

2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan

Introduction and Background

The City of Kingston is committed to making the 2022 municipal election and any subsequent by-elections accessible to all candidates, electors and election workers. The City of Kingston understands the importance of accessibility for persons with disabilities and will work to identify, remove and prevent barriers to participation in the election.

The core principles contained in the City of Kingston Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and the City's Accessibility Standards Policy have guided the information contained in 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan (the Plan).

A municipal election accessibility plan was prepared by staff in 2014 and 2018. Changes to the *Municipal Elections Act* (MEA) in advance of the 2018 election required the City Clerk to prepare an Accessibility Plan regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect candidates and electors with disabilities and to make the Accessibility Plan available to the public before Voting Day.

Internet voting and accessible voting equipment will be used for the 2022 municipal election. The accessible voting equipment will be provided at all voting places except for special voting places in institutions or retirement/long-term care homes.

There will be six (6) voting places city-wide on Advance Voting Day, where electors can cast their ballot at any one (1) voting place regardless of where they live in Kingston. On Voting Day there will be one (1) voting place in each electoral district, except Countryside which will have two. Electors residing in Countryside can cast their ballot at either voting place. There will also be (19) dedicated voting places located in various institutions and retirement/long-term care homes for the residents of those buildings only.

This Plan has been prepared in advance of the 2022 municipal election in compliance with the requirements of the MEA and to identify the accessibility measures to be implemented for the 2022 municipal election and any subsequent by-elections. As required by the MEA, following the election information will be presented to Council and be made available to the public reporting on the success of the measures that were implemented to identify, remove and prevent barriers for electors and candidates with disabilities. The MEA requires that the report be submitted to Council within 90 days after the election.

Mandate

To provide every candidate, elector and election worker with an equal opportunity for positive involvement in the 2022 municipal election and any subsequent by-elections.

Goal

To establish objectives and actions for the 2022 municipal election and any subsequent by-elections to identify, remove and prevent barriers to participation in municipal elections.

Objectives

The objectives of the 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan include:

- that all voting places meet the accessibility requirements established by the City, or have the ability to be modified so as to meet the accessibility requirements (see Appendix A);
- that all electors can independently cast a ballot and verify their choices while maintaining the privacy of their vote;
- that all electors have full and equal access to information on where and when to vote and the candidates for each office;
- that all electors can fully participate in the municipal election as an elector, candidate, or election worker; and
- that electors and candidates are aware of the accessibility measures available for the municipal election through a variety of media.

Corporate Policy

As required by the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation 191/11 (the Regulation), City Council approved the current version of the Accessibility Standards Policy in October 2016. The Policy and its related procedures apply to all City employees, volunteers and any individual or organization that provides goods, services or facilities to the public or other third parties on behalf of the City. The Policy is intended to provide an overarching framework for the City's standards, procedures, by-laws and guidelines that are required to comply with the Regulation developed under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. This Policy establishes accessibility standards, procedures and guidelines in the areas of information and

communication, employment, transportation, design of public spaces and customer service for the City of Kingston.

In accordance with the Accessibility Standards Policy, the City is committed to:

- identifying, removing and preventing barriers to enable better access to municipal goods, services and facilities; and,
- ensuring that the City meets the needs of persons with disabilities in a timely manner.

Provincial Legislation

Municipal Elections Act, 1996 (the MEA), as amended:

Section 12.1

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

Subsection 45 (2)

In establishing the locations of voting places, the clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities.

Communications

Candidate Information

In March 2022 staff released a podcast via the [City of Kingston: Tell Me More](#) platform. The podcast provides listeners with information on how to run for Council, an overview of job duties, and what characteristics make a good City Councillor. A second episode is planned for August 2022 in which staff will discuss the importance of voting and the process of how to vote using all the methods available to electors.

