



Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula Council Report

Report Number: C 22-54

Subject: Accessibility Initiatives undertaken for the 2022 Municipal Election

From: Cathy Addison, Municipal Clerk

Date: November 15, 2022

Recommendation:

That Council receives Clerk's Report C-22-54 as information with respect to the Accessibility Initiatives undertaken for the 2022 Municipal Election.

Background:

In accordance with the Municipal Elections Act and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, the Clerk is authorized to establish procedures and provide appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities can participate fully in the Municipality's 2022 Municipal Election.

The 2022 Municipal Election was held on October 24, 2022. For the 2022 Municipal Election, Council opted to vote by internet and telephone. The internet and telephone voting method were authorized by By-law No. 2022-36, which was passed on April 25, 2022.

The Municipal Election Accessibility Plan that was adopted by By-law 2022-08 earlier this year, supports and strengthens the municipality's commitment and efforts to respond to the needs of persons with disabilities. The focus of the plan was to ensure that elections services were accessible to all electors and candidates, to identify and eliminate barriers for persons with disabilities and to create a positive voting experience for everyone.

Comments:

Northern Bruce Peninsula utilized Internet and Telephone Voting and therefore did not have voting locations. However, staff did ensure the accessibility of the Municipal Offices for electors, candidates and staff as this location was utilized for anyone to access the voting equipment, if needed. The Council Chambers was setup to offer touch screen computers, laptops and a push button telephone for any elector who required assistance and to vote at the office location.

The Accessibility Plan, Election Procedures and the Act require the following:

- Elections Staff completed accessible customer service training and specific election training to ensure persons with disabilities were serviced in a way that accommodated their individual needs, which staff has been previously received training;
- Election information posted to the Municipality's website or circulated in print was created with consideration for, and adherence to, accessibility requirements;
- The Help Centre established at Municipal office was available during regular and extended hours on Saturday, October 22 and Monday, October 24, 2022;
- Both the Lion's Head and Tobermory Libraries functioned as technology hubs during normal hours of operation for those individuals who required a device to vote on, or access to wireless internet;
- The Municipal Office has designated accessible parking spots, level pathways leading to facility entrances, automatic door opening devices, or were propped open in a safe manner with doors being wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair or other mobility device;
- The Voting booths set up in the Council Chambers featured a wide area to allow individuals using mobility aids to vote independently and secretly;
- Voting booths provided equipment with Accessibility ease of access, if required;
- Electronic (telephone and internet) Voting provided alternate accessible formats for voting;
- Elections Staff completed Form EL11 – Appointment and Oath of an Election Official in order to assist electors upon request;
 - Electors who required assistance to mark their ballots attended a designated Help Centre and verbally stated Form EL27 – Oral Oaths at Voter Help Centre.
- Elections Staff attended Brad Davis Apartments – Bruce County Housing to assist eligible voters with voting equipment and support, which was greatly appreciated by the residents;
- Two Golden Dawn Nursing staff members were sworn in to assist their residents with voting requirements. This was done to ensure the residents safety with the latest COVID outbreaks in the area;
- Staff assisted a local resident with the ability to vote who is unable to attend in person or has access to internet due a severe disability;

- Accessibility Election questionnaires were completed by voters using the Council Chambers Help Centre and very positive comments were received with regards to the ease of access and the professional staff assistance;
- Elections Staff ensured Election Procedures were flexible yet secure to allow parttime/seasonal, and full-time residents the ability to have Voter Information Letters reissued, or, for qualified electors to be added to the Voters' List up to and including Election Day.

The considerations noted above contributed to a barrier-free election in accordance with s.12 of the Act.

Staff received very positive feedback with regards to our voting provider, Simply Voting. Many voters complimented staff on the ease of access.

Through these efforts, staff tried various methods to reach as many voters as possible to ensure the public was properly informed about the election. Staff recognize that informing an electorate about a new voting method, the voting dates, and encouraging voting can always be improved.

