

# 2022 Municipal & School Board Elections **Accessibility Plan**



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## **1. Foreword**

The City of Oshawa's 2022 Municipal and School Board Elections Accessibility Plan is provided in order to identify, remove and prevent barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities in regard to the City's 2022 elections. The City Clerk will conduct the election with regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities through the implementation of this plan and will take any additional measures required to ensure those needs are met.

This plan is prepared as required under the *Municipal Elections Act (M.E.A.), 1996*, as amended, and is intended to be consistent with the principles of the M.E.A. The plan has also been prepared with consideration to the principles and requirements of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (A.O.D.A.), 2005*, the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (I.A.S.R.)*, and the *Ontario Human Rights Code (the Code)*.

The City Clerk has the right to amend this plan at any time and for any reason to ensure the principles under the aforementioned legislations are met.

This plan is designed as an action plan and Sections 2 through 6 contain action items to be delivered by City Clerk Services and Election Officials under the direction of the City Clerk. Sections 7 and 8 of the plan outline the feedback process and sources of additional information.

## **2. Review and Identify Barriers to Accessibility**

### **2.1. Consult with O.A.A.C.**

City Clerk Services will seek input from the Oshawa Accessibility Advisory Committee (O.A.A.C.) and other stakeholders on how to make elections accessible. City Clerk Services will share planned accessibility initiatives and other voting information such as voting times, Voting Places, and alternative voting methods.

### **2.2. Consult with internal staff**

The Accessibility Program Coordinator will provide advice on how to improve accessibility for the municipal elections. In addition to monitoring accessible voting methods, City Clerk Services will establish criteria for accessible Voting Places and ensure they are accessible for persons with disabilities.

### **2.3. Conduct post-election accessibility survey**

A post-election survey asking for feedback on accessible elections will be shared with the O.A.A.C. and voters. This will help City Clerk Services evaluate accessibility of the 2022 municipal elections and help improve the accessibility of future elections.

### **2.4. Publish post-election accessibility report**

Within 90 days after Voting Day in a regular election, the Clerk will prepare a report about how Oshawa identified, removed and prevented barriers for electors and candidates with disabilities. The report will be made public and available on Oshawa's website.

### **3. Use Information and Communications to Remove Barriers**

#### **3.1. Develop an accessible website**

The elections website (voteoshawa.ca) will be an updated landing page and act as a one-stop shop for all election matters. Like all of Oshawa's web pages, it will be in compliance with WCAG 2.0 Level AA. Oshawa shall ensure all information posted is accessible and available in alternate accessible formats upon request. The website will allow visitors to request alternative formats and subscribe to website changes.

Continuously updating election information will be posted on the City's website to reflect the most recent developments and information.

An opportunity to provide feedback or to seek assistance on the website will be provided.

#### **3.2. Deliver training, documents and information in alternative formats**

The Candidate Information Package, Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario's (A.M.C.T.O.) Candidate's Guide to Accessible Elections, and other associated information will be provided in various formats.

Election Official accessibility training will be provided in various formats, such as a link to Accessibility Ontario/Access Forward resources and training.

Other information regarding candidates, voting places, voter registration etc. will be posted on the website, and paper copies will be provided if necessary.

#### **3.3. Provide documents in alternative formats upon request**

The City will provide documents/information in large-print to assist people who are visually-impaired and other accessible formats when requested.

#### **3.4. Supply accessible information to stakeholders**

Assistive groups will be approached to assist with distributing information to members/voters about the voting options available to them.

#### **3.5. Enable accessible feedback**

Feedback about the manner in which election services are provided to persons with disabilities may be submitted to City Clerk Services through a variety of methods as outlined in [Section 6](#) of this plan.

#### **3.6. Issue notice of changes and emergencies**

If applicable, the City will post notifications regarding Voting Place changes, emergencies, and other information on voteoshawa.ca and social media.

If there is a temporary disruption in the delivery of election information or services, City Clerk Services shall provide public notice on the City's election website, at the physical site of the disruption and when possible, in the local media. The notice shall include the reason for the disruption, anticipated duration and a description of alternative methods

of delivering the information or service. Every effort shall be made to provide the information or service to persons with disabilities.

#### **4. Ensure Voting Places are Accessible**

##### **4.1. Inspect voting places**

In establishing the locations of voting places, the Clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities. City Clerk Services will conduct site inspections of all potential voting places to apply accessible criteria and ensure accessibility. Election Officials will also perform a final accessibility check on locations used during advance voting. Any necessary adjustments to ensure accessibility on voting day will be noted. This may include but is not limited to: providing additional accessible parking, training and informing election officials on site-specific accommodations such as elevators, and providing additional election officials to assist voters at the voting place.

