# 2018 Election Accessibility Plan – Outcomes and Achievements

## Introduction

One of the most important mandates of the City Clerk’s Office is to ensure that elections are accessible to all. We continue to learn and adapt our methods of anticipating and removing barriers for voters with disabilities in Toronto's municipal elections.

The main objective of the Plan is to identify and eliminate barriers for persons with disabilities to ensure that elections are accessible to all voters and candidates. The Plan outlines how the City Clerk's Office aims to meet this objective, organized into the following six key areas:

1. Consultation
2. Communication and Information
3. Voting Places
4. Voting Options and Accommodations
5. Assistance to Candidates
6. Accessible Customer Service

## Key Considerations

* Policies and procedures must be consistent with the principles of the Municipal Elections Act, and must respect the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
* Access to voting services must be integrated and equitable.
* Initiatives should address and take into account a wide range of abilities.
* The guidelines established in the [City Clerk’s Office's Customer Service Policy for Providing Services to People with Disabilities](https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/accountability-operations-customer-service/city-administration/staff-directory-divisions-and-customer-service/city-clerks-office/city-clerks-office-customer-service-standards/providing-services-to-people-with-disabilities/) must be followed throughout.

## Requirements under the Municipal Elections Act

The City Clerk is responsible for conducting municipal elections and establishing policies and procedures to ensure that all electors have the opportunity to fully participate in the 2018 City of Toronto municipal election.

More specifically, the Municipal Elections Act states the following:

12.1 (1) a clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities.

12 (2) 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. 2016, c. 15, s. 11.

12 (3) 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. 2016, c. 15, s. 11.

41 (3) The clerk shall make such changes to some or all of the ballots as he or she considers necessary or desirable to allow electors with visual impairments to vote without the assistance referred to in paragraph 4 of subsection 52 (1). 1996, c. 32, Sched. s. 41 (3); 2001, c. 32, s. 30 (1).

45 (2) in establishing the locations of voting places, the clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities.

### Definition of Disability

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 defines “disability” as follows:

1. 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;
2. A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
3. A learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
4. A mental disorder; or
5. An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

