



TOWNSHIP OF NORTH HURON
2022 MUNICIPAL AND SCHOOL BOARD
ELECTIONS ACCESSIBILITY REPORT

December 1, 2022

The Report

The *Municipal Elections Act*, 1996, as amended (MEA), requires the Clerk to have regard for the needs of voters and candidates with disabilities and to ensure that all voting places are accessible to voters with disabilities.

This report describes the legislative environment under which elections are conducted in Ontario. It provides an overview of the Election Accessibility Plan and highlights how physical, attitudinal, informational, technological and communications barriers were identified, removed and prevented in the conduct of the 2022 Election.

This report details how the Clerk will continue to improve the accessibility of municipal elections in the Township of North Huron.

Legislative Environment

The Municipal Clerk is responsible for the appropriate legislative and administrative conduct of the municipal election in the Township of North Huron.

The MEA, Section 12.1 (1) places responsibility on the Clerk to have regard for the needs of voters and candidates with disabilities. The Clerk is also required, within 90 days after the regular election, to prepare a report on the identification, removal and prevention of barriers.

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, 2005 (AODA) sets out clear goals and timeframes for making Ontario Accessible by 2025. Under the AODA, private and public sector organizations across Ontario are required to comply with Regulations established by the Province. These regulations include the Customer Service Standard and the Integrated Accessibility Standards.

In preparation for the 2022 Municipal Election, staff reviewed the relevant legislation and implemented a number of initiatives to ensure compliance. The Clerk's Office will continue to monitor the applicable legislation, standards and deadlines and look to relevant court decisions to ensure that any new requirements are incorporated in the Election Accessibility Plan.

About the Accessibility Plan

The Township of North Huron Election Accessibility Plan is a living document that will continue to be updated and enhanced through the efforts of the Clerk's Office, with input and feedback from persons with disabilities and individual voters.

The Accessibility Plan has the following components:

- Staff training and Election Assistance
- Assistance to Electors/Voters
- Internet Voting
- Telephone Voting
- Assistance to Candidates
- Feedback Process

In 2022, the election was conducted by Internet and Telephone Voting only.

The Accessibility Plan was developed to reflect the use of these two alternative voting methods and the way they may impact voters with disabilities.

Staff Training and Election Assistance

The Clerk/Returning Officer and all other Township of North Huron Elections staff have, in compliance with the AODA, received Accessible Customer Services Training.

Additionally, the Clerk/Returning Officer reviewed ways in which to clearly explain internet and telephone voting to voters that may have various types of disabilities.

No North Huron voters requested election information in an alternative format.

No Temporary Service Disruptions were experienced during the election period.

All election related material (newspaper ads, website, social media posts, tax bill newsletter, Voter Instruction Letters) provided contact information for the Township of North Huron, to ensure that any elector who required assistance could easily obtain additional information. Voters were able to contact municipal staff by phone, email, mail, and in person at the Township Municipal Office and Voter Help Centres opened at Belgrave and Blyth Community Centres.

Assistance to Voters

As previously noted, the 2022 election was conducted by internet and telephone voting methods. The details on each of these voting methods are set out in the 2022 Clerk's Procedure Manual. The Manual is available on the Township of North Huron website (www.northhuron.ca) and can be provided in alternative formats upon request.

The *Municipal Elections Act*, Section 45(2) requires that the Clerk ensure that each voting area is accessible to voters with disabilities. The Township of North Huron provided the following options for those electors without access to the internet or telephone voting:

1. Access to the Township of North Huron Municipal Office/Voter Help Centre:
 - a. The Township of North Huron Municipal Office is located at 274 Josephine Street, Wingham and is always accessible to the public during regular office hours;

- b. Internet and Telephone voting opened at 9am on October 11th and ended at 8pm on October 24th, during which the Township of North Huron became the “Revision Centre/Voter Help Centre” and made a Voting Kiosk available to voters:
 - i. Regular Office Hours – October 11th to 24th, 2022 with extended hours on October 19th (until 7:00pm) and 24th (until 8pm);
 - c. In accordance with the Election Accessibility Plan (Page 5) the Municipal Office parking lot was designated for parking for individuals with disabilities and clearly posted. The interior of the Municipal Office and the voting kiosk booths were fully accessible to voters with various abilities.
2. Access to Township of North Huron Off-Site Voter Help Centres at the Blyth Community Centre and Belgrave Community Centre:
 - a. Both of the Off-Site Voter Help Centres are public buildings which are always accessible to the public;
 - b. Voter Help Centres were open, and fully staffed, from 2:00pm to 7:00pm on October 19th;
 - c. In accordance with the Election Accessibility Plan (Page 5), the entrance, interior and voting kiosk booths were fully accessible to voters with various abilities at the Off-Site Voter Help Centres.

In some cases, voters with disabilities were accompanied to the Voting Kiosks with a support person OR a staff person aided in casting a vote.

Internet and Telephone Voting

Internet and telephone voting enabled voters to vote through secure internet and/or telephone services. These alternative methods of voting provided voters with disabilities the ability to vote independently and privately using assistive technologies that they have available in their own home and on their own computer.

Internet and telephone voting allowed voters to participate without attending a physical location to cast a ballot. Voters were able to use assistive technologies, keypads, voice commands etc. that are readily available to them.

Assistance to Candidates

At the time of filing Nomination Papers, all candidates were provided with a copy of the 2022 North Huron Municipal Election Accessibility Plan.

Clerk’s Department staff were available throughout the election to assist with any issues that may have arisen with respect to removing barriers for candidates.

Feedback Process

Any voters and/or candidates that experienced barriers during the 2022 election process were able to utilize the Accessible Customer Service Feedback Form to identify the issue to the Township of North Huron.

Conclusion

The Township of North Huron adopted the 2022 Election Accessibility Plan and then proceeded to manage the 2022 Municipal Election in accordance with that Plan.