City Clerk Services will develop criteria that will assess physical accessibility of Voting Places. These criteria will include standards established by the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (I.A.S.R.). Among other criteria, the checklist will contain requirements for:

- Accessible/power-operated doors
- Sufficient lighting
- Accessible ramps
- Layout and barrier-free paths of travel
- Additional seating
- Accessible parking

##### **4.2. Provide accessible voting equipment at City Hall**

During advance voting and on voting day, City Hall will be equipped with vote tabulators and ballot marking devices, which permit the independent casting of ballots by individuals with accessibility needs or those who cannot mark a paper ballot with a ballot marking pen. Voters with disabilities are eligible to attend City Hall to vote regardless of their ward or poll.

##### **4.3. Consider proximity of public transit to the voting place**

Proximity of the voting place to accessible public transit routes shall be a consideration when selecting voting places; however the voting place may not necessarily be located on the same street as the transit stop. Identification of the voting place shall be clearly visible from the street. If the distance of the voting place to a transit stop is too far for a voter, they may choose to attend a different location, as per the sections on flexible voting places below.

**4.4. Provide flexible voting places - advance voting**

During advance voting, voters can vote at any location across the City, which will provide more flexibility for all voters. Advance voting will occur October 6-8, 11, 13, 15-16.

**4.5. Provide flexible voting places – voting day**

On voting day, voters can vote at any location in their ward, which will again provide more flexibility for all voters.

**4.6. Use accessible signage at voting places**

City Clerk Services will ensure that signage is placed in the appropriate areas to guide voters to the voting place. Signage will have large print with an acceptable contrast to the background, and will be easy to read and understand. Where possible, accessible signage will indicate that the accessible entrance is the same as the main entrance.

**4.7. Prevent hazards inside the voting place**

Access to the interior voting area and voting booth shall be level and easily traversed. Any doormats or carpeting shall be level with the floor to prevent potential tripping hazards. All voting areas are to be well lit and seating shall be made available along the path of travel. Election Officials will be available to assist voters in navigating the voting area.

**4.8. Design accessible voting booths**

Accessible voting booths will be available at each voting place. Voting booths will be low in height and have a wide pathway around them. This will allow individuals utilizing assistive devices to travel behind the booth in order to vote independently and secretively.

**4.9. Provide accessible candidate information sessions**

Any candidate information session will occur in a location that is accessible for assistive devices and will also be streamed online. Accommodations will be available upon request.

**4.10. Collaborate with facility owners/operators of voting places**

City Clerk Services will work with facility owners and operators to ensure accessibility at the voting place such as using the room with the shortest path of travel from the entrance, moving or creating accessible parking spaces, and gaining elevator access.

**5. Ensure Voting is Accessible**

**5.1. Provide alternative voting methods**

City Clerk Services will provide a vote-by-mail on-request service so that voters may vote from any location including the comfort of their home. Voters will be notified of the vote-by-mail on-request process by mail and on the City's website in addition to a comprehensive public media campaign.

Requests to vote-by-mail will be accepted online, on the phone or in-person. Vote by mail kits will be mailed directly to voters. Voters may return their ballot through the mail

using a pre-paid envelope or by dropping it off at a secure, designated drop box location throughout the city.

### **5.2. Provide accessible voting equipment**

The Advance Voting Day held at City Hall will be equipped with an accessible voting system that will permit the independent casting of ballots by individuals with accessibility needs or those who cannot mark a paper ballot with a ballot marking Pen.

The system consists of the following components:

1. An Image-Cast Vote Tabulator;
2. A Voting Handheld Controller and a set of headphones that a Voter uses to interact with the system;
3. An external printer for printing the audio session Ballot once the Voter has made their selections; and
4. Other input interfaces as necessary to accommodate a Voter's individual needs, including:
  - a) Sip and Puff Input Interface; or,
  - b) Paddle Button Input Interface.

The voter will hear an audio presentation of the ballot through the available headphones and use the handheld controller or other assistive devices, as necessary, to adjust the volume, speed of the audio presentation, move between contests, and select votes. The audio presentation will confirm votes selected for Voter verification. When the Voter has made and confirmed all their selections, they will use the handheld controller or optional interface devices to direct the ballot marking device to print a paper ballot. The ballot marking device will automatically process a standard paper ballot, printing markings beside the name(s) of the candidate(s) chosen by the voter.

The printed ballot is indistinguishable from a ballot marked by hand. The ballot marking device contains a library of random hand-made marking images that it uses to print the ballot so the printed markings in the defined area look just like marks made by hand with a ballot marking pen.

Instructions on how to use assistive devices will be available on the elections website and in print at the City Hall voting place. An Election Official will also be trained and available to assist any voter with using the device upon request.

