



MUNICIPALITY OF
GREENSTONE

2018 Post Municipal Election Public Accessibility Report

Completed
This 17th day of January, 2019

Facts:

- In Accordance with Section 12.1(3) of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, the Clerk shall provide a report, within 90 days after voting day in a regular election, about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect Electors and candidates with accessibility needs.
- The report must be made available to the public. Therefore it will be posted on the municipal website, unlike the 2014 Election where the report was only to be submitted to Council.
- This report will not identify the overall success of the 2018 Municipal Election nor does it provide information on results based on wards, turnout rates, or the general complaints of the voting process. This information is provided in an alternate report to Council.
- This report will identify accessibility achievements from the 2018 Election and details how we will continue to improve the accessibility of municipal elections in the Municipality of Greenstone and enable the Electors to exercise their democratic right to vote.
- During the Election period an Election Accessibility Plan was developed. The Plan was designed to respect the principle of dignity, independence and equality of Electors and candidates. The Plan detailed practices and procedures with a focus on those specific principles. The Plan was made available to the public, Election Staff and the candidates. It was also available on the Municipal Website.
- The Municipality of Greenstone enacted for its third election the alternative voting (Internet and telephone) method.
- The alternative voting method was identified in the plan as playing a key role in conducting an accessible election by providing Electors with the capability to vote from the comfort of their own home. Voting from home facilitates the voting process for persons with disabilities who may have mobility restrictions, visual impairment, and or have a difficult time with transportation.
- Electors with assistive devices in their homes can utilize them with casting their ballot privately and independently.
- By allowing Electors with disabilities to vote from any location and from a selection of methods, there was an increase in the capability for the voter to vote without any assistance, providing the elector with a disability the same independence and privacy as other voters.
- The following are the initiatives undertaken and part of the Election Accessibility Plan Initiative:
 - **Telephone Voting:** Eligible voters could vote using a touch-tone telephone, and the toll-free telephone number and PIN number contained in their Voter Information Letter to access an audio ballot.
 - **Internet Voting:** Eligible voters could vote online, using a smart phone, tablet device, gaming device or computer and any accompanying assistive devices or software, along with their PIN to access the internet address provided in their Voter Instruction Letter. Intelivote Systems was created to meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0 Level AA),

so that persons with disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate and interact with the online voting system. It is compliant with the guidelines of the World Wide Web Consortium website principles, which include organization, functionality and readability of information provided, as well as alternative ways of representing information. Based on the accessibility review from 2014, touch screen Tablets (Ipad's) were available to allow individuals with limited hand mobility to apply votes rather than rely on the functionality of mouse.

- **In-Person Voting at a Voter Help Centre(s):** For those individuals without means to access voting via telephone or internet, or who required the assistance of a trained Election Official, several Voter Help Centre(s) were open to provide in-person internet or telephone voting opportunities via a laptop our touch screen monitor/Ipad.
- The Clerk conducted a review of potential locations for Voter Help Centres with accessibility in mind.
- **Election Official:** All Election Officials were Municipal Employees and staff were trained on how to interact with people with disabilities and assist. Election Official assistance was provided at each Voter Help Centre, and upon a request from the Elector and with a written Oath Election Officials were authorized to assist an Elector. Election Officials were clearly identified with a name tag. Electors also had the option of being accompanied by a support person (not a candidate) an Oath was required to affirm that the individual was a friend of the Elector.
- **Special Voting Provisions:** Election Officials visited the Geraldton District Hospital to provide onsite access to online voting via the Touch Screens (IPad's).
- **Election Website, Notices and Communication:** The Municipality provided multiple communication channels, including, local newspaper, radio, website, social media and Canada Post. All information was made available in alternative formats upon request. The Municipality promoted the vote anywhere/anytime in the Municipality for electors with disabilities.
- **Candidates:** Candidates were provided guides on how to conduct an accessible campaign.
- **Advance Voting:** Scheduled advance voting opportunities and communication on how to vote in advance was provided.
- In accordance with the Election Accessibility Plan a feedback process was established the following will outline the feedback received most of which were verbal and noted during the entire Election period.

Analysis

Areas of improvements with Telephone Voting:

- During the voting period the System Auditor identified barriers in the volume and audibility due to static/interference of the audio provided by the election system provider. This matter was communicated to the system provider and rectified during the voting period as quickly as possible. It is important to point out that

Electors who contacted the municipality before they completed their vote were able to finish casting their ballot by using the internet option, if they didn't have this option at home they were able to attend a Voter Help Centre to access the kiosk.

- Telephone Kiosk's were set up in each Voter Help Centre, with a specialty phone for accessibility needs (large button phone) with the exception of the Geraldton Ward where the purchased telephone would not operate due to none compatibility with the internal telephone system provider which resulted in a regular office phone being installed at the Kiosk station. There was 1 elector that opted to utilize the telephone because of visual impairment and was unable to utilize the telephone. The elector was under the impression that they required to vote at their ward office not realizing that it was alternative voting and they could vote from home. The elector determined that the telephone line at home which has assistive devices would provide the ability to cast the ballot and went back home to cast the ballot. An accessible telephone, compatible with the internal telephone system provider will be purchased to address this issue in future Elections.
- Telephone voting experienced a service disruption due to one of the service providers having a province wide outage. Recognizing that persons with disabilities may prefer the use of the telephone, in accordance with the plan notice of the temporary disruption was provided and posted on the Municipal Website, the radio station and social media. The notice included information about the disruption the anticipated duration and a description of alternative methods to vote.
- A number of concerns were received regarding the following but were not identified as a barrier pertaining to accessibility but a user error, Electors were directed to seek assistance from an Election Official at the appropriate Voter Help Centre:
 - Prematurely or over selecting in multiple races or lack of selecting and finalizing the vote
 - Length of Pin Number

Areas of improvements with Internet Voting

- A number of concerns were received regarding the following but were not identified as a barrier pertaining to accessibility but a user error, Electors were directed to seek assistance from Election Official at the appropriate Voter Help Centre. :
 - The 'CAPTCHA' or I am not a robot challenge
 - Length of Pin Number

Areas of improvements with In-Person Voting at a Voter Help Centre(s):

- Identified designated accessible parking was missing signage at a Voter Help Centre which was quickly replaced.
- There were concerns about the lack of Bilingual Election Staff at certain Voter Help Centre(s). Staff were quickly able to find alternative support from other french speaking Election Officials to help communication and assistance with the Elector. The concern was not considered a disability barrier the matter was noted and will be considered at future Elections.

- Non french speaking Election Official found it challenging to assist Electors that selected the french language setting specific to the CAPTCHA challenge question in order to enter the voting screen. Staff were able to learn the CAPTCHA challenge as they were repetitive. Staff was also aware that they were able to request assistance from a french speaking Election Officials in those circumstances. The concern was not considered a disability barrier the matter was noted and will be considered at future Elections. All communication pertaining to the Election including the voting method being telephone or internet voting were provided in both French and English.

How does this tie to the Strategic Plan?

Complimenting the second imperative of the Strategic Plan "Build a better future by building better relationships". Continuous improvements of residents perception relating to Communication, Accountability, Transparency, Satisfaction of day to day contact with the Municipality.



Gabrielle Lecuyer
Clerk / Returning Officer