



2010 Toronto Election Report on Accessibility

Feedback

The City Clerk welcomes feedback to identify areas where changes need to be considered and ways in which the City can improve the delivery of accessible elections. Feedback on this report can be submitted through the following channels:

- Email: AccessibleElections@toronto.ca
- Phone: 416-338-1111 (press 6)
- Fax: 416-395-1300
- TTY: 416-338-0889
- By Mail: City of Toronto
City Clerk's Office
Elections & Registry Services
89 Northline Road
Toronto, ON M4B 3G1

If you require this information in a different format, please let us know.

Message from the City Clerk

I am pleased to provide this report documenting the 2010 Toronto election accessibility efforts.

The Municipal Elections Act, 1996, as amended, requires the Clerk to have regard for the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities and ensure all voting locations are accessible to electors with disabilities. It also requires a report to be submitted to Council on the identification, removal and prevention of barriers.

Conducting an election that is accessible to all electors has always been a priority for the City Clerk's Office. Recent advances in voting equipment and technology enabled staff to offer more services and voting options in the 2010 Election than ever before.

The attached report summarizes the initiatives implemented for the 2010 Election, the lessons learned and the next steps going forward. These initiatives were made possible due to the many consultations with the disability community.

I thank all the staff, City divisions, the Disability Issues Committee, and the hundreds of organizations for their tremendous efforts and contributions. All the organizations that we reached out to are listed in this report.

Much has been learned and there is a great deal more to understand in order to provide more choices for all electors to vote confidently, conveniently, independently and privately. This is just the beginning and we need to start planning today for yet a more accessible election.

I invite your comments and feedback.

Regards,



Ulli S. Watkiss
City Clerk



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1.0 Executive summary

On December 15, 2009, the Good Government Act, 2009 (Bill 212) received Royal Assent. Included in this Bill were several amendments to the Municipal Elections Act, 1996; (the “MEA”) requiring the Clerk to:

- have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities;
- ensure that each voting location is accessible to electors with disabilities; and
- submit a report to Council within 90 days of voting day on the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

These legislative amendments came into effect less than one month before the start of the election year. By this point in time, the framework had been finalized for how the 2010 Election was to be conducted and staff were preparing for implementation. While this framework already included many features to make the election more accessible, a great deal of additional work was required to incorporate these new legislative requirements, particularly in the area of securing accessible voting locations.

Finding a sufficient number of accessible voting locations was a major challenge for the City Clerk’s Office. The infrastructure of buildings in Toronto has not kept pace with the growing recognition of the need to retrofit buildings to provide access for persons with disabilities.

An Accessibility Plan was developed to implement and communicate a strategy for providing services to electors and candidates with disabilities. The Plan was circulated to various stakeholders and updated with their comments and feedback.

Key components of the Plan included the provision of new accessible voting equipment, enhanced communication vehicles, an

expanded outreach and community engagement program and the provision of accessible customer service training to all election workers. Specific details on these initiatives are outlined in this report.

This report outlines how physical, attitudinal, informational, technological and communication barriers were identified, removed and prevented in the conduct of the 2010 Election to enable all electors to exercise their democratic right to vote.

The report outlines the:

- legislative environment;
- creation of the Election Accessibility Plan;
- implementation of the Accessibility Plan;
- 2010 accessibility costs; and
- lessons learned and next steps.

More than half of the City's eligible electors came out to vote in the 2010 Election. With the introduction of the voter assist terminals, more people than ever before enjoyed a private, independent and barrier free voting experience. However, the City Clerk's Office continues to look for ways to improve accessibility. Further discussion and consultation with the disability community, the public and other stakeholders will be conducted. As well, efforts to reach individuals not associated with disability-serving agencies and organizations will be increased. Feedback from this consultation will be incorporated into the 2014 Election Accessibility Plan.

"I ... assisted my niece Sumreen who is blind and works for the CNIB to cast her vote...It was easy - in her words a piece of cake... first time in her life that she [voted] with confidence. Kudos to all of you... to make this possible and inclusive to all without any barriers."

A.S., Elector

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



2.0 Legislative environment: responding to new legislation and judicial decisions

Ontario's Human Rights Code has long provided that all persons have a right to equal treatment without discrimination on the basis of disability and that persons with a disability be provided with accommodation short of undue hardship.

Legislators and society recognize the need to work towards an accessible environment which allows all individuals equal access to goods, services, employment, accommodation and buildings. The Human Rights Code, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) establish an overall framework for making Ontario accessible.

One of the principles of democratic elections is that an election must be accessible to voters. The City Clerk's Office continuously monitors technology advancements, best practices and stakeholder comments to incorporate accessibility initiatives in Toronto's municipal elections.

Since the 2006 Election, several key events occurred which gave the Clerk additional guidance in how Toronto's elections could be made more accessible.

Select Committee on Elections

In June 2008, the Legislative Assembly created the Select Committee on Elections to review provincial election legislation and report on recommendations for legislative changes. On April 28, 2009, representatives of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance made a presentation to the Committee on what is needed to make elections accessible to people with disabilities. Staff incorporated information from the presentation into the Accessibility Plan.

Municipal Elections Act, 1996, as amended

Amendments to the legislation governing municipal elections in Ontario received Royal Assent on December 15, 2009, less than one month before the start of the election year.

Specifically, the amendments to the MEA required the Clerk to:

- have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities;²
- ensure that all voting places were accessible to electors with disabilities;³ and
- submit a report to Council within 90 days of voting day on the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that effect electors and candidates with disabilities.⁴

Elections Canada and the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal

"Voting is one of the most sacred rights of citizenship and that includes the right to do so in an accessible context."

- Hughes decision⁵

In February 2010, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT) ruled in the matter of James Peter Hughes v. Elections Canada (Hughes decision). The CHRT determined that Elections Canada engaged in a discriminatory practice when an elector (Hughes) encountered a number of obstacles while attempting to vote in two separate federal elections in Toronto.