### **5.3. Provide assistance to in-person voters**

Any Designated Election Official who has taken an oath or affirmation of secrecy from the Clerk may assist a Voter in any manner if they are unable to attend to a voting booth independently, including: assisting a voter to mark their ballot behind a voting booth or in the voter's apartment/room at any [special voting place](#).

A voter may receive assistance from a friend to mark their ballot properly, provided the friend takes an oath or affirmation of secrecy from the Election Official providing the voter's ballot.



**5.4. Allow voting by proxy**

If a voter is unable to vote in person and does not wish to vote by mail, they may choose to appoint another qualified voter to vote on their behalf. The appointment must be completed using the prescribed appointment of voting proxy form.

**5.5. Permit support persons and service animals in voting places**

Any person with a disability accompanied by a support person or service animal may enter City Clerk Services or any voting place with their support person or service animal.

**5.6. Supply tools/supplies to facilitate voting for persons with disabilities**

Magnification screens, note pads, and pens will be available at Voting Places.

**5.7. Provide other voting opportunities in special voting places**

Voting opportunities will be provided to residents of special voting places which are:

- Retirement homes where 50 or more beds are occupied;
- Institutions (Hospital, Long Term Care Homes etc.) where 20 or more beds are occupied by persons with disabilities or chronic illness.

**5.8. Enable online access to the voters' list**

The Municipal Property Assessment Corporation will allow residents to check if they are on the voters' list, and add their name if they are not, on [voterlookup.ca](http://voterlookup.ca) Oshawa will provide a link to this website. This could improve waiting times for voting on Voting Day and allows residents to update their information online without visiting City Clerk Services.

**5.9. Request a P.A. day**

City Clerk Services will request that school boards designate Voting Day as a P.A. day in order to reduce congestion in schools and parking lots. This will also increase likelihood of more accessible parking becoming available for voters.

**5.10. Exclude campaign expenses related to a disability**

Expenses that are incurred by a candidate with a disability that are directly related to the disability, and would not have been incurred but for the election to which the expenses relate, are excluded from the permitted spending limit for the candidate.

**6. Deliver Accessibility Training**

**6.1. Provide candidates with information on accessibility**

The candidate's information package will include a printed copy of A.M.C.T.O. Candidate's Guide to Accessible Elections in the physical package and a link to the guide in the digital version.

**6.2. Deliver accessibility training to election officials**

All Election Officials will be trained to recognize and ensure that persons with disabilities are served in a way that accommodates their individual needs. Training attendance will

be tracked, and any Election Official that does not complete the accessibility training will be ineligible to work on voting day. Training will meet the requirements of the A.O.D.A. and the I.A.S.R. and cover the *Code* as it pertains to persons with disabilities. Training will include:

- How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disability;
- How to interact with persons with disabilities 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; and
- What to do if a person is having difficulty accessing election information or services.

## 7. Feedback Process

City Clerk Services staff are available to assist with any issues that may arise with respect to providing a barrier-free election. Feedback about the manner in which election services are provided to persons with disabilities may be submitted to City Clerk Services through a variety of methods including:

1. Telephone: 905-436-3311
2. In Person: City Clerk Services, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor – Rundle Tower  
50 Centre Street South, Oshawa
3. Fax: 905-436-5697
4. Email: [vote@oshawa.ca](mailto:vote@oshawa.ca)
5. Mail: City Clerk Services, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor – Rundle Tower  
50 Centre Street South, Oshawa, L1H 3Z7

The [Service Oshawa general service request page](#) can also be used to file complaints, compliments or accessible format requests.

The feedback process provides City Clerk Services with an opportunity to take corrective measures to prevent similar recurrences, address training needs, enhance service delivery and provide alternative methods of providing election services.

Additionally, individual members of our election team can be contacted directly for assistance:

Adam Foran, Elections Officer 905-436-3311, Ext. 2310  
E-mail: [AForan@oshawa.ca](mailto:AForan@oshawa.ca)

Laura Davis, Deputy City Clerk 905-436-3311, Ext. 2475  
E-mail: [LDavis@oshawa.ca](mailto:LDavis@oshawa.ca)

Mary Medeiros, City Clerk 905-436-3311, Ext. 2239  
E-mail: [MMedeiros@oshawa.ca](mailto:MMedeiros@oshawa.ca)

## **8. Additional Information**

### **8.1. City of Oshawa – Election Website**

[The City of Oshawa’s election website](#) is continuously updated to reflect the most recent developments and information. Visit the site for an up-to-date list of candidates and other important messages or events throughout the election year:

### **8.2. Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing – Election Website**

[The ministry’s municipal elections website](#) contains information about municipal elections, the Province of Ontario 2022 Municipal Elections Guides for Candidates and Third Party Advertisers and the Ministry’s commitment to promote greater accessibility for voters and candidates with disabilities.

### **8.3. Service Ontario – e-Laws**

[The e-laws website](#) contains all current statutes including the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.