensure voters directed to the accessible voting entrance by prominent signage.

Signage provided if alternate accessible entrance required. If the facility required extra direction in terms of accessibility, an additional election worker was stationed at the voting place from open until close of voting.

- Use large-print signage at voting places for election information.

12 interior directional signage was provided, in addition to 10 bright "Vote" exterior directional signs were provided to provide direction outside the voting place.

### **Provide a contact centre to deal with accessibility issues, concerns or complaints on Advance Vote and Voting Day**

- Establish easy access website link to an accessibility feedback form so an elector who encounters an accessibility issue can contact Election or Accessibility staff before Advance Vote and Voting Day.
- Provide a separate accessibility information phone line for Advance Vote and Voting Day.

On the City Website [London.ca/elections](http://London.ca/elections), there was a link for an Accessibility Request Form which asked:

- what does your request relate to?;
- how can we help?; and
- first name, last name and email request.

All of these Accessibility Requests were appropriately responded and attended to.

### **Provide accessible pandemic-related health and safety precautions**

- Utilize high-visibility physical distancing markers, if required.
- Use high-visibility health and safety pictorial info-graphics at each voting place, if required.

At all voting places on Advance Vote and on Voting Day, pandemic related health and safety precautions were utilized. All Poll Supervisors were provided with All Purpose Disinfectant wipes, a box of masks, gloves and sanitizer. All election workers were provided with plexi-screens and access to safety glasses. All these supplies were to be used by election workers and voters, as they felt appropriate. Election workers stationed at voting places during Advance Vote were provided with masks that contained a clear window to assist with reading facial expressions and lips.

## **Voting Methods**

### **Provide accessible voting opportunities and methods on Advance Vote and Voting Day**

- Provide voters with the option to vote by mail or vote by proxy.

**Vote by Mail:** September 1-30<sup>th</sup> Application Period. Vote by Mail Ballots could be mailed to City Hall, picked up by an election worker, or could be submitted into one of our secure drop boxes at four conveniently located drop boxes across the City.

**Vote by Proxy:** Forms available online and printed and placed in the Elections Office. Voting Proxy forms could be filled out any time prior to the end of voting hours on October 24<sup>th</sup>.

- Provide voters with the opportunity to request a transfer of their voting place before Advance Vote or Voting Day, if the voting place did not meet their accessibility needs.

If a voter was not able to visit a voting place due to accessibility needs on Voting Day, **Transfer Certificates** were issued to transfer a voter to a voting place that better accommodated their voting requirements.

- Ensure legibility of ballots through use of accessible font styles and sizes, and colours.
- Provide braille and large print candidate lists and vote instructions at each voting place.

Braille How to Vote Instructions and Candidate Lists were provided to all Registration Officers and Poll Supervisors at each voting place.

All Registration Officers were provided with Braille Voting Instructions and a Candidate List

- Provide an accessible ballot-marking device (ABMD) at all Advance Vote for independent voting via “sip-and-puff”, paddles, or a tactile device.

An accessible ballot-marking device (ABMD) was provided at all 8 Advance Voting Places.

- Provide magnifiers at all voting places.
- Provide on-site ASL interpretation services for the duration of Advance Vote at City Hall.

### **Provide assistance to voters, as requested**

- Upon request, provide voters with the opportunity to vote from anywhere at the voting place (including curbside) with assistance from a Deputy Returning Officer.

Curbside Voting was available for all voters at all voting places on Voting Day.

- Upon request, assist the elector with voting or reading of ballot.

American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreters were available three days of the Advance Vote period at City Hall.

Poll Supervisors were provided with an Oath prior to arriving at their voting place in the event a voter required their ballot to be read or filled on their behalf.

- Enable voters to swear an oath if they are unable to provide the required identification and/or documentation with a signature.

All Registration Officers, Poll Supervisors and Deputy Returning Officers were provided with a document of Oaths (in large print and braille).

### **Provide instructions on the use of accessible voting equipment**

- Produce videos that outline the voting process and the accessible voting technologies in use for the election. Videos will include accessible elements including ASL interpretation and captioning. Post the videos on the City's website.

Three videos with ASL interpretation, a transcript and captioning were produced and posted to the website in August of 2022. A URL link of these videos were provided to all Registration Officers at all voting places for Advance Voting and Voting Day.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OWT65SgBLao>

"Making our Municipal Elections Accessible"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vf76zsB9dbM>

"Plan to Vote- What you need to vote in a Municipal Election"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XKbRZewE6qk>

"The Voting Process"

- Provide pictorial instructions on voting processes at all voting places.