The CHRT stated that "voting is one of the most sacred rights of citizenship and that includes the right to do so in an accessible context"⁶. To this end, the CHRT ordered Elections Canada to:

- undertake a comprehensive review of its accessibility practices;
- improve consultations with electors with disabilities and disability groups;
- enhance election signage and training practices; and
- implement a complaints process.

The City Clerk's Office looked to this decision during the development and implementation of the 2010 Election Accessibility Plan.

Bill 231, Election Statute Law Amendment Act, 2010

The Election Statute Law Amendment Act, 2010 (Bill 231) received Royal Assent on May 18, 2010. This bill amended the Election Act which governs Ontario provincial elections and included provisions relating to accessible elections.

Election staff reviewed the submissions made by stakeholders during the public hearings on the bill. The comments provided by the representatives of the disability community provided insight into a number of areas that the community views as lacking in the election process. Many were incorporated into the City's 2010 Election Accessibility Plan.

3.0 Creating the election accessibility plan

"Why not also consult persons with disabilities and disability groups?"

- Hughes decision⁷

Staff reviewed all aspects of the election to determine what additional resources would be needed to implement the new accessibility requirements of the MEA.

Several needs were determined, including:

- staff members with detailed knowledge of accessible built environment standards, connections with the disability community and an understanding of accessibility trends and best practices;
- infrastructure, equipment, supplies and materials; and
- the allocation of funds.

The Accessibility Plan was developed to implement and communicate a strategy for identifying, removing and preventing barriers to accessibility in the election process. Plan development began in February 2010 and was updated as new information and opportunities were identified or became available.

The Hughes decision emphasized the need for consultation with persons with disabilities and disability groups in order to prevent discriminatory practices occurring during an election. The disability community reinforced this need for consultations when providing their comments regarding Bill 231.

The Plan was presented to the City's Disabilities Issues Committee on June 7, 2010 for feedback. Staff also demonstrated the accessible voting equipment that would be used in the 2010 Election. The Plan was well received by the members of the Committee. The Committee also stressed the importance of communicating the

availability of accessible voting equipment as part of the election communication plan.

The Plan was circulated to over 200 individuals, agencies and organizations associated with the disability community for feedback (an initial draft on July 16 and an updated version on September 3, 2010). The Plan was also provided to candidates for their information and feedback and posted to the Elections website for access by the public.

The feedback received from the disability community was generally positive with some suggestions for improvement, which were integrated into the Plan.

See Appendix A of this report for a copy of the Accessibility Plan and detailed results of its implementation.

4.0 Accessibility Plan implementation

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

- Helen Keller, 1880-1968

4.1 Assembly of an accessibility team

Staff with specific expertise was required to assist in the implementation of the Accessibility Plan. The Clerk was able to secure staff from within the City to provide this assistance.

- A Project Manager from Facilities Management with knowledge of the Ontario Building Code and the City's accessible built environment standards was recruited to assist with the identification of accessible voting places.
- The Information and Technology Division provided a Web Editor with expertise in online accessibility to develop the Elections website components and layout.
- A Disability Advocate with extensive contacts and experience working with the disability community was seconded from Parks, Forestry and Recreation.
- Facilities Management provided Operations staff to assemble the ramps that were installed at some voting places.



Facilities Management staff assemble a ramp at a voting location.

4.2 Accessible voting locations

The new accessibility requirements changed the scope of the requirements for voting locations dramatically, requiring 1,596 staff hours for inspections.

Prior to the December 2009 legislative amendments, the Clerk was required under the MEA to have regard to the needs of electors with disabilities when choosing voting places. Where possible, all voting places were accessible but, if an accessible location could not be found in a neighbourhood, practices such as curbside voting were implemented to accommodate the needs of electors with disabilities.

The 2009 amendments required the Clerk to now ensure that all voting places were accessible to electors with disabilities. Unfortunately, the Legislature did not provide any guidelines or definitions as to what constituted an accessible voting place, leaving municipal clerks across the province to define their own standards. In addition, the accessible built environment standards under AODA have not yet been regulated by the Province.

Also there was no recognition in the legislation that accessibility means different things to persons with different disabilities. As a result there were some unintended consequences. For example, a person in a wheelchair or scooter requires level access to a building, a person with a mobility disability using a walker may be able to navigate a small step. By eliminating all voting places with a small step, some voters would have to travel further to vote, thereby making the new voting place with level access less accessible to the elector with the walker.

The lateness of the amendments was a major challenge. Originally it had only been intended to physically inspect new condominiums, community centres and schools that had been constructed since the last election, which totalled approximately 50 to 75 locations. With the new accessibility requirements, the scope of the project changed dramatically, requiring 1,596 staff hours to inspect locations.

Elections staff did not have the technical knowledge of the Ontario Building Code or accessible built environment standards to undertake this assignment in the timeframe provided. At the request of the City Clerk in May 2010, Facilities Management provided a staff person to assist with the massive project of determining the accessibility of more than 1,650 voting locations.

Among many other duties, staff developed accessibility standards based on the City of Toronto's built environment standards, the Ontario Building Code and best practices of other jurisdictions. Staff also researched available ramping options, hired an architect to prepare the detailed drawings of the required ramping solutions, and oversaw the installation of ramps at voting locations (as required).

To accurately and consistently determine the accessibility of voting locations, a checklist was developed and used by staff during the inspections. Between April and June of 2010, five temporary staff were hired to visit approximately 1,650 existing and potential voting locations. Each inspection involved gathering a large amount of information regarding the physical characteristics of the location and the room to be used for voting, such as:

- number of parking spaces, including accessible spaces;
- quality of the pavement or surface of the route of travel to the voting location from the parking lot and the sidewalk;
- lighting conditions;
- level access to the voting location;
- height and number of step(s) to enter the building and room;
- existence of automatic doors;
- door widths;
- methods for getting to the voting room (at grade, elevator, chairlift or ramp); and
- path of travel inside the voting location.

