



municipal and school board **election**
élections municipales et scolaires

City of Greater Sudbury
2018 Municipal and School Board Election
Pre-Election Accessibility Plan

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1.0 Introduction

“Voting is one of the most sacred rights of citizenship and that includes the right to do so in an accessible context.”

James Peter Hughes v. Elections Canada. 2010 Canadian Human Rights Tribunal 23.

The City of Greater Sudbury is a community of communities that respects the dignity and rights of persons with disabilities and endeavours to promote a barrier-free and inclusive community.

The focus of the Pre-Election Accessibility Plan is to ensure that electoral services are accessible to all electors and candidates, to identify and eliminate barriers for persons with disabilities, and to create a positive voting experience.

The City of Greater Sudbury’s Clerk’s Services Department will continue to learn, develop, and adjust our approaches in order to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. The review of accessibility issues and initiatives and addressing barrier prevention or removal is an ongoing practice.

2.0 Governing Legislative and Policy Framework

Under the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996, (The Act)* the City Clerk is legislatively responsible for conducting Municipal and School Board Elections and establishing policies and procedures to ensure that all electors have the opportunity to participate fully in the election. The *Act* requires the Clerk to have regard for the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities and to ensure that all voting places are accessible to electors with disabilities. The Clerk is also required, within 90 days after a regular election, to submit a report to City Council on the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

In addition to the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, the Clerk must also comply with the requirements of the following legislation:

- The *Ontario Human Rights Code, 1990* provides that all persons have the right to equal treatment without discrimination, including on the basis of disability, and that persons with disabilities be provided with accommodation short of undue hardship.
- The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)* was enacted in 2005 and 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.
 - The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations (IASR) brings together accessible standards for Information and Communications, Employment, Transportation and Design of Public Spaces under one regulation and harmonizes the requirements common to each standard. Each of the standards articulates specific requirements and compliance deadlines, which will be phased in across Ontario between 2011 and 2025.

Additionally, the *City of Greater Sudbury’s 2017-2021 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan* highlights the City’s planned strategies for identifying, removing, and preventing barriers within the

community. This Plan contains the strategies that will be used to enhance the overall accessibility of the 2018 Municipal and School Board Election.

3.0 Development of the Plan

In preparation for the 2018 Municipal and School Board Election, staff reviewed the relevant legislation and implemented a number of initiatives to ensure compliance. The City's Clerk's Services Department 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 Pre-Election Accessibility Plan.

During the development process of the Plan, the following steps were also implemented:

1. The proposed Pre-Election Accessibility Plan was provided to the Accessibility Advisory Committee to confirm that needs are being met;
2. Staff training standards and practices directly related to the election were established to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to vote in a positive customer service environment and that all Election Officials recognize that electors' needs are to be accommodated whenever possible and in every form possible; and
3. Following the 2018 Municipal and School Board Election, a Post-Election Accessibility Report will be prepared on the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

4.0 Planned Strategies and Actions for the Identification, Removal, and Prevention of Barriers

4.1 Electronic Voting

On May 30, 2017, City Council approved a change to the method of vote for the 2018 Municipal and School Board Election. City Council determined that electronic voting would be utilized as the sole method of vote for the entire voting period of this election. This decision greatly enhanced the overall accessibility of the election, as it allows electors to cast their electronic ballot anytime from a variety of electronic devices. Electors with disabilities have the option to use the built-in electronic voting system accessibility features to enlarge the font size and adjust the colour contrast.

Significantly, electronic voting also provides electors with the ability to cast their ballot from home if they so choose. This allows increased rights of privacy to electors with disabilities who may find voting at traditional paper based voting locations more difficult, as they have the ability to vote with little or no assistance required from others. In essence, they can use their personal assistive technologies to interact with the electronic voting system anywhere.

It is also important to note that the City's Clerk's Services staff has worked closely with the electronic voting system service provider, Dominion Voting Solutions, to evaluate the system and ensure that it will be fully secure and accessible for persons with disabilities.

