

**CITY OF HAMILTON
ELECTION 2022
ACCESSIBILITY PLAN**



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INTRODUCTION

The City of Hamilton is committed to ensuring that the 2022 Municipal and School Board Election is accessible to all citizens of Hamilton – including all voters, candidates, employees and volunteers who participate in the election administration. The City of Hamilton's Accessible Election Plan 2022 supports and enhances the City's policies, the multi-year Accessibility Plan (2020 – 2025) and the City's commitment to respond to the needs of persons with disabilities.

PURPOSE

The Municipal Elections Act, 1996 (MEA) requires that a clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities.

The MEA also requires that in establishing the locations of voting places, the clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities.

As per Section 12.1, 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.

The focus of the Accessible Election Plan 2022 is to:

- a) ensure that electoral services are accessible to all eligible voters and candidates;
- b) engage with equity seeking and citizen advisory committees to help identify additional barriers to voting
- c) identify and eliminate barriers for persons with disabilities; and
- d) create a positive and inclusive voting experience for all electors.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW

In preparation for the 2022 Municipal Election, Election staff consulted with Talent & Diversity specialists, Diversity and Inclusion Specialists, Public Health specialists, the AMCTO Municipal Election Project Team, Accessible Transportation Services (ATS), including DARTS, Corporate Facilities Specialists, and the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities (ACPD).

Throughout the development of this Plan and all Policies and Procedures related to the administration of the election, careful consideration was given to ensure that the approaches were developed to ensure respect of the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities, and are consistent with the principals of the following Acts and Policies:

- a. Municipal Elections Act, 1996,

- b. Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001
- c. Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005
- d. The City of Hamilton's Equity and Inclusion Policy
- e. The City of Hamilton's Customer Service Standards Policy
- f. The City of Hamilton's Multi-year Accessibility Plan (2020-2025)

The City Clerk's Office will continue to learn, develop, and adjust the Accessible Election Plan 2022 in order to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. This Plan will be reviewed and updated as new opportunities are identified or become available.

Following the election, the City Clerk and the Manager, Elections Print and Mail will review the outcomes of the plan implementation with the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities to identify potential areas of improvement and any additional barriers experienced during the election that can be addressed in the future. The City Clerk will report to City Council within 90 days following the election on the outcomes and performance of the 2022 Accessible Election Plan.

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS – MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS ACT, 1996, AS AMENDED

The City Clerk is responsible for conducting municipal elections and establishing policies and procedures to ensure all voters have the opportunity to fully participate in the 2022 Municipal 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 they consider 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.

ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE

The City of Hamilton is committed to providing quality services that are accessible to all persons in accordance with the City of Hamilton's Customer Service Standards Policy. In addition, and in compliance with the customer service standards of *the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, employees working in support of the 2022 Municipal Election will be required to participate in training on Accessibility at the Polls, Customer Service, and Diversity and Inclusion aligned with the AODA 2005, Integrated Accessibility Standards and Customer Service Standards Handbook. By incorporating the above-noted policies and guidelines into the training of all election staff The City of Hamilton will provide services that respect the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities throughout the election process.

DEFINITIONS AND BARRIER TYPES

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) a 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

Many different types of barriers may exist including:

- **Attitudinal Barriers:** Barriers that result when people think, and act based on false assumptions. Example: a receptionist who talks to an individual's support person because they assume the individual with a disability will not understand.
- **Information and Communication Barriers:** Barriers created when information is offered in a form that suits some, but not all, of the population. Example: print that is too small for some people to read, and public address systems that alert only people who can hear the message.

- **Technology Barriers:** Barriers occur when technology, or the way it is used, cannot be accessed by people with disabilities. Example: websites that are not accessible to people who are blind and require the use of screen reader software.
- **Physical and Architectural Barriers:** Physical barriers or obstacles that make it difficult for some people to easily access a place. Example: a doorknob that cannot be turned by a person with limited mobility or strength, or a hallway or door that is too narrow to allow a person who uses a wheelchair to pass through safely.
- **Organizational Barriers:** Occur when policies, practices or procedures result in some people receiving unequal access or being excluded. Example: a hiring process that is not open to people with disabilities.

When developing this plan and building an approach to support the administration of the election, staff considered the categories of barriers faced by persons with disabilities. Staff has worked to develop policies, practices and procedures that address barriers and enhance accessibility.

