



INFORMATION REPORT
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January 25, 2015

CORPORATE SERVICES – LEGISLATIVE SERVICES
INFORMATION REPORT - 2015-01

TO: Mayor and Members of Council
COPY: SLT, OLT
FROM: Lisa Lyons, Deputy Clerk
SUBJECT: Accessibility in the 2014 Municipal Election

In accordance with the Procedure By-law, any Member of Council may make a request to the Town Clerk that this Information Report be placed on an upcoming Committee of the Whole agenda for discussion.

PURPOSE

In accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, all municipalities are required to adhere to the following provisions:

Electors and candidates with disabilities

12.1 (1) A clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities.

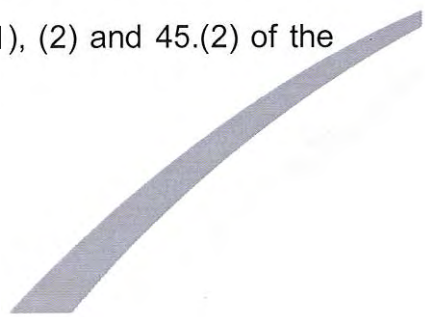
Report

12.1 (2) Within 90 days after voting date in a regular election, the clerk shall submit a report to council about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

Accessibility

45.(2) In establishing the locations of voting places, the clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities.

The purpose of this report is to address the provisions of Section 12.1 (1), (2) and 45.(2) of the *Municipal Elections Act*, as noted above.



COMMENTS

The Town of Newmarket is committed to promoting an inclusive community and ensuring that all qualified electors have an opportunity to fully participate in the municipal election process.

In preparation for the 2014 municipal election, town staff worked in consultation with the Newmarket Accessibility Advisory Committee to develop the 2014 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan (attached as Appendix 1). The plan outlines various initiatives and activities to identify, prevent and remove barriers in relation to voting locations, voting methods, election workers and communications.

In accordance with the relevant legislation, this report demonstrates the Town of Newmarket's commitment in addressing barriers to participation in the electoral process.

Sample "Accessible Voting Postcard" distributed to community groups and at events



Accessible Voting Options



There are accessible voting options for voters of all abilities in the Town of Newmarket.

Did you know...

1. All voting locations within the Town of Newmarket are physically accessible and have trained staff to help if needed.
2. A friend or family member may help you mark your ballot provided they take an Oath of Secrecy.
3. Accessible voting devices which allow you to mark your ballot independently will be available during the advance vote at the Magna Centre. For voting times and dates, please see the calendar on reverse.
4. If you have any questions or voting requirements you wish to discuss, please call 905-953-5300 ext. 2220 or email elections@newmarket.ca



If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact the Town of Newmarket at 905-895-5193.



Comments/feedback received from the public and election staff regarding accessibility during the advance voting opportunities and voting day include:

- Residents appreciated the advance voting “vote anywhere” model which allowed opportunities to vote in locations throughout the Town at their convenience
- Residents appreciated being able to add their name to the voters list through the online tool provided by the Town of Newmarket website and not having to attend in person
- Staff attended resident’s homes upon request for those who could not attend in person to process proxy forms
- The accessible voting equipment was utilized during the advance voting opportunities
- St. Elizabeth Seton School: on voting day automatic front doors ceased working, election officials deployed a customer service clerk to assist electors in and out of the building
- Glen Cedar School: complaint regarding need for additional accessible parking (had not been a complaint in previous elections and will be re-evaluated for 2018)
- Sacred Heart School and Youth Centre: complaint regarding distance from parking lot to voting location inside building (had not been a complaint in previous elections and will be re-evaluated for 2018)

As part of the 2018 election planning, staff will take the comments/feedback provided and will explore and report back on opportunities that provide enhanced levels of service to all electors including a potential vote model incorporating internet voting.

BUSINESS PLAN AND STRATEGIC PLAN LINKAGES

This report links to Newmarket’s visions to be a community *Well* beyond the ordinary and links to the key strategic directions in being Well-equipped and Managed – focusing on providing service excellence and in being Well-balanced – focusing on increased accessibility for persons with disabilities.

CONSULTATION

The 2014 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan was developed in consultation with the members of the Newmarket Accessibility Advisory Committee and staff from Corporate Communications.

HUMAN RESOURCE CONSIDERATIONS

Not applicable to this report.

BUDGET IMPACT


The accessible voting devices and enhanced engagement tools were accommodated through the approved 2014 budget.

