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**Charitable Registration No. /
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10788 3928 RR0001

October 21, 2021

Toronto Executive Committee
12th floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Re: Agenda Item 2021.EX27.13

Dear members of the Executive Committee,

On behalf of March of Dimes Canada, I am writing to provide you with input regarding Executive Committee agenda item 2021.EX27.13, pertaining to the procurement of vote counting equipment.

Founded over 70 years ago, March of Dimes Canada is one of the country's largest non-profit organizations supporting people living with disability. Headquartered in the Thorncliffe Park neighbourhood, March of Dimes Canada has a long history of providing services, supports, and programs to Torontonians with disabilities, currently operating seven sites across the city.

Based on our many decades of serving people with disabilities, we have seen firsthand the barriers and challenges for the clients we serve to participate fully in their communities. It goes without saying that, while Toronto has made progress over the years, we have a long way to go to build a truly inclusive and equitable city for Torontonians with disabilities.

One of the important ways that people with disabilities can be active and engaged in their community is to vote. Voting is an empowering experience, where people exercise their independence, and have a voice and a choice on the type of society they want to live in.

That is why it is so crucial that elections are made fully accessible for voters of all abilities. From learning about election issues and platforms, to transportation and physical access to polling stations, to the experience of casting a ballot, there are many friction points along the voting journey that can pose barriers to electors with disabilities. At March of Dimes Canada, we have developed resources for political campaigns to ensure their offices and campaigns are accessible for all voters.¹

We applaud the City of Toronto 2018 Election Accessibility Plan, aimed at improving accessibility for voters and candidates with disabilities in the 2022 municipal election.² Notably, the availability of Voter Assistance Terminals and assistive supplies are both included as key initiatives to make voting more accessible in the next election.



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March of Dimes Canada agrees that advances in voter assistive technology can have an incredible impact on enabling electors with disabilities to cast their votes independently and confidentially. While access to support staff when casting a ballot is a helpful accommodation, being able to independently cast one's own vote using touch screen, audio, Braille, Sip-Puff, foot switches and other assistive technology is a more empowering and inclusive experience.

For this reason, we support the City purchasing a voting system so that they can independently and confidently provide high standards of accessibility for many years to come. We hope that the Committee will prioritize accessibility for electors with disabilities in your decision on this matter.

Thank you for the opportunity to share the perspectives of March of Dimes Canada's community with regard to election accessibility. We will be following this issue closely.

Yours sincerely,

Amanda MacKenzie

National Director, Public Affairs

March of Dimes Canada

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¹ March of Dimes Canada, *Making Your Campaign Accessible*, Retrieved from <https://www.marchofdimes.ca/en-ca/aboutus/govtrelations/provincial/Pages/Make-your-campaign-accessible.aspx>

² City of Toronto, *Election Accessibility Report & Plan*, 2018, Retrieved from <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/elections/city-elections/election-accessibility-plan/>