



2020 Municipal By-Election

Accessibility Plan

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1. Introduction

The City Clerk is responsible for the proper legislative and administrative conduct of municipal and school board elections in the City of Cambridge. In accordance with the [Municipal Elections Act, 1996](#), the [Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001](#) and the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005](#), the City Clerk is authorized to establish procedures and provide appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities have the opportunity to participate fully in the 2018 Municipal Elections. Accordingly, the 2020 By-election will be conducted in the same manner and will ensure that:

1. Candidates and Electors with disabilities have full and equal access to all election information and services;
2. Persons with disabilities have full access to Voting Places;
3. Persons with disabilities are able to independently and privately mark their ballot and have access to alternative methods of voting assistance.

This policy establishes the principles to accommodate Electors with Disabilities and is going to be applied by the City of Cambridge during municipal elections.

1.1 Municipal Election Act, 1996, as amended – Legislative Requirements

The City Clerk is responsible for conducting municipal elections and establishing policies and procedures to ensure that all electors have the opportunity to fully participate in the 2018 City of Cambridge election.

The *Municipal Elections Act*, 1996, as amended states the following:

12.1 (1) A clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities.

12.1 (2) The clerk shall 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.

12.1 (3) Within 90 days after voting day in a regular election, 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.

41 (3) 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 the assistance referred to in paragraph 4 of subsection 52 (1).

45 (2) In establishing the locations of voting places, the clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities.

2. Purpose and Scope

The scope of this policy applies to all facilities utilized by the City of Cambridge during Municipal Elections.

This document clarifies the application of the [Human Rights Code](#) and *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* in the section of polling locations; and complies with Section 45(2) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, which states “In establishing the locations of voting places, the clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities.”

The principal of this document includes the respect and dignity of electors and integrates election procedures regarding accessibility into the regular election process; providing an equal opportunity for persons with disability.

This documents provides a checklist allowing for assistive devices and any communications, access, and other tools required by people with disabilities.

3. Definition of Disability

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* defines “disability” as follows:

- a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
- b) condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- d) a mental disorder, or
- e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

Disabilities can take many forms, both visible and invisible. The following criteria were considered in the development of this Plan:

- policies and procedures must be consistent with the principles of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 and must respect the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities,
- access to electoral services must be integrated and equitable,
- initiatives should address and accommodate a wide range of abilities, and
- the City of Cambridge customer service policy for providing services to people with disabilities must be followed throughout the election process.

4. Training for Staff and Volunteers

All staff and volunteers participating in election duties will be trained to recognize and ensure that persons with disabilities are served in a way that accommodates their needs.

This training will include:

1. How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities;
2. How to interact with persons with disabilities who use assistive devices or require the assistance of a service animal or support person;
3. How to use voting equipment and assistive devices to deliver election services;
4. How to provide accessible customer services and what to do if a person is having difficulty accessing election information or services.

Election officials shall be well informed of the voting process as well as all the available tools and assistive devices and how they may be used.

Election officials shall be sensitive to each elector's needs.

Election officials shall be trained to provide customer service to people with different disabilities.

Support and accommodation needs are considered for new hires and existing employees with disabilities working on election process and/or voting day. Accommodations are available upon request.

5. Communications and Information

Candidates and electors with disabilities will be able to receive information and copies of election documents in a format that takes into account their disability. The format may be agreed upon between the requester and the Clerk, or their designate. Notice of this provision is located on the [City's website](#) and is included in election notices placed in the local media.

6. Notice of Temporary Service Disruption

The Deputy Returning Officer shall provide notice for each planned or unplanned disruption that could affect the public, such as the unavailability of an assistive device, service or feature that is regularly available to enable or enhance access to services.

The notice of service disruption must include the following information:

- Description of the service disruption
- Reason for the disruption
- Anticipated duration of the disruption
- Alternate routes, facilities and services, if any, that are available
- Contact information

Notice will be given by posting the information in a visible place on the premises (on doors, at service counters, on bulletin boards, etc.), by posting on the City's website, and by such other method as is reasonable under the circumstances.

7. Emergency Information and Procedure

Election staff will be aware of the emergency evacuation procedure and plans at their designated voting location. They will be informed on how to assist staff and electors with disabilities in the event of an emergency.

8. Assistance to Candidates

Election staff will provide candidates with information on how to make their campaigns accessible to the public and providing candidates with election information in accessible and alternative formats. Election staff will ensure candidates with disabilities can access services consistent with the requirements of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and Customer Service Standard.

Service Animals

Candidates and scrutineers are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at all Voting Places and other designated election locations.

Campaign Expenses

Expenses that are incurred by a candidate with a disability that are directly related to the disability, and would not have been incurred but for the election to which the expenses relate are excluded from the permitted spending limit for the candidate in accordance with Section 67(2) 8.2 of the *Municipal Elections Act*, 1996.