CONTACT

For more information on this report, please contact Lisa Lyons, Deputy Clerk, Legislative Services, at llyons@newmarket.ca or at 905-953-5300 Ext. 2203.



Lisa Lyons, Deputy Clerk



Andrew Brouwer,
Director of Legislative Services/Town Clerk



Anita Moore,
Commissioner of Corporate Services



APPENDIX 1

2014 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan



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**Alternative formats of this document
are available upon request.**

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1. Introduction

This plan addresses the specific accessibility requirements in relation to the 2014 Municipal Election in the Town of Newmarket.

On December 17, 2009, Bill 212 was enacted to amend various provisions within the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* (MEA). These amendments came into force and effect on January 1, 2010. In relation to accessibility issues, a number of provisions are mandated for the 2014 Municipal Election. The Clerk responsible for an election must:

- conduct an election that will have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities.
- ensure that voting places are accessible to persons with disabilities
- submit a report to Council about the identification, removal and prevention of election barriers that affect persons with disabilities.

The Town of Newmarket is committed to promoting an inclusive community. These efforts are evident through the implementation of numerous accessibility standards aimed at improving the delivery of customer service to people with disabilities. The 2014 Town of Newmarket Municipal Election Accessibility Plan ('the Plan') was developed with the advisement of the Accessibility Advisory Committee, in an effort to ensure that the 2014 Municipal Election coincides with the core principles of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. This document was created in advance of the election in order to identify the necessary measures to be taken and reported to Council following the election.

2. Development of the Plan

In order to develop the Plan, several steps were taken in order to ensure that the statutory requirements were met and a feasible implementation plan was in place. During the development of the Plan, the following measures were taken:

- Reviewed and analyzed documents, policies and other supporting materials from AMCTO, neighboring municipalities, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and other various stakeholder groups.

- Established staff training standards and practices directly related to the Election to ensure that people with disabilities are able to vote in a positive and comfortable customer service environment, and that all Election Officials recognize that a voter's needs shall be accommodated.
- Consulted with the Accessibility Advisory Committee to confirm that the Plan met the needs of persons with disabilities.
- Comment cards and feedback forms will be available at all voting locations and online to obtain feedback on the accessibility of the election.
- Following the election, the Plan will be submitted to Council as per Section 12.1 of the Municipal Elections Act.

The Plan will be updated and improved upon as best practices and new opportunities to provide accessibility are identified.

The 2014 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan is available at the Legislative Services department at the Town of Newmarket Municipal Offices and on the Town of Newmarket web site www.newmarket.ca/vote2014. Alternative formats are available upon request.

Information regarding the accessibility measures provided for the 2014 Municipal Election shall be included in general election advertising as well as in the 2014 Municipal Election Nomination Package.

3. Voting Location

A comprehensive accessibility audit of each polling location shall be conducted prior to voting day in order to ensure compliance with legislated accessibility standards. The purpose of the accessibility audits is to ensure that appropriate measures are taken on voting day to make each voting location as accessible as possible.

The following considerations shall be taken into account:

Accessible Route

- The name and/or address of the voting location shall be clearly visible from the road or sidewalk.
- An easily navigable route will be marked for entry into the polling location and into the voting area within the location.

- The voting area shall be identified with clear and understandable signage.
- If needed, the voting area will be accessible by ramp or elevator.
- Road or sidewalk work will not interfere with access at voting locations.

Entrance and Egress

- The route to the entrance of the voting location shall be unobstructed and accessible.
- The route shall be wide enough to allow for an individual using a wheelchair, scooter, or other assistive device, or service animal to travel safely.
- Doors into the voting location shall be equipped with working power doors, or an election worker will be present to open the doors for all voters.
- Doors into the voting area will be propped open for the duration of the polling location hours.
- Routine checks of entrance and egress routes will be made throughout the day.
- The entrances and interior voting route shall be well-lit and in good working condition (no abrupt changes in the level of the pathway or obstructions).

Parking

- Accessible parking shall be available at all voting locations.
- The designated parking space(s) shall be clearly marked with the International Symbol of Accessibility and will be on firm and level ground, close to the entrance of the voting location.
- In locations where parking is limited, an election worker will be acting as a parking attendant to ensure that accessible voting spaces are being used appropriately.
- Consideration has been given to the distance between accessible parking and the voting area.

Washrooms

- Accessible washrooms shall be available at the voting location.
- Election staff will be able to direct voters to the accessible voting locations.

