

# City of Brockville



## 2018 Municipal Election Accessibility Report

# 2018 Municipal Election Accessibility Initiatives

Under Section 12.1 of the *Municipal Elections Act*;

## **Electors and candidates with disabilities**

[12.1 \(1\)](#) A clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities. 2009, c. 33, Sched. 21, s. 8 (8).

## **Plan re barriers**

[\(2\)](#) 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.

## **Report**

[\(3\)](#) 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.

## **2018 Accessible Municipal Election**

eVoting services were offered using both Internet and Telephone voting capabilities. Persons who are deaf, deafened, oral deaf or hard of hearing could have made use of the Internet to cast their ballot in the election with little to no assistance. Persons who have a vision loss disability, including total blindness and legal blindness, had the ability to use the telephone to cast their ballot for the election. The eVoting system addresses other types of disabilities (learning; mental health; mobility).

Using the eVoting system, disabled persons were given the opportunity to vote from the comfort of their own home. Voting from home facilitates the voting process for disabled persons who have mobility restrictions and/or have a difficult time with transportation due to physical disabilities. Travel to a physical polling location no longer created a hardship or barrier.

Enabling persons with a disability the opportunity to vote from any location, using more than one method, (phone or internet) increases the opportunity for these individuals to participate in the election without assistance. This level of independence affords them an increased level of privacy while casting their ballot without the usual involvement of a friend or relative, which might otherwise compromise their secret ballot.

Brockville also hosted a Voter Help Centre where all members of the public, including persons with a disability, could visit or call to get assistance with their voting process

using the internet with touch screens. These centers were held in locations that provided accessibility to voters with disabilities as well.

The eVoting system was also designed to accommodate the older population in the community. Internet voting allowed election staff to travel to senior citizen homes to assist in the voting process to maintain the high participation rates found in these older age voter ranges. Seniors could choose the telephone to complete their voting, or election staff visited the residence equipped with touch screens on wireless Internet affording those electors the opportunity to cast their ballot using the internet.

As part of addressing the accessibility requirements under the Act, the voting period commenced Monday, October 15, 2018 at 10:00 am and closed on Monday, October 22, 2018 at 8:00 pm, totaling 178 hours of voting opportunity.

## **Accessibility of eVoting Services**

An opportunity to cast a ballot from the comfort and convenience of a familiar setting, complete with the tools, equipment and/or software that assist citizens with disabilities in their day to day activities is addressed with internet and telephone voting.

eVoting combined with everyday tools like computers, telephones and other aids can present opportunities for persons with disabilities to accomplish more, while being consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.

### **Internet Voting:**

Persons with disabilities accessed the eVoting services offered by the municipality for the 2018 election using the Internet and telephone.

An accessible internet can help persons with disabilities to more actively participate in society, including the ability to cast a ballot in a municipal election.

Internet initiatives that increase accessibility can positively impact many people with disabilities. It is essential that the internet be accessible in order to provide **equal access** and **equal opportunity** to persons with disabilities.

The supplier of the eVoting solution (Intelivote Systems Inc.) used by the municipality, created and operates a system that meets the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) draft standards. These **accessibility** requirements, architected into the solution, **assist persons with disabilities**. In addition, people with changing abilities due to aging are often impacted and the system can assist them to perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with the web.

The supplier of the system used by the municipality has been proactive in accommodating persons with disabilities, facilitating their comfort and participation in using eVoting services. The system the municipality selected, and the voters used,

complied with the guidelines as defined by the W3C technologies website principles. These guidelines cover a variety of initiatives including the organization, functionality and readability of information provided, as well as alternative ways of representing information over the web. Abiding by this standard ensured voters with a disability, with existing web aware technology, could connect to the voting website and interact with the voting system.

As an example, voters were offered the opportunity to make an audio selection of some of the security features required when entering a voting session via the web. This support afforded visually impaired voters the opportunity to successfully navigate the login security challenge required to cast their ballot.

### **Telephone Voting:**

Persons with disabilities could access the eVoting services over the telephone using mobile or landline telephones.

Communication barriers can make it difficult for people to receive or convey information. Barriers may come in the form of low volume, the use of language that is not clear or plain, and confusing or unorganized menus and menu options.

The eVoting system was designed and implemented with the following telephone voting functional criteria taken into consideration:

- The telephone eVoting service was offered on all types of touch tone phones and wireless devices.
- Clear natural language was used and was offered in either English or French.
- Menu options were clear and easy to follow, advising when to select options and providing confirmations of voter selections.
- Standard volume was used to allow for adjustments dependent on the telephone or device of the user.

Persons with disabilities could also use the TTY (Teletypewriter) service to access eVoting services.

### **Summary**

In general, eVoting offered electors choice in the way they were able to cast their ballot. The flexibility and choice afforded electors with disabilities positively impacted their accessibility.

The eVoting system combined with election staff members that were trained in accessible customer service provided an equal and dignified opportunity for electors to cast their ballot.