

Report Back on the 2022 Election Accessibility Plan

Date: June 9, 2022

To: Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee

From: City Clerk

Wards: All

SUMMARY

Toronto Elections is reporting back to the Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee on how those who participated in the home visit voting pilot during the 2018 municipal election will be accommodated in the upcoming 2022 municipal election.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Clerk recommends that the report be received for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact resulting from this report.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the information as presented in the Financial Impact Section.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on June 8, 2022, Executive Committee requested the City Clerk to report back to the June 13, 2022 Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee on how those who participated in home visit voting can vote in the upcoming municipal election.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2022.EX33.11>

At its meeting on May 5, 2022 the Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee considered a presentation from the Deputy City Clerk, Toronto Elections on the 2022 Election Accessibility Plan. The Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee recommended that Executive Committee direct the Deputy City Clerk, Toronto Elections to report back to the June 13, 2022 Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee on how those who relied on at-home voting will be accommodated in the upcoming municipal election.

At its meeting on October 1 and 4, 2021, City Council amended Municipal Code Chapter 53, Elections, to authorize a mail-in voting program for the City's municipal and school board elections and by-elections.

Agenda Item History - 2021.EX26.1 (toronto.ca)

COMMENTS

The City Clerk is committed to removing barriers to voting for Toronto electors with disabilities, ensuring elections are inclusive and accessible to all. The City Clerk continues to enhance existing inclusive election programs and deliver new options and supports to ensure all eligible electors can exercise their democratic right to vote.

Home Visit Pilot Program for the 2018 Municipal Election

In 2018, Toronto Elections piloted a home visit voting program, enabling an elector who could not leave their home due to illness, injury and/or disability to vote from home. City staff with police screening clearance and experience working with vulnerable communities were hired to fill temporary Home Visit Officer positions. Home visits were scheduled during the 7 days of advance vote, serving a total of 350 electors.

Planning for the 2022 Municipal Election

Planning for the 2022 municipal election began in 2020, during the beginning of the pandemic, which necessitated a use of lower risk alternatives to in-person voting. Alternative options to in-person voting during pandemic waves was imperative to reduce the number of electors at voting places, manage line ups at voting places, and provide alternatives to electors who may have COVID-19.

Mail-in Voting Option for the 2022 Municipal Election

Toronto Elections piloted mail-in voting as an alternative to in-person voting during the Ward 20 by-election held in January 2021. Leading practices were implemented, leveraging learnings from other jurisdictions with deep experience administering mail-in voting, including British Columbia, Alberta, Edmonton and Calgary for example.

In the fall of 2021, the City Clerk reported to City Council on 2022 election plans including authority to offer mail-in voting during the 2022 municipal election. Council adopted a by law authorizing the City Clerk to administer mail-in voting in 2022 and future general elections.

For the 2022 election, electors will be able to choose an alternative to in-person voting and apply for a mail-in voting kit starting September 1. A braille mail-in voting kit will be available upon request.

Options for Home Visit Pilot Program Participants

The 350 electors who participated in the 2018 home visit voting pilot will be able to vote within the framework of the new mail-in voting program or they can vote by proxy.

All Toronto electors who require assistance with mail-in voting due to illness, injury, or disability, can contact Toronto Elections to discuss accommodation options. Election staff will work with each elector to meet their voting needs. Services will include:

- Assistance completing the mail-in voting application
- Assistance completing the ballot and voting kit
- Assistance returning the completed mail-in voting kit

To reach electors with disabilities, Toronto Elections will work with Accessibility Outreach Network members, accessibility experts, service providers, and community advocates to disseminate mail-in voting program details. The program will be promoted through a broad range of digital and print communication channels with mass reach, all driving to the toronto.ca election pages for full details and how to request an accommodation.

Vote by proxy is available in cases where an elector is unable to attend a voting place and cannot vote by mail. The elector can appoint another person to act on their behalf.

Accommodations for Electors with Disabilities in the Voting Place

For electors with disabilities who are able to attend a voting place, there are a number of accommodation options available.

- Voter Assist Terminals are available at each advance vote location and two in each ward on voting day. This ballot-marking device allows electors with disabilities and special needs to mark their ballot privately and independently. The features include a touch screen, an audio component, a braille key pad, a sip/puff tube device, a rocker paddle/foot switch and zoom features to adjust font sizes and colour contrast.
- Ballot Transfers are available if an elector requires the use of a Voter Assist Terminal and one is not located at their designated voting place. The elector can request to have their ballot transferred to the location in their ward with a Voter Assist Terminal. A ballot transfer can also be requested in circumstances where an elector identifies a barrier at their designated voting place.
- Curbside Voting is available to electors who are physically unable to go inside a voting place. They can request to have their ballot brought to their vehicle or a location outside of the building but within the voting place boundaries.
- Personal Assistance is available to electors who require assistance in the voting place through an election official or by bringing a support person with them. Election procedures enable a person providing support to accompany the elector behind the voting screen. Service animals are, of course, able to enter a voting place with an elector.

Each voting place has magnification sheets for electors with visual impairments, how to vote instructions in braille and note pads and pens to assist when communicating with electors who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.

Each voting place is inspected multiple times to ensure that all locations are accessible and modifications are made where required, including ramps, door handles or additional staff to assist with doors and elevators.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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City Clerk