| Objectives | Initiatives | 2018 Outcomes |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Public Consultations | | |
| Consult with individuals and groups knowledgeable in providing services to persons with disabilities in order to gain better understanding of their needs and to obtain feedback on this Plan by: | Consulting with members of the Election Accessibility Outreach Network (AON) on matters such as accessible customer service, assistive devices, and voting options. | * There were 98 members on the Accessibility Outreach Network (AON), including 49 organizations and 29 community advocates represented. * Four AON meetings were held. * At the AON meeting held on September 13, 2018 election staff provided attendees with updates on the Better Local Government Act and its impact on voters and candidates. At these meetings, attendees had the chance to ask questions and share comments with election staff. |
| Collaborating with the AON Work Groups to advance the objectives in the Plan. | * 43 people attended 6 workgroup sessions. * Work group achievements included:   + Providing input on the home visit pilot program's outreach plan and operational procedures,   + Conducting user-testing on MyVote,   + Reviewing the Accessible Customer Service Handbook, and   + Providing detailed input during the development of the video about the Accessible Voting Equipment. |
| Presenting the 2018 Election Accessibility Plan to the Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee, one of City Council’s advisory committees. | * Presented the 2018 Accessibility Plan to solicit input from members of the Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee on April 19, 2018. |
| Posting the 2018 Election Accessibility Plan online for public review and input. | * Between January 1 and November 19, 2018, the Accessibility Plan webpage had 5,801 views and 3,559 distinct users. |
| Conducting special consultations as needed, such as the review of the accessibility of the ballot design; the accessible customer service handbook; and voting locations. | * Two consultation sessions were held to discuss three design options for the 2018 ballot. Sessions comprised of representation from people who may encounter barriers marking their ballot, including:   + Persons with disabilities,   + People with English as a secondary language, and   + First-time voters. * The ballot design was also sent to an Accessibility Consulting Group for further review. |
| 2. Communication & Information | | |
| Provide an informative and accessible election website by: | Ensuring election information is available online in clear and simple language. | * Election information such as voting options & accommodations, ID requirements, eligibility requirements, the voters' list, and how to vote, was available online in plain language. * Voter information was also provided online through various videos with on screen ASL captioning, including videos explaining How to Vote (1,293 views to date) and the Accessible Voting Equipment (303 views to date). |
| Continuously updating election information on the election website to reflect the most recent developments and information. | * The election website was monitored and updated regularly. This involved sharing timely information about the Better Local Government Act, where considerable effort was made to communicate changes to the public as quickly and clearly as possible, by:   + Displaying important updates and notices prominently on the main election page.   + Developing a dedicated webpage about the legislative changes, where candidates and electors could find clear and accurate information about the changes all in one place.   + Encouraging electors to use MyVote to find their new ward and review an updated list of the candidates running in their ward. |
| Ensuring all web pages are W3C Consortium WCAG 2.0 Level AA Compliant. | * All City of Toronto websites meet the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA, in accordance with the schedule set out in the AODA Integrated Accessibility Standards. |
| Adding an Accommodations for Voters section to the main page of the Election website. | * The Voting Options and Accommodations webpage was linked from the main Election webpage, and had 8,042 views from January to November. |
| Producing a ‘How to Vote’ video that includes American Sign Language interpretation and captioning, and posting it on the election website. | * A How to Vote video was developed and published on the election website, receiving 1,293 views. The video helped electors familiarize themselves with the process and what to expect when they go to vote and had on-screen ASL interpretation. |
| Ensuring the MyVote web application to includes accessibility information about voting places | * MyVote allowed voters to input their address and find their new ward number and list of candidates. This was particularly helpful to voters following the changes that resulted from the Better Local Government Act. * MyVote provided information about voting place accessibility under the 'Where Do I Vote?' tab. * New features in MyVote included the ability for electors to add themselves to the voters' list and view and print their Voter Information Card. * Between May 1 and October 22, MyVote had 702,371 views and 254,833 distinct users. |
| Provide election information in alternative formats and through multiple channels by: | Attending meetings, events and fairs to showcase accessible voting technology and raise awareness about the municipal election and accommodations available to voters. | * Election staff conducted outreach at 51 events and facilitated 31 workshops and 5 demonstrations of how to use the accessible voting equipment. * Following the introduction of the Better Local Government Act, an informative pamphlet was developed to help residents better understand the legislative changes and how they impacted the 2018 election.   + - * + The pamphlet included a map of the new ward model and directed people to MyVote where they could input their address to find their new ward and list of candidates.         + While conducting outreach, election staff explained how these changes affected the municipal election, while distributing the pamphlets and responding to questions and comments.         + 2,500 pamphlets were distributed at community events and through partnering organizations. |
| Working with persons with disabilities, community advocates, and disability service providers to disseminate election information to persons with disabilities across Toronto. | * Election information and materials were provided to the 98 AON members for them to distribute within their networks through word of mouth, workshops and by disseminating printed materials. * Regular email updates were sent to the AON to keep members up-to-date with the legislative changes and their impact on the election, enabling them to share timely and accurate information to their service users and networks. * 49 disability-serving organizations received election print materials to disseminate to their networks and service users, and post in their facilities. * 5,145 postcards and 80 posters with specific information about accessibility, were distributed across Toronto at community events and through partnering organizations. * Election advertising included 27 radio stations. |
| Actively promoting employment opportunities to persons with disabilities and disability-serving organizations. | * Over 7,000 employment postcards and 445 employment posters were mailed to 49 community organizations across Toronto, to be shared with residents and posted in facilities. * Approximately 5,000 employment postcards were distributed at events by election staff. |
