



VAUGHAN
VOTES

October 22, 2018

City of Vaughan

2018 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan



MISSION STATEMENT

To provide all candidates and voters with equal opportunity and to ensure a positive involvement in the electoral process.

GOAL

To establish objectives and actions to ensure the needs of voters and candidates with disabilities have been addressed.

References

Corporate Policy

The Corporation of the City of Vaughan (hereinafter referred to as the City) is committed to eliminating barriers and improving accessibility for persons with disabilities to afford equal opportunities and the provision of integrated programs and services where possible, in a manner that respects dignity and independence.

Municipal Elections Act, 1996

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

12 (2) 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 a regular election. 2016, c. 15, s. 11.

12 (3) 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. 2016, c. 15, s. 11.

41 (3) The clerk shall make such changes to some or all of the ballots as he or she considers necessary or desirable to allow electors with visual impairments to vote without the assistance referred to in paragraph 4 of subsection 52 (1). 1996, c. 32, Sched., s. 41 (3); 2001, c. 32, s. 30 (1).

45 (2) In establishing the locations of voting places, the clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities.

Objectives

1. Review – Identification of Barriers:

Review election process to establish actions that provide accountability and ensure accessibility initiatives are implemented.

Consultation to take place with individuals and groups knowledgeable in providing services to persons with disabilities to ensure goals and actions are relevant and effective.

Actions	
1.	Consult the City's Accessibility and Diversity Coordinator to provide comments and recommendations on methods to meet accessibility needs.
2.	Provide voting information to the City's Accessibility Advisory Committee and request that the information be shared with all user group contacts.

2. Communications and Information – Removal of Barriers:

Ensure communication initiatives and information for candidates and voters are available in alternate formats.

Actions	
1.	Post all information to City's election website and allow users to request documents and forms in alternative formats. Provide results and past election information on election website throughout 2018 election.
2.	Provide links and pamphlets to candidates relating to accessible Information, including the Candidate's Guide to Accessible Elections, produced jointly by the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerk's and Treasurer's of Ontario (AMCTO) and the Province of Ontario, the provincial accessibility website and the City of Vaughan's election accessibility website. Permit access to information in variable formats.
3.	Establish a web page dedicated to receiving feedback on accessibility initiatives.
4.	Provide all documentation and forms in large print to assist visually impaired persons upon request.
5.	Approach assistive groups to assist with broadcasting election information to members, including the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB), Canadian Hearing Society, and Community Living.
6.	Provide candidates and staff with information relating to accessible customer service and integrated accessibility standard regulation training.

7.	Provide candidates with supplementary information to ensure a positive campaign for both candidates and electors. This will include providing AMCTO's Candidate's Guide to Accessible Elections to candidates through the Candidate Access Portal, and posted on the City's election website.
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3. Voting Locations:

Ensure all voting locations (facilities) are physically accessible.

Actions	
1.	Create an accessibility checklist for the Office of the City Clerk's staff to use when conducting site visits of each voting location.
2.	Conduct site visits of all potential voting locations to ensure full accessibility. Parking lots and paths to be considered as part of the voting location.
3.	The City's Accessibility and Diversity Coordinator will assist elections staff in auditing voting locations to ensure they are accessible.
4.	In 2014, with the assistance of a member of the Vaughan Accessibility Advisory Committee, a mock voting location was set up to determine maximum accessibility (i.e. distance between voting booths, height of tables, etc.). This information was incorporated into the training of election officials for all voting locations. The same distance and route was confirmed for use in 2018.
5.	Address accessibility concerns with the York Region District School Board (YRDSB) and the York Catholic District School Board (YCDSB)
6.	Provide appropriate signage at voting locations to ensure access areas are clearly identified.
7.	Service animals and support persons to be permitted in all voting locations and training provided to election officials to support these needs. Support persons will be able to take an oral oath of secrecy prior to assisting an individual in the voting process.

8.	Set up a process to facilitate notification of any last-minute voting location changes, should an emergency occur using the City's website and social media channels.
9.	Ensure designated or reserved parking for persons with disabilities at each voting location, which are clearly marked with the accessibility symbol.

4. Voting:

Ensure equal opportunity for all voters to vote as independently as possible.

Actions	
1.	Provide fully accessible voting equipment at City Hall during the entire Advance Vote period.
2.	Provide instructions on use of accessible voting equipment to voters online and at the voting location.
3.	Promote advance voting opportunity for voters with disabilities.
4.	Provide magnification screens to enable voting for visually impaired voters.
5.	In accordance with Section 45 (7) of the <i>Municipal Elections Act, 1996</i> , provide voting opportunities on the premises of: “2) an institution in which 20 or more beds are occupied by persons who are disabled, chronically ill or infirmed; 3) a retirement home in which 50 or more beds are occupied.”
6.	Review additional facilities eligible for reduced hours voting.
7.	Provide tools to assist with ensuring accessibility as identified.
8.	Provide curbside voting at all voting locations, if requested. Voters will be advised of option for curbside voting when asking about accessibility. If unable to access the established voting area due to a disability, the Deputy Returning Officer would attend to the voter anywhere within the voting place, including the parking lot.

9.	Facilitate assisted voting by friends, companions, support persons or election officials (companions).
10.	Provide voters with the ability to vote by proxy.

5. Staff Training:

Ensure all Election Officials receive election training which shall incorporate accessible customer service and integrated accessibility standards regulation training in an effort to provide a positive voting experience.

Actions	
1.	Staff will receive all required Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) training.
2.	Reference materials will be provided including Accessible Customer Service Etiquette and Integrated Accessibility Standards handbooks and a link to Accessibility of Ontario Directorate website.

Training includes:

- a) A requirement to monitor voters' concerns and to ensure that their needs are met, i.e. if an individual with a walker is in a long line, staff are to observe, and if it is felt that the elector is having difficulties, offer a chair and ensure that their place is saved in the voting line;
- b) A requirement to ensure that voters are aware that magnifiers are available, if required, throughout the day by routinely advising line-ups that may occur;
- c) Direction for election officials to observe voters during discussions with them, and if it appears that the voter is having difficulty understanding, ensuring that the voter is able to clearly see, hear, and understand the speaker;
- d) Encouraging election officials to approach a voter if it appears that the voter requires assistance to get around in the voting location. Offer assistance to help, do not assume an individual needs help;

- e) Ensuring that voters are aware of where the accessible facilities are (i.e. washrooms) and provide greeters to assist and/or direct them should the voter request it;
- f) Election officials will be trained to identify a service animal and to follow the City's Accessible Customer Service Policy;
- g) Maintaining a friendly and approachable demeanor, regardless of how tired, upset or hassled an Election Official may feel;
- h) Checking the access doors frequently to offer assistance and watch for voters unable to easily enter the building; and
- i) Ensuring that voters who have self-identified as voting curbside are met in a timely manner.

Feedback

The City of Vaughan welcomes your feedback on the implementation of accessibility initiatives for the 2018 Municipal Election. If you have comments or suggestion on ways the City may improve accessibility for municipal elections, please contact us at:

Email: elections@vaughan.ca

Telephone: (905) 832-8585

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