



Town of Aurora Accessibility Plan for the 2022 Municipal Election

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TOWN OF AURORA

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Introduction

The Town of Aurora is committed to providing equitable treatment to all people by identifying and removing barriers to accessibility. The Town of Aurora Municipal Election Accessibility Plan addresses the specific accessibility requirements in accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA) and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA), as amended.

The Elections Accessibility Plan is built to strengthen the Town's commitment to improving accessibility for all, and ensures that electoral services are accessible to all electors and candidates.

The Town of Aurora is dedicated to the continuous improvement and development of our approach to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. This plan will be updated and improved as new opportunities are identified or become available. The review of accessibility issues, initiatives and addressing barrier prevention or removal is an ongoing practice.

Municipal Elections Act, 1996

The Town Clerk is responsible for the proper legislative and administrative conduct of the municipal election in the Town of Aurora. The legislative requirements under the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, include:

- Section 12.1 (1) places responsibility on the Clerk to have regard to the needs of the electors and candidates with disabilities. Accessible Customer Service Standards must be followed when conducting a Municipal Election.
- Section 12.1 (2) requires that the Clerk 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.
- Section 12.1 (3) requires that within ninety (90) days after voting day 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.
- Section 41 (3) states that 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 assistance.

- Section 45 (2) states that in establishing the locations of voting places, the Clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities.

Objectives

The Election Accessibility Plan was developed by the Town's Accessibility Advisor and is intended to highlight measures that the Town will be implementing to ensure equal opportunity for all electors and candidates. These objectives include:

- That all voting locations are accessible;
- That persons with disabilities are able to independently cast their vote and verify their selection;
- That persons with disabilities have full and equal access to all information on where and when to vote and on eligible candidates;
- That persons with disabilities can fully participate in the Municipal Election as an elector, candidate or election official; and,
- That efforts are made to ensure that electors with disabilities are aware of the accessibility measures available via channels such as the newspaper, media launches, the Town's website and social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram).

Development of the Plan

This Plan is an active document which will be improved and updated as best practices are identified and new opportunities for improvement arise. During the development process of the 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan, the following steps were implemented:

- 1) Staff training standards and practices directly related to the Election were established to ensure that people with disabilities are able to vote in a positive customer service environment, and ensure that all Election Officials recognize that in every way possible a voter's needs are to be accommodated whenever possible; and,
- 2) Following the Election, a report will be prepared on the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities and shall make the report available to the public.

Definition of Disability

- 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 Town of Aurora customer service policy for providing services to people with disabilities must be followed throughout the election process.

Accessibility Training for Election Officials

The Town of Aurora will hold mandatory training sessions for all staff and volunteers carrying out election duties. Staff and volunteers will complete Accessible Customer Service Training and specific Election Training to help serve people with disabilities and educate themselves on the special services available to assist electors.

Training will include:

- How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities;
- How to interact with persons with disabilities who use assistive devices or require the assistance of a service animal or support person;
- Explaining the voting method;
- How to use voting equipment and assistive devices to deliver election services;
- How to provide accessible customer services and what to do if a person is having difficulty accessing election information or services;
- Creating a barrier free voting location; and,
- Providing voter assistance, if required.

Communications and Information

As per the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, the Town of Aurora will provide electors information in a format that takes into account a persons disability. Information and forms will notify candidates and electors that the information is available in an alternative format upon request. Once a request has been made formats may be agreed upon between the elector and the Town Clerk, or their designate.

Notice of Temporary Service Disruptions

Due to unforeseen circumstances beyond the Town's control, the Clerk shall provide public notice on the municipal website and in the local media should a temporary disruption in the delivery of election information or services occur. The notice shall include the reason for the disruption, the expected duration and an explanation of alternative methods of delivering the information or service.

In the event of disruptions to service or unforeseen circumstances that affect the accessibility of Voting Locations during the advance vote or on the Election Day, Notices of Disruption will be posted in real time:

- On the Town's website and election website;
- On Facebook;
- On Twitter;
- On Instagram;

- Posted at the site of disruption

Accessible Voting Locations

To ensure that voting locations are accessible to electors, an Accessibility Site Inspection Checklist was created for voting locations. The checklist has been prepared to assist in the evaluation of each voting location.