Based on the inspections, staff determined the suitability of each location for use as a voting place. In total, 113 locations, which had been used in the 2006 Election, were deemed inaccessible (no level access into the building or voting room). Replacement locations were found for 17 of these, 54 were ramped to resolve step issues and another 42 were eliminated as they could not be ramped or retrofitted to make them accessible. Voters from these locations were integrated into surrounding voting locations.

The list of tentative voting locations, together with information on the accessible features of the locations, was posted on the Elections website on July 27, 2010 and emailed to agencies and organizations serving the disability community for comments and feedback. Two feedback calls were received, neither of which required a change to a voting place.

As there are not enough available and accessible City-owned buildings to use as voting locations, other public and private facilities must be used. This usage represents one of the biggest barriers to an accessible election as the City Clerk has no authority or power to require the owners of these buildings to install proper accessible amenities (e.g. automatic door openers and ramps).

The infrastructure of public buildings in Toronto has not kept pace with the growing recognition of the need to



Ramp with platform.



One of the 54 ramps installed to make voting locations accessible.



Transition strip.

retrofit buildings to provide access for persons with disabilities. A number of buildings in the City do not have built-in ramps, automatic doors, accessible washrooms or a number of other important accessible features. Staff implemented a variety of work-around solutions, such as hiring 766 Customer Service Officers to provide assistance to electors including opening doors where there was no push button or operating chair lifts and elevators.

Unfortunately, this shortage of accessible buildings meant that some electors would need to travel a further distance to vote. For example, the voting place that had served the Lotherton Pathway complex was inaccessible, with three flights of stairs to the voting room and no elevator. The voting location had to be moved to a school approximately 570 metres away.

In some instances, it was possible to ramp a voting place so electors would not be displaced. Rubber transition ramps were installed at 40 locations and pre-fabricated ramps were assembled at 14 locations. This approach, while necessary, required an extensive use of staff time to orchestrate.

Despite the efforts by staff to inspect the voting locations in advance of the election, there was no guarantee that the locations would remain in the same condition between the inspection date and voting day. Letters reminding property managers and building owners they could not change the agreed upon room location were mailed out with the voting place contracts.

As well, additional voting location inspections were carried out by Ward Managers in late August and early September and during the Weekend Advance Vote. On Election Day, Ward Supervisors were responsible for completing an additional accessibility checklist to ensure nothing had changed. This checklist looked at the building environment as well as the usage of signage. Election signage was purchased and posted with the universal accessibility symbol to ensure electors with disabilities could easily find the shortest and most appropriate route to the entrance of the voting location.



Road in front of voting location under construction three days before election day.



A pathway paved to make the voting location accessible for electors.

Despite staff's best plans, three days before Election Day staff became aware of a major road reconstruction project in front of a voting location, making it inaccessible for voters.

A staff member was immediately sent out to the voting location to investigate. As seen in the above picture, the access to the entrance of the voting location was completely obstructed by the construction. Staff from the City's Technical Services Division called the contractor to arrange for the contractor to pave a portion of the front lawn to provide level access from the adjacent street to the voting location. A pay duty police officer was also hired by the contractor to assist in ensuring the safety of electors attending the voting location.

Ensuring that all voting places were accessible to electors with disabilities in the timeframe given by the new legislative amendments was a major challenge. However, the value of the work undertaken is illustrated in the following results of the [Ipsos Reid survey](#) commissioned by the City Clerk:

- 78% of respondents with disabilities rated the accessibility of their voting location as "excellent or good";
- 77% of respondents with disabilities rated their physical mobility inside the voting place as "excellent or good"; and

- 89% of respondents with disabilities rated both the proximity of the voting location to their home and the location of the voting place as "excellent or good".

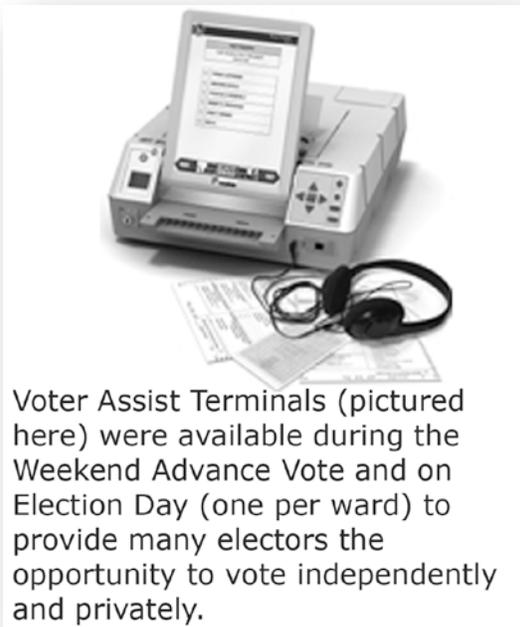
These statistics should not lead us to complacency. Much more needs to be done before all locations can be 100% accessible to 100% of voters.

4.3 Accessible voting equipment

"Bravo to Toronto's Accessible Election Unit for providing the voter assist terminal. I applaud the initiative and hope to vote in the same way in provincial and federal elections."

- J.R., elector

Since the 2000 Election the City Clerk's Office has offered touch screen terminals for voting. These paperless electronic voting terminals allow electors who are blind or have limited or low vision to vote privately and independently through the use of an audio ballot and Braille key pads.



Recognizing this technology does not serve people with other disabilities, staff investigated available options in 2009. Voter assist terminals (terminals) were introduced for the 2010 Election. The voter assist terminal is a paper ballot-marking technology that allows voters with disabilities to mark their ballot privately and independently. With an

audio function and Braille-embossed key pads, similar to the touch screen terminal, it allows people that are blind or partially sighted to listen to their choices through headphones. This function also allows the voter to adjust the speed and volume at which the ballot is read. A zoom feature enables voters to increase the font size on the touch screen and the contrast may also be adjusted to help those with low vision. It features a sip and puff tube and a rocker paddle that may be used by voters with limited motor function, or who are unable to use the touch screen or touch pad.