| Producing material with election information that includes accessibility information and mailing it out to every residence in Toronto. | * Approximately 1.3 million election information pamphlets were mailed to every household in Toronto. These pamphlets highlighted accessibility information such as a description of the different voting options and accommodations, and where to call if you have questions about accessibility or require additional assistance. The pamphlet was also posted to the website with translations available in 25 different languages (based on the [Use of Languages By-law](http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/bylaws/2009/law1176.pdf)). * These pamphlets also included notices about the ward change, and directed electors to MyVote to find their new ward and list of candidates. * Voter Information Cards were mailed to all electors on the voters' list, providing up-to-date information about their new ward and voting locations. |
| Producing a How to Vote booklet in English and additional languages, as well as make the booklet available at all voting places in both print format and Braille. | * The How to Vote booklet was available online and at all voting locations on voting days. This booklet was also available in alternate formats, such as braille and translated in 25 different languages (based on the [Use of Languages By-law](http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/bylaws/2009/law1176.pdf)). |
| Communicating information about new legislative requirements for third party advertising across varied platforms, including: website updates, a dedicated email and phone line, documents available in accessible formats and information sessions hosted in accessible venues with accommodations available upon request (for example, ASL interpreters). | * Information about third party advertising was shared through the Elections website, a dedicated email and phone line, help desk staff and social media channels. Emails included links to the Elections website, which provided regular updates about the Better Local Government Act. * Three information sessions were held between April and July, 2018. A video of the information session was recorded and posted with closed captioning on the election website, along with accessible presentation slides. * Presentations on third party advertising were also delivered to the Election Outreach Networks. |
| 3. Assistance to Candidates | | |
| Provide information to support accessible campaigning by: | Providing candidates with resources such as the ‘Accessible Campaign Information and Communication’ produced by the Province of Ontario and the ‘Candidates’ Guide to Accessible Elections’ produced by AMCTO. | * The AMCTO Candidate's Guide to Accessible Elections was included in the resources listed on the MyCampaign portal for candidates. * Information about voting options and accommodations were made available to candidates, including procedures for the home visit pilot program and Voter Assist Terminals. * Multiple channels were used to communicate changes resulting from the Better Local Government Act to candidates in a regular and timely manner, including bulletins, emails, web updates and social media. * Note: An updated, accessible version of the 'Accessible Campaign Information and Communication' was not made available by the Province of Ontario for this election. |
| Incorporating accessibility information and messaging into Candidate Information Sessions. | * 5 information sessions were held between April and July, attended by approximately 350 people. * Information sessions opened with a segment that reinforced the value and importance of running a campaign that is accessible to all electors. * A video of the information session was recorded and posted with closed captioning on the election website, along with accessible presentation slides. |
| Ensure accessibility for candidates with disabilities by: | Ensuring the candidate's guide and/or other relevant publications are available in accessible formats. | * All documents provided to candidates were made accessible and alternate formats were available upon request. |
| Holding candidate information sessions in accessible locations and adding an accommodation statement in the invitations to ensure attendees are aware that accommodations are available upon request. | * All information sessions were held in accessible locations. * An accommodation statement was included in the promotion of each information session. |
| 4. Accessible Voting Places | | |
| Ensure all voting places are accessible to electors with disabilities by: | Creating an accessibility checklist for election staff to use when conducting site visits of each voting place ensuring each facility has   * Barrier free path of travel from the parking lot/sidewalk * Barrier free parking, where parking was provided * Door operators or accessible doors * Adequate lighting | * The [voting place accessibility inspection checklist](https://contrib.wp.intra.prod-toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/8f93-VP-Inspection-Checklist.pdf) was updated in 2018, adding the availability of an accessible washroom for staff as a criteria. |
| Inspecting all voting places to ensure all locations are accessible.   * Where possible, make modifications to existing voting places to make them accessible, for example by installing temporary ramps. * Places that cannot be made accessible will be relocated or merged with other voting places in the vicinity. * Conduct an additional accessibility check in August/September to ensure there have been no changes to the locations. * Have election staff perform final accessibility checks during the advance vote period and on election day to verify the accessibility of the voting place. | * Advance Vote: Over 70 locations inspected, all locations were deemed accessible and no modifications were required. * Election Day: 1,725 locations were inspected three times. 1,700 were deemed to be accessible and available. * 60 ramps and 54 door handles were temporarily installed. |
| Hiring Accessibility Officers to mitigate voting place accessibility issues by doing the following roles when needed:   * Helping open doors without automated power door openers. * Operating elevators. * Direct voters to the accessible entrance if it is different from the main entrance. | * 689 Accessibility Officers were hired to work on election day. |
| Ensuring all voting place access routes and entrances are clearly identified by:   * Providing appropriate signage at voting places. * Ensuring electors with accessibility needs are directed to the accessible voting entrance by prominent signage. * Where possible, make the accessible entrance the same as the main entrance. | * Each voting location had the following signs:   + Vote Here outdoor sign   + Accessibility outdoor sign   + A sign to identify accessible entrances   + Directional accessibility signs (5 to 10 per site)   + General directional signs (10 to 30 per site)   + For Advance Vote, 50 out of 51 locations had a main entrance that was the same as the accessibility entrance.   + For Election Day: 1,614 out of 1,700 locations a main entrance that was the same as the accessibility entrance. |
| Ensuring all voting place owners and managers are aware of accessibility requirements by:   * Notifying all facility owners and managers of the proposed voting places of legislative accessibility requirements in order to prevent last minute changes to voting rooms. | * Facility contracts included a clause indicating that the space must have "unobstructed and hazard free access for all voters". |
