

STAFF REPORT

Report #CSM2018-17

To: His Worship the Mayor and Members of Council
From: Will Jaques, Corporate Services Manager/ Clerk
Re: Post-Election Evaluation/ Accessibility Report
Date: October 31, 2018

Background:

On April 5, 2017, Council approved the use of Internet and Telephone voting methods for the 2018 Municipal Election. These voting methods replaced the Vote-By-Mail method which was used by the Township for the 2010 and 2014 Municipal Elections. By moving to Internet and Telephone voting methods, electors had an opportunity to participate in an even more accessible, environmentally-friendly, and convenient method of voting. It also eliminated the labour-intensive process of vote counting, as well as the staff time required to recruit, train and monitor the people hired to complete the vote counting.

Discussion:

In the opinion of Staff, the election process was successful.

Accessibility

Under the amendments to the Municipal Elections Act, Clerks are required to prepare a plan for the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect voters and candidates with disabilities, and make the plan available to the public before voting day in a regular election. The Clerk also needs to provide a "follow-up report" to the public within 90 days after the election. This section of the report is considered to be the follow-up report. In terms of the Policy requirement, in addition to the Accessible Elections Policy being posted for the public on the Township website, I have attached a copy of the Policy to this report as Appendix 'A'.

In the opinion of Staff, as compared with previous elections, further strides were made in the 2018 election toward ensuring a high degree of accessibility for electors. In particular:

- For candidates, again ensured that printed copies and links on the Township's website were available to "a Candidates Guide to Accessible Elections", produced jointly by AMCTO and the Province.

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- Upon request, all documentation and forms were available in large print to assist the visually impaired.
- As compared with paper (e.g. traditional voting, Vote-by-Mail), everyday tools like computers, telephones and other aids presented accessible opportunities for persons with disabilities to accomplish more, while being consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equal opportunity.
- The voting system provided voters 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. Additionally, persons who have assistive devices set up in their homes could use them to assist with casting a ballot privately and independently.
- The 10-day timeframe for voting provided convenience and independence of voting from anywhere via telephone or Internet during the October 12–22, 2018 voting period. This was especially appropriate for electors with disabilities who could vote a time that was most convenient to them.
- By allowing persons with disabilities to vote from any location and through Internet or Telephone methods, there was an increase in the capability for the voter to vote without any assistance. This in turn provided persons with disabilities the same independence and privacy in participating in the election as other voters.
- The Voter Help Centre was made as accessible as possible for voters requiring assistance. The route to the entrance of the Voter Help Centre was kept unobstructed and accessible. The route was wide enough to allow for an individual using a wheelchair, scooter, other assistive device, or service animal to travel safely. Doors into the Voter Help Centre were accessible and easy to open for the duration of the Voter Help Centre hours. Routine checks of entrance and exit routes were made throughout the hours of operation. Further, accessible parking was made available at the Voter Help Centre.
- For persons with disabilities that required assistance in the voting process, Staff at the Voter Help Centre were available to assist throughout the voting period. Alternatively, pursuant to the Township Accessible Customer Service Policy and 2018 Township Election Policies and Procedures, people with disabilities were permitted to be accompanied by a support person, during the voting process itself. In order to assist, a designated support person and/or 'Friend of the Voter' was administered an oath of secrecy/confidentiality by an Election Official prior to providing such assistance.

Voter Participation

The overall voter participation rate for the Township was 41.10%. While voter participation was down when compared to the 2014 election (50.67%), participation was only slightly less than the average previous Township elections:

Historic Township Overall Voter Participation %		
Year	Overall Participation %	Voting Method
2018	41.10%	Internet/ Telephone
2014	50.67%	Vote-by-Mail
2010	42.70%	Vote-by-Mail
2006	35.00%	Traditional
2003	35.40%	Traditional
2000	46.00%	Traditional
1997	45.00%	Traditional
Average	42.27%	

When breaking out the participation rate further for both Positions and Wards, the participation rate does show some improvements. In particular, the participation rate for Ward 1 Councillor was 43.00%, while the overall participation rate for Ward 1 & Ward 2 was 43.30% and 45.90%, respectively. In addition, please see Appendix 'B' for more participation % details.

Further, when looking at the voter participation information for other Oxford County municipalities, East-Zorra-Tavistock had the third highest overall participation rate, trailing approximately 5% behind Ingersoll, and about 2.5% behind Zorra:

Municipality	Overall %	System	Council Size	Notes
Blandford-Blenheim	34.65%	At Large	5	Traditional ballot, Mayor race, Councillor race, no acclamations. Tabulators.
East Zorra-Tavistock	41.10%	Wards	7	Internet/telephone, Mayor race, Deputy Mayor race, Councillor race (Ward 1), Ward 2 & 3 acclaimed.
Ingersoll	45.80%	At Large	7	Mail in ballot, Mayor race, Deputy Mayor race, Councillor race, no acclamations. Tabulators
Norwich	38.00%	Wards	5	Traditional ballot, Mayor race, 1 ward acclamation. Tabulators
South-West Oxford	16.60%	Wards	7	Internet/telephone, No Mayor race, 2 acclamations, 2 ward races
Tillsonburg	39.30%	At Large	7	Internet/telephone, Mayor race, councillor race.
Woodstock	31.00%	At Large	7	Traditional ballot, Mayor race, City/County race, Councillor race, no acclamations. Tabulators
Zorra	43.76%	Wards	5	Mail in ballot. Mayor race, councillor - 2 ward races and 2 ward acclamations. Tabulators

While a higher voter participation rate is always desired, there are numerous factors that ultimately lead to this percentage. Staff are of the opinion that ample advertising regarding the election process was completed.