4. Voting Methods

All voting for the 2014 Town of Newmarket Municipal Election will be done in-person by paper ballot, at a voting location or roving poll. Similar to previous elections, optical scan vote tabulators will be used to read and tabulate marked ballots according to the procedures established by the Clerk.

Accessibility considerations:

- Ballots will have large print contrast text
- Magnifier sheets will be available at all voting locations
- An accessible voting device will be available during the advanced vote
- Voting assistance options are outlined in Section 4.2 of this report
- Election workers will be trained in providing accessible customer service (please see Section 6 of this report)

4.1 Advance Voting

There are eight advanced voting opportunities scheduled for the 2014 Municipal Election.

During the advanced voting period, qualified voters can “vote anywhere”. This means that residents can vote at any advanced voting location, no matter which ward they live in.

Saturday, October 11

8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Community Centre

12:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Ray Twinney Complex and the Magna Centre

Sunday, October 12

12:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Ray Twinney Complex and the Magna Centre

Saturday, October 18

8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Community Centre

12:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Ray Twinney Complex and the Magna Centre

Sunday, October 19

12:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Ray Twinney Complex and the Magna Centre

Monday, October 20, Tuesday, October 21 and Thursday, October 23

4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Ray Twinney Complex and the Magna Centre

4.2 Voting Assistance

1. Pursuant to the Town of Newmarket Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) Policy, all voting locations are physically accessible for individuals with disabilities.
2. Elections officials will be available to provide help if needed. 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; attending to a voter in a vehicle parked at a Voting Place, or in the voter's apartment, room or other space at a Special Voting Place.
3. 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.
4. Pursuant to Town of Newmarket Accessibility Standards for Customer Services, persons with disability are permitted to be accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal at any voting location.
5. An accessible voting device which allows voters with disabilities to mark their ballot independently will be available during the advance vote at the Magna Centre.

4.3 Multi-unit Residences

Election staff will be visiting select multi-unit residences on Wednesday, October 22, 2014 between 4:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. in order to provide advanced voting opportunities.

4.4 Roving Polls

On Voting Day (October 27, 2014), election workers will be visiting long-term care facilities and retirement homes to set-up on-site polls or bedside voting opportunities for residents.

4.5 Accessible Voting Equipment

Accessible voting equipment which allows voters to mark their ballot independently will be available during the advance vote at the Magna Centre.

The accessible voting equipment is an Audio Tactile Interface (ATI) Device. This is a tethered handheld device attached to a vote tabulator used to navigate, indicate and record ballot selections, which may be used alone or together with paddles, sip and puff, headset or other assistive appliances.

A printer attached to a Vote Tabulator is used to mark ballots in accordance with voter's ATI-recorded ballot selections for subsequent processing by a Vote Tabulator.



Figure 1: Accessible Voting Device

How the Accessible Voting Device works

1. A voter may request or be offered the use of the ATI Device and ATI Device-assistive appliances by an Election Official when registering to vote.
2. The Designated Election Official determines any ATI Device-assistive appliances the voter prefers to use and assists the voter to wear the headset, hold or secure the ATI Device, or hold or secure any ATI Device-assistive appliances. The Designated Election Official will explain to the voter about what they can generally expect in their voting session.
3. The voter will listen to and record his or her candidate choice(s) using the ATI Device/ATI Device-assistive appliance. These selections will generate a ballot for tabulation from the printer attached to the Vote Tabulator.
4. The Designated Election Official will remove the ballot from the printer in a discreet manner which attempts to conceal the voter's votes using a Secrecy Folder.
5. The Election Office tabulates the voter's marked ballot as outlined in section 12(5) of the Clerk's Procedures for Use of Vote Tabulators.

Accessible Voting Device Accessibility

Accessible voting devices will be available at the Magna Centre during the advanced voting days.

Saturday, October 11

12:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Magna Centre

Sunday, October 12

12:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Magna Centre

Saturday, October 18

12:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Magna Centre

Sunday, October 19

12:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Magna Centre

Monday, October 20

4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Magna Centre

Tuesday, October 21

4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Magna Centre

Thursday, October 23

4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Magna Centre

4.6 Voters' List

Potential electors can confirm and/or update their information through the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) online voter look-up tool at www.voterlookup.ca

Beginning September 2, 2014, qualified voters will be able to add their name to the voters list through Newmarket's own online voter look-up tool, which can be accessed through the Town of Newmarket website: www.newmarket.ca/vote2014

These online tools allow voters to add their name onto the Voters list at their own convenience, from a variety of devices. The Town of Newmarket has been working with VoterLookUp.ca to raise awareness of the www.voterlookup.ca platform. Representatives from VoterLookUp.ca attended the Accessibility Awareness Week event in order to provide information about VoterLookUp.ca. The Town has also advertised VoterLookUp.ca in various media outlets.

