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## **2022 Municipal and School Board Election**

### **Post-Election Accessibility Report**

#### **1. Introduction**

When planning the 2022 Municipal & School Board Election, the focus was on ensuring that all electors in the City of Cambridge had equal opportunity to vote as undependably as possible by identifying and removing barriers that would limit the independence and dignity of electors. This following summary highlights the actions and initiatives taken during administration of the 2022 Municipal and School Board Election, as they relate to the prevention, identification, and removal of accessibility barriers.

#### **2. Legislative Requirements – Municipal Elections Act, 1996**

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 2022 Municipal and School Board 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.

#### **3. The 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan**

In preparation for the 2022 Municipal and School Board Election a detailed Municipal Election Accessibility Plan was developed in consultation with the City's Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility Services staff. A copy of the Plan was provided to all candidates as part of the nomination process and was made available to the public through the City's website.

The premise of the measures noted in the Plan is to identify and remove barriers to accessibility. This was achieved by treating all electors with respect and dignity. In addition, special attention was provided to how information and communication were provided, being cognizant of communication needing to be in an accessible format. It also took into consideration the need for Support Persons whereby a person with a disability would have someone accompany them to help with communications, mobility, personal care or medical needs. This also applies to Service Animals, if required, as they were permitted in all voting places.

#### **4. Voting Methods and Opportunities**

The 2022 City of Cambridge Municipal and School Board Election was conducted over an eighteen (18) day voting period commencing at midnight on October 7, 2022 and ending October 24, 2022.

Electors were given multiple methods to cast their vote including:

1. In-person Voting
2. Curbside Voting
3. Online Voting
4. Institutional Voting (Special Voting Locations)
5. At-Home Voting
6. Voting by Proxy

Those individuals requiring assistance with voting or with limited access to internet voting were able to request Election's staff attend at their home to help facilitate their vote or regardless of their Ward of residence, could attend the City Hall Voting location on Election Day to use the accessible voting equipment.

#### **5. Voting Methods**

For the 2022 Election, the City contracted Dominion Voting to provide internet and traditional paper ballots using Optical Scan Tabulators. The continued implementation of online and paper ballot voting methods built upon the increased convenience, sustainability, and accessibility of previous City of Cambridge Municipal and School Board Elections. Voters were granted the independence of voting anywhere in the world at any time via internet voting and anywhere within the City during the Advanced Voting period or anywhere within their Ward residence on Election Day using a traditional paper ballot.

##### **In-person Voting**

There were 41 voting locations in eight (8) wards. On Voting day, October 24, 2022, electors could vote at any polling location in their ward (each ward had at least one poll designated as a large location equipped with more equipment and staff to enable electors to vote quickly).

In the months leading up to the election, the City undertook a facility inspection for each of the election-day facilities to check for accessibility, technology and layout planning to ensure that all facilities met the minimum standard for accessibility and so that Election staff could plan voting layouts and any necessary modifications to ensure accessible voting. Criteria used during accessibility visits screened for ingress/egress, accessible parking stalls, exterior/interior signage, nearness to bus stops, etc. Staff made sure entrances for electors were accessible and as much as possible, that the voting areas were on the main floor of the facility. Temporary accessible modifications to voting locations included having Election Assistants/Greeters welcome electors and assist with opening of doors where a facility did not have automatic accessible push plates, ensuring additional exterior and interior signage, staging extra accessible parking stalls and cordoning off parking.

The City deployed Accessible Voting equipment at City Hall on voting day. The equipment meets full compliance with accessibility standards for accessible voting devices (hand-held touchpad, paddles, and sip and puff) for ballot marking.

### ***Opportunities for Improvement in 2026***

- Avoid using schools as voting locations where possible due to Accessible Parking limitations, poor lighting and poorly maintained walkways into voting locations.

### **Curbside Voting**

The City provided the curbside voting opportunity at multiple locations during the Advanced Voting period and at all polling locations on voting day. This endeavor was undertaken by the Clerks Division with the support of the City's By-law team during the Advanced Voting period. Electors were able to vote from the comfort and privacy of their vehicles. This opportunity enabled electors with mobility issues to have privacy and dignity while voting in the comfort of their vehicles. Voter's maintained the option to get out of their vehicles and vote in-person at curbside voting locations if they wished. Election Officials were provided training to assist electors with Curbside voting when required.

