

To: David Creery, Chief Administrative Officer

From: Alysha Faria, Deputy City Clerk

Re: Accessibility Report for the 2018 Municipal Election

AIM

To advise Council of the accessibility measures taken for the conduct of the 2018 Municipal Election.

BACKGROUND

The *Municipal Elections Act* has accessibility requirements built into the legislation to ensure that all Ontarians have the ability to vote on Election Day. Section 12.1 (1) states that a clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities. As such, subsection 45 (2) requires the clerk to ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities. Additionally, subsection 12.1 (2) requires the clerk to have a plan in place regarding the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers that affects electors and candidates with disabilities. This plan was received by Council at the August 9, 2018 regular Council meeting. Finally, subsection 12.1 (3) requires the clerk to prepare a report within 90 days after voting day confirming the success of the removal of the barriers identified in plan. This report seeks to fulfil the statutory requirements as mandated through the *Municipal Elections Act*.

COMMENTS

Pursuant to the above noted sections of the *Municipal Elections Act*, the following measures were taken to prevent barriers at the polling locations:

- Prior to Election Day, CAW Hall, Oxford Auditorium, Goff Hall, and the Rock Community Church were all subject to a comprehensive accessibility review. The advanced poll location at City Hall also underwent an accessibility assessment. The review process entailed election staff to complete a detailed accessibility checklist to ensure that the environment in the proposed voting locations was free of barriers. The checklist included accessibility features pertaining to parking, walkways and ramps, loading zones, entrances and exterior doors, lobby, hallways & corridors, interior doors, fire exits, elevators, washrooms, and the voting room at all polling locations.
- In addition, election staff roved to a number of retirement homes within the community on Election Day including Cedarview Gracious Retirement Living, Woodingford Lodge, the Woodstock Hospital, Langdon Retirement Villa, Caressant Care Woodstock, Oxford Gardens Retirement Residence, and Park Place Retirement Residence. All residents within these facilities were given advanced notice and had an opportunity to cast their ballots without having to leave the facility.
- Election staff attended on patients at their bed side in the hospital to ensure that those who could not physically leave their bed had a chance to cast their ballot.
- Changes to the *Municipal Elections Act* made in 2016 included prohibiting landlords or condo corporations from limiting the ability of their tenants/owners from displaying

election campaign material during the municipal election. As a result, the City of Woodstock did not use apartment buildings as voting locations on Election Day due to the inability of ensuring a neutral voting location. Instead, the City of Woodstock offered two full weeks of advanced voting at City Hall. This included the Saturday of Thanksgiving weekend, four days of the polls being open from 8:00 am – 4:00 pm and five days of the polls being open from 12:00 pm – 8:00 pm.

- Goff Hall was equipped with an AutoMark Machine. The AutoMark Machine is an assistive device that marks ballot selections of voters who are visually impaired, have a disability, or who are more comfortable using an alternative language. The device displays ballot choices and instructions in large text print on the touch screen monitor, and is also read by an audio system in the language choice selected by the voter. Voters are able to enter their selections by touching buttons on the screen or pressing keys on the keypad. The keypads have braille labels to assist those who are visually impaired. The controls allow the voters to adjust the volume, pause and repeat audio messages and adjust the audio tempo. Finally, the AutoMark marks the voter's ballot in accordance with their wishes and returns the ballot back to the voter so that it can be cast. In the 2018 Municipal Election, the AutoMark Machine was used by one elector.
- Chairs were placed in the hallways of voting locations so individuals could sit in the event of line-ups.
- Election staff and support person(s) were permitted to assist electors with marking their ballot.
- The “vote anywhere” method assisted voters with choosing the most convenient voting location that suited their needs.
- Letter sized magnifiers were made available at all of the voting locations.
- All voting locations were along bus routes and transit and para-transit was available while polls were open. An additional para-transit bus was put into service on Election Day from 10 am – 8 pm to accommodate any additional and last minute rides.
- In accordance with Regulation 429/07 Customer Service for persons with disabilities, all election staff were provided training on the following:
 - Assistive Devices;
 - Service Animals;
 - Support Persons;
 - Communication and Terminology;
 - Notice of Service Disruption; and
 - Feedback

RECOMMENDATION

That Woodstock City Council receive the Accessibility Report for the 2018 Municipal Election as information.

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