4.2 Information and Communication

The City of Greater Sudbury has considered accessibility in all information and communication strategies for the 2018 Municipal and School Board Election. For example, as per the Accessible Customer Service Standard, the City of Greater Sudbury will provide a copy of an election document to a person with a disability, or the information contained in the document, in a format that takes into account the person's disability if they so request. In general, the production of election materials will be done using simple, easy to understand language with high contrasting colours and the information regarding the election will be available in a number of communication formats.

Furthermore, information placed on the City's election website will be compliant with WCAG 2.0 Level A guidelines and allow for personal assistive technologies to be utilized. In addition, users will have the option to adjust the website font within the browser's functionality to aid them in reading the information. Electors, candidates, and third parties are being directed to access all election documents and forms through the City's election website in an effort to promote accessibility and transparency. Specific to candidates, another key accessibility feature for this election is the new DataFix VoterView Candidate Access Portal, which grants them the ability to download the Voters' List electronically once it becomes available.

Information will be communicated through numerous channels, such as the newspaper, website, and social media, in an effort to ensure that electors with disabilities are aware of the accessibility measures available. It is also important to note that the City of Greater Sudbury welcomes feedback on the accessibility of the 2018 Municipal and School Board Election. This provides Clerk's Services staff with an opportunity to take corrective measures to prevent similar recurrences, address training needs, enhance service delivery, and provide alternative methods of providing election information and services.

With regards to temporary service disruptions, Election Officials will commit to making reasonable efforts to ensure that election services are reinstated as quickly as possible and that alternative services are provided where feasible. The City of Greater Sudbury will provide reasonable notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services. In the event of disruptions to services or unforeseen circumstances that affect the accessibility of voting locations during the voting period, notices of disruption will be posted in real-time on the City's website, social media pages, site of disruption, and issue media advisories where applicable.

4.3 Voting Locations

City Council determined that the City of Greater Sudbury will host in-person electronic voting locations for the 2018 Municipal and School Board Election. The City's Clerk's Services staff has arranged for Voter Help Centres to be set up at the City's Citizen Service Centres and Libraries for those who would like to receive assistance in casting their electronic ballot. These Voter Help Centres will open during regular business hours during the entire voting period. Staff also arranged for assistance to be available at the regular Electronic Voting Locations on Election Day.

The City of Greater Sudbury Clerk's Services staff conducted a comprehensive accessibility audit of each Electronic Voting Location and Voter Help Centre to ensure that each voting location is accessible to all persons with disabilities. Each voting location was assessed using

specific accessibility features, such as parking, route of travel, slope and surface, level access and the availability of a power door opener. The accessibility features of the 2018 Municipal and School Board Election voting locations can be summarized as follows:

- Accessible Route – An easily navigable route will be marked for entry into voting locations and into the voting area within the location. The voting area will be identified with clear and understandable signage.
- Assistive Equipment – Persons with disabilities may use personal assistive devices including wheelchairs, walkers, canes, note taking devices, portable magnifiers, recording machines, assistive listening devices, personal oxygen tanks, and devices for grasping. Voting locations will be equipped with magnifying sheets to assist individuals with low vision and pads of paper and pens to communicate with persons with disabilities.
- Entrance/Exit to the Voting Location – All entrances to voting locations will be easy to access and barrier-free. Doors into the interior voting areas will be wide enough for a wheelchair, scooter, other assistive device or service animal to pass through safely and easily. Should an issue arise where doors into the interior voting area are not accessible, the doors shall remain propped upon 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 will be level and easily traversed. Any doormats or carpeting will be level with the floor to prevent potential tripping hazards. All voting areas will be well-lit and seating will be made available.
- Parking – 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 throughout the course of the day.
- Service Animals – Service animals will be permitted in all Electronic Voting Locations and Voter Help Centres.
- Support Persons – Persons with disabilities may be accompanied by a support person within the voting location. In addition, an Election Official in each voting location will be available to assist electors with casting their vote. Prior to entering the voting area, the Election Official shall, in conjunction with the elector 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 casting the electronic ballot as directed by the elector with the disability.

Conclusion

It is the goal of the City of Greater Sudbury's Clerk's Services Department to ensure that electors within the municipality who require accessibility services are provided with the best opportunity to vote as independently as possible in the 2018 Municipal and School Board Election. As well, the Clerk's Services Department strives towards making the nomination and registration process as accessible as possible for all candidates and third parties.