In April 2022 staff held two electronic candidate information sessions via Zoom where attendees received information about the requirements to run for Mayor, City Councillor or school board trustee. Representatives from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, the City of Kingston, three of the Kingston areas four school boards and a former City Councillor provided presentations to attendees, which were followed by a Q&A session. A recording of one of the sessions is available for viewing on the City of Kingston YouTube channel. 35 members of the public attended the sessions.

Staff will continue to examine new and interactive methods for sharing information related to the election with potential candidates and electors.

Website

The [Elections](#) page on the City's website will be used as the primary tool to communicate relevant information to electors and candidates with respect to the municipal election. Staff will ensure that content remains up-to-date. The City's website is WCAG 2.0 Level AA compliant which allows for the use of assistive software such as a screen reader. The font can be adjusted within the browser's functionality to aid the user in reading the information. All material posted to the website in PDF format will be remediated to ensure the document can be viewed by those using a screen reader.

New in 2022, candidates will also have access to election information via a dedicated Candidate Access Portal (CAP). The portal will contain relevant information for candidates, including the portion of the voters' list that candidates are entitled to receive. The use of the CAP will also allow candidates to access real-time voters' list data. Previously, a candidate was required to obtain a hard copy of the updated voters' list via the Elections Office.

Print Materials

All print materials produced for the 2022 municipal election will follow best practices for accessibility, including appropriate font size and type, colour contrast and spacing. As per the City's Accessibility Standards Policy, upon request, and in consultation with the person making the request, documents will be provided in alternate format suitable to the needs of the individual.

If information related to an election is not generated by the City or is supplied by a third party, the City will make every effort to obtain the information from the third party in an alternate format and/or attempt to assist the individual by providing assistive equipment. Alternatively, if a third-party document is not accessible, a link to the document on the third party's website will be provided.

Videos

All videos used for promotion of the election will incorporate the use of closed captioning.

Service Disruptions

From time to time and/or for unforeseen circumstances beyond the City's control, temporary service disruptions may be experienced. Section 6 d) of the City's Accessibility Standards Policy provides that where the service disruption is planned the City will provide notice in advance of the disruption. However, in the case where the disruption is unplanned, the City will provide notice as soon as possible.

In the event of a temporary accessible service disruption, staff commit to making reasonable efforts to ensure that services are reinstated as quickly as possible and that alternative services are provided where feasible. Accessible services in relation to this Plan include the voting places, the Elections Office, election materials and/or voting provisions for electors with disabilities at the voting place.

Notice of these temporary service disruptions shall be provided in a conspicuous place and manner at the location of the disruption and information shall also be posted on the City's website and social media accounts. The notice shall include information about the reason for the disruption, its estimated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

If service disruptions affect the accessibility of the voting places on Advance Voting Days or Voting Day, notices of the service disruption will be posted in real time via the City's website and social media accounts. Notice will be posted at the site of the service disruption, and a news release will be issued.

Voting Places

Accessibility Audits

Subsection 45(2) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, as amended, requires that "in establishing the locations of voting places, the clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities." The City of Kingston is committed to providing voting places that are accessible to all candidates, electors and election workers.

Elections Office staff partnered with the Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee (MAAC) to conduct accessibility audits of potential voting places in Kingston. A member of MAAC accompanied staff in the evaluation of approximately 25 potential voting places. Each location was evaluated for criteria established in the 2022 municipal

election voting place accessibility checklist. Below are the areas in which specific accessibility requirements were reviewed; the full checklist can be found in Appendix A:

- Proximity to public transit stop (within 400 metres);
- Parking;
- Building exterior;
- Building entrance; and
- Building interior.

If a site did not meet the criteria of the checklist, but modification was possible to ensure accessibility requirements were met (i.e., an interior door did not have an automatic door opening device but could be propped open), the required modification was noted and will be passed along to election staff working at the location. If a modification was not possible, the location was rejected and an alternate location that met the accessibility criteria was found.

Voting Place Layout and Set Up

A model voting place will be set up to determine the optimal layout, including distance between voting compartments, the height of tables and the overall flow of the voting place. Consideration will also be given to ensuring appropriate physical distancing between those working and attending a voting place. MAAC members will be invited to evaluate the model voting place and provide feedback to staff. Feedback will then be incorporated into the typical voting place diagram that will be provided to each site supervisor.

