



Township of Norwich 2023 Ward 2 By-Election Accessibility Plan

Background

In accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, the clerk must have regard for the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities and shall prepare a plan regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities. The plan must be made available to the public before voting day. Within 90 days after the election, the clerk must also prepare a public report about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affected electors and candidates with disabilities.

Removing and Preventing Barriers

The Township of Norwich is committed to taking measures to identify and remove accessibility barriers that may exist through the voting process and at the voting location. The following measures are being taken during the 2023 Ward 2 By-Election.

Identification of Barriers

The following actions were taken to identify barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities:

- Reviewed and assessed past election administration practices to identify potential issues of accessibility for candidates and electors to develop measures to mitigate or minimize impacts
- Gathered comments and recommendations from the municipality's Accessibility Coordinator on methods to meet accessibility needs
- Updated the accessibility checklist for election personnel to use when conducting site visit at the voting location
- Assessed voting equipment and election plan to ensure it met the needs of the electorate

Removal and Prevention of Barriers

The following actions are being undertaken to remove and prevent barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities:

Communications and Information

- Notify candidates and voters that communications and information for candidates and electors are available in alternate formats upon request
- Post election information on the municipality's website
- Provide elections staff information relating to accessible customer service

Voting Locations

- Conduct a site visit of the voting location to audit accessibility requirements.
- Additional election assistants will be available to assist voters with specific needs and ensure site accessibility.
- Provide appropriate signage at voting locations
- Permit service animals and support persons in all voting locations
- Provide seating areas throughout voting locations
- Ensure designated or reserved parking for persons with disabilities at the voting location
- Provide voting station divisions in an alphabetical breakdown instead of a geographic breakdown in order to improve the ability of the individual to identify which voting station they vote in
- Ensure that all signs used large print in order to improve visibility

Voting

- Provide accessible equipment at the advance and regular voting location
- Promote advance voting opportunity for all electors, including those with disabilities
- Provide ballot magnifiers at each polling station.
- Establish voting booths accessible to allow use of wheelchairs/scooters

Staff Training

- Staff training will incorporate provisions to meet accessible customer service standards
- Staff will ensure that electors are aware that magnifiers are available, if required, throughout the day
- Staff will check access doors frequently to offer assistance and watch for electors unable to easily enter the building

Voting Methods Utilized

- Magnifying sheets will be available to help mark paper ballots
- Staff are to be prepared and trained to assist individuals in voting including swearing in of assistants to help in voting
- Vote tabulators will be programmed to identify incomplete/incorrectly marked ballots, to allow voter opportunity for corrections if desired

Feedback

Feedback, comments, and suggestions regarding the accessibility of elections is encouraged and invited. Please contact Director of Corporate Services/Clerk:

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