



Accessibility Advisory Committee

Meeting Date: September 12, 2024

FROM: Clerk's Department

DATE: September 3, 2024

SUBJECT: 2026 Municipal Election Accessible Voting Enhancements

LOCATION: Town-wide

RECOMMENDATION:

That the report entitled '2026 Municipal Election Accessible Voting Initiatives' from the Clerk's department, dated September 3, 2024, be received.

KEY FACTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this item:

- The 2026 Oakville municipal elections will be held on Monday, October 26, 2026.
- The accessibility goal for Oakville municipal elections is to establish objectives and actions to ensure the needs of electors and candidates of all abilities are addressed.
- The Town of Oakville is committed to eliminating barriers and providing accessible programs, services, and facilities in line with Council's vision to provide accountable governance and inspire community belonging. This includes building an inclusive community where all individuals have equal access to the town's services, programs and facilities in a manner that is integrated and promotes dignity and independence.
- Sections 12.1 (1) and (2) of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, as amended state that the municipality shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities and that a plan regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.
- In our planning, we fully adhere to all legislated accessibility requirements, and go above and beyond to enhance the voting experience for individuals of all abilities, examples include:
 - Ensuring physical voting locations are accessible, with features inside and outside the location that accommodate voters with disabilities (such as magnifiers, accessible parking, and clear paths of travel).

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- Providing on-site voting at long-term care homes and designated retirement homes, ensuring that residents have equal access to voting. Staff attending these sites receive comprehensive and enhanced training to meet the specific needs of these voters, ensuring a supportive and accessible voting experience.
 - Publishing an accessibility plan before each election, outlining the steps planned to meet the diverse needs of voters of all abilities. Following every election, a report is published to evaluate our efforts and identify areas for improvement, ensuring continuous enhancement of accessibility in future elections.
 - Several successful initiatives and accessibility services have been implemented in past elections that have effectively met the needs of individuals of all abilities, examples include:
 - A home visit program, piloted in 2018 and approved by Council by-law for the 2022 election, to provide accessible voting for home-bound electors.
 - Additional and extended advance voting periods to reduce crowds and wait times, providing voters with additional opportunities to cast their ballot.
 - Thorough and strategic communication and outreach plans.
 - Staff are proud of the support services offered in past election, which include:
 - Enhanced training on accessible customer service
 - Curbside voting at voting locations
 - Use of interpreters and language line to assist voters with language barriers.
 - Assistive voting technology, approved by Council by-law and used in past elections, includes voting machines with accessible features such as an audio-tactile device or hand/foot paddle for voting.
 - Staff continue to explore options to expand and enhance accessible voting services. Considerations include:
 - Additional voting channels.
 - Improved assistive technology.
 - Increased outreach and education efforts.
 - Enhanced promotion of accessible voting options to targeted groups.
 - Exploring ways to utilize public transit to enhance accessibility for voters with mobility challenges.
 - Increasing availability of interpreters and a broader range of communication devices to better assist voters with hearing or speech impairments.
 - Staff will be reporting to Council later this year on preparations for the 2026 election and will seek feedback from the Accessibility Advisory Committee to inform this report. The feedback provided will be essential in informing the recommendations that will be presented to Council for consideration.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – 2022 Election Accessibility Report

Prepared and Submitted by:
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