CITY OF HAMILTON'S MULTI-YEAR (2020 – 2025) ACCESSIBILITY PLAN – STRATEGIC GOALS

1. Persons with disabilities receive equitable, inclusive, and accessible customer service that meets their needs when accessing and utilizing City's services, programs, resources and opportunities.
2. Persons with disabilities who are potential employees will be accommodated and supported throughout the recruitment, assessing, selecting, and hiring process and when they are seeking advancement opportunities as employees.
3. Information and communication and supports including the City's website and self-service kiosks are fully accessible and available in accessible formats.
4. Persons with disabilities access barrier free services and programs when using Hamilton Street Railway (HSR) and Accessible Transit System (ATS).
5. City facilities are fully accessible and or will provide accessibility measures to meet the needs of persons with disabilities when accessing program, services, resources and opportunities.
6. Through training and experiential learning, staff is knowledgeable and able to recognize and identify barriers to accessibility when designing, planning, delivering and implementing services, programs and opportunities to the public as well as when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities.

KEY AREAS OF FOCUS IN THE ELECTIONS PROCESS

To prevent and address accessibility barriers for the 2022 municipal election, and to parallel the strategic goals outlined in the City's Multi-year Accessibility Plan, the following key areas were identified and focused on throughout the election planning process:

- a. Elections Communication and Information
- b. Voting Places
- c. Voting Methods
- d. Recruitment, Selection and Training of Election workers
- e. Assistance for Candidates

Based on these areas of focus, a number of specific initiatives have been undertaken by the Elections team in support of greater accessibility for electors.

ELECTIONS COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

The City is committed to ensuring that communications and information is shared in a manner that is accessible for all electors.

Initiative 1: Provide an informative and accessible election website.

Strategies:

- a) Ensure election information is available in clear, simple language.
- b) Continuously update election information posted on the City's website to reflect the most recent information
- c) Enhance the City's "Where Do I Vote?" web application to provide accessibility information about voting places.
- d) Ensure election web pages are W3C Consortium WCAG 2.0 Level A compliant
- e) Establish a dedicated accessibility section on the election's website that provides information on the initiatives undertaken by the City Clerk's Office.
- f) Build and implementation a virtual agent function on the City's website to assist electors with questions and accessing information.
- g) Provide a feedback mechanism on the website for electors to provide feedback on accessibility in the election

Barriers Addressed

- Information/communication
- Technology

Measures of Success

- Feedback
- # of website hits
- # of inquiries related to accessibility
- Level of compliance
- # of users leveraging virtual assistant

Initiative 2: Provide election information in alternative formats and through multiple channels

Strategies:

- a) Present information about election accessibility to stakeholder and community organizations
- b) Produce “How to Vote” Resources in English and Additional Languages
- c) Produce an accessible “How to Vote” Video and post to the City’s Website
- d) Build and implement a voice assistant to assist electors using smart home features.

Barriers Addressed

- Attitudinal
- Information/Communication

Measures of Success

- # of presentations and engagements
- # of stakeholders consulted
- # of resources provided
- # of video views
- # of questions asked
- # of users leveraging the technology

VOTING PLACES

The City is committed to ensuring that voting places are accessible for all electors.

Initiative 1: Ensure all Voting Places are accessible to voters with disabilities

Strategies:

- a) Engage with community stakeholders on voting place selection criteria
- b) Review and update voting place accessibility checklist
- c) Review all potential voting places with consideration for public transit access where applicable
- d) Review all potential voting places for accessibility features, including:
 - door operators / accessible doors
 - barrier-free parking
 - accessible ramps and thresholds
 - a barrier-free path of travel from the parking lot
 - adequate lighting
- e) Inspect all voting locations prior to Voting Day to ensure accessibility for all voters
- f) In the event of disruption or unforeseen circumstances requiring a poll location to be closed, a back-up poll location identified and secured that meets accessibility standards
- g) In the event of disruptions to service or unforeseen circumstances that affect the accessibility of voting places during the Advance Vote or on Voting Day, notices of disruption will be posted as soon as possible:
 - on the City's website
 - on the City's social media accounts (Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn)
 - at the site of the disruption
 - when applicable, a media advisory will be issued.

