



Post-Election Accessibility Report

2022 Municipal Election

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

December 19, 2022

Introduction

The Municipality of South Huron was committed to making the 2022 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 2022 Municipal Election.

This report outlines the various initiatives undertaken during the course of the 2022 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 by the Clerk and reviewed by the Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee. Upon completion, the plan was included in the Election Procedures Manual for South Huron, posted on the website, supplied to all candidates and provided upon request. The 2022 Plan guided the provision of election related services to persons with disabilities and 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 2022 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, local newspaper, and social media that documents and forms were available in alternate formats.
4.	Posted election information to municipal website, at the municipal office (including electronic sign out front) and in the local newspaper. Information and reminders also posted on Municipal social media as well as local radio station.
5.	Consistent font and font size was preferred for printed material relating to the election.
7.	Candidates were provided a link to a shared drive so they could access election resources, copies were available by contacting the Clerk.

Voting Method and Locations

1.	<p>Provided alternative voting method – Internet/Telephone Voting to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 - provided the electors with the ability to vote from anywhere using any assistive devices that were required by the elector.
2.	<p>Provided link to “How To Vote By Internet and Telephone” videos on municipal website and at municipal office.</p>
3.	<p>Published Internet and Telephone Voting information on website, bulletin board, social media and in local newspaper.</p>
4.	<p>Consistent font and font size was preferred for all printed material included in voter letter. All elements of voting site were properly sized and placed on voter’s own device through the responsive web design.</p>
5.	<p>Voter letter provided to every person who qualified to be a voter by mail or in person at the Voter Help Desk at the municipal office.</p>
6.	<p>Provided Voter Helpdesk at municipal office – accessibility improved by the following measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adequate parking available - Accessible entrance with ramp and automatic door opener - Adequate lighting outside entrances and inside at Voter Help Desk - 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 Voter Help Desk – large, clear font - Seating available for voters waiting to vote - Voting station low and wide enough to enable wheelchair or scooter
7.	<p>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 2022.</p>
8.	<p>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.</p> <p>The Simply Voting System was created to meet the Web Content Accessibility</p>

	<p>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.</p>
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In addition to the accessible Voter Help Desk at town hall, election officials contacted South Huron Hospital and Exeter Villa to determine mutually convenient dates to attend at their facilities to assist residents get added to, make changes to the Voters' List and to vote:

- October 18, 2022 9:00 am - 12:00 pm at Exeter Villa
- October 19, 2022 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm at South Huron Hospital

Election Officials took the helpdesk to various locations throughout the Municipality to assist residents to check if they were registered to vote, get added to/make changes to the Voter's List, and provide Voting assistance (during the voting period).

- September 16, 2022 3:00 pm – 6:00 pm – Exeter BIA Farmers Market
- September 22, 2022 9:00 am – 11:00 am – Riverview Estates, Exeter
- September 22, 2022 11:00 am – 12:30 pm – South Huron District Highschool
- September 27, 2022 10:00 am – 12:00 pm – Grand Cove Estates, Grand Bend
- October 13, 2022 1:00 pm – 3:30 pm – Dashwood Community Centre
- October 14, 2022 1:00 pm – 3:30 pm – Dashwood Community Centre
- October 14, 2022 2:00 pm – 6:00 pm – Exeter BIA Farmers Market
- October 15, 2022 9:30 am – 11:30 am - Kirkton-Woodham Community Centre
- October 20, 2022 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm – Grand Cove Estates, Grand Bend
- October 20, 2022 4:00pm – 7:pm – Stephen Arena, Huron Park

The Returning Officer and Deputy Returning Officer had authority to meet with individuals virtually or by telephone to have individuals added to the voter's list, this provided accessibility to individuals that were unable to attend the Municipal Office or voter help desks in person.

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 demeanour.
6.	Attended nursing home and hospital to assist residents with forms to ensure they were on Voters List and to assist in voting.
7.	Mobile Helpdesk – staff attended various locations, on various dates throughout the Municipality to assist residents with forms to ensure they were on Voters List and to assist in voting.
8.	Remote meeting options available to be added to voter’s list – in the event someone was unable to physically attend the Voter Help Desk location, there were alternate means available for them to be added to list.

In-person Voting at Voter Help Desk

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 Desk at the municipal office was open to provide in-person internet voting opportunities via a touch screen kiosk. As outlined above, Election Officials took the Voter Help Desk on the road to various locations throughout the Municipality to provide assistance. 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 the casting their ballot.

Telephone Voting

During the voting period Election Officials were not notified by any electors of any barriers relating to voting by telephone.

Internet Voting

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 voter help desk if further assistance is required.
- Additional information in relation to the “decline to vote” option and electors responsibility to review voting option prior to hitting submit.
- Additional information and assistance in relation to electors to ensure their own technology (phone, computer, tablet) is suitable for the purposes of casting ballots and is not going to create accessibility issues.

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
December 19, 2022