

RICHMOND HILL

VOTES

October 22, 2018

2018 Municipal Elections Accessibility Plan

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Introduction

The 2018 Municipal Elections Accessibility Plan reaffirms the Town's commitment to provide all candidates and voters with the equal opportunity to participate in the electoral process with dignity and independence. The Plan's focus is to establish objectives and actions that will identify and eliminate barriers to accessibility. Ultimately, our goal is to create a positive voting experience and ensure the municipal elections are accessible to everyone.

References

Richmond Hill's Tabulator Procedures – Sections 2 (2C) & 12

The election should be accessible to the voters. One of the principles of the Town's Municipal Elections, in accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, is that the Clerk will have regard to the needs of Voters with disabilities. Section 12 of the Tabulator Procedures includes procedures for providing accessible and alternative voting methods.

Richmond Hill's Accessibility Policy

This policy establishes the overarching framework to guide the Town of Richmond Hill's compliance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, S.O. 2005, c. 11 (AODA)* for the Town of Richmond Hill. The Town is committed to identifying and eliminating barriers to accessibility in the provision of goods and services that are accessible to everyone, and which are provide in a manner that respects dignity and independence of all people

Accessible Customer Service Procedures

Our Accessible Customer Service Procedures reaffirms the Richmond Hill's commitment to providing barrier-free goods and services. It supports the Town's Accessibility Policy and outlines detailed processes and accommodations pursuant to the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service.

Municipal Elections Act, 1996 – Sections 12, 41 (3), 45

The clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities. In addition, 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. In establishing the locations of voting places, the clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities. During voting, the clerk shall make changes to ballots as necessary or desirable to allow electors with visual impairments to vote without assistance.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, or AODA, aims to identify, remove, and prevent barriers for people with disabilities. The AODA is made up of five standards: Information & Communications, Employment, Public Spaces, Transportation, and Customer Service. The legislation and standards apply to all levels of government, nonprofits, and private sector businesses in Ontario.

Definition of Disability

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* defines “disability” as follows:

(a) Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness

and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,

(b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,

(c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,

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(d) a mental disorder, or

(e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

Feedback

The Town Clerk welcomes feedback to identify areas of improvement for the delivery of accessible municipal elections. If you require this document in an alternative format please feel free to contact us.

Phone: 905-771-8800

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Richmond Hill, ON L4B 3P4
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Objectives

1) Review and Identify Barriers to Accessibility

Richmond Hill will review municipal elections processes to identify barriers and determine actions that can remove them. This includes consultation with staff and accessibility stakeholders, and reporting on progress in identifying and removing barriers after the elections.

Planned Initiatives	Planned Actions
<p>Consult with accessibility stakeholders and the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC)</p>	<p>Seek input from the Accessibility Advisory Committee and other stakeholders on how to make elections accessible. Staff will share planned accessibility initiatives and other voting information such as voting times, voting locations, and alternative voting methods. Staff will seek input from the AAC on accessible voting locations.</p>
<p>Consult with internal staff and use their expertise to identify and eliminate barriers</p>	<p>The Town’s Legislative & Accessibility Coordinator will provide advice on how to improve accessibility for the municipal elections. In addition to monitoring accessible voting methods, staff will establish criteria for accessible voting locations and ensure they are accessible for persons with disabilities.</p>
<p>Post-election accessibility survey</p>	<p>A post-election survey asking for feedback on accessible elections will be shared with the Accessibility Advisory Committee and voters. This will help staff evaluate accessibility of the 2018 municipal elections and help improve the accessibility of future elections.</p>

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Planned Initiatives	Planned Actions
Post-election accessibility report	Within 90 days after voting day in a regular election, the clerk will prepare a report about how Richmond Hill identified, removed and prevented barriers for electors and candidates with disabilities. The report will be made public and available on Richmond Hill's website.

2) Use Information & Communications to Remove Barriers

We will ensure information and communications for candidates and voters are accessible and available in alternative formats.