Barriers Addressed:

- Organization
- Information/Communication
- Physical/Architectural

Measures:

- # of parties consulted
- # of voting places located directly on a public transit route # of voting places located less than 250 meters from public transit route
- # of voting places located greater than 250 meters from a public transit route

City of Hamilton Election Accessibility Plan, 2022

- # of poll locations reviewed
- # of features included
- # of locations inspected
- # of backup locations identified
- # of notices posted
- # of interactions on social media

Initiative 2: Ensure all Voting Place access routes and entrances are clearly identified

Strategies:

- a) Ensure voters with accessibility needs are directed to the accessible voting entrance by prominent signage.
- b) Use large-print signage at voting places
- c) Train election workers to communicate with people who are blind or have low vision.
- d) Consult on best practices in signage and identification

Barriers Addressed:

- Physical/Architectural
- Information/Communication
- Attitudinal

Measures:

- # of accessibility signs at each voting place
- Feedback
- Information provided in election accessibility procedure manual and through training

Initiative 3: Ensure all Voting Place owners and managers are aware of accessibility requirements

Strategies:

- a) Notify all voting place owners and managers of legislative accessibility requirements in order to prevent last minute changes to voting places
- b) Welcome the use of support persons and service animals in voting places.
- c) Educate elections staff on appropriate communication with voters and service animals

Barriers Addressed:

- Attitudinal

Measures:

- # of facility owners and managers notified
- Information provided in election accessibility procedure manual and training
- Information provided in election accessibility procedure manual and training

Initiative 4: Provide a system to deal with accessibility issues, concerns or complaints

Strategies

- a) Establish a website link to an accessibility feedback form so an elector who encounters an accessibility issue can contact Election or Accessibility staff
- b) Use the received feedback to ensure that voting places are accessible to voters, as required by the Municipal Elections Act, 1996

Barriers Addressed:

- Information/Communication

Measures

- # of accessibility related reports received
- # of modifications made based on feedback, if necessary

Initiative 5: Provide information on the accessibility features available at each Voting Place

Strategies:

- a) Provide details of accessibility features available to voters and candidates at Advance Vote locations on the City's website
- b) Provide details of accessibility features available to voters and candidates at voting places on Voting Day on the City's website.

Barrier Type:

- Information/Communication

Measures:

- # of webpage hits

VOTING METHODS

The City is committed to providing electors with options for voting and ensuring that each method of voting is accessible.

Initiative 1: Provide accessible voting opportunities

Strategies:

- a) Provide voters with the option to vote by mail
- b) Provide voters with the option to vote by proxy
- c) Review ballot design to increase legibility
- d) Increase legibility of ballots through use of accessible font styles, appropriate case usage, and colours, where possible
- e) Provide an accessible ballot-marking device at all advanced polls, and one in each ward on Election day for independent voting via “sip-and-puff”, the use of paddles, or a tactile device
- f) Provide magnifiers, pens and paper at all voting place

Barriers:

- Physical/Architectural
- Information/Communication

Measures:

- # of vote by mail ballots requested, and received
- # of proxy forms received
- # of accessible voting machines
- # of opportunities to vote using accessible voting machines
- # of magnifiers at each voting place
- # of pen and paper pads at each voting place

Initiative 2: Provide voting opportunities in institutions and long-term care facilities and for underserved communities

Strategies:

- a) Establish voting places at the following facilities in order to allow eligible residents of the facility the opportunity to vote:
 - any institution in which 20 or more beds are occupied by persons who are disabled, chronically ill or infirmed
 - a long-term care facility in which 50 or more beds are occupied.
- b) Provide additional lead time for voting to occur at institutions to ensure all voters have time to cast their ballots by voting day
- c) Establish Polls in locations that fall outside of those legislated but which specifically provide seniors, post-secondary students, Indigenous electors, and electors experiencing homelessness, and indigenous with an additional and focused voting opportunity

Barriers Addressed:

- Physical/Architectural

Measures:

- # of long-term care and retirement homes where voting process was implemented
- # of Special Advance Polls established
- # of Ballot on Demand Polls
- # of electors at each poll

Initiative 3: Provide assistance to voters with disabilities as requested

Strategies:

- Ensure that voters using DARTS to get to a poll location on a voting day have front of the line access, reducing their time at the poll and ensuring that their transportation will wait for them.
- Upon request, provide voters with the opportunity to vote from anywhere at the voting place (including curbside) with assistance from a Managing Deputy Returning Officer and a Deputy Returning Officer.
- Upon request, assist the elector with voting or reading of ballot.
- Train Deputy Returning Officers to assist voters with voting process when requested