9. Assistance to Electors

Voting by Proxy

A person with a disability that is unable to attend a Voting Place may appoint another person to act as a voting proxy to cast a ballot on his or her behalf. The appointment must be made on the prescribed form available at the Clerk's Division and on the [City's website](#).

The person being appointed as a proxy will be required to take a statutory declaration before a Commissioner of Oaths. Clerk's Services staff can administer this oath (2nd Floor, Cambridge City Hall, 50 Dickson Street, Cambridge). Once completed, the voting proxy may be exercised at on Advance Voting Day or Voting Day. The appointment of a proxy may only be made after March 2, 2020 and is null and void after Voting Day.

Voting Locations

The entrance to the voting locations will be clearly identified at each location with appropriate signage.

A checklist has been created to ensure that each polling location has been properly inspected and that the place is adequately suitable to conduct an election taking into consideration accessible features.

Parking

Designated parking for persons with disabilities will be available close to the entrance of voting places, where possible. Accessible parking spaces will be clearly marked and will be on firm and level ground. Routine checks will be made to ensure all entrances remain barrier free through the course of the day.

Service Animals

Electors requiring service animals are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at all voting locations.

Support Person

Electors with disabilities may be accompanied by a support person within all voting locations. In addition, an Election Official in each voting location can assist the voter in casting their vote.

Entrance to the Voting Place

Where the main entrance to the voting place is inaccessible, another entry point that is accessible will be used. Where possible the accessible entrance is to be used as the main entrance for everyone.

The entrance for persons with disabilities will be clearly sign-posted. Every effort shall be made to ensure that the door into the Voting Place is wide enough for a wheelchair or scooter to pass through easily. If the doors are heavy, awkward to open or have handles that are out of reach, where possible an attendant will be present.

Interior Voting Area

Access to the interior voting area and voting booth shall be level and easily travelled. Where possible, seating will be made available in voting areas.

Accessible Voting Booths

Voting booths which are easily accessible will be available at each Voting Place. Voting booths will be low in height and have a wide area to allow for individuals who use a wheelchair or scooter to vote independently and secretively. Magnifiers will be made available to assist any individual with low vision.

Voting Method

The 2020 by-election will be conducted via in-person voting only. Eligible electors are able to vote at any polling location.

In this system, electronic counting machines are used for greater accuracy in the counting of votes cast by electors using paper ballots. Voters record their choices by marking the boxes next to the candidate and once the ballot has been

completed, it will be placed in a secrecy folder and then onto the vote tabulator for processing.

Accessible voting devices to assist electors who require assistance or an alternate means of casting a ballot will be available at Advance Voting Day or on Voting Day at Forward Baptist Church.

Some of the options may include:

- Thumb-switch/Joystick Method – this system involves electronic ballot cards; that are inserted into counting machines. The list of candidates is read out in the audio device and allows ease of use for voters with visual disabilities.
- Sip-and-Puff – this system involves electronic ballot cards that are inserted into counting machines. The list of candidates is indicated on the screen and voters sip or puff on a tube device to indicate their choice to vote.
- Paddles – this system involves electronic ballot cards that are inserted into counting machines. The list of candidates or question is indicated on the screen and voters press on paddles to indicate their choice to vote.

Voting Assistance

Persons with disabilities may be accompanied by a support person within the Voting Place. In addition, the Deputy Returning Officer in each Voting Place can assist the voter in casting their vote. Prior to entering the voting booth, the Deputy Returning Officer shall, in conjunction with the person with the disability, determine the extent to which they need assistance and the best way in which this assistance can be provided. This may include actually marking the ballot as directed by the person with the disability. Where a Voting Place is located in an institution or retirement home, the Deputy Returning Officer can attend their specific living areas or at their bedside to assist them in voting. All Deputy Returning Officers are sworn to an oath of secrecy.

10. Feedback

The City welcomes feedback to identify areas where changes need to be considered and ways in which the City can improve the delivery of an accessible Election. This is a living document and will continue to undergo changes based on feedback regarding services provided to people with disabilities.

A feedback form has been created to ensure that any concerns raised by the electorate will be responded to within an adequate sufficient time period.

11. Post-Election

Procedures for responding to feedback post-election shall be in place. The process must provide every person the opportunity to give feedback on the provision of municipal services to people with disabilities. This process must indicate the action to be taken when feedback is received.

12. Contact Information

Designated Clerk's Division staff will be available to assist with any issues that may arise with respect to providing an accessible election. For more information about the 2020 by-election, please contact the City Clerk's Office as follows:

Telephone: 519-760-4680 ext. 4079

Email: byelection@cambridge.ca

Internet: www.cambridge.ca/byelection

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