Town of Georgina
2022 Municipal Election
Accessibility Report

Report regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affected persons with disabilities during the 2022 Municipal and School Board Election

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Introduction

The Town of Georgina is committed to providing equitable treatment to all people by identifying and removing barriers to accessibility. For the 2022 Municipal Election, in person and online voting methods were chosen as accessible options for Georgina residents. Online voting allowed physical barriers to be broken by allowing polling through the use of the internet. While in person voting provided for those who might have a barrier when it comes to using internet services and need further help through the use of accessible voting technologies. It was important for the Town of Georgina to offer as much accessibility as possible to voters.

Municipal Elections Act, 1996

The Town Clerk is responsible for the proper legislative and administrative conduct of the Municipal Election in the Town of Georgina. The legislative requirements under the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996,* include:

- Section 12.1 (1) places responsibility on the Clerk to have regard to the needs of the electors and candidates with disabilities. Accessible Customer Service Standards must be followed when conducting a Municipal Election.
- Section 12.1 (2) 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 (3) requires that within ninety (90) days after Voting Day, 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 41 (3) states that 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 assistance.
- Section 45 (2) states that in establishing the locations of voting places, the Clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities.

General Election Information

For the 2022 Municipal Election, the Town of Georgina operated a vote anywhere model. Electors could visit any voting location in the Town of Georgina to cast their ballot regardless of which ward they lived in. Electors could also choose to vote online from October 8th at 10:00 a.m. to October 23rd at 12:00 p.m. Internet voting was not available on October 24th 2022, Voting Day.

The Town of Georgina's Municipal Election was conducted over a sixteen (16) day voting period from October 8th to October 24th, 2022 as noted in the table below:

Date	Time
October 8	10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
October 13	10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
October 15	10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
October 19	12:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
October 24	10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Communication and Information

One of the main goals of the 2022 Municipal Election was to promote and increase the use of accessible voting. Advertisement of the accessible supports available were conducted in multiple formats.

Highlights:

- Posted all information on the Town of Georgina's website to ensure information was presented and accessible in an easy to navigate manner while using clear language.
- Ensured communication initiatives and information for candidates and electors were available in alternative formats.
- Provided multiple communication channels for persons with disabilities to interact with the Town of Georgina staff including the election webpage, newspaper advertisements, Facebook, Twitter, phone, email and in person.
- Provided advertisements of accessible supports available in multiple formats including social media, print, and brochures in resident's water bills.

Moving Forward:

- Consider establishing a web link dedicated to receiving feedback on the Municipal Election and Accessibility.
- Consider providing detailed accessibility information about each voting location through the election webpage.
- Consider conducting outreach to community agencies supporting persons with disabilities to market support available for advanced and internet voting.

Voting Locations

Clerk's staff visited each potential voting location to ensure full accessibility. As the Clerk does not have the power to compel building owners to ensure that accessible amenities are installed, finding fully accessible locations can be a challenge. Well-known locations, accessible routes, entrances, and parking were all important considerations on the accessible checklists when voting locations were selected. It was also important to ensure institutions and retirement homes were contacted and serviced by bringing accessible voting to them.

Highlights:

- Conducted site visits and follow ups for voting locations.
- Provided appropriate and additional accessible signage at voting locations during voting hours.
- Permitted service animals and support persons in all voting locations.
- Set up processes to facilitate the notification of any last-minute voting location changes in the event of an emergency. Disruption of service notices were made available in the Supervisor's materials box. Clerk's staff coordinated with the Communications Division to be prepared to post disruptions on the Town of Georgina website.
- Ensured there were designated or reserved accessible parking spots at each voting location.
- Created layout maps to assist Election Officials in setting up voting locations in a way that was accessible to all electors.
- Contacted institutions and retirement homes in advance to ensure access to in person voting at these locations was equitably provided on Voting Day.

Moving Forward:

- Continue to monitor the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations and include any established building standards into voting place inspection checklists.
- Consider putting maps for all voting locations online.
- Ensure that accessible entrances and ramps are clearly marked.
- Provide additional accessible signage.
- Consider additional temporary accessible parking spots at locations with limited parking spots.

Voting Methods

The Town of Georgina offered both internet voting and in person paper ballot voting for the 2022 Municipal Election. Having the option to vote in a variety of methods increased accessibility, convenience and independence. Electors who preferred online voting were provided with the opportunity to vote from any location during the online voting period using personal devices alongside their accompanying assistive devices or software required.

Electors who preferred in person methods of voting had the advanced voting period as well as Voting Day available to vote. Assistance from trained Election Officials was available at all voting locations. Accessible voting technologies including audio-visual assistance, sip and puff devices, and rocker paddle devices were rotated through the voting locations during the voting period so that electors could access the technologies at the location that was convenient for them.

Highlights:

- Promoted advanced and internet voting opportunities for persons with disabilities.
- Traditional paper ballots with large text were used at all voting places. Magnifying sheets were made available at the voting booths.
- Processes in place at each voting place to allow a support person or an Election Official to assist an Elector with marking their ballot, if needed.

Moving Forward:

- Continue to investigate new technologies available and alternative forms of voting to better meet the needs of electors with disabilities.
- Continue implementing online voting to meet the needs of electors that are unable to attend in person voting.
- Consider creating a web-based portal to allow electors to update their information online and to securely reset online voting credentials.

Election Officials

As an equal opportunity employer, the Town of Georgina abides by all current legislation related to individual rights to employment. The Town is committed to recognize and celebrate the diversity, talent and expertise that makes each person unique.

To provide a fully accessible voting experience for persons with disabilities, Election Officials needed to understand the importance of providing equitable and excellent customer service to all electors. All Election Officials received training on providing accessible customer service with respect to the Municipal Election and voting locations.

Highlights:

- Required all Election Officials to read the Town of Georgina's Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Training. Election Officials were required to sign a confirmation acknowledging they had read and understood the training.
- Tips were provided on how to deliver accessible customer service to all electors during training and in the training manuals.
- Election Officials were advised during training that service animals were permitted in voting locations.
- Election Officials were trained to not assume that an individual needed help, but to always be available if an elector needed any type of assistance.
- Ensured that electors who self-identified as being unable to enter the voting location were accommodated and were still able to cast their ballot by bringing the voting methods to them.
- Ensured that all Election Officials were aware and trained to use accessible voting technologies.

Moving Forward:

- Continue to build awareness of the importance of human rights, accessible customer service and how to best service persons with disabilities.
- Continue to review and enhance training sessions to ensure Election Officials are provided with tools and resources needed to provide equitable and excellent customer service to all electors.

Feedback

The Town of Georgina is committed to providing the best customer service to all of our residents. The review of accessibility issues, initiatives and addressing barrier prevention or removal is an ongoing practice and will be improved as new opportunities are identified or become available. Additional feedback regarding the accessibility of the Town of Georgina's Municipal Election can be submitted through regular mail, email, telephone or by using the Town of Georgina's Web Submission Form which is available to everyone via the Town's website: https://www.georgina.ca/municipal-government/contact-us