

**Submitted by:** Karen Martin, Director of Corporate Services

**Report No:** 2018-158

**Council Meeting Date:** December 4, 2018

**Agenda Item:** 7.6(d)

**Subject:** 2018 Municipal & School Board Election – Accessibility Report

**File:** C07 Election/2018

## RECOMMENDATION:

**For Council's information.**

## BACKGROUND & COMMENTS:

Section 12.1(1) of the *Municipal Elections Act* (MEA) states that the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities must be incorporated into the 2018 election process. Further, Section 12.1(3) provides that: "Within 90 days after voting day in a regular election, the clerk shall prepare a report about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities and shall make the report available to the public."

Section 12.1(2) of the MEA states 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." The above plan was prepared within the Election Procedures, was posted on the Township website and available for viewing at the Township Office or in any form requested by an elector and appears as follows:

### 27. ACCESSIBILITY

- 27.1 The Clerk shall have regard to the needs of candidates and electors with disabilities.
- 27.2 The Clerk shall ensure that the Ballot Return Station is accessible to electors with disabilities.
- 27.3 The Clerk shall ensure that the Counting Location is accessible to candidates and scrutineers with disabilities.
- 27.4 The Clerk shall prepare a Report to be submitted to the Council, 90 days after voting day, about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect voters and candidates with disabilities.
- 27.5 Election Officials will be available for assistance during normal office hours from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday, during the election period and on Voting Day from 8:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- 27.6 The Township of Zorra has established Accessible Customer Service Policies, Practices and Procedures. The Municipal Election for the Township of Zorra will be conducted with having regard to the policies as established.

The attached information identifies actions that were taken by staff throughout the election planning process, and recommendation for future elections, if applicable. Due to the fact that Zorra Township utilized the Vote by Mail method for the 2018 municipal election, all electors had the opportunity to vote in their homes, thereby addressing many of the accessibility concerns we may have encountered had we run traditional polls.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

N/A

## LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN

**Goal:** We are an *engaged* community that values all members and actively encourages involvement, engagement, openness and transparency.

**Action:** By being open and transparent

## ATTACHMENTS

- a. 2018 Municipal & School Board Election Accessibility Report

Submitted by:

Approved by:

*Karen Martin*

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Karen Martin  
Director of Corporate Services



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Don MacLeod  
Chief Administrative Officer

**Appendix A**  
2018 Municipal Election – Accessibility Report

Purpose of Report

The following represents the report to Council as required by Section 12.1 of the Municipal Elections Act regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

Identification of Barriers

The following actions were taken to identify barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities:

Actions	
1.	Had access to an accessibility checklist for election personnel to use when conducting election work, if required.
2.	Assessed voting method and equipment to ensure it met the needs of the electorate.
3.	Assessed the risk of our past election administration practices, identifying the likelihood of the creation of risk to accessibility of candidates and electors.

Removal and Prevention of Barriers

The following actions were taken to remove and prevent barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities:

*Communication and Information*

Actions	
1.	Ensured communication initiatives and information for candidates and electors were available in alternate formats (upon request).
2.	Provided links to “A Candidates Guide to Accessible Elections”, produced jointly by the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario and the Province on the municipality’s website and other related material.
3.	Provided all documentation and forms in large print to assist visually impaired (upon request).
4.	Provided candidates and staff with information relating to accessible customer service.
5.	Established a feedback process by posting notices on the Municipal website and in the other publications.
6.	Utilized pictures, where possible, to demonstrate the message.
7.	Utilized a video with step-by-step instructions on the use of alternative voting method (Vote-by-mail) and made it accessible on municipal website and social media. Audio instructions describing the process were included for those with limited or no vision.

8.	Posted a large copy of the ballot at the voting booth located in the Council Chambers for easier reading and understanding.
9.	Utilized radio advertisements.
10.	Offered the use of an interpreter for voters, where possible, if advance notice provided.
11.	Encouraged candidates to make their campaign as accessible as possible to voters with disabilities. Provided candidates with the joint AMCT and Accessibility Directorate of Ontario publication entitled "Candidate's Guide to Accessible Elections" to provide guidance in this regard.

*Voting Locations*

Actions	
1.	Utilized the accessible Municipal Office and Council chambers (on the main floor) as the voting location to ensure full accessibility.
2.	Provided one central voting location prior to voting day and on voting day which was physically accessible.
3.	Provided seating areas throughout the voting location for electors needing a rest and for support persons.
4.	Provided appropriate signage.
5.	Permitted service animals and support persons in voting location.
6.	Designated parking available for persons with disabilities at voting location.

*Voting*

Actions	
1.	Established voting booths on tables which were low and wide enough for easy access to enable the use of a wheelchair or scooter to allow the voter to vote independently and secretly; also provided seating for both elector and support person.
2.	Posted a large copy of the ballot at the voting booth for easier reading and utilized pictures to demonstrate the instructions to complete the ballot.
3.	Permitted an elector who needed assistance in voting to have such assistance. For example, a support person may make the mark on the ballot for someone with a disability, or may read the ballot aloud for them.
4.	Provided extended advance voting opportunities, utilizing alternate voting method (vote-by-mail).
5.	Promoted advance voting opportunity for all electors, including those with disabilities.
6.	Provided vote anywhere in the municipality using vote-by-mail.
7.	If elector was unable to attend the office to be added to the voters list, staff delivered and picked up the appropriate forms.

*Staff Training*

Actions
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1.	Staff training incorporated provisions to meet accessible customer service standards.
2.	Provided reference materials.
3.	Monitored elector's concerns and ensured their needs were met.
4.	Directed election staff to observe electors during discussions with them, and if it appeared that the voter was having difficulty understanding, ensured that the voter was able to clearly see the speaker.
5.	Encouraged election workers to approach an elector if it appeared that the elector required assistance to get around in the voting location. Offered assistance to help, did not assume an individual needed help.
6.	Election staff was trained to identify a service animal and follow the Municipality's Accessible Customer Service Policy.
7.	Maintained a friendly and approachable demeanour, regardless of how tired or hassled a worker may have felt.
8.	Check the access doors frequently to offer assistance and watch for electors unable to easily enter the building.
9.	Evaluate above effectiveness post-election.

*Voting Methods Utilized*

Vote-by-mail	This method provides for easy voting for voters with any disabilities.
	This system offers anytime, anywhere voting during the voting period (i.e. allows voters to fill out their ballots in the privacy and convenience of their own home and to vote when they wish).
	This method offers the option of hand delivering the ballot (in addition to using mail service) in an after hours drop box that is available 24 hours/7 days a week.
	This method removes potential obstacles such as inclement weather, family commitments, work commitments and transportation.
	This method allows for a longer voting period.

In conclusion, Township of Zorra Staff feel that the needs of the electors and candidates with disabilities were addressed for the 2018 Municipal Election utilizing the above-noted measures and voting methods. Zorra Staff recommend utilizing above accessibility initiatives in the 2022 Municipal and School Board Election.