

Municipality of West Elgin

2022 Municipal & School Board Election

Pre-Election Accessibility Report

1. Introduction

The Municipality of West Elgin's Accessibility Pre-Election Report supports and strengthens the Municipality's commitment to respond to the needs of all electors. The focus of this Plan is to ensure that electoral services are accessible to all electors and candidates. The intention is to identify and reduce or eliminate barriers and create a positive voting experience.

The review of accessibility issues and initiatives and addressing barrier prevention and/or removal is an ongoing practice. This plan will be updated as new opportunities are identified or become available.

a) **Municipal Elections Act, 1996, as amended – Legislative Requirements**

The 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 2022 Municipal & School Board Election.

The Municipal Elections Act, 1996, as amended states the following:

Section	Clause
12(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.
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.
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.

b) **West Elgin's Accessibility Policy (2.14)**

The Municipality of West Elgin is committed to establishing policies and practices which are consistent with the accessibility standards and four core principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity. The Municipality's Accessibility Customer Service Policy HR 8.1 provide guidance on meeting the requirements of meeting the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005(AODA) and in accordance with the Integrated Accessibility Standards

Regulation 191/11 in order to ensure that all persons with disabilities are provided equal opportunities. To view the Municipality of West Elgin's Accessibility Policy, visit <https://www.westelgin.net/en/municipal-office/resources/Accessibility-Policies/HR-8.2-Accessibility-Policy.pdf> or email clerk@westelgin.net

c) Definition of Disability

The AODA and Ontario Human Rights Code define disability as meaning:

- i) 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 coordination, blindness or visual impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
- ii) A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- iii) A learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- iv) A Mental disorder; or
- v) An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

Disabilities take many forms, visible and invisible. The following criteria were considered in the development of this Plan:

- Policies and procedures being consistent with the principles of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, respecting the dignity and independence of all people;
- Access to electoral services must be integrated and equitable;
- Initiatives should address and accommodate a wide range of abilities; and
- The Accessibility/ Accessible Customer Service Policy will be followed throughout the election. To view the Municipality of West Elgin Accessibility Policy (HR 8.2), visit <https://www.westelgin.net/en/municipal-office/resources/Accessibility-Policies/HR-8.2-Accessibility-Policy.pdf> or email clerk@westelgin.net.

2. Feedback

The Municipality of West Elgin welcomes feedback to identify areas where changes need to be considered and ways in which the Town can improve the delivery of an accessible election.

As this Plan is a working document, it will continue to undergo changes. Feedback on this Plan can be submitted to the Clerk at clerk@westelgin.net or 519-785-0560 ext 222, or in writing to:

Jana Nethercott, Clerk
22413 Hoskins Line
Rodney ON N0L 2C0

3. Consultation

Consultation with individuals and community groups provide a greater understanding into conducting elections that are optimally accessible.

Initiative: Consult with the community about the Accessibility Pre-Election Report.

Actions:

- i) Collaborate with community groups to disseminate election information and raise awareness about the Municipality's accessibility initiatives.
- ii) Attending community meetings, events and fairs, where possible, to demonstrate the alternative voting method and raise awareness of the 2022 Municipal and School Board Election.
- iii) Consult with the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee (County of Elgin) following the conclusion of the voting period to evaluate the success of various accessibility initiatives.

4. Alternative Voting Procedure

Initiative: Provide an accessible voting method for all Municipality of West Elgin eligible electors.

Actions:

- i) The use of internet voting system was designed to meet the needs of electors to ensure independence, dignity, integration and equal opportunity;
- ii) Posting videos and other informative material that outlines the voting process in advance of the voting period;
- iii) Eligible voters are able to vote from home without having to travel using either telephone or internet voting. Menu options are clear and easy to follow, font size and volume can be adjusted and a screen reader can be used for internet voting.
- iv) Ensure Voter Information Letters are designed with appropriate accessible font styles and sizes, appropriate case usage and colour contrast where possible.

5. Information and Communications

Information and communication initiatives will help ensure election information is accessible and available in alternative formats.

Initiative (1): Provide an informative and accessible election website at www.westelgin.net/elections .

Actions:

- i) Ensure language is clear, simple and easy to understand;
- ii) Update election information on the www.westelgin.net webpage to ensure it is recent and accurate;
- iii) Ensure the election webpage is WCAG 2.0 Level AA compliant;
- iv) Work with website provider to explore other opportunities to enhance accessibility on election page beyond current accessibility standard (WCAG 2.0 Level AA).

Initiative (2): Provide election information in alternative formats and through multiple channels.

Actions:

- i) Produce and distribute election related material prior to the election in accessible formats (print, web and other);
- ii) Post a step-by-step process on how to vote on the municipal election webpage;
- iii) Work with community stakeholders to address language barrier issues relating to election communications;
- iv) Post a video (as provided by Intelivote) with instructions on how to vote in the 2022 Municipal and School Board Election.

6. Assistance to Candidates

Initiative: Provide candidates with information on how to make their campaigns more accessible. Also provide candidates with access to information in alternative formats and ensure candidate information sessions are fully accessible.

Actions:

- i) Provide candidate links through Municipality municipal election website to accessible election information produced by the Province and other organizations where available.
- ii) Ensure information provided to candidates is available in an accessible format upon request.
- iii) Ensure the Municipality of West Elgin Voters List is available in an electronic format, free of charge, to candidates upon request.
- iv) Hold candidate information session in an accessible location and video record or livestream for viewing afterwards at a remote location.

7. Voter Information (Help) Centre

Initiative: Ensure the Voter Information Centre is accessible.

Actions:

- i) Confirm that the Voter Information Centres have a barrier free path of travel from the parking lot/ sidewalk, barrier free parking, door openers and accessible doors and adequate lighting.
- ii) Inspect the Voter Information Centres during the voting period, making modifications where possible to enhance accessibility.
- iii) Provide adequate signage at Voter Information Centre.
- iv) Ensure that election staff are aware of the Municipal Notice of Accessible Service disruption procedure in the event that disruptions to service or unforeseen circumstances affect the accessibility of the Voter Information Centre.
- v) Ensure accessible customer service training is provided to election staff.
- vi) Ensure election officials are available at the Voter Information Centre to assist a voter in casting their ballot when requested.

8. Post-Election Report

Section 12.1(3) of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 as amended states the following:

“Within 90 days after voting day in a regular election, the clerk shall submit a report to Council about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.”

The post-election report will be posted on the Municipality’s website and provided to Council in accordance with Section 12.1(3) of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 as amended.