



Town of LaSalle
Post-Election Accessibility Report
2022

Dated: December 21, 2022

The Town of LaSalle is a community that respects the dignity and rights of persons with disabilities and strives to promote a barrier-free and inclusive community.

This Post-Election Accessibility Report is intended to evaluate the accessibility of the electoral services offered to all electors and candidates in the 2022 Municipal and School Board Election. More specifically, this Report outlines the initiatives undertaken during this election cycle regarding the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates and how these actions impacted their voting experience.

The Town acknowledges that reviewing accessibility issues, and removing and preventing barriers is an ongoing process. The Town will continue to learn and adjust its approaches in order to meet the accessibility needs of its community members.

Governing Legislation and Policy Framework

The *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* (the “*MEA*”) governs the conduct of municipal and school board elections across the province. As part of their responsibility to conduct the election, the Clerk shall have regard for the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities and, in advance of voting day, shall establish policies and procedures to ensure that all electors have the opportunity to fully participate in the election. In accordance with the requirements of the *MEA*, the [2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan](#), dated April 2022, was published to the Town’s website.

The *MEA* also requires the Clerk to prepare a report about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities and make that report available to the public within 90 days after voting day.

In addition to the *MEA*, the Clerk shall have regard for, and comply with, the following pieces of legislation:

- The *Ontario Human Rights Code, 1990*, which provides that all persons have the right to equal treatment with respect to services 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* (the “*AODA*”) and its associated regulation, the *Integrated Accessibility Standards* (the “*IASR*”), which set out clear goals and timeframes for making Ontario accessible by 2025. Both private and public sector entities are required to comply with the *AODA* and the *IASR*. The *IASR* brings together accessibility standards for information and communications standards, transportation, employment, design of public spaces, and customer service.

General Accessibility Considerations

In preparation for the 2022 Election, staff reviewed the relevant legislation and implemented a number of initiatives to ensure compliance.

As required under the *MEA*, the [2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan](#) was prepared and provided to the Town's Accessibility Advisory Committee for review and comment. The Plan highlighted measures to be implemented to ensure equal opportunity for all electors and candidates with disabilities. It focused on the needs of persons with disabilities, ensuring that all persons were able to independently cast their vote and verify their selection, that full and equal access to all information about the election was granted, including voting times and locations and that all persons could fully participate in the election as an elector, candidate or election official in a way that respects their dignity and independence.

The Plan was posted to the Town's website in the Spring of 2022.

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

Method of Voting and Voting System

On October 26, 2021 Council approved an electronic election, internet and telephone, for the 2022 Municipal and School Board Election. This is the same method of election as was utilized for the 2018 Municipal and School Board Election. This method of election enhanced the accessibility of the election as it allowed electors to cast their ballot using a telephone, tablet or laptop at any time and from any location from 10:00 am on Friday, October 14, 2022, through to 8:00 pm on Monday, October 24, 2022.

Administration worked closely with staff at ScytI Canada Inc. to evaluate the voting platform, ensuring that it was fully accessible and secure for persons with disabilities. The internet platform was compatible with standard web browsers and operating systems commonly available on the market and there was no need for electors to download any additional software. Moreover, the system was WCAG 2.0 AA compliant, supporting the use of common commercially available screen-magnifiers, screen readers, and other assistive devices.

The electronic election supported independent, private and convenient voting anytime throughout the 10-day voting period. Electors were able to mark their electronic ballot using their own devices from a location and at a time convenient to them. This increased rights of privacy and accessibility for electors with disabilities who may find voting at a traditional paper-based voting location more difficult. Of the 7743 votes cast, 6868 were cast via the internet at a location other than the Voter Assistance Centre.

Election Officials and Staff Training

Leading up to the election an Accessibility Plan was developed and reviewed by the Town's Accessibility Advisory Committee. The Plan guided the provision of election-related services to persons with disabilities. The Plan was designed to ensure that persons with disabilities are served in a manner that accommodates their individual needs, provides them with equal opportunity, and respects their dignity and independence.

All Election Officials were staff members of the Town and previously received accessibility training under the *AODA*, which includes training on the customer service standard and how to serve persons with disabilities. Additionally, Election Officials were required to attend a training session conducted by the Returning Officer/Clerk. Officials were provided with information about how to assist electors who attend or call the Voter Assistance Centre. Election Officials were always available to respond to inquiries.

On Voting Day, Election Officials wore Town-branded shirts and lanyards for ease of identification.