Analysis of Voters by Age

A long-held concern in western democracies has been the encouragement of the younger demographic to vote. Indeed, one of the reasons that the Township transitioned to Vote-by-Mail for the 2010 and 2014 elections was to try and encourage the younger demographic to exercise their democratic right, and responsibility, to vote. Following the 2014 election, the previous Township Clerk had noted that there was still some room for improvement in this regard, as better than 60% of electors aged 49 through 80/90 voted, whereas the following table shows a different result for those younger voters, in 2014:

Electors by Age	# of Voters	# of Voters Who Voted	Participation %
18 through 24	504	166	34%
25 through 35	651	177	29%
36 through 48	912	374	41%
49 through 90	2,792	1,778	+60%

As the Township transitioned to Internet and Telephone voting methods for the 2018 election, a hope was that these voting methods may engage the younger demographic. At the same time, one of the common concerns expressed by many is that using Internet and Telephone voting methods may lead the senior demographic not to vote. Much of the research shows that regardless of voting method, the senior demographic will continue to have the highest voter participation rate percentage. This was proven to be correct in East Zorra-Tavistock in 2018:

Electors by Age	# of Voters	# of Voters Who Voted	Participation %
18 through 30	920	180	19.56%
31 through 40	759	184	24.24%
41 through 50	774	247	31.91%
51 through 60	947	488	51.53%
61 through 70	920	562	61.09%
71 through 80	495	318	64.24%
81 through 90	257	134	52.14%
91+	83	24	28.91%

The statistics above show that there is continued room for improvement in encouraging the younger demographic to vote.

Recommendation:

1. None. For information only.

Reviewed by C.A.O:



Ruth Coursey
Interim Chief Administrative
Officer

Report prepared and submitted by:



Will Jaques
Corporate Services Manager

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1. INTRODUCTION

This plan will address the specific accessibility requirements in relation to the 2018 Municipal Election in the Township of East Zorra-Tavistock.

The Township of East Zorra-Tavistock has made great efforts in promoting a barrier free community. In an effort to ensure that the 2018 Municipal Election is consistent with the core principles of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, this planning document was developed in advance of the election in order to identify measures to be taken and reported to Council following the election.

2. OBJECTIVES

This plan is intended to highlight measures that the Township of East Zorra-Tavistock will be implementing to ensure equal opportunity for all electors and candidates. These objectives include:

- That persons with disabilities are able to independently cast their vote and verify their selection.
- That persons with disabilities have full and equal access to all information on where and when to vote and on eligible candidates.
- That persons with disabilities can fully participate in the Municipal Election as an elector, candidate, or election official.
- That efforts are made to ensure that electors with disabilities are aware of the accessibility measures available via channels such as the newspaper, media launches, the Township of East Zorra-Tavistock website and social media.

3. DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN

This Plan is a “living” document which will be improved and updated as best practices are identified and new opportunities for improvement arise. In order to develop the plan below, several steps were taken in order to ensure that the statutory requirements were met and a feasible implementation plan was in place. During the development of the 2018 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan, the following steps shall be implemented:

- Review and analysis of documents, policies and other supporting materials from AMCTO, neighboring municipalities, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, technology suppliers and other various stakeholder groups.
- Establish staff training standards and practices directly related to the Election to ensure that people with disabilities are able to vote in a positive customer service environment, and ensure that all Election Officials recognize that a voter’s needs shall be accommodated.

4. VOTING METHODS

The 2018 Township of East Zorra-Tavistock Municipal Election will be working with Intelivote Systems Inc. to provide eVoting services to eligible voters. This includes the convenience and independence of voting from anywhere via telephone or Internet during the October 12 – 22, 2018 voting period.

Everyday tools like computers, telephones and other aids can present accessible opportunities for persons with disabilities to accomplish more, while being consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equal opportunity.

The Intelivote Voting System provides voters 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. Additionally, persons who have assistive devices set up

in their homes can now use them to assist with casting a ballot privately and independently.

By allowing persons with disabilities to vote from any location and from a selection of methods, there is an increase in the capability for the voter to vote without any assistance. This provides persons with disabilities the same independence and privacy in participating in the election as other voters. If persons with disabilities do require assistance in the voting process, trained Election Officials will be present at the Voter Help Centre throughout the voting period.