Budget Implications:

Funds were allocated for the 2022 Municipal Election to assist with any expenditures.

Attachments:

1. By-law No. 2022-08 Election Accessibility Plan for the 2022 Municipal Election
2. Pictures of Help Voting Location at Municipal Office

Municipal Strategic Commitment:

Maintaining a transparent & responsible government

Building a safe & vibrant community

Respectfully submitted:

Cathy Addison
Municipal Clerk

Approved by:

Peggy Van Mierlo-West,
Chief Administrative Officer



Election Accessibility Plan

2022 Municipal Elections

Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula

Schedule "A" to By-law No. 2022-08

This Plan is for use in the 2022 Municipal Election in conjunction with the Municipality's current Accessibility Plans and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation

This document is available in an alternative format upon request

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Introduction

The Clerk is responsible for the appropriate legislative and administrative conduct of the municipal elections in the Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula.

The Municipal Elections Act ('MEA'), Section 12.1 (1) places responsibility on the clerk to have regard to the needs of the electors and candidates with disabilities.

Section 12.1 (2) of the MEA requires that 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.

Northern Bruce Peninsula municipal elections will be conducted in a manner that shall ensure that candidates and electors with disabilities have full and equal access to all election information and services, including help centres. The election will be conducted in a manner that ensures that persons with disabilities are able to vote independently and privately with access to voting assistance if required.

Section 12.1 (3) of the MEA requires that within 90 days of voting day the clerk who is responsible for conducting the election shall submit a report to Council regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

Staff Training

All staff carrying out election duties will complete the Northern Bruce Peninsula Accessible Customer Service Training and specific Election Training to recognize and ensure that persons with disabilities are serviced in a way that accommodates their individual needs.

Training will include:

- how to interact/communicate with persons with various types of disabilities;
- how to interact with persons with disabilities who use assistive devices, require the assistance of a support person or a service animal;
- how to clearly explain internet and telephone voting;
- what to do if a person is having difficulty accessing election information or services; and
- how to provide voter assistance if requested.

Provision of Election Information

Election information will be provided to electors and candidates with disabilities in an alternative format, agreed upon between the requester and the Clerk.

Notice of the provision of information in an alternative format will be provided on the Municipality's [election webpage](#) and included in various election notices within the Bruce Peninsula Press and municipal Facebook page. A friendly URL has been

established for the election webpage to promote accessibility:
northbrucepeninsula.ca/elections/

Notice of Temporary Service Disruption

The Clerk shall provide public notice on the Municipality's [election webpage](#), and in the local media if there is a temporary disruption in the delivery of election information or services. The notice shall include the reason for the disruption, the expected duration and an explanation of alternative methods of delivering the information or service. Every effort shall be made to provide alternative methods of providing the information or service to persons with disabilities.

Staff Assistance

Election staff are available throughout the election to assist with any issues that may arise with respect to providing a barrier-free election.

Telephone: (519) 793-3522

Email: clerk@northernbruce.ca or deputyclerk@northernbruce.ca

Fax: (519) 793-3823

In Person (pending COVID-19 restrictions): Municipal Office, 56 Lindsay Road 5, Lion's Head, ON N0H 1W0

Mail: Clerk, Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula, 56 Lindsay Road 5, Lion's Head, ON N0H 1W0

Assistance to Electors

The 2022 Northern Bruce Peninsula municipal elections will be conducted with internet and telephone voting methods. Detailed information about each voting method is set out in the 2022 Election Procedure Manual, available on the Municipality's [election webpage](#) or from the Clerk's Office and can be provided in an alternative format upon request.

Please contact us at (519) 793-3522 or clerk@northernbruce.ca or deputyclerk@northernbruce.ca if you require your Voter Notification Letter in an accessible format.

Dedicated Election staff are available throughout the election to assist with any issues that may arise with respect to providing a barrier-free election.

Help Centre

The Help Centre located at the Municipal Office (56 Lindsay Road 5) will be available to voters throughout the voting period and on Voting Day until 8:00 p.m. The location, accessible parking and entrance information will be posted on the Municipality's [election webpage](#).

