



# POST-ELECTION ACCESSIBILITY REPORT

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF WOLLASTON  
2022 MUNICIPAL AND SCHOOL BOARD ELECTION

January 20, 2023

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## **1.0 Introduction**

The Township of Wollaston is a community that respects the dignity and rights of persons with disabilities. We were committed to promote a barrier-free and inclusive community in making the 2022 Municipal and School Board Election accessible by working to accommodate the needs of electors by removing these barriers to vote for persons with disabilities.

The focus of the Post-Election Accessibility Report is to evaluate the **accessibility** of the electoral services offered to all electors and candidates in the 2022 Municipal and School Board Election. This report outlines the various initiatives undertaken during the course of the 2022 Municipal and School Board Election regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities and how these actions impacted their voting experience.

## **2.0 Governing Legislative and Policy Framework**

Under the **Municipal Election Act, 1996** (The **Act**) the Clerk is legislatively responsible for conducting Municipal and School Board Elections and establishing policies and procedures to ensure that all electors have the opportunity to participate fully in the election. The **Act** requires the Clerk to have regard for the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities and to ensure that all voting places are accessible to electors with disabilities. The Clerk is also required, within 90 days after a regular election, to prepare a report on the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities and make the report available to the public.

## **3.0 General Accessibility Considerations**

In preparation for the 2022 Municipal and School Board Election, staff reviewed the relevant legislation and implemented a number of initiatives to ensure compliance. Significantly, as required under the **Act**, the Clerk prepared a plan regarding the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities and made the plan available to the public before Election Day by posting it on the Municipality's website.

## **4.0 Strategies and Actions for the Identification, Removal and Prevention of Barriers**

### **4.1 Method of Voter and Electronic Voting System**

On May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Council approved an alternative method of voting for the 2022 Municipal and School Board Election. Council determined that electronic voting would be utilized as the method of voting for the first time for this election.

The Election was conducted over a fourteen-day voting period (October 11 – 24, 2022) as a vote-anywhere, vote-anytime, paperless election. Voters were not required to mail back a voter-by-mail kit as in previous elections, and instead could vote at the municipal office, deemed a Voter Help Centre during hours of operation or remotely by touch-tone telephone or online 24 hours a day from anywhere in the world using a smartphone, tablet or laptop.

Such provisions supported increased accessibility, convenience, and sustainability throughout the voting process.

Moreover, Electronic voting provided the electors with the ability to mark their ballot from home at their convenience. This allowed increased rights of privacy to electors with disabilities who may find voting at a traditional paper-based voting location more difficult or need assistance with mailing a vote-by-mail kit. This format gives the ability to vote with little or no assistance required from others.

The Clerk worked closely with the contracted electronic voting system service provider, Intelivote Systems Inc., to evaluate the system and ensure that it was fully secure, keeps its servers in Canada to satisfy legal requirements by Canadian election officials, which stipulates the vote must be kept secret and is accessible for persons with disabilities. Electors with disabilities could use their personal assistive technologies to interact with the electronic voting system anywhere and a demo for the electronic voting system was made available on the Municipality's website.

## **4.2 Election Officials**

Leading up to the election, an Election Accessibility Plan was developed. The 2022 Plan guides the provision of election related services to persons with disabilities. The Plan was designed to respect the dignity and independence of electors and candidates and ensure that practices and procedures are consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.

## **4.3 In-Person Method of Voting with or without Voting Assistance**

For those votes without means to access touch-tone telephone or online voting opportunities, or those who sought assistance from trained election officials, a 10-day voting place location at the municipal office was available to provide access to touch-tone telephone and laptops, Internet connectivity and election staff.

The 2022 Municipal and School Board Election ensured that accessibility was a primary consideration in choosing where voters could cast their electronic ballot. This was critical to ensure that the Municipal office building had a barrier-free path of travel, with no obstructions to the entrance, and designated barrier-free parking spaces at grade. There was adequate lighting and signage was posted to inform electors of the Voter Help Centre location. Election Officials made electors aware of the availability of assistance for persons requiring same at the dedicated voting booths. Election Officials were positioned to greet electors as they came into the Voter Help Centre during the voting period and into the building on Election Day and assist them as may be necessary.

During the entire voting period, personal assistive devices were permitted at the Voter Help Centre, such as wheelchairs and walkers. Support persons and service animals were welcomed, and assistance was offered to voters at every stage of the voting process, including being greeted at the door, making any necessary amendments to their information on the Voters' List, and casting their electronic ballot. Election Officials treated all voters with dignity and respect, being sensitive to the individual needs of voters and recognizing that some required unique attention. While forms and oaths were able to be printed in large font, a magnifier was also present to assist voters with low vision and Election Officials could read

and sign oaths upon voters' requests. Chairs were available for voters to sit at if they had to wait. It is important to also note that there was a mix of both a touchscreen laptop and a laptop with a mouse at the Voter Help Centre in an effort to offer various accessible technologies to voters.

### **Opportunities for Improvement:**

- Ensure that Election Officials have adequate computers and printers to allow for more than one person to input information at a time.
- Have more visible identifier (other than lanyards) for election staff, perhaps vests or T-Shirts.
- Have more directional signage outside so Electors know where to Enter.