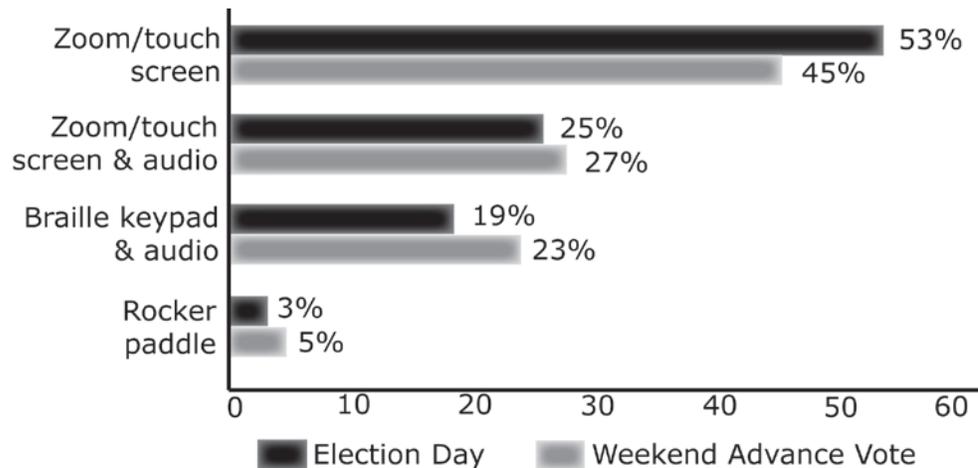
The voter assist terminals were originally scheduled for use during the Weekend Advance Vote. As a result of feedback received from the disability community, the availability of the terminals was expanded to include one in each ward on Election Day. Ballot Transfer Certificates were made available to electors wishing to cast their ballot at the voting place in their ward where the terminal was located.

The voter assist terminal was demonstrated at various events across the City. Individuals were provided the opportunity to learn about and use the terminal.

With the introduction of the voter assist terminal the City Clerk's Office promoted the need for individuals with experience working with people with disabilities to its partnered organizations. Thirty-nine of the required 88 Voter Assist Terminal Officers were recruited through this effort. These Officers provided instruction on the use of the terminal and provided assistance to electors as needed.

The voter assist terminals were well received with a total of 250 electors using the equipment to vote.

Figure 1: Features used on voter assist terminals



The most common feature used during both the Weekend Advance Vote and on Election Day was the "zoom/touch screen" feature.

4.4 Communication

The goal of the City Clerk's Office was not only to communicate the messages of accessibility but to ensure the messages were available in various accessible formats.

Elections Website

Equal access to information and services on government websites should be a fundamental right for everyone, including people with disabilities. A variety of initiatives were implemented to make the election information available on the Elections website accessible to a wider range of audiences.

The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) is an international community of member organizations, the staff and the public that work together to develop web standards. This working group developed the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) that

explains how to make web content accessible to persons with disabilities.

During the public hearings on Bill 231, the disability community recommended that websites meet the standard of Level AA or higher compliance. The City Clerk followed the guidelines and achieved between a Level AA and AAA compliance, with many of the AAA level checkpoints satisfied. Redesigning and reorganizing the web pages took one staff member over two weeks to complete.

These changes to the Elections website enabled individuals to use their own personal software applications to access election information. The City Clerk's Office also provided a web page reader software tool (BrowseAloud) for individuals who do not have their own software. This tool reads website content aloud and assists individuals including people with limited vision, low literacy, English as a second language and learning disabilities, such as dyslexia.

A separate section was created on the Elections website to inform the disability community of the various accessibility initiatives including:

- the Accessibility Plan;
- a calendar of accessibility and voter outreach events;
- links to accessibility related policies, reports and legislation;
- information and videos on accessible voting equipment; and
- information on providing feedback regarding the way the City Clerk's Office provides election-related services and other services to people with disabilities.

The accessibility section of the Elections website received more than 3,500 visits between April and October 2010.

"Where Do I Vote?"

The "Where Do I Vote?" application on the Elections website previously provided electors with information on where and when they could vote, a list of candidates, and a mapping component. The application was enhanced for the 2010 Election to include:

- accessibility information specific to the particular voting location;
- photographs of the voting location where a location had a ramp; and
- previews of the ballot.

The application received 101,806 visits between September 27 and October 25, 2010.

"How-to-vote" videos

To educate voters on the voting process and the accessible voting equipment, the following step-by-step instructional videos were produced:

- "How to Vote";
- "Touch Screen Terminal"; and
- "Voter Assist Terminal".

The videos were designed with open captioning and audio components. As well, audio description files of the physical form and features of the touch screen terminal and the voter assist terminal were made available.

After receiving feedback from the Bob Rumball Centre for the Deaf and the Canadian Hearing Society, American Sign Language (ASL) was incorporated into the videos to better serve a broader community.

The videos were available on the Elections website, YouTube, Facebook, and through Twitter. In addition, several organizations

posted a link to the videos on their website and sent notification about them to their members.

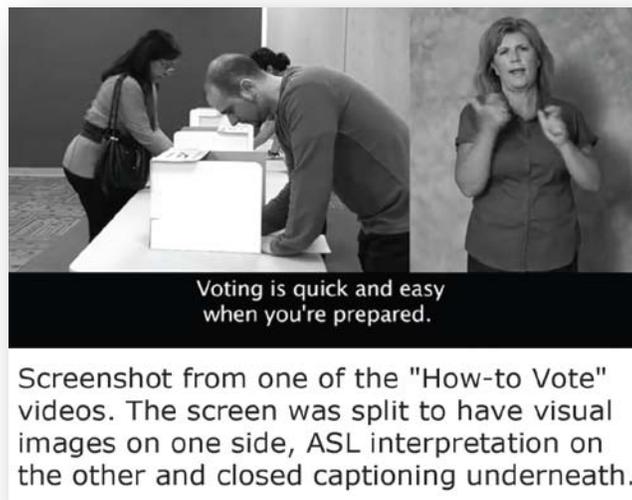
The "Touch Screen Terminal" video was also played for electors waiting to vote during the Weekday Advance Vote to help inform them about the voting process.