Magnifiers and individual lamps will be provided in voting compartments to allow electors to better view their ballot. Voting compartments will be situated in the voting place to allow for privacy and provide optimal lighting conditions.

On one Advanced Voting Day, an American Sign Language interpreter will be available at one voting place for full operating hours. Staff will be advertising to the public the availability of the interpreter and the location and hours of the voting place. Advanced Voting will allow for electors to vote at any location regardless of their address.

Transportation to Voting Places

Kingston Access Services (KAS) will provide free transportation for registered clients to and from voting places on Advanced Voting Days and Voting Day. Clients are requested to advise KAS staff when booking their trip that they will be voting in the municipal election and to identify the location of their voting place.

Kingston Transit will also be providing electors who show their voter information notice free transportation during the hours of operation for voting places on Advanced Voting Days and Voting Day.

Accessible Voting Options

Accessible Voting Equipment

All voting places will have accessible voting equipment available for electors. This equipment allows an elector to independently mark their ballot and maintain the secrecy of their ballot in a manner like the traditional ballot marking process. The equipment will be set up and operated by the election staff operating the optical scan voting equipment (the machine operator). The machine operator as well as the site supervisor will receive hands-on training on the set up and operation of the accessible voting equipment.

Accessible voting equipment includes the following options for marking an elector's ballot:

- A touch screen that allows the elector to navigate a digital version of the ballot and navigate contests via on-screen buttons. The text on screen can be increased or made high contrast by the elector.
- A tactile keypad and headset that allows the elector to maneuver through the ballot and make selections based on voice prompts. The volume and tempo of the voice prompts can be modified by the elector.
- A rocker paddle device with 'yes' and 'no' buttons can be plugged into the accessible voting equipment. Paired with a headset, voice prompts allow the elector to navigate and mark their ballot by pressing the 'yes' or 'no' buttons on the paddle.
- A sip-n-puff device can be plugged into the accessible voting equipment. Paired with a headset, voice prompts allow the elector to independently navigate and mark their ballot by sipping on the straw or blowing air into the straw.

Upon completing a voting session using any of the above devices, the accessible voting equipment will mark the ballot as indicated by the elector. The ballot will then be counted by the optical scan voting equipment.

More information on the accessible voting equipment can found in the [Optical Scan Voting Equipment](#) procedure document.

Internet Voting

For the 2022 municipal election, Internet voting will be available beginning at 10 a.m. on Wednesday October 5 until 8 p.m. on Voting Day, Monday October 24. Electors must be registered by 5:00 p.m. to access the internet voting system. This availability of Internet voting increases the opportunity to vote online by 10 days compared to the 2018 municipal election (10 days in 2018, 20 days in 2022).

Instructions on how to access and complete registration for Internet voting will be available on the City website and contained in the Voter Information Notice that will be mailed to all eligible electors. Election staff will also be available via telephone or email to assist electors accessing the internet voting system.

Electors may vote from any internet-enabled device, such as tablet, smartphone, laptop, or desktop computer. The online voting system is WCAG 2.1 AA compliant.

Voting from home facilitates the voting process for electors who may have mobility restrictions, visual impairment, and/or have a difficult time with transportation. Allowing electors to vote from any location and providing a selection of methods to cast a ballot increases the capability for an elector to vote without any assistance. This provides all electors the same independence and privacy in participating in the election.

Voting Proxy

An elector that is unable to go to a voting place may appoint another person to act as their voting proxy and go to a voting place to cast a ballot on their behalf. The appointment must be made on the [prescribed form](#) which is also available at the Elections Office.

The appointment of a voting proxy may take place during Elections Office hours after 2 p.m. on August 24, 2022, and before 5 p.m. on Voting Day, Monday October 24, 2022. A person acting as a proxy must be an eligible elector in Kingston and may only act as a proxy for one qualified elector who is not a relative. A person may be appointed a proxy for multiple electors if those electors are a relative, meaning a parent, grandparent, child, sibling or spouse.

