



Post-Election Accessibility Report

2018 Municipal Election

**The Corporation of the Municipality
of South Huron**

January 17, 2019

Introduction

The Municipality of South Huron was committed to making the 2018 Municipal Election accessible by working to accommodate the needs of electors by removing barriers to vote for persons with disabilities. The focus of the Post-Election Accessibility Report is to evaluate the accessibility of the electoral services offered to all electors and candidates in the 2018 Municipal Election.

This report outlines the various initiatives undertaken during the course of the 2018 Municipal Election regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

Post-election Reporting

In accordance with section 12.1(3) of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, the Clerk shall provide a report, within 90 days after voting day in a regular election, about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with accessibility needs. The report will be available to the public and posted on the municipal website in an accessible format.

Leading up to the election, an Election Accessibility Plan (the “Plan”) was developed. Upon completion, the proposed plan was included in the Election Procedures Manual for South Huron, posted on the website, supplied to all candidates and provided upon request. The 2018 Plan guides the provision of election related services to persons with disabilities. The Plan was designed to respect the dignity and independence of electors and candidates, and ensure that practices and procedures are consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.

The following are the various initiatives undertaken by the Clerk’s Department during the course of the 2018 Municipal Election:

Communications and Information

1. Ensured communication initiatives and information for candidates and electors were created in clear, simple language.
2. Communication initiatives and information for candidates and electors were available in alternate formats.
3. Provided notice on municipal website, bulletin board and local newspaper that documents and forms were available in alternate formats.
4. Posted all election information to municipal website, at the municipal office and in the local newspaper.
5. Consistent font and font size was used for all printed material relating to the election.
6. Provided candidates, staff and public with information relating to accessible elections, as contained in the AMCTO/MMAH “Candidates Guide to Accessible Elections”.

Voting Method and Locations

1. Provided alternative voting method – Internet/Telephone Voting to:
 - Provide electors with an accessible option to vote
 - Improve access by eliminating the need to attend a voting location and ensure that electors are able to participate fully in the democratic process regardless of disabilities such as mobility issues
 - Provide convenience and accessibility for electors to vote from their own home
 - Eliminate the need for proxies, advance polls and voting places
 - Provides electors with an extended time period to vote
2. Provided link to “How To Vote By Internet and Telephone” videos on municipal website and at municipal office.
3. Published Internet and Telephone Voting information on website, bulletin board and in local newspaper.
4. Consistent font and font size was used for all printed material included in voter letter.
5. Voter letter provided to every person who qualified to be a voter by mail or in person at the Revision Centre at the municipal office.
6. Provided Voting and Revision Centre at municipal office – accessibility improved by the following measures:
 - Adequate parking available
 - Accessible entrance with ramp and automatic door opener
 - Adequate lighting outside entrances and inside Revision Centre
 - Accessible washroom available
 - Curb side assistance available if needed
 - Trained staff available to assist if needed with any accessibility needs including assistance with the doors, reading, etc.
 - Permitted service animals and support persons if needed
 - Appropriate signage at Revision Centre – large, clear font
 - Seating available for voters waiting to vote
 - Voting station low and wide enough to enable wheelchair or scooter

Staff Training

1. Staff training incorporated provisions to meet accessible customer service standards.
2. Provided reference materials related to accessibility and especially accessible elections.
3. Staff duties included identifying accessibility issues for voters and addressing them to ensure needs were met, i.e. providing extra seating for those unable

- to stand, assist with reading necessary material or explaining processes in clear language.
4. Trained to identify service animals, follow municipal Accessible Customer Service Policy.
 5. Maintained a friendly and approachable demeanor.
 6. Attended nursing home and hospital to assist residents with forms to ensure they were on Voters List.

Telephone/Internet Voting provided the electors with the ability to vote from anywhere using any assistive devices that were required by the elector. All elements of voting site were properly sized and placed on voter's own device through the responsive web design. The voting site was audited against Section 508 and WCAG-2 accessibility requirements, and are accredited as A (highly accessible) by the Bureau of Internet Accessibility and was also compliant with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) at Level AA of WCAG-2. See Schedule "A" to this report for Accessibility Compliance Report 2019.

Election Officials contacted South Huron Hospital and long term care home to determine mutually convenient dates to attend at their facilities to assist residents get added to, or make changes to, the Voters' List.

October 15, 2018 9:30 am - 11:30 am at Exeter Villa

October 17, 2018 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm at South Huron Hospital

Areas for improvement with telephone voting:

- During the voting period barriers were identified in the volume and audibility of the message provided by the election system provider Simply Voting. This created some difficulty and election officials ultimately recorded five electors that had chosen to vote by telephone that encountered this problem. This matter was communicated to the Voting Service Provider and rectified during the voting period as quickly as possible. It should also be noted, that many of those who contacted the Municipality were able to finish their vote without issue.
- Two voters reported that the speed of the automated prompts were fast and that instructions were received too quickly for telephone voting resulting in pressing the "#" after only selecting one councilor which prevented the voter from selecting any further councilors and moved them onto the next ballot. Election Staff offered assistance with regards to these complaints but ultimately this concern was primarily the result of user error. Notwithstanding, Staff will take this into account and work to address this challenge in the future.

Internet Voting

Eligible voters could vote online, using a smart phone, tablet device, or computer and any accompanying assistive devices or software, along with their date of birth and PIN and qualifying information, to access the internet address provided in their Voter Instruction Letter.

The Simply Voting System was created to meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG-2 Level AA), so that persons with disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate and interact with the online voting system. It is compliant with the guidelines of the World Wide Web Consortium website principles, which include organization, functionality and readability of information provided, as well as alternative ways of representing information, such as with audio.

Areas for improvement with internet voting:

- Ensuring electors are aware that at any point in the voting process they can cease and return to the voting session on an alternative method or visit a voting assistance centre if further assistance is required.
- Additional information in relation to the fact that electors have a responsibility to ensure their own technology (phone, computer, tablet) is suitable for the purposes of casting ballots and is not going to create accessibility issues.

In-person Voting at Voting Help Centre

For those individuals without means to access voting via telephone or internet, or who required the assistance of a trained Election Official, a Voter Help Centre at the municipal office was open to provide in-person internet voting opportunities via a touch screen kiosk or telephone. Municipal Staff conducted a review of the municipal office with accessibility objectives in mind. Voters were permitted to be accompanied by a support person who could be administered the "Friend of the Voter Oath" by an election official in order to grant them authority to accompany and assist a voter behind the privacy screen. Election Officials were authorized to provide assistance to any voter on request, with casting their ballot.

Feedback

Public feedback about the manner in which election services were provided to persons with accessible needs may be submitted to the Clerk through a variety of methods:

- Telephone: 519-235-0310
- Email: clerk@southhuron.ca
- Mail or in person: 322 Main Street S. Box 759, Exeter ON N0M 1S6

The feedback process provides election 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 services.

Rebekah Msuya-Collison, Clerk January 17, 2019