Printed material

Voting information was made available in a variety of formats and languages.

In every election, an election information piece is sent to all households in Toronto to provide key election and accessibility information. The mail-out was expanded for the 2010 Election to include information on the new accessibility initiatives. It was available in Braille, English and 22 other languages upon request. It was also posted on the Elections website.

Accessibility initiatives were also communicated through two issues of the Our Toronto newsletter distributed to every household in the City.



An accessibility information ad was placed on the abilities.ca website to inform electors of the availability of the voter assist terminals.

“How to Vote” booklets were produced to educate voters on who can vote, the voting process, the offices being voted upon, how to mark the ballot, the various oaths used in the voting place and the identification policy. These were made available in Braille, English and 22 other languages, as well as in large print. The booklets were provided in all voting places and were available on the election web pages.

“You’ve made my life that much easier – now I can just direct my dad to translated “How to [Vote]” documents! Thanks much.”

- Twitter follower

4.5 Consultations and outreach

Community engagement, participation, and education was the focus for the 2010 Election.

After the 2006 Election, the City Clerk made several recommendations to transform and expand the election outreach program including changing the focus from a communications program to a community engagement program.

Recognizing the importance of consulting with the public, the City Clerk developed and implemented the 2010 Election Community Engagement Program to:

- increase public awareness of how to get on the voters’ list and the importance of doing so;

- inform eligible voters on new identification requirements and the new date for the 2010 Election;
- develop internal and external partnerships that focus on providing awareness;
- encourage participation and increase accessibility to groups such as persons with disabilities, tenants, shelter users, seniors, youth, new voters and new Canadian citizens; and
- apply traditional and non-traditional marketing and communications methodologies as well as personal connections and face-to face dialogue.



Election staff demonstrating accessible voting equipment at an outreach event.

The importance of such an initiative was further reinforced by the Hughes decision which ordered Elections Canada to develop a plan to consult with voters with disabilities and disability groups.

Staff worked to develop internal and external partnerships with City divisions, agencies as well as organizations and individuals in the disability community. Consultations with disability groups and individuals occurred through open, personal and interactive dialogue, new technologies and traditional media.

External consultations

Many partnerships were formed which fostered the sharing of information and increasing the awareness of accessible options for people with disabilities.

Through these partnerships, an extensive awareness campaign was launched with staff attending many disability events which are detailed in the attached Appendix A. These events provided individuals the opportunity to hear about the various accessibility

initiatives and use the voter assist terminal. These events provided a valuable opportunity for receiving feedback about the accessibility initiatives.

Staff also attended fourteen community events throughout the City to provide information about the election as well as respond to questions and suggestions about the Accessibility Plan.

By communicating with the disability community through a variety of face-to-face opportunities, communication efforts developed into a "grass roots" campaign. Information about the accessible voting technology and other initiatives spread through the community by word of mouth. The organizations and agencies serving the disability community also promoted election information through their websites, newsletters and email "blasts".



Elector learning how to use the Voter Assist Terminal.



Elector testing out one of the accessible features of the Voter Assist Terminal.

Working with internal and external partners gave staff a better understanding and ability to respond to the specific needs of the disability community.

For example, during demonstrations at several disability events, it was noted by staff that individuals using the rocker paddle device attached to the voter

assist terminal had difficulty keeping it from sliding off their lap. To address this problem, staff provided electors with "lap trays" to stabilize the rocker paddle during its use.

In another instance, it was brought to the Clerk's attention that some electors with disabilities could not provide identification with a signature as they are unable to sign documents. To address this issue, the Clerk amended the Identification Policy to provide accommodation.

Multiple communication avenues, such as phone, email, fax, TTY, Twitter and Facebook, were provided to ensure that individuals with disabilities were able to communicate with the Clerk's Office using their preferred method.

Dedicated feedback channels

The City Clerk's Office Customer Service Policy provides various avenues for individuals wishing to provide comments and feedback on how services are delivered. To ensure any comments from electors with disabilities could be quickly responded to, especially on Election Day, several dedicated channels were created. These included a separate email account and telephone and fax numbers. Staff were assigned to monitor and respond to any inquiries.

Internal consultations

Staff consulted with City divisions, agencies, boards and commissions to raise awareness of the 2010 Election and to provide election information to be shared with their clients and community.

The Accessibility Plan was presented to the Disability Issues Committee on June 7, 2010 along with a demonstration of the voter assist terminal. The Plan was well received by the Committee which also provided feedback and encouraged staff to work with the disability community to raise awareness about the various initiatives.

The MEA requires that voting locations be provided at facilities where 20 or more beds are occupied by persons who are disabled, chronically ill or infirm and in retirement homes in which 50 or more beds are occupied. Staff worked with the Long Term Care Homes and Services Division to identify locations to be used as voting locations and to coordinate bed-to-bed voting. Staff from the Division were also encouraged to work at these voting locations as they were familiar with the residents and their needs.

The Division also included information in their newsletters to inform residents and their family members about the election.

Recognizing that many electors with disabilities rely on WheelTrans to get to a voting location, staff worked with WheelTrans to raise their awareness about the election and to ensure service was available during the Weekend Advance Vote and on Election Day. WheelTrans was provided with the dates and times of voting as well as the locations where voter assist terminals would be available. This allowed WheelTrans to plan for the demand and staff accordingly on voting days.

Post-election survey

After the 2010 Election, the City Clerk's Office commissioned an [Ipsos Reid survey](#) of Toronto's electors. Specifically, the research was conducted to:

- understand residents' knowledge of the voting process;
- explore attitudes and opinions toward voting;
- understand perceptions of the voting experience;
- explore any problems or barriers experienced;
- determine recall of the communications campaign;
- understand sources of information about the voting process;
- measure awareness of services provided; and
- measure residents' ratings of these services.

