



CL-02-23 Appendix A 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Report.docx

(IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 12.1(2) OF THE MUNICIPAL
ELECTIONS ACT, 1996) 2022 BURLINGTON MUNICIPAL
ELECTION
ISSUED BY THE ELECTIONS OFFICE



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OVERVIEW

The 2022 Election Accessibility Report provides an overview of initiatives undertaken during the 2022 Municipal Election, aimed at improving accessibility for voters and candidates during an election.

The main objective of the initiatives was to identify and eliminate barriers for persons with disabilities to ensure that the election is accessible for all.

MANDATE AND LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENT

The City of Burlington is committed to providing electors and candidates with disabilities equal access to all election information and services. A key strategic objective of the Burlington's Strategic Plan 2015-2040 is to be an accessible city where municipal programs, buildings, services and public spaces are accessible, available and welcoming to people of all abilities.

The Municipal Elections Act, 1996, (MEA) states in section 12.1(1) that a clerk shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities, and section 12.1(2) indicates that the clerk shall prepare a plan regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities. Section 12.1(3) provides that the clerk must provide a report 90 days after Voting Day regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors with disabilities. Furthermore, section 45(2) indicates that in establishing the locations of voting places, the clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities.

UNDERSTANDING DISABILITY

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) defines disability as follows:

- 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.

CONSULTATION

The Burlington Election Management Team presented the plan to the Burlington Accessibility Advisory Committee for input and feedback. The plan was shared with various accessibility partners in Burlington and the public to receive feedback.

Based on feedback received, the City of Burlington partnered with Canadian Hearing Services and CNIB DeafBlind Community Services to provide Burlington electors with interpreter or intervenor services, if required, to vote. The cost for these services was billed to the City of Burlington. Information about this program was shared directly by the providers with their clients in Burlington, as well as posted on the Burlington Elections microsite. During election official training, trainers explained how the program worked and how electors participating in the program should be processed at the polls.

Additionally, based on feedback received from the Burlington Accessibility Advisory Committee, one voting location in a school was changed to a church in Ward 1, resulting in improved access for electors. The new location included automatic doors, no threshold changes at voting room entrance, and closer proximity of accessible parking, while being familiar to the community.

Gathering of feedback on accessibility concerns is ongoing and will be used to improve processes for the 2026 municipal election. Post-election survey to supervisors and election officials included feedback on the accessibility of the voting locations, as well as accessibility training. While no specific accessibility concerns were raised, the routes of travel either within the voting location, or from the parking lot to voting room in some locations will be reviewed to further improve access for electors and candidates. Additionally, signage for inside and outside of the voting locations will be reviewed to further improve access for future elections.

VOTING LOCATIONS

The Municipal Elections Act, 1996 states that each voting location place must be accessible to electors with disabilities. The City of Burlington had 3 in-person advance poll locations, 24 regular voting day locations plus a number of special polls in institutions such as nursing and retirement homes.

All voting locations were inspected using an accessibility checklist. Items checked for included accessible doors, barrier free parking, availability of accessible bathrooms, acceptable slope of ramps and thresholds, adequate lighting and barrier free route of travel. For any locations where power assist doors were not available, additional staff (Information Assistants) were hired to open doors for electors. Each location was rated for accessibility and only those with acceptable scores were used as voting locations.

Voting locations were set up to promote efficient flow, maintain secrecy of the vote and allow access for electors. Additional chairs were provided to ensure seating was

available to those electors who needed it. Staff conducted regular checks throughout the day to ensure entrances, exits and paths of travel remained barrier free throughout the day.

Service animals were permitted in all voting locations. Election staff were instructed not to distract service animals, and not to question or ask for documentation to verify a service animal's authenticity.

Support persons were able to assist individuals at the voting locations, as required, provided they took an oral oath of a friend. If no support person available, election officials were trained to assist electors accordingly.

All voting locations had clear and visible signage to direct electors to the voting place. Upon review and based on feedback, additional large signage will be deployed to voting locations on busier roads. ie. Haber Community Centre and Halton Conservation Administrative Building.

VOTING METHODS

City of Burlington provided electors with various methods to cast their vote in the 2022 Municipal Election, including online voting, in-person advance polls, proxy-voting and in-person voting locations on Voting Day, including special polls in institutions such as long-term care and retirement homes.

Online Voting

- a) Online voting was offered over a ten-day period where electors were able to use accessibility features available on their own devices such as a smartphone, computer, or tablet, to cast a vote independently. Online voting opened on October 11th at 10am and closed on October 20th at 8:00 p.m. 14,980 eligible voters cast their vote online during the 2022 municipal election.
- b) The City's online voting system met WCAG 2.0 guidelines.
- c) Individuals who were unable to vote using the internet from home could visit a Burlington Public Library branch to access online voting via a computer.
- d) Staff were available via telephone or email to assist electors during the online voting period from 8:45 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

In-person Voting with Paper Ballots

- e) All in-person advance polls and voting day polls were equipped with tools such as magnification screens and signature guides, and staff were trained to provide assistance to electors when requested. In instances where an elector was unable to physically enter a location, election workers were trained to provide curbside voting.

- f) Proxy voting allowed electors who were unable to attend a voting place, to appoint another person to act on their behalf and vote. This process was particularly helpful for those unable to attend a polling station due to sudden illness.
- g) Special polls in institutions and retirement homes on Voting Day allowed those electors to cast their ballot conveniently. In 3 locations, last-minute Covid lockdowns prevented staff to set up a poll however, special voting procedures were established so the affected residents could still cast their ballot. For future elections, City of Burlington Elections team will recommend that the legislation be amended to allow the Clerk to establish polling stations in institutions as advance voting opportunities to provide more time for electors to cast their ballot.

COMMUNICATION AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The City of Burlington Election Team implemented the following to remove barriers surrounding communication and access to information:

- a) Election information was available online in clear and simple language.
- b) Election information was continuously updated to reflect the most recent developments and information.
- c) All election webpages including the online voting platform were W3C Consortium WCAG 2.0 Level AA compliant.
- d) Election information was provided in alternate formats upon request to both electors and candidates.
- e) Election information including how to vote was provided in multiple languages to community groups.
- f) Whereas no disruptions occurred, a process was developed to provide a Notice of Disruption of services to be posted on the City's election website. If required, the notice was to include information on the reason, the duration of the disruption and alternate locations to vote.
- g) Information about voting options was clearly communicated to electors and candidates through the election microsite, social media, newspaper advertisements, City Talk updates, engagement events and community-focused information sessions.

RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

The City of Burlington provided accessible customer service and ensured all workers were well equipped to assist electors:

- a) Election staff were trained on accessibility requirements, serving people with disabilities and on the accommodations and services available to assist voters
- b) Accessibility training was part of the mandatory training completed by all election officials.
- c) Election workers were instructed to periodically check access doors and parking area to ensure electors can enter the location with ease.

Election workers were provided the opportunity to indicate any accessibility accommodations they required to attend training or to work on advance polls or on voting day. All requests were accommodated. All training facilities were City facilities and were accessible.

The Election Team provided accommodations to staff and actively promoted employment opportunities to persons with disabilities and organizations serving people with disabilities. Additionally, election staff assisted any applicants completing their online applications via telephone when required.

FEEDBACK AND UPDATES

The Election Team welcomed feedback on how to ensure the 2022 Election was an accessible one. In planning for the future, the team will continue to gather feedback and work with community groups to ensure the accessibility of the 2026 municipal election is further improved.

Please contact elections@burlington.ca with any feedback for improvement or to request this document in an alternate format.