"How to Vote" booklets with an illustration on how to vote were provided to all Deputy Returning Officers for Advance Vote and Voting Day.

- Host a promotion event (September 2022) on voting technology, including accessible voting equipment and processes.
- Provide recordings for the ABMD audio files using a human's voice.

Accessible Voting Equipment was demonstrated during a meeting of ACCAC in September of 2022.

All Candidates names for use on the Accessible Tabulators (AMBD) on Voting Day were recorded using a human's voice.

### **Recruitment and Staffing**

**Provide accessibility training to all Voting Day workers who participate in the election.**

- Develop an Accessible Election Procedure providing direction on how the City of London will address the needs of persons with disabilities during the election and distribute the manual during training.

Manuals for all election positions contained a set of procedures outlining how workers should assist voters who require assistance. It guided workers through the processes for interpreters and 'friend of electors', if a voter is unable to enter the voting place and the use of assistive devices. In addition, workers were provided other important points to remember when interacting with people with disabilities.

Develop accessibility training and reference materials for all elections staff, including:

- how to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities;
- how to interact with persons who use assistive devices or require the assistance of a service animal or support person;
- how to use voting equipment and assistive devices to deliver election services;
- what to do if a person is having difficulty accessing election information or services.

Workers were required to watch a closed-captioned accessibility video for their training that was narrated by the City's Accessibility and Inclusion Advisor. The video covered how to interact and communicate with persons or various abilities and with service animals.

**Ensure the recruitment process for staff is accessible**

- Provide accommodations and special services for recruitment process, upon request.

The recruitment and employment of staff was managed to ensure people with all abilities could apply and work Voting Day. The Elections Office provided Londoners many accessible opportunities to apply, including an online application and a paper application. On August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022 the Municipal Elections team hosted four Job Fair events around the City where applicants could be interviewed and hired on the spot.

**Ensure the worker's manual and/or other relevant materials are available in an accessible format, upon request.**

Election worker manuals were reviewed and edited by the appropriate individual to guarantee they met accessibility reading standards and provided accurate information. Alternative formats of worker information were available upon request, as needed.

- Provide applicants an opportunity to proactively request an accessibility related workplace accommodation during the application process.

During the interview process, the Elections Office matched workers to voting places that were the most convenient for them, based on their preference.

### **Assistance to Candidates**

#### **Provide candidates with information on how to make their campaign accessible to the public**

- Provide candidates with references and links to provincial publications at the time of nomination, including Accessible Campaign Information and Communication.

Candidates received a Provincial Accessibility Guide, “Count Us In: Removing Barriers to Political Participation – Accessible Campaign Information and Communication,” in their Nomination Package that focused on effective campaign communication.

- Topics covered include accessible communication, accessible all candidate’s meetings, and accessible customer service.

Candidates were provided a City of London Accessibility guide, “Guidelines for Running an Accessible Campaign”, in addition to a recorded presentation regarding “How to Run an Accessible Campaign”, provided by the City’s dedicated Accessibility and Inclusion Advisor. It supplemented the Ontario guide by detailing information about seven frequently asked accessibility-related questions.

- Provide candidates with access to information in alternative and accessible formats

Candidates were encouraged to request additional support or assistance from the Elections team via email, phone or by visiting the Elections Office.

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- Provide a Candidate Information Session in-person and electronically. Provide a recording of the information session on the City’s website.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, a virtual Candidate Information Session was held on February 10, 2022. Attendees of this three-hour session were provided information about changes to the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, the role of Council, running an

accessible campaign and nominations and eligibility. The session was recorded and posted on the City of London website. To easily access key information, the session is separated in five videos, providing viewers the option of closed captioning.

- Ensure the candidate guide and/or other relevant publications are available in an accessible format, upon request.

Candidates were provided a Candidate package that included the '2022 Candidates' Guide – Ontario municipal council and school board elections. A copy of the guide is available on the City of London webpage and viewers could have the document read aloud and enlarge the font.

- Provide the City of London Voters' List in multiple formats, upon request.

At the time of nomination, Candidates requested a paper or electronic copy of the Voters' List. All candidates received the Voters' List electronically and a paper copy, if requested.

- Provide accommodations and special information services upon request.
- Provide candidates the opportunity to record their name for the ABMD device on a dedicated phone line established by the Elections Office.

Candidates were provided the opportunity to record the name listed on the ballot for the ABMD device to ensure proper and clear pronunciation.