5. Communication Plan

- All candidates are provided information regarding accessible elections in their nomination package.
- Staff attend Newmarket Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting to demonstrate how to use the accessible voting device and provide accessible voting information.
- Members of the 2014 Election team demonstrated accessible voting equipment at the Accessibility Awareness Week.
- Media release regarding accessibility and language support for election and attendance on July 20, 2014 at the Multicultural Festival.
- Election advertisements in local media including the Town Page, SNAP, Era Banner and local radio stations.
- Members of the 2014 Election team attend community events leading up to Voting Day (October 27, 2014).
- Further media releases will be put out regarding accessibility closer to Voting Day.
- Information packages regarding accessible voting options shall be distributed to community organizations for feedback.

5.1 Election Materials

The Town of Newmarket is required, as per the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, to provide a copy of a document to a person with a disability, or the information contained in the document, in a format that takes into account the person's disability.

5.2 Alternate Formats

Alternate formats are other ways of publishing information besides regular print. Some of these formats can be used by everyone while others are designed to address the specific needs of the user.

The Town of Newmarket and the person with a disability may agree upon the format to be used for the document or information.

In the event the information is not generated by the Town or is supplied by a third party, the Town will make every effort to obtain the information from the third party in an alternate format and/or will attempt to assist the Elector by providing assistive equipment.

5.3 General Election Materials

Large Print – Printed material generated by the Town will be provided in a sans serif font, minimum 11 point, and can be made available in a font (print) size that is 16 to 20 points of larger.

Website – Information generated by the Town on the website in relation to the election will be compliant with WCAG 2.0 Level A, and allow for assistive software to be utilized. In addition, website font can be adjusted within the browser's functionality to aid the user in reading the information through BrowseAloud™.

5.4 Accessible Voting Cards

Information regarding accessible voting options and the availability of the accessible voting device is provided on Accessible Voting Cards. This card is distributed at community events as part of Election Outreach.

5.5 Community Events

Members of the 2014 Election team have been attending community events leading up to Voting Day to distribute valuable information regarding the Municipal Election (including information about accessible voting options).

This includes:

- National Access Awareness Week Event
- The Newmarket Farmers' Market
- Kanata Festival
- The Around the World Multicultural Festival
- Newmarket Library
- Upper Canada Mall
- New'bark'et
- Caribbean & South Asian Showcase
- English as Second Language Classes



5.6 Community Outreach

The Town of Newmarket has contacted community groups that work with people with disabilities in order to provide information about accessible voting options. Information packages are to be distributed in September.

5.7 Service Disruption

In the case of service disruptions, the Town of Newmarket shall provide reasonable notice in the event of planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by persons with disabilities.

Notice of these temporary disruptions shall be provided in a conspicuous place and manner at the respective locations and information shall be posted on the Town of Newmarket website. This notice shall include information about the reason for the disruption, anticipated duration, and description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

Accessible services in relation to this plan include voting places, election materials and/or voting provisions for Electors with disabilities at the voting place.

In the event of disruptions to service or unforeseen circumstances that affect the accessibility of voting places during the advance vote or on Election Day, *notices of disruption* will be posted in real time:

- On the Town of Newmarket website
- On Twitter: @TownofNewmarket
- Through the PingStreet—Newmarket app
- At the site of the disruption
- Where applicable, a media advisory will be issued.

6. Election Workers

The Town of Newmarket will be recruiting and hiring a variety of customer-service focused, temporary election officials to assist on Voting Day.

6.1 Recruitment and Selection

The recruitment and selection of election workers adhered to the Employment Standard, which promotes the hiring of people with disabilities and encourage people to disclose.

6.2 Training in Accessible Customer Service

All election staff will receive training under the Accessible Customer Service Standard and the Integrated Standard.

Full-time Legislative Services staff will be trained to assist voters with accessible voting equipment.

7. Reporting

Pursuant to Section 12.1 of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, within 90 days after voting day, the Town Clerk shall submit a report to Council about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

8. Additional Information

For additional information about accessibility, please visit the Town of Newmarket website at www.newmarket.ca or by contacting one of the following individuals:

Sarah Niezen, Records and Project Coordinator
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905-953-5300 ext. 2213
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