

THE MUNICIPALITY OF LAMBTON SHORES

Report CL 01-2023

Council Meeting Date: January 10, 2023

TO: Mayor Cook and Members of Council
FROM: Stephanie Troyer-Boyd, Director of Corporate Services
RE: 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Report

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report CL 01-2023 regarding “2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Report” be received for information.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with information, in accordance with the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect voters and candidates with disabilities in relation to the 2022 Municipal Election.

BACKGROUND

In accordance with Section 12.1 of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, the Clerk shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities, shall prepare an accessibility plan and report after the election.

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. 2009, c. 33, Sched. 21, s. 8 (8).

Plan re barriers

(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.

Report

(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.

As part of the awareness and recognition of electors and candidates with disabilities, the Act requires that the Clerk 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 (Section 12.1(2)).

The attached 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan was prepared by the Clerk's department in March 2022 and was available to the public if requested.

The Municipal Elections Act, 1996 also provides 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. (Section 12.1(3)). This report identifies, through the 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan, how the Municipality met its obligation for having regard for the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities using the e-voting method.

Voting Method:

Alternative Voting, in the form of both internet and telephone voting provided electors with the ability to cast their ballot at any time, or in any place, convenient to them.

Voter Help Centre:

A Voter Help Centre was open at 7883 Amtelecom Pkwy, Forest office on the following days:

October 14, 2022 – 9:00 am to 4:30 pm
October 15, 2022 - 9:00 am to 1:00 pm
October 17-21, 2022 - 8:30 am to 4:30 pm
October 22, 2022 - 9:00 am to 1:00 pm
October 24, 2022 – 8:30 am to 8:00 pm

In addition to the Accessibility Plan, the following measures were in place to ensure that the Voter Help Centre was accessible for electors and candidates with disabilities: accessible parking spots, elevator, automatic push button doors and ground level access.

Both door openers and the elevator were confirmed to be in working order during these times. Signage was used to direct electors to the Voter Help Centre. In determining the set-up of the room, consideration was given to safety, voter privacy, flow of 'traffic', the need for extra seating, and table height, knee and toe clearance and turning radius for voting stations. Staff were available to assist voters at all times and extra hours outside of regular business hours were provided for those members of the public not able to attend during regular business hours. The election auditor attended the Voter Help Centre on two (2) occasions to do the accessibility assessment.

Voting Assistance:

Election Officials were available at the Voter Help Centre throughout the voting period to provide support and assistance to any elector requesting support. Processes were in place to allow for support by either a person/friend of the voter or an Election Official upon request.

Election Official Training:

Several municipal staff acted as Election Officials. All staff are trained in accessibility, including accessible customer service.

Communication:

Clear, timely and effective communication leading up to and during the 2022 Municipal Election was paramount. Information was communicated via various channels and formats including the municipal website and social media, giving consideration to key audiences. The municipal website is compliant with Web Content Accessibility Guideline (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA and the Election pages were designed to be organized, informative and accessible with clear, simple language.

Feedback:

Election related feedback and questions could be directed to election@lambtonshores.ca or by contacting the municipal office/voter help centre by phone.

The municipality was able to meet its obligation for having regard for the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities using the e-voting method provided by Scytl Canada.

The attached Accessibility Plan specifically addresses what measures the municipality implemented to ensure equal opportunity for all electors and candidates.

ALTERNATIVES TO CONSIDER

There are no alternatives to consider; this report is for information only.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

This report is for information only and no action is required.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact.

CONSULTATION

None.



THE MUNICIPALITY OF
LAMBTON SHORES

2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION 3

2. OBJECTIVES 3

3. DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN 4

4. VOTING METHODS 4

5. VOTING LOCATION(S) 7

6. VOTING ASSISTANCE 8

7. COMMUNICATION 8

8. CANDIDATES 10

9. REPORTING 11

1. INTRODUCTION

This plan will address the specific accessibility requirements in relation to the 2022 Municipal Election in the Municipality of Lambton Shores.

The Municipality of Lambton Shores has made great efforts in promoting a barrier free community. In an effort to ensure that the 2022 Municipal Election is consistent with the core principles of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, this planning document was developed in advance of the election in order to identify measures to be taken and reported to Council following the election.

2. OBJECTIVES

This plan is intended to highlight measures that the Municipality of Lambton Shores will be implementing to ensure equal opportunity for all electors and candidates. These objectives include:

- That persons with disabilities are able to independently cast their vote and verify their selection.
- 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, or election official.
- That efforts are made to ensure that electors with disabilities are aware of the accessibility measures available via channels such as the newspaper, media launches, the Municipality of Lambton Shores website and social media.
- That the Voter Help Centre is accessible.

3. DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN

This Plan is a “living” document which will be improved and updated as best practices are identified and new opportunities for improvement arise. In order to develop the plan below, several steps were taken in order to ensure that the statutory requirements were met and a feasible implementation plan was in place. During the development of the 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan, the following steps shall be implemented:

- Review and analysis of documents, policies and other supporting materials from AMCTO, neighboring municipalities, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, technology suppliers and other various stakeholder groups.
- Establish staff training standards and practices directly related to the Election to ensure that people with disabilities are able to vote in a positive customer service environment, and ensure that all Election Officials recognize that a voter’s needs shall be accommodated.

4. VOTING METHODS

The 2022 Municipality of Lambton Shores Municipal Election will be working with Scytl Canada to provide eVoting services to eligible voters. This includes the convenience and independence of voting from anywhere via telephone, internet or in-person at the Voter Help Centre during the voting period - October 14-24, 2022.

Everyday tools like computers, telephones and other aids can present accessible opportunities for persons with disabilities to accomplish more, while being consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equal opportunity.

The eVoting System provides voters with the capability to vote from the comfort of their own home. Voting from home facilitates the voting process for persons with disabilities who may have mobility restrictions, visual impairment, and/or have a difficult time with transportation. Additionally,

persons who have assistive devices set up in their homes can now use them to assist with casting a ballot privately and independently.

By allowing persons with disabilities to vote from any location and from a selection of methods, there is an increase in the capability for the voter to vote without any assistance. This provides persons with disabilities the same independence and privacy in participating in the election as other voters. If persons with disabilities do require assistance in the voting process, trained Election Officials will be present at the in-person Voter Help Centre located at the Municipality of Lambton Shores Administration Office, 7883 Amtelecom Parkway, Forest throughout the voting period.

4.1 Telephone Voting

Eligible voters may vote using a touch-tone telephone, and the toll-free telephone number and PIN number contained in their Voter Information Letter to access an audio ballot. Communications barriers can make it difficult for people to receive or convey information. Barriers may be identified as low volume, use of language that is not clear or plain, and confusing or unorganized menu options.

The telephone voting application provides the following:

- Service on all types of touch tone phones and wireless devices.
- Clear, plain language.
- Menu options that are easy to follow, advising when to select options and provision of confirmation of the voter's selections.
- Standard volume is used to allow for adjustment dependent of the telephone or device being utilized.

4.2 Internet Voting

Eligible voters may vote online, using a smart phone, tablet device, gaming device or computer and any accompanying assistive devices or software, with their PIN and qualifying information, to access the internet address provided in their Voter Instruction Letter.

The evoting system has been created to meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG-2 Level AA), so that persons with disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate and interact with the online voting system. It is

compliant with the guidelines of the World Wide Web Consortium website principles, which include organization, functionality and readability of information provided, as well as alternative ways of representing information, such as with audio.

4.3 In-person Voting at Voter Help Station

For those individuals without means to access voting via telephone or internet, or who require the assistance of a trained Election Official, a Voter Help Station will be open to provide in-person internet voting opportunities via a laptop.

Access to the Voter Help Centre interior and voting area shall be level and slip-resistant. Any doormats or carpeting shall be level with the floor to prevent potential tripping hazards. The voting area shall be well lit and seating shall be available. Entrance corridors shall be clear of obstructions and tripping hazards and will allow sufficient space for use of a wheelchair or scooter. There is an elevator to the Voter Help Centre for those voters who cannot comfortably gain access by the stairs.

An accessible voting area will be available at the Voter Help Centre. This area shall be low in height and have a wide area to allow for individuals who use a wheelchair or scooter to vote independently and secretively.

Voters may attend the Voter Help Centre throughout the voting period. The Municipality of Lambton Shores will be operating the following voting place location during the Voting Period:

October 14, 2022 – 9:00 am to 4:30 pm

October 15, 2022 - 9:00 am to 1:00 pm

October 17-21, 2022 - 8:30 am to 4:30 pm

October 22, 2022 - 9:00 am to 1:00 pm

October 24, 2022 – 8:30 am to 8:00 pm

Administration Office

7883 Amtelecom Parkway, Forest

The following Voter Help Centre will be open on Election Day, Monday October 24, 2022 from 8:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Administration Office
7883 Amtelecom Parkway, Forest

4.4 Special Voting Provisions

Election staff shall visit sites including long-term care facilities and retirement homes, to set-up on-site voting kiosks, or bedside voting opportunities for residents.

Country Manor	Tuesday, October 18, 2022	9 am to 12 pm (Noon)
North Lambton Lodge	Thursday, October 20, 2022	9 am to 12 pm (Noon)

5. VOTING LOCATION

An accessibility assessment of the physical Voter Help Centre location will be conducted. The following considerations are taken into account when determining the location to be used:

5.1 Accessible Route

Proximity of the Voter Help Centre to accessible public transit routes shall be considered in the selection of Voter Help Centre. The name and/or address of the Voter Help Centre shall be clearly visible. An easily navigable route will be marked for entry into the Voter Help Centre and into the voting area within the location. The voting area shall be identified with clear and understandable signage. Seating areas shall be provided throughout the voting location for individuals needing a rest.