#### **4.4 Internet Method of Voting**

Eligible voters were provided with the opportunity to vote online using a number of personal devices, including but not limited to tablets, computers and smart phones alongside any accompanying assistive devices or software required. Such methods supported independent, private and convenient voting anytime throughout the 14-day voting period and eliminated the need to visit the Voter Help Centre location in person to vote. This is an added benefit to those with mobility impairment. Intelivote System Inc. provided a service compliant with World Wide Web Consortium website principles (organization, functionality, readability and alternative ways of representing information). The system was also created to meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0 Level A) so that persons with disabilities could perceive, understand, navigate and interact with the online voting system.

### **Opportunity for Improvement:**

- Several voters who called in on the Voter Helpline identified minor confusion related to accessing the voter website. Once clarified by the Election Official that the issue was with the placement of the voting website address in Search "in the middle of the screen" instead "the top of the screen", and not with the voting website address itself, the Elector was able to access the site.
- Several voters who called in on the Voter Helpline identified lack of access to the voter website. Once clarified by the Election Official that there was missing information (Date of Birth), and not with the voting website address itself, the Election was able to access the site.

#### **4.5 Telephone Method of Voting**

Persons with disabilities and those who did not wish to use internet voting options, were able to access electronic voting over the telephone. Intelivote Systems Inc created a telephone voting service that was offered on all types of touchtone phones and wireless devices. The service used clear, English language and menu options were presented in an organized and easy-to-follow order, advising voters when to select options and provide confirmation of one's selections. Standard volume levels were used to allow for adjustments depending on the user and device. Telephone voting could also be used via TTY (Teletypewriter) Services. Bell Relay service operators are required by law to maintain confidentiality and not disclose any information from conversations, nor keep any records of such.

## Opportunities for Improvement:

- Voters who called in on the Voter Helpline identified issues with accessing voting by telephone. Once clarified by the Election Official that there was missing or incorrect information (Date of Birth with month and date reversed), and not with the voting itself, the Elector was able to access the site.

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| Number of Electors who voted via <b>Internet: 861</b><br>Number of Electors who voted via <b>Telephone: 137</b> |
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### 4.6 Communications

The Township of Wollaston considered accessibility in all information and communication strategies for the 2022 Municipal and School Board Election. Upon requests from persons with disabilities, Election staff were prepared to provide copies of election documents, or the information contained in the document, in a format that took into account the person's disability. Specific to candidates, Intelivote's Candidate Access Portal granted candidates the ability to access the Voters' List electronically throughout each day of the voting period. This prevented candidates from having to physically attend to obtain their copies of the Voters' List.

The Municipality's election website was designed to be both informative and accessible. All information for voters, candidates, and third parties was placed in district sections on the website, and they were directed to access all documents and forms through the website in an effort to promote accessibility and transparency. The information available online used clear and simple language and was continuously updated to reflect the most recent election developments and information.

Election information was communicated through various channels and alternate formats including emails, social media, and newspaper. Vote Information Letters were mailed out to all eligible electors on the Voters' List as well as newsletters in the tax bills explaining where and when to vote in the election and have electors' information on the Voters' List amended. For election-related inquiries or feedback, all residents were able to contact the Clerk's Department directly via telephone or through a designated email. Live assistance with Election Staff was provided during office hours. This provided another means of information for those who did not access the election website. The Clerk will continue to receive feedback through the election email address.

In the event of disruptions to electoral services or unforeseen circumstances that affected the accessibility of voting locations, a process was in place to facilitate notification. For example, if the Clerk needed to declare an emergency, information regarding the extension of voting hours and voting locations would be updated in real-time on social media, the Township's election section of the website, posted on the front window of the office, broadcast to the local radio station and communicated to all Election Officials present at the voting location.

## **Opportunity for Improvement:**

- Include notation relative to “availability of alternative formats on request” on Voter Information Letter

## **5.0 Conclusion**

It was the goal of the Township of Wollaston’s Clerk to ensure that electors within the Township who required accessibility services were provided with the best opportunity to vote as independently as possible for the 2022 Municipal and School Board Election. Election staff also strived to make the nomination and registration process as accessible as possible for candidates.

The 2022 Municipal and School Board Election total vote turnout was 45.6%.

The Township of Wollaston’s Clerk will continue to learn, develop, and adjust approaches in order to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. Debriefs have been conducted with all Election Officials and both residents and staff/council feedback regarding the accessibility of the election will be considered by the Clerk in preparation for the next Municipal and School Board Election.

## **6.0 Feedback**

Public feedback about the manner in which election services were provided to persons with accessible needs may be submitted to the Township Clerk through a variety of methods:

- Telephone: 613-337-5731 or toll free in ON 1-833-337-5731
- Email: [clerk@wollaston.ca](mailto:clerk@wollaston.ca)
- In person: 90 Wollaston Lake Road, Coe Hill, ON
- Mail: 90 Wollaston Lake Road, P.O. Box 99, Coe Hill, ON K0L 1P0

The feedback process provides election staff with an opportunity to take corrective measures to prevent similar recurrences, address training needs, enhance service delivery and provide alternative methods of providing election services.

Bernice Crocker

Clerk/Administrator  
Township of Wollaston