



City of North Bay Report to Council

Report No: CORP-2023-003

Date: December 5, 2022

Originator: Karen McIsaac, City Clerk

Business Unit:

Department:

Corporate Services

Clerks Department

Subject: Accessibility Initiatives Undertaken for the 2022 Municipal and School Board Elections

Closed Session: yes ☐ no ☒

Recommendation

That Council receive Report to Council CORP 2023-003, from Karen McIsaac dated December 5, 2022 for information purposes.

Background

Section 12.1 of the *Municipal Elections Act* requires that “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.”

Identification of Barriers

As part of the planning process for the 2022 Municipal Elections, the following actions were taken to identify barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities:

- Created an accessibility checklist for election personnel to use when conducting site visits of each voting location.
- Provided on-line voting for electors who wished the ability to vote from their homes.
- Assessed voting equipment to ensure it met the needs of the electorate.
- The RFP for voting equipment included the provision of accessible ballot marking machines.
- Assessed the risk of our past election administration practices, identifying the likelihood of our practice creating a risk to accessibility of candidates and

electors and we then identified the impact of the risk and developed measures to mitigate or minimize the risk

Removal and Prevention of Barriers

The following actions were taken to remove and prevent barriers that have the potential to affect electors and candidates with disabilities:

i. Communications and Information

- Ensured communication initiatives and information for candidates and electors were available in alternate formats, upon request.
- Attended Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee (MAAC) meeting to advise of the introduction of on-line voting for the 2022 Election and receive feedback from MAAC to ensure that it met accessibility standards.
- Posted information to municipality's website – for both electors and candidates.
- Upon request, provided documentation and forms in large print to assist visually impaired.
- Provided candidates and staff with information relating to accessible customer service.
- Advertised all key dates and information for voters on the City's website, North Bay Nipissing News and by way of radio advertisements.
- Included MPAC's Voter.ca in water bill mailouts and all correspondence originating from the Clerk's Department in the time period leading up to the election.

ii. Voting Locations

- Conducted site visits of all voting locations to ensure full accessibility.
- Provided appropriate signage at voting locations.
- Permitted service animals and support persons in all voting locations.
- Set up a process to facilitate notification of any last-minute voting location changes, should an emergency occur. Pete Palangio Arena was booked for Emergency Locations.
- Ensured designated or reserved parking for persons with disabilities at each voting location. Where necessary, temporary signage was put in place.

iii. Voting

- Two advance voting dates were held at West Ferris Arena and Memorial Gardens. Each advance poll was held from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
- One further advance poll was held at Castle Arms II (Olive Street).
- Promoted advance voting opportunity for electors with disabilities by including the use of an AutoAssist Ballot Marking Machine.
- In accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act*, provided voting opportunities on the premises of:
 - a) institutions in which 20 or more beds are occupied by persons who are disabled, chronically ill or infirmed;
 - b) a retirement home in which 50 or more beds are occupied.

- Seven “special” voting places were identified – North Bay Regional Health Care Centre (Chronic Care and Mental Health Facilities), Cassellholme, Waters Edge, the Empire/Terrace Suites, Marina Point and Barclay House.
- Election staff attended at the Empire/Terrace Suites, Marina Point and Barclay House the week before Voting Day to confirm that the residents were on the Voters’ List and to complete the necessary Applications to Amend the Voters’ List. As a result, most residents did not have to wait in line on Voting Day to complete amendments.
- The North Bay Regional Health Centre and Waters Edge opted to assist their residents to vote on-line in the 2022 Election. The Clerk’s office provided the residents with Voter Information Letters for this purpose. The Clerk’s Office received positive feedback from these institutions regarding the on-line voting process.

iv. Staff Training

- Staff training incorporated provisions to meet accessible customer service and the integrated standards.
- Training Handbook included reference materials.
- Monitored elector’s concerns and ensured that their needs were met, i.e. if an individual with a walker was in a long line, staff observed, and if felt that the elector was having difficulties, offered a chair and ensured that their place was saved in the voting line-up.
- Ensured that electors were aware that the AutoAssist Ballot Marking machine was available for use at the advance voting and on election day.
- Ensured that electors were aware that magnifiers were available, if required, throughout the day by routinely advising line-ups that may have occurred.
- Additional magnifiers were provided at all Voting Places to ensure that there were not waiting periods.
- Directed election workers to observe electors during discussions with them, and if it appeared that the voter was having difficulty understanding, ensured that the voter was able to clearly understand the speaker.
- Encouraged election workers to approach an elector if it appeared that the elector required assistance to get around in the voting location. Offered assistance to help, did not assume an individual needed help. Instructed to ask “may I help?” or “how may I help you?”
- Election workers were trained to identify a service animal and followed the Municipality’s Accessible Customer Service Policy.
- Election workers were encouraged to maintain a friendly and approachable demeanor, regardless of how tired, upset or hassled they may have felt. The majority of the election workers are experienced – they have worked numerous municipal, provincial and/or federal elections. Consequently, they have very good people skills, are comfortable with the processes and understand the pressures that they may face throughout the day.
- Election workers reminded that it is “not a race” – “take your time with the elector in front of you”.
- Checked the access doors frequently to offer assistance and watch for electors unable to easily enter the building.
- Evaluated effectiveness of training post-election.

Financial/Legal Implications

There are no financial or legal implications.

Corporate Strategic Plan

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Natural North and Near | <input type="checkbox"/> Economic Prosperity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Affordable Balanced Growth | <input type="checkbox"/> Spirited Safe Community |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Responsible and Responsive Government | |

Specific Objectives

Promote quality customer service as a practice.

Options Analysis

Option 1: That Council receive the 2022 Accessibility Initiatives Report for the Municipal and School Board Elections.

This is the recommended option.

Option 2: That Council not accept the 2022 Accessibility Initiatives Report for the Municipal and School Board Elections.

This is not the recommended option.

Recommended Option

That Council receive Report to Council CORP 2023-003, from Karen McIsaac dated December 5, 2022 for information purposes.

Respectfully submitted,

Name: Karen McIsaac, Dipl. M.A.

Title: City Clerk

I concur with this report and recommendation

Name David Euler, P.Eng., PMP

Title: Chief Administrative Officer

Personnel designated for continuance:

Karen McIsaac, Dipl. M.A.

City Clerk