

2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan



Accessibility Plan for the 2022 Election

Introduction

Haldimand County is committed to making the Municipal Election accessible for voters, candidates and election workers. In accordance with section 12.1 of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* Haldimand County Accessible Election Plan 2022 ensures electors with a disability are provided with the opportunity to vote as independently as possible in the Haldimand County Municipal Election.

This plan was developed by members of the Clerk's Elections Team, in consultation with the Accessibility Advisory Committee and the Customer Experience and Communications Supervisor.

The focus of the Accessible Election Plan 2022 is to:

- a) Ensure that electoral services are accessible to all voters, candidates and election workers
- b) Identify and eliminate barriers for persons with disabilities; and
- c) Create a positive and inclusive voting experience.

Definitions

In support of compliance with the Act, staff reviewed the Accessibility for Ontarians' with Disabilities Act, 2005 S.O. 2004 c. 11 (AODA) and noted with attention the key definitions of "barrier" and "disabilities" as follows:

"Barrier" means , anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including any physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an informational or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or practice.

"Disability" means,

- 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 co-ordination, 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 a 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*.

Key Areas of Focus in the Elections Process

The following were noted as key aspects of the election where consideration was given to identify, remove and prevent barriers:

1. Elections Communication and Information
2. Voting Places
3. Voting Methods
4. Recruitment and Selection of Workers

Elections Communication and Information

- Provide election information in alternative formats upon request and through multiple channels
- Provide an informative and accessible election website
- Timely and relevant information on the election, including introduction of internet voting, to be delivered through a series of advertisements and social media platforms.
- Solicit feedback by providing a “Customer Service Feedback Form” through the County’s website
- Election employees are provided with training on how to interact and communicate with persons having various types of disabilities and with persons who use an assistive device or service animal.
- Provide resources to candidates and third party advertisers regarding measures to be considered to ensure equal opportunity of access to campaign information.
- Ensure that note pads and pens are available at all voting locations to assist in communicating with electors who are deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing.
- Publicize the following communication channels so that an elector with election accessibility concerns can readily contact the Municipal Clerk’s Division Staff: Phone: 905-318-5932 or Email: election@haldimandcounty.on.ca
- In the event of disruptions to service or unforeseen circumstances that affect the accessibility of voting locations during the advance vote or on Election Day, notices of disruption, including information regarding the nature of service, the reason, the expected length of disruption, and alternatives, will be posted in real time:
 - On the County’s website and social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter)
 - At the site of the disruption
 - At Haldimand County Administration Building
 - Where applicable, a media advisory will be issued.

Voting Places

- Review and update Voting Place Accessibility Check list
- Conduct site visits of all voting locations to ensure compliance with the Accessibility Check list
- Provide a sufficient number of voting locations throughout the County
- All voting locations are “vote anywhere” giving electors the choice of which location they attend
- Conduct routine checks of the facility throughout voting day to ensure accessibility
- Provide appropriate signage at voting locations
- Ensure a minimum of two designated or reserved parking spaces at each voting location for persons with disabilities
- Provide magnifying sheets at all voting locations.
- Hire additional election staff assigned as door and elevator operators to provide assistance where needed
- Any person with a disability accompanied by a support person or service animal may enter any voting location with his or her support person or service animal including the voting screen area

Voting Methods

- Provide “Vote Anywhere” in the County on all Advance Voting Days and Election Day
- Internet voting approved for 2022 Election
- Provide voters the option vote by proxy
- Review ballot design to increase legibility through a use of appropriate fonts, sizes and colours where possible
- Train election staff to assist voters with the voting process when requested
- Provide magnifiers, pens and paper at all voting locations

- Establish voting places at the following facilities in order to allow eligible residents of the facility the opportunity to vote:
 - a) an institution in which 20 or more beds are occupied by persons who are disabled, chronically ill or infirmed;
 - b) a retirement home in which 50 or more beds are occupied.

In accordance with the requirements of the Act, on-site voting will be provided for the residents of:

- a) Anson Place
- b) Edgewater Gardens
- c) Grandview Lodge
- d) Leisure Living Retirement Home
- e) Parkview Meadows

Recruitment and Training of Election Workers

- Election Staff training sessions incorporate provisions to meet the Accessible Customer Service Standards and reference material to be provided
- Ensure the manuals and/or other relevant materials are available in an accessible format, upon request

Post Election Report

Following the election, the Clerk shall prepare a report concerning the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect voters, candidates and election workers with disabilities. This report will include feedback from Haldimand County's Accessibility Advisory Committee and seek to identify areas of improvement and determine if the initiatives can be improved in subsequent elections.

Recommendations, suggestions or feedback, can be forwarded to the Election Team at election@haldimandcounty.on.ca, or by calling the Clerks office at 905-318-5932