Of those individuals identifying themselves as members of a disability group, 85% described themselves as "very knowledgeable" to "somewhat knowledgeable" about the voting process. This ranking is 5% higher than the general population. This statistic is important as it suggests that Toronto electors with disabilities are knowledgeable and interested in the electoral process. It is important to recognize and engage the disability community as we move forward.

A copy of the survey results will be available on the Elections website at www.toronto.ca/elections.

4.6 Accessible customer service training

"There should be no hierarchy of citizenship when it comes to voting in Canada: no second class voters. [There is] damaging impact on persons with disabilities going away from the polling site thinking that their presence was at best unexpected, and at worst unwelcome."

- Hughes decision⁸

Over 10,000 people are hired to work during the election. In addition to training the election workers on their duties and responsibilities, the Clerk also provided mandatory accessible customer service training.

An "Accessible Customer Service Etiquette Handbook" containing information on how best to serve people with different disabilities was provided to every election worker.



Election team members communicating using the Ubi Duo. The election worker using the Ubi Duo during the Advance Vote said, "Many people adapted to the new machine easily... find[ing] it fun to communicate."

For those election workers with disabilities the Clerk ensured accommodations were provided, such as:

- holding training sessions in accessible locations;
- providing ASL interpretation;
- providing a portable, wireless, stand-alone communication device (Ubi Duo) for use at training and to facilitate face-to-face communication between voting place staff and voters;
- providing flash cards for communicating special election messages, such as:

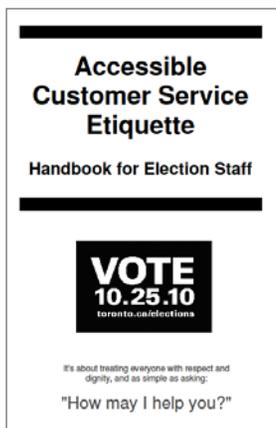
"please wait a moment while the tabulator accepts your ballot";

- ensuring the voting location they worked at had accessible washrooms.

78% of electors with disabilities who responded to the [Ipsos Reid survey](#) rated the service received from workers in the voting place as "excellent or good".

"I ended up working at the election and was most impressed by [your] booklet on how best to interact with voters with disabilities. Excellent work!"

- Election worker



4.7 Accessibility for candidates

The City Clerk's Office offered several accessibility options to candidates, including:

- ASL interpretation at candidate information sessions;
- an audio recording of the Candidate's Guide;
- electronic copies of the voters' list;
- a copy of the Accessibility Plan; and
- the following provincial publications to increase knowledge about accessibility:
 - Accessible Campaign Information and Communication;
 - Accessible Constituency, Riding Association, Central Party and Campaign Offices; and
 - Accessible Candidates' Meetings.

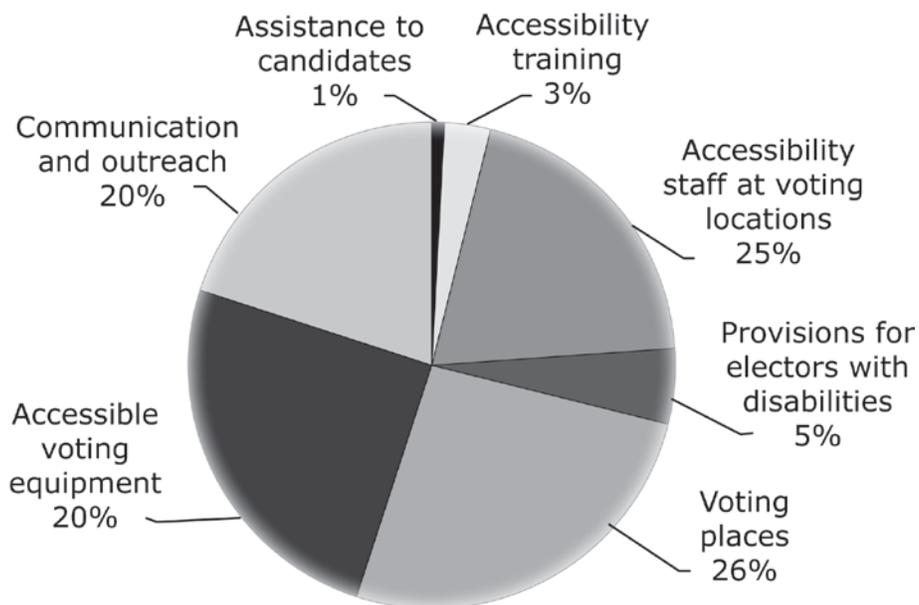
5.0 2010 accessibility costs

The cost of providing accessibility related initiatives for the 2010 municipal election totalled \$542,127.37 which represents 8% of the cost of the election.

Although accessibility has long been a consideration in preparing for and conducting an election, the legislative amendments imposed new requirements. As a result, additional costs were incurred.

There is now a better understanding of the funding requirements for the various initiatives which will need to be integrated into future budgets.

Figure 2: Accessibility expenditures



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Category	Amount
Assistance to candidates	\$922.33
Accessibility training	\$16,128.06
Provisions for electors with disabilities	\$24,795.06
Communications & outreach	\$107,962.27
Accessible voting equipment	\$108,425.00
Accessibility staff at voting locations	\$134,909.00
Voting places	\$148,985.65
Total spent on election accessibility measures	\$542,127.37

“For someone who works in the developmental services field, as an election worker it was great to be reminded of how best to interact with individuals with a variety of disabilities.”