The Accessibility Site Inspection includes the assessment of the following:

- Exterior paths of travel
- Accessible parking
- Accessible entrances
- Interior paths of travel
- Elevators (if applicable)
- Barrier free washrooms
- Facility signage and information systems

A comprehensive accessibility audit of each voting location has been conducted to ensure that each voting location is accessible to electors with disabilities.

Designated parking for persons with disabilities

Designated parking for persons with disabilities will be provided in close proximity to the entrance of the Voting Location 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.

Accessible Routes

Each location will have a route marked for entry into the voting location and into the voting area within the location. The voting area will be identified with clear and understandable signage.

Entrances and Exits

All entrances to the Voting Location will be easy to access and barrier free. Every effort will be made to ensure that the door into the interior Voting Area is wide enough for a wheel chair, scooter, other assistive device or service animal to pass through safely and easily. Should doors into the interior Voting Area not be accessible the doors shall

remain propped open for the duration of the voting location hours. Routine checks of the entrance and exit routes will be made throughout the day.

Interior Voting Area

Access to the interior voting area and voting booth shall be level and easily traversed. Any doormats or carpeting shall be level with the floor to prevent potential hazards. All voting areas shall be well lit and seating will be made available at various stages of the voting process.

Accessible Voting Booths

Accessible voting booths will be available at each Voting Location. Voting booths will be low in height and have a wide area to allow for individuals who use mobility or assistive devices to vote independently and privately. A large print "Notice of Ballot" poster shall be displayed in close proximity to the voting booth. Magnifying sheets will be made available to assist any individual with visual impairments, upon request.

Accessible Voting Technologies (online)

In this system, voters are able to vote from the comfort of their homes through secured internet services. This method provides for easy voting for voters with any disabilities. Internet voting will be available from October 14, 2022 until October 23, 2022.

Voting Assistance

Persons with differing abilities may be accompanied by a support person within the voting location. In addition, an Election Official in each voting location can assist the voter in casting their vote. Prior to entering the voting booth, the Election Official shall consult with the person with the varying ability to determine the extent to which they need assistance and the best way in which this assistance can be provided. Wherever possible the Election Official will explain the accessible technologies available and confirm the elector's preferred method to vote. This may include actually marking the ballot as directed by the person with the varying ability.

Service Animals

Anyone requiring the use of service animals is permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at all designated voting locations.

Support Person

A support person may accompany a person with a disability in order to help with communications, mobility, personal care or medical needs. The support person, upon the completion of an “Oath of Secrecy”, may accompany the elector behind the voting screen to assist the elector in the voting process.

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

Voting Methods

The Town of Aurora will be offering the traditional method of voting using a paper ballot that’s counted by vote tabulators as well as internet voting. Paper ballot voting will be available on the following dates and times:

Saturday, October 15, 2022 – 12 p.m. – 6 p.m. – Aurora Senior’s Centre

Sunday, October 16, 2022 12 p.m. – 6 p.m. – Aurora Senior’s Centre

Monday, October 17, 2022 4 p.m. – 8 p.m. – Aurora Senior’s Centre

Tuesday, October 18, 2022 4 p.m. – 8 p.m. – Aurora Senior’s Centre

Wednesday, October 19, 2022 4 p.m. – 8 p.m. – Aurora Senior’s Centre

Monday, October 24, 2022 10 a.m. – 8 p.m. – Local polling station

Internet voting will be available from October 14 at 10 a.m. to October 23 at 12 p.m. Please note that internet voting will not be available on Election Day.

Feedback

The Town of Aurora welcomes feedback to identify areas where changes need to be considered and ways in which the Town can improve the delivery of an accessible Election. This Accessibility Election Plan is a living document and will continue to

undergo changes. Please provide us with your feedback so we know how to best provide an accessible election. Feedback on this Plan can be submitted through the following channels:

Telephone: 365-500-3172

Email: accessibility@aurora.ca

In person or Mail: Aurora Town Hall, Corporate Services
100 John West Way, Box 1000, Aurora, ON, L4G 6J1

Additional Resources

Please visit the Town's website for more information on the [2022 Municipal Election](#) and the [Town of Aurora Multi-Year Accessibility Plan](#).