Voter Assistance Centre

As part of the 2022 Municipal and School Board Election, a Voter Assistance Centre ("VAC") was offered to provide electors who required assistance, or did not have the technology, an opportunity to vote. The Civic Centre was selected as the site for the VAC because of its configuration and accessibility features to allow electors to travel to and from the VAC with minimal, or no, assistance. Prior to Voting Day, the VAC operated during regular municipal business hours in addition to select extended hours. During the operation of the VAC, electors could obtain assistance from an Election Official via telephone, email, or in-person.

Travel from the parking lot to the entrance of the VAC and within the VAC was barrier-free. All doors were equipped with hand swipe access. There was adequate lighting in the parking lot and within the Centre for those who attended during dusk or evening hours. Signage was posted throughout the VAC to direct electors that required assistance. Prior to Voting Day, an Election Official was stationed at the Reception Desk to provide first contact assistance to those electors entering the VAC. On Voting Day, the Election Officials were stationed throughout the Civic Centre to greet electors and provide assistance or direct elector traffic.

The VAC itself was configured with five (5) voting stations, which were all curtained off to enhance the privacy of the station. All stations were equipped with a chair, touch screen laptop, a mouse or mouse pad, privacy screen, large font candidate list, touch-screen stylus pen and magnifying glass. Electors were able to vote by using the touch screen, or mouse/mouse pad. Headphones were available upon request.

Two (2) stations were designated as accessible stations with enough space to allow for a mobility device. One of the accessible stations also contained a touch-tone telephone for telephone voting. All stations contained enough space to allow an election official to remain with the elector should they require voting assistance.

At all times, personal assistive devices and resources were permitted at the VAC, including but not limited to support persons, wheelchairs and service animals. Election Officials treated all persons entering the VAC with dignity and respect, and were sensitive to the individual needs of each elector. Chairs were set up for voters who had to wait in the event that there were lineups. Election Officials were trained to administer oaths, in the event that an elector requested assistance from a friend or family member to mark their ballot.

During the voting period, Election Officials also attended the two (2) retirement homes located in LaSalle and set up off-site VACs. The off-site VAC was fully equipped to allow electors to vote, obtain assistance voting, make changes to their voting information, and/or obtain a replacement Voter Information Letter. The iPads used to vote at the off-site VAC were enabled with large font. Election officials were present to provide support, explain the voting process, answer questions and assist when needed. Approximately 40 residents attended the off-site VAC and successfully cast their vote.

Information and Communication

Communicating information to the public was a key component of the Election. If requested, election staff were prepared to provide copies of election documents, or information contained in the document, in an alternative format, taking into account the requester's disability.

The website was designed to be informative and accessible. All information was grouped into distinct categories on the website. All persons were encouraged to access information, forms, policies and procedures through the Town's municipal election web pages. The information was continuously updated to ensure that electors and candidates received the most current information at all times. Notably, the website contained an accessibility section that provided information about the accessibility of the election.

Electors were also able to access step-by-step voting instructions in both video and print format off the website. In addition to being available on the website, the videos ran continuously on the televisions mounted in the VAC and print instructions were available from the Reception Desk.

The Town engaged other communication channels including radio advertisements, print ads, billing inserts, and social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to communicate important election information. Election Officials also attended numerous Night Markets and Vipers' Games to create awareness and provide information about the election in an effort to reach as many electors as possible.

Voter Information Letters were mailed to all eligible electors on the Voters' List. This letter contained detailed voting information as well as information about where an elector may receive assistance.

Conclusion

It was the goal of the Town of LaSalle to ensure that electors within the Town requiring accessible services were provided with the best opportunity to vote as independently as possible in the 2022 Municipal and School Board Election.

The Town received some feedback regarding the election:

- A large screen should be used at the accessible station at the VAC. A laptop screen is not large enough for those with visual impairments.
- Increase the depth and width of the voting stations to allow for a larger turning radius for scooters.
- Increase the font size on both the VIL and the Application to Amend Voter Information as a number of electors found the font too small to read without assistance.

The Town will continue to learn, develop, and adjust our approaches in order to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. Debriefs have been conducted with Election Officials regarding all aspects of the election, including accessibility needs, in preparation for the next election cycle.

Additional public feedback about the manner in which election services were provided to persons with accessibility needs may be submitted to Council Services through a variety of methods:

- Telephone: 519-969-770 X 1234
- Email: elections@lasalle.ca
- In person: LaSalle Civic Centre, 5950 Malden Road
- Mail: 5950 Malden Road, LaSalle ON N9H 1S4, Attention: Clerk

The feedback process allows staff in Council Services an opportunity to take corrective measures to prevent barriers from recurring, addresses training needs, and enhances service delivery.



Jennifer Astrologo
Director of Council Services/Clerk/Returning Officer