Planned Initiatives	Planned Actions
Develop an accessible and informative election website – Richmondhill.ca/elections	<p>The elections website will be transformed into a separate landing page and will become a one-stop shop for all election matters. Like all Town web pages, it will be in compliance with WCAG 2.0 Level AA. The Town will strive to ensure all information posted is accessible. The website will allow visitors to request alternative formats and subscribe to website changes.</p> <p>Continuously updating election information posted on the City's website to reflect the most recent developments and information.</p> <p>Providing BrowseAloud, a free web page reader on the election website to assist individuals who have difficulty reading online.</p> <p>An opportunity to provide feedback on the website will be</p>

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Planned Initiatives	Planned Actions
	provided.
Provide training, documents and supplementary information in alternative formats and through various channels	<p>The Candidate Information Package, AMCTO's Candidate's Guide to Accessible Elections, Clerk's Guide to conducting accessible elections, and other associated information will be provided in various formats.</p> <p>Staff accessibility training will be provided in various formats, such as link to Accessibility Ontario/Access Forward resources and training. Hard copies will be provided.</p> <p>All other information will be posted on the website, accessible links will be provided, and paper copies will be provided if necessary.</p>
Documents/information in alternative formats upon request	For example, provide documents/information in large-print to assist people who are visually-impaired.
Provide accessible information to stakeholders	Assistive groups will be approached to assist with distributing information to members/voters about the voting options available to them.

3) Ensure Voting Locations are Accessible

Ensure voting places and facilities are physically accessible.

Planned Initiatives	Planned Actions
Voting location inspections	Consult with Elections Ontario regarding voting locations for the 2018 provincial elections. Consider their

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Planned Initiatives	Planned Actions
	<p>assessment criteria to determine accessibility of voting locations.</p> <p>Develop criteria that will assess physical accessibility of voting locations. Among other criteria, the checklist will contain requirements for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible/power-operated doors • Sufficient lighting • Accessible ramps • Layout and barrier-free paths of travel • Additional seating • Accessible parking <p>Staff will conduct site visits of all potential voting locations to apply criteria and ensure accessibility. Staff will also consult with the school board representative to ensure schools are accessible. Election officials will also perform a final accessibility check during advance voting.</p>
Accessible Candidate Information Sessions	Any Candidate Information Session will occur in an accessible location. Accommodations will be available upon request.
Central voting location	Provide at least one central voting location to provide an opportunity for persons with disabilities to vote using accessible voting equipment.
Flexible voting requirements – advance voting	During advance voting, voters can vote at any location across the Town, which will provide more flexibility for all

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Planned Initiatives	Planned Actions
	voters and especially voters with physical disabilities. Advance voting will occur October 6-7, 13-17.
Collaborate with other organizations	Staff will address any accessibility concerns with York Region school board administrators.
Accessible signage at voting places	Staff will ensure that signage is placed in the appropriate areas to guide voters to the voting place. Signage will be accessible, follow guidelines to accessible signage, and will be easy to read and understand. Where possible, accessible signage will indicate that the accessible entrance is the same as the main entrance.
Accessible feedback/notification process	If applicable, Richmond Hill will post notifications regarding voting location changes, emergencies, and other information on the Richmond Hill 2018 Municipal Elections website and social media.
Accessible constituency and campaign offices	Recommend that candidates have accessible constituency and campaign offices.
Collaborating with facility owners/operators of voting locations	Notify all facility owners/operators of the accessibility requirements in the Building Code and AODA in order to prevent late changes to voting locations.