To vote as a proxy at a voting place, a proxy voter must present the original, signed copy of the Appointment for Voting Proxy and proof of identity.

Curbside Elector Support

If an elector is on the voting place premises but is not able to physically access the room inside the building where voting is taking place, a designated election official will be permitted to make external accommodations. Once advised that there is an elector in

the parking lot or at curbside who cannot physically access the voting place, a ballot can be brought out and marked at their vehicle. If the elector does not have their Voter Information Notice or an acceptable form of identification, the designated election official will assist the elector in completing an Application to Amend the Voters' List and/or completing the written Declaration of Identity.

The individual who brought the elector to the voting place may assist the elector in marking the ballot. However, that individual will first be required to take the Oral Oath of Friend of Elector before marking the ballot.

Once the elector has voted, the ballot will be placed in a privacy sleeve. The individual who brought the elector to the voting place will then accompany the designated election official back into the voting place to witness the ballot being inserted into the tabulator and to receive confirmation that the votes were successfully recorded.

Assistive Devices

Section 6 a) of the City's Accessibility Standards Policy allows a person with a disability to provide his or her own assistive device to obtain, use and benefit from the City's goods and services. An assistive device is a piece of equipment a person with a disability uses to help with their daily living. Examples include a wheelchair, electric scooter, hearing aid, portable magnifier, cane or walker, or personal oxygen tank. An elector with their own assistive device is permitted to enter any voting place and voting compartment and, if required, use the assistive device in marking their ballot.

Assistance from Support Person or Designated Election Official

In the case of an elector who requires assistance in the marking of their ballot and does not wish to use the accessible voting equipment, the elector can obtain assistance from a support person or from a designated election official. In the case of a support person, both the elector and the support person would take the Oral Oath of Friend of the Elector. Following the oath, the support person would be allowed to enter the voting compartment with the elector and mark the ballot at the direction of the elector.

In the case of an elector seeking the assistance of a designed election official to mark their ballot, the elector would take the Oral Oath of Friend of the Elector. The designed election official would then accompany the elector to a voting compartment and mark the ballot as directed by the elector.

Service Animals

Section 6 b) of the City's Accessibility Standards Policy allows a person with a disability to enter premises owned or operated by the City accompanied by a service animal, and

to keep the animal with them if the public has access to such premises and the animal is not otherwise excluded by law. As voting places are accessible to the public, there is no reason to exclude a service animal in a voting place. It is the responsibility of the person with the disability to ensure that their service animal is always kept in control.

An animal is considered a service animal if:

- it wears a harness, vest, or other visual indicator; and
- upon request, the person with a disability provides documentation from a regulated health professional confirming that the animal is required for reasons relating to the person's disability.

At times it may be difficult to differentiate between a person with a disability using a service animal and an individual accompanied by a pet. If it is not readily apparent that the animal is a service animal, a designated election official may ask the person to provide documentation from one of the defined regulated health professionals confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

Accessibility Training for Designated Election Officials

All designated election officials are required to complete the City's general Accessible Customer Service training which includes:

- The purpose of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*;
- How to provide accessible customer service to with persons with various disabilities; and
- How to interact with persons who use the assistance of a service animal or support person.

All designated election officials will be provided with hard copy material and in-person training to assist them in delivering accessible customer service. Topics for this training include the above bulleted list, as well as the *Human Rights Code*, the City's Accessibility Standards Policy, and definitions of different disabilities and tips to assist designated election officials in providing accessible customer service.

