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## MANAGEMENT REPORT

**Date:** January 14, 2019  
**To:** Mayor and City Council  
**From:** Joan Thomson, City Clerk  
**Report#:** COU19-003  
**Attachments:** None

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**Title:** Post 2018 Election Accessibility Report

**Objective:** To report out on the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities in accordance with section 12.1 (3) of the *Municipal Elections Act*.

**Background:**

### **Identification of Barriers**

The City took the following actions to identify barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities:

#### **Actions**

1. Reviewed our election accessibility initiatives with the Stratford Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC).
2. Used an accessibility checklist for election personnel to use when conducting site visits of each designated voting location.
3. Assessed the risk of past election administration practices, identifying the likelihood of a practice creating a risk to accessibility of candidates and electors. Then identified the impact of the risk and developed measures to mitigate or minimize the risk.
4. Assessed the risk of past election facilities and feedback regarding these facilities and identified areas where adjustments could be made to reduce the risk to accessibility of electors.

## **Removal and Prevention of Barriers**

The City took the following actions to remove and prevent barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities:

### **Communications and Information:**

#### **Actions**

1. Ensured communication initiatives and information for candidates and electors were available in alternate formats upon request.
2. Posted information to municipality's website.
3. Posted information to the municipality's Facebook and twitter accounts.
4. Provided links to: a Candidates Guide to Accessible Elections, produced jointly by the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario and the Province; the provincial accessibility website; the municipality's website.
5. Established a process on the City web page to receive feedback on accessibility initiatives.
6. Provided documentation and forms in large print to assist visually impaired upon request.
7. Provided candidates and staff with information relating to accessible customer service.
8. Provided candidates with supplementary information to ensure a positive campaign for both candidates and electors.
9. Provided information to Candidates regarding Campaign Expenses and particular rules affecting disabled candidates.
10. Addressed feedback received by revising election information for electors and training material for election officials.
11. Sign Language Interpreters participated in the 2018 Candidate Information Night.
12. Made amendments to the City Website to make the election information more prominent and added information as it become available.

### **Voting Locations:**

#### **Actions**

1. Used check list when staff conducted site visits of potential voting locations to ensure accessibility.
2. Met with staff at voting locations to obtain feedback on accessibility and awareness prior to voting.
3. Provided voting locations with accessible voting equipment, in addition to being physically accessible at City Hall and Rotary Complex.
4. Service animals and support persons welcome in voting locations.

5. Provided a wheelchair at the voting location at the Rotary Complex during the voting period.
6. Varied times at many of the Nursing Home and Institutions to make it easier for residents to get to the polling place.
7. Worked with staff to take the election team bed to bed if it was difficult for an elector to vote.
8. Added additional signage that contained larger font sizes at the Institutions and Nursing Homes with voting information.
9. Arranged for additional polls at McCarthy Residence and River Gardens in an attempt to make it easier for residents to vote. (the opening of these sites was not required by legislation; however, staff felt it would be easier for some residents if they needed assistance with the computer and/or phone voting.)

## **Voting:**

### **Actions**

1. Provided accessible equipment at designated voting locations and at City Hall and Rotary Complex.
2. Provided instructions on use of accessible voting equipment.
3. Scheduled voting hours to offer a variety of voting opportunities.
4. Promoted voting opportunity for electors with disabilities.
5. Provided vote anywhere in the municipality during the voting period.
6. Provided voting opportunities on the premises of
  - a) an institution in which 20 or more beds are occupied by persons who are disabled, chronically ill or infirmed;
  - b) a retirement home in which 50 or more beds are occupied.
7. Provided voting opportunities on the premises of additional facilities with established hours of voting.
8. Added tools to assist with ensuring accessibility as identified – magnifiers, touch screens on notebooks provided by the City.
9. Met with representatives from McCarthy Residence to outline the procedure for completing Application to Amend Forms so residents could receive a Voter Notification Letters. Suggestions were also made to staff at the two facilities for helping the residents find the dedicated SimplyVoting website as their facility was in lock-down due to illness. This was appreciated as City staff were not able to access the institution/facility due to their lock down but facility staff were able to find the voting webpage on their library computers to assist the electors in casting ballots.

10. IT staff switched the computers from laptops to computer terminals at the Rotary Complex so the monitors would be larger making it easier for electors to view the screen contents.

### **Staff Training:**

#### **Actions**

1. Staff training incorporated provisions to meet accessible customer service standards.
2. An Accessible customer service video was shown in the training sessions to ensure election officials would be aware of different types of disabilities.
3. Each citizen or staff member working at the Election was required to complete an Accessible Customer Service Quiz to increase their awareness of different types of disabilities and helpful hints for providing assistance to voters.
3. Monitor concerns and ensure that their needs were met, i.e. if an individual with a walker was in a long line, staff observed, and if felt that the elector was having difficulties, offer a chair and ensure that their place was saved in the voting line-up.
4. Ensured that electors were aware that magnifiers were available, if required.
5. Directed election staff to observe electors during discussions with them, and if it appeared that the voter was having difficulty understanding, ensured that the voter was able to clearly see the speaker.
6. Encouraged election workers to approach an elector if it appeared that the elector required assistance to get around in the voting location. Offered assistance to help, did not assume an individual needed help.
7. Election staff was trained to identify a service animal and followed the Municipality's Accessible Customer Service Policy.
8. Maintained a friendly and approachable demeanour of election staff.
9. Checked the access doors frequently to offer assistance and watch for electors unable to easily enter the building/room.
10. Evaluated effectiveness of training post-election.

### **Voting Method**

For each voting method, the City took the following measures to ensure accessibility:

1. Audio ballots – telephone voting.
2. Other Assistive Devices (magnifiers and magnifying glasses)
3. Combined Telephone-Internet Voting
4. Telephone Voting

5. Internet voting that met the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) requirements and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

**Analysis:** The Clerk's Office has not received communications from persons with disabilities regarding concerns following the 2018 municipal and school board elections. Staff will continue to review best practices in preparation for the 2022 Municipal and School Board Elections.

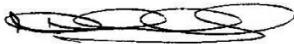
**Financial Impact:** The cost for the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities were included in the 2018 Municipal Election budget and are within the approved budget.

**Staff Recommendation:** **THAT the Post 2018 Election Accessibility Report dated January 14, 2019 be received by City Council for information.**



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Joan Thomson, City Clerk



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Michael Humble, Director of Corporate Services



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Rob Horne, Chief Administrative Officer