4) Ensure Voting is Accessible

We will ensure all voters have the equal opportunity to vote, with integrity and as independently as possible

Planned Initiatives	Planned Actions
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Planned Initiatives	Planned Actions
<p>Permit support persons and service animals in voting places</p>	<p>Any person with a disability accompanied by a support person or service animal may enter the Office of the Clerk or any voting location with their support person or service animal.</p>
<p>Provide alternative voting methods and accessible voting equipment</p>	<p>Any Designated Election Official who has taken an oath or affirmation of secrecy from the Clerk may assist a Voter in any manner if he or she is unable to attend to a Voting Screen independently, including: assisting a voter to mark his or her Ballot behind a Voting Screen or in the Voter's apartment, room at any Special Voting Location.</p> <p>A Voter may request assistance from a friend to mark his or her Ballot properly, provided they have taken an oath or affirmation of secrecy from the Designated Election Official.</p> <p>Voters who are not able to vote at a voting location may appoint another person as their voting proxy.</p> <p>Voting tabulators will be accessible. An Audio Tactile Interface (ATI) Device and Assistive Devices intended to support an independent voting experience will be available during the Advance Vote at some locations. It will include a tactile controller with large buttons that are distinguishable by shape and colour. Each button will have a Braille label next to it. The device will connect to a voting tabulator and a set of headphones. At the voter's option, a set of paddles or a sip and puff device will be</p>

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Planned Initiatives	Planned Actions
	<p>provides. The device could allow the voter to vote independently.</p> <p>Instructions on how to use assistive devices will be available on the elections website and in print at the voting place.</p>
<p>Schedule advance voting</p>	<p>Advance voting will be scheduled to allow more flexibility for those that cannot vote during regular business hours on Voting Day. Advance Voting is available over 7 days, including 2 weekends, and is “Vote Anywhere” which offers a choice of attending any designated location.</p>
<p>Provide tools/supplies to facilitate voting for persons with visual impairments</p>	<p>Magnification screens, note pads, and pens will be available at voting locations.</p> <p>A visual poster on how to vote will be available.</p>
<p>Provide other voting opportunities for seniors and persons with disabilities</p>	<p>Voting opportunities will be provided on premises of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retirement homes where 50 or more beds are occupied; • Institutions where 20 or more beds are occupied by persons with disabilities or chronic illness.
<p>Voter lookup</p>	<p>The Municipal Property Assessment Corporation will allow residents to check if they are on the voters’ list, and add their name if they are not, on voterlookup.ca. Richmond Hill will provide a link to this website. This could improve waiting times for voting on Voting Day and</p>

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Planned Initiatives	Planned Actions
	allows residents to update their information online without visiting the Office of the Clerk.
Provide voting opportunities at retirement homes	Voting will be provided at institutions and retirement homes according to the legislative requirements. This will increase the accessibility of voting for residents with disabilities and seniors. Voting hours will be advertised at these locations in advance. Posters on dates and times will be displayed.
Curbside voting	Upon request, voters may request to vote in their vehicle at a voting location. This will ensure voting is accessible to persons with physical disabilities.
Voting Day	Staff will request that school boards designate Voting Day as a PA day in order to reduce congestion in schools and parking lots. This will also increase likelihood of more accessible parking becoming available for voters.

5) Provide Accessibility Training

Richmond Hill will ensure elections officials receive training on AODA legislation and standards, which includes training on providing accessible customer service.

Planned Initiatives	Planned Actions
Provide candidates with information on how to make their campaigns more accessible	Candidate Information Sessions will cover information on making campaigns accessible and accessibility requirements in the <i>Municipal Elections Act</i> . Candidates

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Planned Initiatives	Planned Actions
	<p>will be provided with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clerk’s Guide to Accessible Elections; • Candidate’s Information Package with information on accessibility requirements and legislation; and • Links to Ontario government resources on accessibility.
<p>Develop accessibility training for temporary staff</p>	<p>Richmond Hill will develop training sessions for elections staff on accessibility requirements, serving people with disabilities and on the accommodations and special services available to assist voters.</p> <p>Elections staff will complete the Certificate version of <i>Working Together: The Code and the AODA</i>, which is AODA training developed by the Ontario Human Rights Commission for Ontario Public Service employees. Training will be monitored and temporary staff will provide a certificate of completion upon request.</p> <p>Staff will be provided with supplementary material such as the Clerk’s Guide to Accessible Elections, links to Ontario government resources on accessibility/Accessibility Directorate of Ontario, and Access Forward resources.</p>