- Election official

6.0 Lessons learned and next steps

While the City Clerk’s Office has incorporated many accessibility features in past elections, the new initiatives introduced during the 2010 Election posed several operational and implementation challenges. In implementing the Accessibility Plan, staff also learned many valuable lessons that can be applied not only to future elections, but also as the City moves forward to implement the upcoming AODA standards. Key among these challenges and lessons learned are:

- The City Clerk’s Office does not have staff with the specific expertise required to implement all aspects of the Accessibility Plan. Fortunately, several City divisions provided their staff to assist elections staff during the 2010 Election, particularly in the areas of accessible built environment standards and accessible web development.
- It was very challenging to secure a sufficient number of accessible voting locations to properly serve Toronto’s electors. While the work-around measures staff implemented, such as installation of ramps and hiring additional staff to open doors, provided temporary relief, permanent solutions need to be found, including looking at alternative methods of voting.
- Bringing the Elections website up to the WCAG accessibility standards was very time consuming. When preparing documents for the Elections website, staff need to write these documents in an accessible format from the outset, keeping in mind accessibility features such as formatting style, font type and size.
- Election information must be made available in multiple formats to better serve all members of the disability community.

- Consulting with the disability community is a key success factor. Their knowledge, experience and willingness to share contributed to a more effective Accessibility Plan.
- It was extremely difficult to reach those individuals who are not associated with agencies or organizations designed to assist individuals with disabilities. These individuals may not have had the benefit of being exposed to the accessibility messaging, the accessible voting equipment demonstrations and other critical election information, other than what the general public received.
- Provision of the accessible customer service training was well received and assisted voting place staff when dealing with electors with disabilities.

While the new accessibility initiatives introduced in the 2010 Election allowed more electors than ever before to cast their ballots privately and independently, more work needs to be done. The City Clerk's Office gained valuable insight into the disability community and their needs.

Leading up to the 2014 Election, the City Clerk's Office will:

- build accessibility initiatives into the election plan based on the 2010 Election experience and the feedback received from stakeholders;
- continue to work with the Disabilities Issues Committee and organizations and agencies representing the disability community;
- reach out to those individuals who are not members of an agency or organization serving the disability community to ensure they are involved in the process;
- review the election service delivery model to better serve all electors;
- urge the Province to establish its accessible built environment standards well in advance of the 2014 Election to allow the Clerk sufficient time to incorporate these rules into the voting location criteria;

- review the criteria for determining voting locations and continue to identify potential accessible voting places;
- monitor and investigate advancements in voting equipment technology and alternative voting channels to provide more service options;
- share lessons learned with other City divisions as the City moves forward to implement AODA; and
- continue to raise awareness with the public and our stakeholders of the importance of providing accessible elections and involve them in the planning and implementation of the process.



Elector John Rae trying out accessible voting equipment at an outreach event.

John Rae made the following comments about his 2010 voting experience:

"Electors who are blind demand the opportunity to vote independently and in secret like all other electors, and to be able to independently verify how [they] cast [their] vote, something sighted electors take for granted. I was very excited that, for the first time in my life, during the most recent municipal election in Toronto, I used a fully accessible voting machine that enabled me to do exactly that. It was a great day for me! "

Mr. Rae serves as 1st Vice President for the Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians, and is a national council member of the Council of Canadians with Disabilities.

Glossary

- **accessibility** is the degree to which something is accessible or usable by people with disabilities. Accessibility is a standard term when referring to products, services, and facilities in relation to people with disabilities.
- **accommodation** refers to providing the tools or practical measures that create access and is required when barriers have not or cannot be removed.
- **American Sign Language (ASL)** is a language used by individuals who have a hearing disability in the United States and Canada. ASL employs signs made with the hands and other movements, including facial expressions and postures of the body to communicate.
- **audio description file** is a narration, spoken out loud to explain visual details. This allows visual content to be accessible to individuals who are blind or partially-sighted.
- **barrier** is anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice.⁹
- **built environment** is all public and private sector:
 - buildings (including all features that would impede persons with disabilities from fully accessing or using the building or its facilities or circulating within it);
 - site development (built elements, external parcels of land bounded by property lines);
 - public ways (portions of land such as a street, road, highway, public square or other built area not designated as of a private nature); and
 - public parks, trails and playgrounds.¹⁰

- **disability** is:
 - any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
 - a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
 - a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
 - a mental disorder, or
 - an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.¹¹
- **flash cards** is a set of cards bearing information, such as words or numbers.
- **social media** is a vehicle for social interaction, using highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques. Social media uses web-based technologies to turn communication into interactive dialogue.

Accessibility Plan distribution list

- Abilities Church
- Ability On Line
- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance
- Accessible Media Inc.
- Achilles Track
- Active Living Alliance for Canadians with a Disability
- Albion Neighbourhood Services
- Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians (AEBC)
- Alzheimer Society of Toronto
- Anne Johnston Health Centre, The
- ARCH Disability Law Centre
- Arthritis Society, The – Ontario
- Association for the Neurologically Disabled
- Autism Ontario
- Autism Treatment Network
- Balance for Blind Adults
- Bellwoods Centres for Community Living
- Best Buddies Canada
- Beyond Ability International
- Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Toronto
- Birchmount Bluffs Neighbourhood Centre
- Blind Sailing Association of Canada
- Bob Rumball Centre for the Deaf
- Bridgepoint Health
- Bridging The Gap
- Canadian Amputee Sports Association

- Canadian Association for Disabled Skiing
- Canadian Cancer Society – Toronto
- Canadian Council of the Blind
- Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work, The
- Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation – Toronto & District Chapter
- Canadian Diabetes Association
- Canadian Down Syndrome Society
- Canadian Electric Wheelchair Hockey Association
- Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons, The
- Canadian Head Injury Resource Services (CHIRS)
- Canadian Hearing Society, The
- Canadian Helen Keller Centre Inc.
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- Canadian National Institute For the Blind – Deaf-Blind Services Toronto
- Canadian National Institute For the Blind – Toronto District
- Canadian Paraplegic Association Ontario
- Canadian Therapeutic Riding Association (CANTRA)
- Central Toronto Youth Services
- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health(CAMH)
- Centre for Independent Living in Toronto Inc.
- Cerebral Palsy Parent Council
- Christian Horizons
- City of Toronto – Children's Services
- City of Toronto – City Manager's Office
- City of Toronto – Community Development Unit
- City of Toronto – Municipal Licensing and Standards