### ***Opportunities for Improvement in 2026***

- Consider additional communications to Voter's on what Curbside voting is about and the purpose as some voters who had a disability were confused by the concept and thought they had to get out of their vehicles to vote.
- Consider the use of mobile tablets that could be provided to Curbside voters who would prefer not to use a paper ballot or who had difficulty with reading or making paper ballots from in their vehicles

## Online Voting

Online voting is one of the most accessible voting opportunities, as electors can vote from anywhere at any time on an internet-enabled device. Each elector was provided with a unique voter ID and PIN in their mailed Voter Information Letters, which they used with their Date of Birth to access and cast their ballot online. Online voting began on October 7, 2022, at 12:00 am and was open until the close of the Election on October 24, 2022. The online voting period was the longest duration of Online Voting opportunity the City of Cambridge has provided to date. The number of online votes cast increased significantly from the 2018 Municipal and School Board Election from 8,677 votes cast in 2018 to 17,711 in 2022.

## Special Voting Locations

As prescribed by the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, the Clerk is mandated to conduct voting stations at special institutions and retirement homes. During the summer leading up to the Election, the City initiated processes to update the list of Long-term care, retirement homes and nursing homes and reached out to all facilities and set up contact persons who are mandated by the facilities to liaise with the City for the promotion and conduct of elections within the institutions. Eighteen facilities were identified, and trained staff from the City's Administrative Leadership Team and Clerks Division administered voting at all 18 facilities during the Advance Voting period so that residents of these facilities could cast their ballot.

## *Opportunities for Improvement in 2026*

- Consider the use of internet voting at Special Voting Locations using touchscreens on large-monitors and all-in-one kiosks that could be left during the voting period to provide a larger window for residents to vote during the election instead of designated days.
- Consider using mobile tablets to help facilitate voting with in-person election officials on designated Special Voting Location dates.
- The *Municipal Elections Act* requires the voters' list for all municipal elections in the province be provided by the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC). The municipal, provincial and federal elections do not share a voters' list and all three are generated differently. After every election, municipalities upload all the changes received and provide those revisions back to MPAC to adjust their information to be more accurate.
- Elections Ontario has approved the municipal voters list be the same as the Provincial voters list for the next municipal election in 2026 which hopes to bring more accuracies to municipal voters.

## **At-Home Voting**

The City provided at-home voting for electors who were unable to make it to the polls or utilize any of the other voting opportunities to be able to cast their ballot. Upon making an appointment with the Clerk, Election Officials would visit the voter's home with the proper ballot and a ballot box so they could vote. All the at-home ballots were sealed and counted at the close of the poll by the City Hall tabulator.

### ***Opportunities for Improvement in 2026***

- Consider the use of mobile tablets for at-home voting to eliminate the need for Election Officials to bring so many supplies.

## **Voting by Proxy**

Under the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, an elector may formally appoint another eligible elector to vote on their behalf in the case that they are unable to make it to the voting place. Information on appointing a proxy was posted on the City's election web page. The Clerk and Deputy Clerk took appointments during which the prescribed form could be certified. Training sessions provided Election Officials with the information required to assist electors with proxy voting.

## **6. Training for Election Officials / Voting Assistance**

All internal staff and external Election Officials participating in the election received online training specific to their role which included content on how to ensure that persons with disabilities were served in a way that accommodates their needs. Election Officials were well informed of the voting process and all the available tools and assistive devices and how they may be used.

As the Tabulator Operator at City Hall on Election Day, the City's Accessibility Coordinator was specifically trained on the use of the assistive voting equipment as City Hall was the designated fully accessible polling location where anyone in the City could vote. Additionally, throughout the voting process voters needing assistance could call, e-mail or come to City Hall to speak with staff who could troubleshoot any issues for them with needing to be added to the Voter's List or if they were having difficulty with online voting.

In addition to the training providing to staff on assisting persons with disabilities, a video was created by the City's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility staff to inform votes on the accessible voting options available to them. This video can be viewed [here](#).

Support and accommodation needs were considered for new hires and existing employees with disabilities working on the election process and/or voting days and accommodations were available upon request.