5.2 Entrance and Exit

The route to the entrance of the Voter Help Centre shall be unobstructed and accessible. The route shall be wide enough to allow for an individual using a wheelchair, scooter, other assistive device, or service animal to travel safely. Doors into the Voter Help Centre and voting area shall be accessible and easy to open or shall remain propped open for the duration of the voting location hours. Routine checks of entrance and exit routes will be made throughout the hours of operation.

5.3 Parking

Accessible parking shall be available at all voting locations. The designated parking space(s) shall be clearly marked with the international Symbol of Accessibility and will be on firm and level ground, close to the entrance of the Voter Help Centre. By-law officers will monitor and enforce parking at the Voter Help Centre throughout the day.

6. VOTING ASSISTANCE

6.1 Support Person/Friend of the Voter

Pursuant to the Municipality of Lambton Shores' Accessible Customer Service Policy people with disabilities shall be permitted to be accompanied by a support person at the Voter Help Centre. A designated support person and/or 'Friend of the Voter' will be administered an oath of secrecy/confidentiality by an Election Official prior to providing any such assistance.

6.2 Service Animals

Pursuant to the Municipality of Lambton Shores Accessible Customer Service Policy individuals requiring service animals are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at all the Voter Help Centre.

6.3 Election Officials

At the in-person Voter Help Centre, upon request, Election Officials are available to assist any voter who requires assistance in casting their online ballot. All individuals working in the capacity of an Election Official are formally appointed as such and administered an oath of secrecy prior to voting day.

7. COMMUNICATION

The 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan will be made available at the Administration Office, 7883 Amtelecom Parkway, Forest and by way of the Municipality of Lambton Shores' website www.lambtonshores.ca. Alternative formats will be made available upon request.

Information regarding the accessibility measures provided for the 2022 Municipal Election shall be included in general election advertising as well as in the 2022 Municipal Election Nomination Package.

7.1 Election Materials

The Municipality of Lambton Shores is required, as per the Accessible Customer Service Standard, to provide a copy of a document to a person with a disability, or the information contained in the document, in a format that takes into account the person's disability.

Alternate Formats

Alternate formats are other ways of publishing information besides regular print. Some of these formats can be used by everyone while others are designed to address the specific needs of a user.

The Municipality of Lambton Shores and the person with a disability may agree upon the format to be used for the document or information.

In the event the information is not generated by the Municipality of Lambton Shores or is supplied by a third party, the Municipality of Lambton Shores will make every effort to obtain the information from the third party in an alternate format and/or will attempt to assist the Elector by providing assistive equipment.

General Election Materials

Large Print – Printed material generated by the Municipality of Lambton Shores will be provided in an Arial font, minimum 11 point, and can be made available in a font (print) size that is 16 to 20 points or larger.

Website – Information generated by the Municipality of Lambton Shores on the website in relation to the election will be compliant with WCAG 2.0 Level A, and allow for assistive software to be utilized. In addition, website font can be adjusted within the browser's functionality to aid the user in reading the information.

Video – Promotional and educational videos created for the 2022 municipal election shall incorporate audio and captioning.

7.2 Service Disruptions

From time to time and/or for unforeseen circumstances beyond the Municipality of Lambton Shores' control, temporary service disruptions may be experienced. In the event of a temporary accessible service disruption, Election Officials will commit to making reasonable efforts to ensure that services are reinstated as quickly as possible and that alternative services are provided where feasible.

In these instances of service disruptions, the Municipality of Lambton Shores shall provide reasonable notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by persons with disabilities.

Notice of these temporary disruptions shall be provided in a conspicuous place and manner at the respective location and information shall also be posted on the Municipality of Lambton Shores' website. This notice shall include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

Accessible services in relation to this plan include the Voter Help Centre, election materials and/or voting provisions for Electors with disabilities at the voting place.

In the event of disruptions to service or unforeseen circumstances that affect the accessibility of the Voter Help Centre during the advance vote or on Election Day, notices of disruption will be posted in real time on the Municipality of Lambton Shores website and election website.

8. CANDIDATES

Candidates must also have regard to the needs of electors with disabilities. Campaign offices, election materials and canvassing should all be reviewed in order to ensure that they are fully accessible. The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario has released several quick reference documents to assist candidates with accessible elections considerations:

- [Count Us In: Removing Barriers to Political Participation - Quick Reference Guide to Accessible Campaign Information and Communication](#)

- [Count Us In: Removing Barriers to Political Participation - Quick Reference Guide to Accessible Constituency, Riding Association, Central Party and Campaign Offices](#)
- [Count Us In: Removing Barriers to Political Participation - Quick Reference Guide to Accessible All Candidates Meetings](#)

9. REPORTING

Pursuant to Section 12.1 of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, within 90 days after voting day, the Municipality of Lambton Shores' Clerk shall submit a report to Council about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.