4.1 Internet Voting

Eligible voters may vote online, using a smart phone, tablet device, gaming device or computer and any accompanying assistive devices or software, along with their date of birth and PIN and qualifying information, to access the internet address provided in their Voter Instruction Letter.

The Intelivote System has been created to meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG-2 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, such as with audio.

4.2 Telephone Voting

Eligible voters may vote using a touch-tone telephone, and the toll-free telephone number, date of birth, and PIN number contained in their Voter Information Letter to access an audio ballot. Communications barriers can make it difficult for people to receive or convey information. Barriers may be identified as low volume, use of language that is not clear or plain, and confusing or unorganized menu options.

The Intelivote telephone voting application provides the following:

- Service on all types of touch tone phones and wireless devices.
- Clear, plain language.
- Menu options that are easy to follow, advising when to select options and provision of confirmation of the voter's selections.
- Standard volume is used to allow for adjustment dependent of the telephone or device being utilized.

5. VOTER HELP CENTRE

The Voter Help Centre is located at the Township Office (90 Loveys Street, Hickson). The following considerations are taken into account regarding the Voter Help Centre:

5.1 Entrance and Exit

The route to the entrance of the Voter Help Centre shall be unobstructed and accessible. The route shall be wide enough to allow for an individual using a wheelchair, scooter, other assistive device, or service animal to travel safely. Doors into the Voter Help Centre shall be accessible and easy to open for the duration of the Voter Help Centre hours. Routine checks of entrance and exit routes will be made throughout the hours of operation.

5.2 Parking

Accessible parking shall be available at the Voter Help Centre. The designated parking space(s) shall be clearly marked with the international Symbol of Accessibility and will be on firm and level ground, close to the entrance of the Voter Help Centre.

Alternate Formats

Alternate formats are other ways of publishing information besides regular print. Some of these formats can be used by everyone while others are designed to address the specific needs of a user.

The Township of East Zorra-Tavistock and the person with a disability may agree upon the format to be used for the document or information.

In the event the information is not generated by the Township of East Zorra-Tavistock or is supplied by a third party, the Township of East Zorra-Tavistock will make every effort to obtain the information from the third party in an alternate format and/or will attempt to assist the Elector by providing assistive equipment.

General Election Materials

Large Print – Printed material generated by the Township of East Zorra-Tavistock will be provided in a Arial font, minimum 11 point, and can be made available in a font (print) size that is 16 to 20 points or larger.

Website – Information generated by the Township of East Zorra-Tavistock on the website in relation to the election will be compliant with WCAG 2.0 Level A, and allow for assistive software to be utilized. In addition, website font can be adjusted within the browser's functionality to aid the user in reading the information.

7.2 Service Disruptions

From time to time and/or for unforeseen circumstances beyond the Township of East Zorra-Tavistock's control, temporary service disruptions may be experienced. In the event of a temporary accessible service disruption, Election Officials will commit to making reasonable efforts to ensure that services are reinstated as quickly as possible and that alternative services are provided where feasible.

In these instances of service disruptions, the Township of East Zorra-Tavistock shall provide reasonable notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by persons with disabilities.

Notice of these temporary disruptions shall be provided in a conspicuous place and manner at the respective location(s) and information shall also be posted on the Township of East Zorra-Tavistock's website. This notice shall include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

Accessible services in relation to this plan include voting places, election materials and/or voting provisions for Electors with disabilities at the voting place.

In the event of disruptions to service or unforeseen circumstances that affect the accessibility of voting places during the advance vote or on Election Day, notices of disruption will be posted in real time on the Township of East Zorra-Tavistock's website.

8. CANDIDATES

Candidates must also have regard to the needs of electors with disabilities. Campaign offices, election materials and canvassing should all be reviewed in order to ensure that they are fully accessible. The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario has released several quick reference documents to assist candidates with accessible elections considerations:

- [Count Us In: Removing Barriers to Political Participation - Quick Reference Guide to Accessible Campaign Information and Communication](#)
- [Count Us In: Removing Barriers to Political Participation - Quick Reference Guide to Accessible Constituency, Riding Association, Central Party and Campaign Offices](#)

Appendix 'B'

POSITION	VOTING ACTIVITY - BY POSITION					VOTING ACTIVITY - BY WARD											
	Eligible Electors	Recorded Electors	% (Overall)	Declined Votes	Spoiled Votes	WARD 1				WARD 2				WARD 3			
						Eligible Electors	Recorded Electors	% (Race)	% (Overall)	Eligible Electors	Recorded Electors	% (Race)	% (Overall)	Eligible Electors	Recorded Electors	% (Race)	% (Overall)
Mayor	5,201	2,133	41.00%	19	9	2,189	945	43.20%	43.30%	1,152	529	45.90%	45.90%	1,860	659	35.40%	35.50%
Deputy Mayor	5,201	2,112	40.60%	59	16		939	42.90%			520	45.10%			653	35.10%	
Councillor - Ward 1	2,189	942	43.00%	14	5		942	43.00%		N/A							
Councillor - Ward 2	N/A																
Councillor - Ward 3	N/A																

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