### ***Opportunities for Improvement in 2026***

- Consider the establishment of additional Voting Assistance Centres at public libraries and City recreation centres with several forms of assistance available to voters throughout the Election period. Voter Assistance Centres would allow voters to be accompanied by a variety of supports including service and therapy animals and assistive devices in addition to support persons who could provide support to the voter after completing the necessary oath with an Election Official. Where a voter does not have a support person to assist them, Election Officials at Voter Assistance Centres could help any voter on request, including with the physical casting of an online ballot, with the voter's consent.
- Consider implementing a virtual voter registration process, whereby voters can schedule a Zoom appointment with Election staff to complete the credentialing and enumeration process virtually and be added to the Voter's List instead of having to come in person to City Hall or to a polling location. This service would increase convenience to individuals who work during office hours or do not have transportation to get to City Hall or a poll.
- Consider more in-person and hands on training opportunities for Election Officials to accommodate various learning styles and to provide workers with the ability to spend more time with the VoterView software used to process voters.

## **7. Communications and Information**

All candidates and electors with disabilities were 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 requestor and the Clerk or their designate. The below notice of this provision was included on all election related documentation, including this report:

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## **8. Notice of Temporary Service Disruption**

The Municipal Election Accessibility Plan provides that notice shall be provided for each planned or unplanned voting 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. No services disruptions were experienced during the delivery of the 2022 Municipal and School Board Election.

## ***Opportunities for Improvement in 2026***

- Consider developing standardized Notice of Service Disruption templates and posters to provide to all voting locations and assistance centres in the event of a temporary disruption.

### **9. Emergency Information and Procedure**

Election Officials were aware of the emergency evacuation procedure and plans at their designated voting locations. As part of their training they were informed on how to assist staff and electors with disabilities in the event of an emergency.

### **10. Assistance to Candidates**

Candidates were provided with information on how to make their campaigns accessible to the public. This included the City's 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan and links to an Election report containing feedback from respondents on how they like to hear about candidates. Additionally, an Equitable and Inclusive Campaigning Guide was provided to all candidates which spoke to the following items:

#### Campaign information

- Should include accessible format and communication supports that are compliance with the AODA including use of platforms and materials with large print, plain language, braille, closed captioning in any campaign videos, and other format usable by person's with disabilities.
- Candidates were encouraged to provide options for translation throughout their platforms and written materials.

#### Candidate Meetings and Locations

- At candidate meetings, candidates were encouraged to provide a recording secretary and have a screen available to broadcast information for the hearing impaired as well as consider the use of sign language interpreters or other supports
- Campaign locations should be at an accessible building and/or site and have access to assistive devices.
- Campaign locations should be accessible by transit and with public access.
- Ensure accommodations are available for service animals and supports persons at campaign events

#### Connecting with People

- Candidates were encouraged to offer a range of meet-and-greet sessions through public meetings, workshops, visit to local community spaces, and door to door.

- Candidates should be prepared to meet the unique needs of Indigenous communities, youth, older adults, persons with disabilities, equity deserving groups, and those who may face barriers in the community.

## Volunteers

- Candidates were encouraged to have their volunteers distribute campaign information, facilitate voter registration, and accompany older adults and/or those with disabilities to voting locations

Despite of the resources provided to candidates, a common comment received from voters was that information on candidates was not easily found. While the City maintained a list of candidate websites, social media sites and contact information on the Election website, there exists a disconnect between electors being aware of who is running for office, what candidates' platforms are, and where to access additional information on a candidate. This disconnect was particularly noted among older voters who did not have access to internet and were not seeing information about candidates in more traditional election information sources such as local newspapers, pamphlets or door-to-door campaigning by candidates.

## *Opportunities for Improvement in 2026*

- Consider the development of Quick Reference Guides specific to Campaigning, Candidate Meetings and Volunteers.
- While it remains the responsibility of the candidate to promote their campaign to eligible voters, the City will continue to promote Candidate Events when organized on the City's Election website to elevate awareness of information available to electors.
- Feedback received from voters about the lack of awareness of candidates will also be shared with candidates in the 2026 Municipal and School Board Election.
- Reiterate to Election Candidates the need to promote themselves via multiple platforms and more traditional methods of campaigning such as door-to-door to reach a broader number of Cambridge voters.

## **11. Conclusion**

Significant improvements have been made regarding accessible elections. The principles, policies, practices and procedures must respect the dignity and independence of the electors, and the election process should ensure that the policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity. Ensuring that electors and candidates with disabilities are able to participate in the election process is essential. Regard to accessible voting systems and site access requirements are necessary.

## **Feedback**

Additional feedback regarding the accessibility of the 2022 City of Cambridge Municipal and School Board Election can be submitted as follows:

Telephone: 519-623-1340 ext. 4228

E-mail: [election@cambridge.ca](mailto:election@cambridge.ca)

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