Elements of the accessible customer service training include:

- Being aware of the accessibility features available at the voting place;

- Monitoring electors concerns and ensuring that their needs are met. This may include adapting the physical layout of the voting place if there are line ups to receive a ballot.
- Observing electors during discussions with them, and if it appears the elector is having difficulty understanding, working with the elector in any manner they are comfortable with to ensure their needs are met;
- Approaching an elector if it appears they need assistance navigating the voting place;
- Ensuring that electors are aware that assistance (in varying forms) is available, if required;
- Ensuring electors are aware that accessible voting equipment is available and where it is located, if required;
- Recognizing support persons and service animals and following the City's Accessibility Standards Policy;
- Regularly checking the entrance to the voting place and the route to the room where voting is taking place to make sure it remains unobstructed throughout each Voting Day; and
- Maintaining a friendly and approachable demeanor.

In addition to the customer service training, machine operators and site supervisors will be trained to administer an accessible voting session. Site supervisors will also be trained to administer the additional accessible voting options outlined in this report.

The training for designated election officials has been prepared to ensure compliance with the requirements noted above. All designated election officials are required to thoroughly review the contents of their training. After the review is complete, each designated election official must submit a signed compliance form verifying that they have read and understand the requirements and responsibilities for providing accessible customer service during the 2022 municipal election. The signed compliance forms will be retained by the Elections Office as a record that the required accessibility training was provided.

Consultation & Reporting

In preparing this report, election staff consulted with the Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee via a [report](#) at the June 2, 2022 meeting of the committee. Staff have incorporated the feedback received at that meeting into this report. This plan will be

made available on the City website before Voting Day as required by the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*. Further, within 90 days after Voting Day a report will be submitted to Council with respect to the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities. This report shall also be made available to the public.

Feedback on Accessibility Concerns

In accordance with Section 7 a) of the City's Accessibility Standards Policy, the City has established a process for receiving and responding to feedback about the manner in which it provides goods, services and facilities to persons with disabilities. General accessibility concerns and service requests can be submitted online via the City's [Contact Us](#) platform.

This plan will be updated as best practices and opportunities for improvement are identified. Election staff welcomes feedback to identify areas where changes can enhance the delivery of a fully accessible election for electors, candidates or election workers. Staff will review all feedback received and will revise this plan as deemed appropriate for any future by-elections and/or the 2026 municipal election. In addition, this information will be included in the City's Annual Accessibility Report to Council.

Please provide your feedback on suggested changes to the Municipal Election Accessibility Plan:

E-Mail: elections@cityofkingston.ca

Phone: 613-546-4291, extension 1430 (Elections Office)

By Mail: City of Kingston,
Clerk's Department,
216 Ontario Street,
Kingston, Ontario, K7L 2Z3

Appendix A – 2022 municipal election voting place accessibility criteria

Public transit

- Public transit stop near the polling place? (Yes/No)

Parking

- Adequate parking available? (Yes/No)
- Number of accessible parking spaces:
- Surface of parking firm and level? (Yes/No)
- Parking lit? (Yes/No)
- Pathway from parking lot to the entrance? (Yes/No)

Building exterior

- Curb cuts between parking lot and sidewalks/pathways? (Yes/No)
- Surface of the pathway is firm and obstacle-free? (Yes/No)
- Pathway is free of a long slope? (Yes/No)
- Pathway is free of a steep incline? (Yes/No)
- Building provides a level access to the entrance? (i.e. no steps) (Yes/No)
- Exterior building lighting? (Yes/No)

Building entrance

- Exterior door has a clear opening width of 810 mm (32")? (Yes/No)
- Door handles are easy to grip? (Yes/No)
- An automatic door opening device is provided (Yes/No)

Building interior

- Interior door(s) has a clear opening width of 810 mm (32")? (Yes/No)
- Door handles are easy to grip? (Yes/No)
- Automatic door opening devices are provided for interior doors? (Yes/No)
- Voting room is on the same level as the entrance? (Yes/No)
- Interior lighting works? (Yes/No)
- Wheelchair accessible washroom (Yes/No)
- Are there any grab bars? (Yes/No)

Overall evaluation

- Does this site meet all the mandatory accessibility criteria? (Yes/No)
- If not, is it possible to modify the site so that it will meet all the mandatory criteria? (Yes/No)

Other comments