| Providing an opportunity for the public to provide feedback on the list of proposed voting places by:   * Posting a tentative list of voting places on the election webpage. * Inviting individuals with disabilities to provide feedback on the tentative list of voting places. * Using the received feedback to ensure that all voting places are accessible. | * A list of preliminary Election Day voting places was posted on the election website on July 9, 2018. |
|  | Setting up a process to facilitate notification of disruptions to service or last minute changes to voting places to ensure that:   * In the event of disruptions to service or unforeseen circumstances that affect the accessibility of voting places during advance vote or on election day, notices of disruption will be posted in real time: * on the City’s website * on Facebook: [Toronto Votes](https://www.facebook.com/ElectionServices/) * on Twitter: [@TorontoVotes](https://twitter.com/torontovotes?lang=en) * at the site of the disruption   When applicable, a media advisory will be issued | * During Advance Vote, there was one location change. To communicate changes, the website was updated, all affected electors were mailed a notice, and over 100 signs were displayed in the area. * On Election Day, three locations had elevators/chair lift failure. This was reported on our website and additional staff were deployed to that voting location to administer curbside voting where needed. |
| 5. Voting Options and Accommodations | | |
| Make accessible voting equipment and voting options available by: | Making Voter Assist Terminals (VAT) available during advance vote and on election day.   * The VAT is a machine that marks paper ballots, allowing voters with disabilities and other special needs to select the candidate(s) of their choice 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. | * There were 50 locations with VATs available on Election Day. * During Advance Vote, the VAT was available at all 51 locations. * Over 200 people used the VAT. * Voters were able to request having their ballot transferred to a voting location with a VAT. |
| Welcoming the use of support persons and service animals in voting places:   * Any person with a disability accompanied by a support person or service animal may enter the City Clerk’s Offices or any voting place with their support person or service animal. | * Detailed information about service animals was included in in-class training sessions and in the Accessible Customer Service handbook that was provided to all voting place staff. |
| Providing assistance to electors with disabilities as required by:   * Having an election official in the voting place to assist a voter in casting their ballot when requested. | * Option was available and all voting place staff received accessible customer service training. |
| Permitting voting by proxy:   * In cases where a voter is unable to attend a voting place, the voter can appoint another person to act on their behalf. | * Option was available. |
| Providing the option of curbside voting:   * Voters that are physically to go inside the voting place can request that the ballot be brought out to their vehicle or to another location within the voting place. | * Option was available. |
| Providing voting opportunities in institutions and retirement homes   * Establishing voting places at the following facilities in order to allow eligible residents of the facility the opportunity to vote:   + any institution where 20 or more beds are occupied by persons who are disabled, chronically ill or infirmed   + a retirement home where 50 or more beds are occupied   + Having election staff administer bedside voting where required. | * 103 long term care homes and 88 senior residences were used as voting places and received information packages. |
| Introducing an Election Home Visit Pilot Program   * The Home Visit Pilot Program is an alternative method of voting for people that are unable to attend a voting place without unreasonable difficult due to injury, illness, or disability. As a part of this program, election officials bring a ballot to the voter to allow them to vote from home. | * 100 home visit officers were recruited. * 352 home visit registrations. * 350 home visit electors voted. * A post-election telephone survey was completed with **183** home visit electors.   + 37% (n=67) said it was extremely easy to sign up for a home visit and 45% (n=82) said it was very easy   + 94% (n=172) were very satisfied with the service received from election officials   + 71% (n=130) are extremely likely to sign up for a home visit again   + 79% (n=144) rated their home visit experience as excellent and 16% (n=30) rated it very good |
| Making supplies available at voting locations that can assist voters with disabilities such as:   * Magnifying sheets (4x) available at all voting places to assist voters with low vision. * Note pads and pens available at all voting places to assist communication with voters who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.   + How to Vote booklets in multiple languages, English, Braille and large font. | * Magnifying sheets, memo pads and How to Vote booklets available in 25 languages and braille, were available at all voting locations. |
| 6. Accessible Customer Service | | |
| Provide accessible customer service by: | Providing all election officials with accessible customer service training.   * Holding training sessions for election staff on accessibility requirements, serving people with disabilities and on the accommodations and special services available to assist voters. * Requiring all staff to receive elections and accessibility training. | * All training sessions included information on accessibility requirements, serving persons with disabilities and on the accommodations and special services available to assist electors * Information on the AODA, the customer service standard and serving persons with disabilities was included in all training materials (manuals, on-line and classroom training). * Voting place employment opportunities were pro-actively promoted through the AON, community organizations and at events and meetings. * Persons with disabilities were recruited as Election Accessibility Trainers and participated in training voting place staff on the importance of accessible elections and customer service. |
| Developing reference materials for all election officials highlighting how to effectively serve voters with disabilities.   * Including AODA, customer service standard, and serving people with disabilities messaging in all training materials, classroom training and web based training being provided to all elections staff. * Providing every election staff member with an [Accessible Customer Service Handbook](https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/90b3-2018_AccessibleCustomerService_handbook.pdf). * Making individual accommodations available upon request to staff during training, for example, ASL interpretation or communication devices. | * The Accessible Customer Service Handbook was revised with input from the AON and provided to all voting place staff. * All online training contained an Accessible Customer Service component, outlining best practices for assisting voters with disabilities. |
| Establishing a dedicated contact centre for anyone who encounters an accessibility issue can contact:   * Phone: 416-338-1111 (press 6) * Email: [AccessibleElections@toronto.ca](mailto:AccessibleElections@toronto.ca) * Fax: 416-395-1300 * TTY: 416-338-0889 | * Election Services has a dedicated accessibility phone number and central email to address questions, comments or concerns relating to accessibility, leading up to or on election day. * These lines of communication are managed by full time election staff. On election day, this team was able to quickly respond and rectify issues that arose. |