- Enable voters to swear an oath if they are unable to provide the required identification and/or documentation with a signature.
- Allow voters to bring a friend or interpreter to assist them as required with the voting process

Barriers Addressed:

- Physical/Architectural
- Organizational

Measures:

- # of trips to poll via Darts
- # of curbside accommodation requests
- average # of requests
- # of Deputy Returning Officers trained to assist with voting
- # of oaths sworn

Initiative 4: Provide instructions on the use of accessible voting equipment

Strategies:

- Produce videos that outline the voting process and the accessible voting technologies in use for the election. Videos will include accessible elements and captioning, and post the videos on the City's website
- Provide pictorial instructions on voting processes

Barriers Addressed:

- Information/Communication

Measures:

- # of videos produced
- # of views
- # of pictorial instructions

RECRUITMENT AND STAFFING

The City is committed to ensuring that recruiting and staffing practices are accessible, and that staff are trained and supported to provide accessible customer service.

Initiative 1: Provide accessibility training to all workers who participate in the election

Strategies:

- a) Develop an Accessible Election Manual providing direction on how the City of Hamilton will address the needs of persons with disabilities during the election and distribute the manual during training.
- b) Develop accessibility training and reference materials for all elections staff, including:
 - how to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities;
 - how to interact with persons who use assistive devices or require the assistance of a service animal or support person;
 - how to use voting equipment and assistive devices to deliver election services;
 - what to do if a person is having difficulty accessing election information or services

Barriers Addressed:

- Organizational
- Attitudinal

Measures

- # of manuals printed and distributed
- # of accessibility references materials printed and distributed,
- # of staff trained

Initiative 2: Ensure the recruitment process for applicants is accessible

Strategies

- Provide accommodations and special services for testing and interviews, upon request
- **Ensure the worker's manual and/or other relevant materials are available in an accessible format, upon request.**

Barriers Addressed

- Physical/Architectural
- Information/Communication

Measures

- # of accommodations requested
- # of reference materials produced in an accessible format

ASSISTANCE TO CANDIDATES

The City is committed to ensuring that Candidates with accessibility needs are provided with assistance and support as requested.

Initiative 1: Provide candidates with access to information in alternative and accessible formats

Strategies:

- Ensure the candidate guide and/or other relevant publications are available in an accessible format, upon request
- Provide the City of Hamilton's Voters' List in an electronic format to candidates
- Meet with Candidates to provide an overview of the election processes
- Hold candidate information sessions in accessible locations and virtually
- Provide accommodations and special information services upon request

Barriers Addressed:

- Information/Communication
- Technology
- Physical/Architectural
- Organizational

Measures:

- # of accessible candidate guides distributed
- # of electronic Voters' Lists distributed
- # of candidate meetings held
- # of information sessions held in an accessible location
- # of accommodation and special services requests

POST-ELECTION REPORT

Following the election, the City Clerk will review the outcomes with Stakeholders, including the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities, to identify potential areas of improvement and any additional barriers experienced during the election that can be addressed in future plans. The City Clerk will report to Municipal Council within 90 days following the election on the outcomes and performance of the Accessible Election Plan 2022.

The City Clerk's post-election report will be posted on the City's website in a format accessible to persons with disabilities and distributed to disability groups and other stakeholders, upon request.

FEEDBACK

The City Clerk welcomes feedback to identify areas where changes and improvements can be considered and ways in which the City can improve the delivery of an accessible election. The feedback process provides the City Clerk's elections staff with an opportunity to carry out corrective measures to prevent similar recurrences; address training needs, enhance service delivery, and offer accessible methods of providing election services.

Please provide us with your feedback so that we can continuously improve the accessibility of Hamilton's municipal elections. Feedback can be submitted to the Elections Office through a variety of methods including:

- **Telephone:** 905-546-2424 ext.4365
- **In-person:** 71 Main Street West Hamilton, ON L8P 4Y5
- **Fax:** 905-546-4905
- **Mail:** Elections Office 71 Main Street West Hamilton, ON L8P 4Y5
- **Website:** www.hamilton.ca/elections
- **Email:** elections@hamilton.ca

APPENDICES: POLL LOCATION CHECKLIST