Parking

The Help Centre will be located in a building that has private or municipal designated parking for individuals with disabilities.

Entrance

The entrance to the Help Centre will be level. Doors will have automatic door opening devices or will be propped open in a safe manner. The doors will be wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair or other mobility devices.

Interior

Access to the interior voting area and voting booths will be level. Carpeting and doormats will be level with the floor. The voting area will be well lit and seating shall be made available.

Accessible Voting Booth

The voting booths will have a wide area to allow individuals using mobility aids to vote independently and secretly. In the voting booth there will be a large, touchscreen tablet on a stand or laptop with a mouse. If the tablet height needs to be adjusted it can easily be removed from the stand to be held on its own or with assistance.

Voting Assistance

People with disabilities may be accompanied by a support person within the voting booths or the Help Centre staff can assist a voter in casting their vote. The Help Centre staff will, in conjunction with the person with the disability, determine the extent to which they need assistance and the best way to provide the assistance.

Election staff will be on-site at the two retirement homes/long-term care facilities within the Municipality during various times in the voting period to increase accessibility. All election officials are sworn to an oath of secrecy.

Internet Voting

Internet voting allows voters to vote from their home through secured internet services. This method provides for easy voting for persons with a variety of disabilities to cast their vote with independence and privacy as voters have the option of using the assistive tools they have on their own computer such as paddles, a hand-held touchpad, a thumb switch or sip and puff technology.

This method of voting is designed to encourage voter participation as voters do not have to attend a physical location to cast their ballot and accessibility and privacy for people with disabilities is maximized.

The internet election platform will include the capability to change font size and colour scheme.

Telephone Voting

Telephone voting allows voters to vote from their home through secured telephone services which provides for easy voting for people with a variety of disabilities to cast their vote with independence and privacy. Land lines or cell phones can be used to vote and the method is compatible with assistive devices.

Voters can register their vote selections with the telephone keypad or voice commands, greatly increasing accessibility, privacy and independence for voters who do not have internet access.

Assistance to Candidates

The 2022 Northern Bruce Peninsula municipal elections will be conducted with internet and telephone voting methods. Detailed information about each voting method is set out in the 2022 Election Procedure Manual, available on the Municipality's [election webpage](#) or from the Clerk's Office and can be provided in an alternative format upon request.

Please contact us at (519) 793-3522 or clerk@northernbruce.ca or deputyclerk@northernbruce.ca if you require your Voter Notification Letter in an accessible format.

The dedicated election staff are available throughout the election to assist with any issues that may arise with respect to providing a barrier-free election.

Feedback

The Clerk welcomes feedback to identify areas where changes need to be considered and ways in which the Municipality can improve the delivery of an accessible election. This plan is a living document and will continue to undergo changes when necessary. Feedback on this plan can be submitted through the following:

Telephone: (519) 793-3522

Email: clerk@northernbruce.ca or deputyclerk@northernbruce.ca

Fax: (519) 793-3823

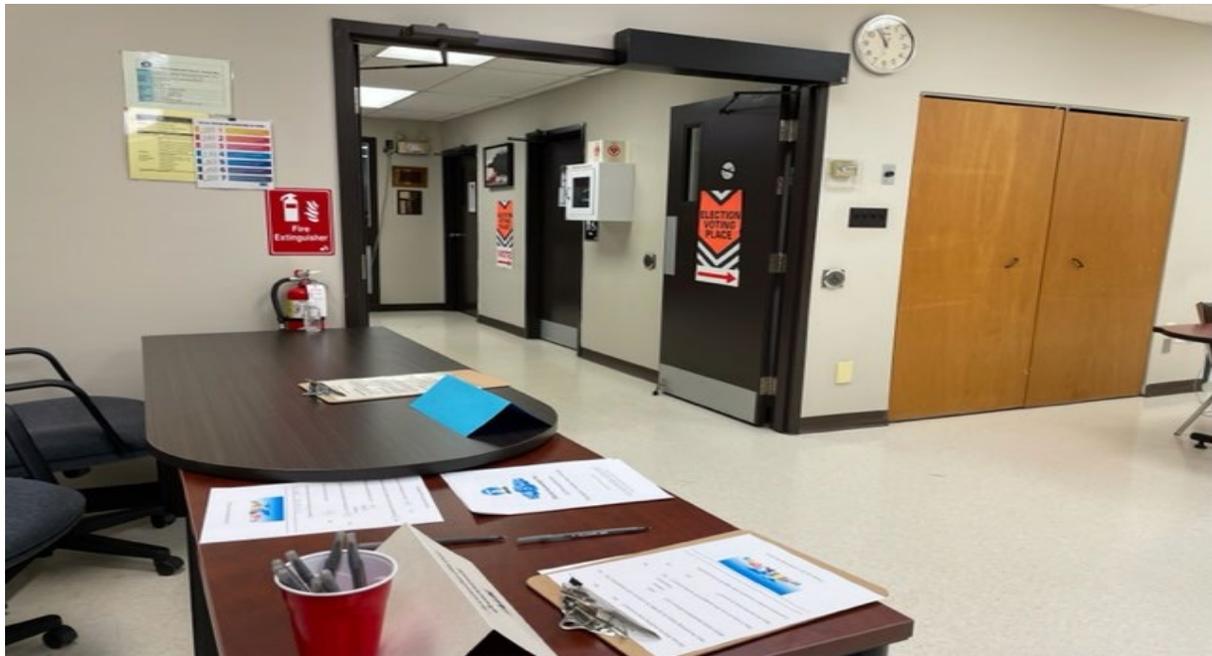
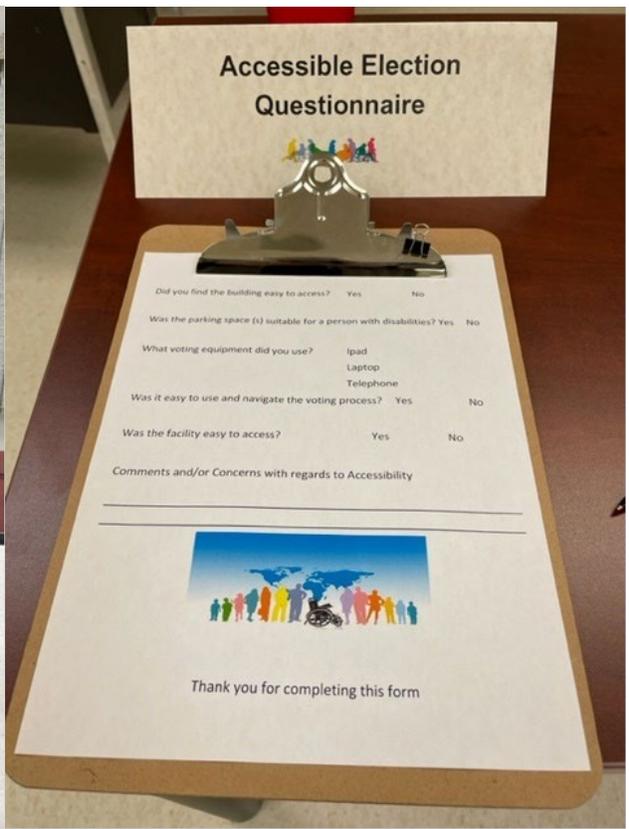
In Person (pending COVID-19 restrictions): Municipal Office, 56 Lindsay Road 5, Lion's Head, ON N0H 1W0

Mail: Clerk, Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula, 56 Lindsay Road 5, Lion's Head, ON N0H 1W0

Additional Information

Northern Bruce Peninsula [Accessibility Webpage](#)

Northern Bruce Peninsula [Election Webpage](#)



Ease of Access to Help Centre – Voting Location in the Municipal Council Chambers – Municipal Election 2022