
CLERK'S DEPARTMENT

Re: Election Accessibility Report

Polling Locations

In preparation for the 2022 Municipal Election, staff consulted with the Township's Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee when determining possible voting locations.

A comprehensive checklist was created prior to the 2022 Election using the Township's Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee to evaluate whether certain sites meet the proper AODA thresholds.

Multiple locations were visited and assessed for use during the Election. The following factors were considered when determining suitable facilities for the Township of West Lincoln to use for the Municipal Election:

Building Exterior

All parking locations had onsite accessible parking spots that were clearly marked with the International Symbol of Accessibility, or were marked by staff, and had an accessible route from the vehicle to the voting location within the building. Parking lots were well maintained and paths were well lit.

Future Areas to Consider:

- More or larger signage to advertise the voting location.
- Consult with location staff to ensure that doors can be unlocked and propped open, or have an extra greeter for exterior doors.

Building Entrance

Any barriers were removed to allow for entry for all electors and staff. Every effort was made to ensure that the doors of the interior voting area were wide enough for a wheelchair, scooter, other assistive device or service animal to pass through safely and easily. If the doors of the interior voting area were not accessible, the doors remained propped open and or a greeter was stationed at the door to ensure electors with accessibility issues could make their way to the voting area. One location had the use of stairs and a ramp.

Future Areas to Consider

- Ensuring that the ramp operates quickly and efficiently.
- That the stairs are wide enough to handle multiple people during heavy voting periods.

- Ensuring that multiple chairs are available for people who need to sit while waiting to vote.

Voting Booths

Booths were made available at each voting location. The tables were low in height and had a wide area to allow for wheelchairs, scooters, and other assistive devices or animals. Seating was also made available at the booths.

Future Areas to Consider:

- Establish a clearer walking path between booths to ensure foot traffic flows more efficiently when voters leave the polls.
- Purchase more voting pens, to have a large quantity always available at every booth.

Voter Help Centre | 318 Canborough Street (Township Administrative Building)

The Township hosted a Voter Help Centre from September 26 to October 17 between regular office hours (9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.). This location was used for all members of the public, including those with a disability, could visit, call or email to get assistance with the voting process.

A room with signage posted on the door of the room was set up, with a secure computer with internet access, to allow for members of the public to access the online advanced vote. Staff were trained to provide assistance if requested by the public. Voters who lost their Voter Information Letter (VIL) or never received one was able to come to the Help Centre located at the Township Administration Building with proper identification and receive one in order to vote online, in person during the physical advanced polls, or Election day.

Legion Villa

The Township of West Lincoln attended each Legion Villa building in the morning during the advanced voting period prior to the election to ensure residents had an opportunity to vote before Election day. Staff were trained to assist the residents with utilizing the secure laptops to access the vote.

Future Areas to Consider

- Scheduling longer polling location hours at certain institutions to better support voters.
- Communicate further about expectations of the institutions in preparing the polling locations.
- Ensure the institutions residents have been properly notified of the vote.

Voting

It was a priority of the Township of West Lincoln to ensure that every voter was able to cast their ballot in an accessible and convenient manner:

Accessible Voting Options

Council selected an additional method of voting for the 2022 Municipal Election, which included an internet option. This method created more ease for those with disabilities or mobile restrictions. Internet voting provides equal access and equal opportunity to persons with disabilities.

Persons with disabilities could access the voting system by internet or by visiting the assistance booth at the Township office during the length of the advanced vote. This enabled persons with a disability the opportunity to vote from any location. As a result, there was an increase in their level of independence in voting.

Voatz Voting System

Voatz internet voting system supports a minimum of WCAG 2.1 Level AA accessibility standards and is compatible with all market leading screen readers and web accessible devices. The Voatz system fully complies with AODA requirements for optimal user experience.

The Voatz website supports smartphone, computer, and browser accessibility features, including the following:

VoiceOver and TalkBack screen readers

- Configurable font size.
- Speech-to-Text.
- Support for Bluetooth assisted devices.

Voatz had their online voting module reviewed by the Townships Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee advisor and was successful.

Accuvote Tabulators

In the 2022 Election, the Township of West Lincoln used Accuvote tabulators. When a voter marked their ballot, they placed it in a secrecy folder and brought it to the Tabulator Operator to cast their vote. There were no accessibility issues as the Tabulator Operator took the ballot and fed it through the tabulator. The secrecy folder allowed for private casting of votes. Once the tabulator showed the ballot was properly accounted for, the Tabulator Operator indicated the vote was successful and the elector could leave the premises.

Future Areas to Consider

- Renting all machines to ensure they are reliable.
- Reserving machines from vendors many months before the Election.
- Rigorous stress testing of each machine months prior to the Election.

Voting Assistance

Electors under the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 were provided with the option to have an individual accompany them when casting their ballot by reciting an "Oath of Secrecy". Staff working the Election were prepared and trained to assist any voter who

asked for assistance by reciting “Oath of a Friend of Elector”. This oath ensured privacy and confidentiality prior to providing assistance behind the voting screen. Voting Proxy Electors that were physically unable to attend a polling location had the option to appoint another qualified elector to vote on their behalf by using the proxy process.

Training

A mix of Township staff and members of the public were utilized during the election process. Two separate training sessions were held for training non-Township staff and Township staff on how to work the election. Staff that could not attend the sessions were trained privately by Clerks staff.

Future Areas to Consider

- More training sessions for non-Township staff.
- Specialized training sessions for specific roles in the election.
- A more hands on training experience.

Voter Lookup

Voter Lookup and registration was completed through MPAC’s online program. This program allowed Voters to update information about themselves and add themselves to the list. This list was then sent to Datafix which created and mailed the VIL cards.

Advertising

The Election website contained information on the voting method, assistance and location of the Election Help Centre in order to expand services.

The Township’s water bills included a 2022 Municipal Election insert containing voting information and registration.

Voter pamphlets were mailed to all West Lincoln residents through a local distributor that included municipal election information such as candidates, voting methods & locations, contact information, and other important voting information.

Through the use of various ads and social media, the Township along with the Region promoted: candidate information sessions, the nomination period, “Are you on the voters’ list?”, and voting dates and times.

Options and Discussions

In general, online and tabulator voting offered electors multiple options to cast their ballot. The flexibility of online voting positively impacted accessibility for electors with disabilities.

Feedback

Public feedback regarding how election services were provided to those with accessible needs may be submitted to Jessica Dyson, Director of Legislative Services/Clerk by the following methods:

- Telephone: 905-957-3346 ext. 6720
- Email: jdyson@westlincoln.ca
- Mail or in person: 318 Canborough Street, Smithville, Ontario,

The feedback process will provide staff with an opportunity to correct and prevent any accessible issues to enhance service delivery, prevent reoccurring issues, and address training.



Jessica Dyson
Director of Legislative Services/Clerk