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- City of Toronto – Parks, Forestry and Recreation
- City of Toronto – Social Development, Finance and Administration
- Community Association Riding for the Disabled (CARD)
- Community Care Access Centre – Central West
- Community Care Access Centre – Toronto Central
- Community Living Toronto
- Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto
- Corbrook
- COTA Health
- Culture Link
- Deaf Club 2000 E-Distribution Service
- Deaf Connect Distribution Services
- Disability Awareness – Advocacy Group
- Disability Awareness Consultants
- Disability Issues Committee (Accessibility Advisory Committee)
- Disabled Sailing Association of Ontario
- Down Syndrome Association of Toronto
- Dramaway
- Dream Team, The
- East Metro Youth Services
- Easter Seals Society – Canada
- Easter Seals Society – Ontario
- Epilepsy Ontario
- Epilepsy Toronto
- Eppleworth Adult Centre
- Ernest C. Drury School for the Deaf

- Ethno Racial Disability Coalition of Ontario (ERDCO)
- Extend-a-Family
- Family Resource Centre
- Family Service Toronto
- Federation of Metro Tenants' Association
- Find Help Information Services
- Foundation Fighting Blindness
- Friends and Advocates Centre Toronto
- GAGE Transition to Independent Living
- General Council for the Institute of Canadian Justice
- Geneva Centre for Autism
- George Hull Centre for Children and Families
- Giddy Up and STEPS Program
- Glenvale Players Theatre Co.
- Grandravine Special Hockey – Tornadoes
- Griffin Centre, The
- Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario
- Heep Chi Association
- Hemophilia Ontario
- Hincks Dellcrest Centre
- Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital
- Hospital for Sick Children, The
- Huntington Society of Canada
- Ideal Way
- Indian Martial and Performing Arts Collective of Toronto (IMPACT)
- Internal Focused Services

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- Jewish Family and Child Services
- Jewish Vocational Services
- Job Opportunity Information Network, The (J.O.I.N.)
- Job Start
- Kerry's Place Autism Services
- Keys to the Studio
- LAMP Community Health Centre
- Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario
- Learning Disabilities Association of Toronto District
- Learning Enrichment Foundation
- Listening Centre
- Lucy McCormack School
- March of Dimes
- Marsha Forest Centre
- MazeMaster – Youth Abilities
- Meta Centre
- Metropolitan Toronto School for the Deaf, Davisville Public School
- Mid-Toronto Community Services
- Ministry of Community and Social Services: Ontario Disability Support Program
- Mix Community Club
- Mount Sinai Hospital – Occupational Therapy Department
- MukiBaum Treatment Centres
- Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada – Toronto Chapter
- Muscular Dystrophy Canada
- Native Child and Family Services of Toronto
- Neighbourhood Centre

- Nucleus Independent Living
- Ontario Association of the Deaf
- Ontario Blind Sports Association
- Ontario Federation for Cerebral Palsy
- Ontario Foundation for Visually Impaired Children
- Ontario Lung Association
- Ontario Seniors' Secretariat
- Ontario Track 3 – Ski Association
- Ontario Visually Impaired Golfers (OVIG)
- Ontario Wheelchair Sports Association
- Osteoporosis Canada
- ParaSport Ontario
- Parent Education Network
- Parkinson Society – Central & Northern Ontario
- Parkinson Society Canada
- Parks, Forestry and Recreation - Community Disability Steering Committee
- Participation House
- Pegasus Community Project
- PEL Consulting
- Reconnect Mental Health Services
- REENA Foundation
- Rehabilitation Management Inc.
- Respite Services.com
- Rexdale Community Health Centre
- Rexdale Women's Centre
- Rowntree Manor

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- Ryerson University – School of Disability Studies
- Safari Walking Group
- Safe Haven
- Salvation Army – Broadview Village
- San Lorenzo Latin American Community Centre
- Scadding Court Community Centre
- Scouts Canada
- Settlement Workers and Schools
- Silent Voice Canada
- Social Planning Toronto
- Sound Times Sports Services
- Speaking Differently
- Special Olympics – Ontario
- Special Olympics – Toronto
- Spina Bifida & Hydrocephalus Association of Ontario
- Spring Tide Resources
- St. Bernadette's Family Resource Centre
- St. Christopher House
- St. Joseph's Health Centre: Family Medicine
- Storefront Humber Inc.
- Stroke Recovery of Canada
- Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre
- Surrey Place Centre
- Thistletown Regional Centre
- Tobias House Resource Centre
- Toronto Catholic Children's Aid Society
- Toronto Catholic District School Board

- Toronto Children's Aid Society
- Toronto Community Housing Corporation
- Toronto District School Board - Special Education and Support Services
- Toronto Family Network
- Toronto Huntington Disease Resource Centre
- Toronto Police Services – Disabled Liaison Section
- Toronto Reference Library
- Toronto Rehab Hospital – ABI and GTA Network
- Toronto Rehab Institute – Lyndhurst Centre
- Toronto Transit Commission – WheelTrans
- Toronto West Regional Stroke Network
- TRAILBLAZERS Tandem Cycling Club
- Trillium Health Centre
- University of Toronto
- Variety Village
- Vita Community Living Services
- Volunteer Toronto
- WarAmps
- West Park Healthcare Centre
- Women's Habitat
- WoodGreen Community Services
- Yorktown Shelter for Women
- Youth Link

Endnotes

¹ Municipal Elections Act, 1996, as amended, section 12.1(2).

² Municipal Elections Act, 1996, as amended, section 12.1(1).

³ Municipal Elections Act, 1996, as amended, section 45(2).

⁴ Ibid at 1.

⁵ James Peter Hughes v. Elections Canada. 2010 T1373/10308 [2010] CHRT 23.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ James Peter Hughes v. Elections Canada. 2010 T1373/10308 [2010] CHRT 28.

⁸ James Peter Hughes v. Elections Canada. 2010 T1373/10308 [2010] CHRT 13.

⁹ Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, definitions.

¹⁰ City of Toronto, Final Proposed Built Environment Standard, July 2010.

¹¹ Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001, Definitions.