



City of St. Thomas
2018 Municipal Election
Accessibility Plan

Endorsed by the Accessibility Technical Committee and the St. Thomas Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Introduction

The Clerk is responsible for the appropriate legislative and administrative conduct of the municipal election in the City of St. Thomas.

The Municipal Elections Act states that the Clerk shall have regard for the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities. It further states that 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.

The municipal election will be conducted in a manner that ensures that candidates and electors with disabilities have full and equal access to election information and services. The election shall be conducted in a manner that ensures that persons with disabilities have every opportunity to vote independently and privately with access to voting assistance if required.

The Municipal Elections Act requires that within ninety days after Voting Day the Clerk shall prepare a report about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

Definition of Disability

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 defines “disability” as follows:

- (a) 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 co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
- (b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- (c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- (d) a mental disorder, or
- (e) 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 can take on many forms, both visible and invisible. The following criteria were considered in the development of this Plan:

- Policies and procedures must be consistent with the principles of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 and must respect the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities;
- Access to electoral services must be integrated and equitable;
- Initiatives should address and accommodate a wide range of abilities; and
- The City’s Policy: Accessibility Standards for Customer Service for providing services to people with disabilities must be followed throughout the election process. This policy can be found on the City’s website at www.stthomas.ca/city_hall/accessibility.

Provision of Election Information

The City of St. Thomas website is compliant with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Election information will be provided to electors and candidates with disabilities on the City's website and in print. Requests for alternative formats can be made in accordance with the City's Policy: Accessibility Standards for Customer Service.

Service Animals/Support Persons

Voters and candidates with disabilities are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at the voting place. The Deputy Returning Officer shall permit a voter who needs assistance in voting to have such assistance as the Deputy Returning Officer considers necessary.

Staff Training

All staff carrying out election duties will complete specific election training to comply with the City's Policy: Accessibility Standards for Customer Service and to recognize and ensure that persons with disabilities are served in a way that accommodate their individual needs.

Voting

The City of St. Thomas will be offering internet and telephone voting for the 2018 Municipal Election during the advance voting period available 24 hours per day from October 10, 2018 at 10:00 a.m. until October 20, 2018 at 8:00 p.m.

The third party voting website being used for the advance voting period is compliant with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and adheres to WCAG-2 at Level AA. This allows the internet voting solution to work with common assistive technology software including screen readers, screen magnification software, voice dictation software, and onscreen keyboards. Remote internet voting means that a voter can vote from any location with an available internet connection on computers, tablets, and cell phones. Telephone voting allows a voter to call from any touch-tone dial pad. A dedicated telephone number will be created by the service provider.

Voters wishing to attend in person may do so at any of the accessible voting locations on Voting Day, October 22, 2018. Additional voting places and special hours of voting will be available for electors residing in institutions where 20 or more beds are occupied by persons who are chronically ill or infirm and in retirement homes where 50 or more beds are occupied. A Deputy Returning Officer will assist a voter anywhere within a voting place in order to allow a voter with a disability to vote.

Voter Information Letter

Voter information letters will be mailed out to every eligible elector recorded on the Voters' List prior to the start of the advance voting period. The letter will contain information on how to vote either by internet, telephone or in person including a unique PIN for online or telephone voting and a bar code for in-person voting.

Notice of Temporary Service Disruption

Public notice shall be provided on the City website and in the local media if there is a temporary disruption in the delivery of election services. The notice shall include the reason for the disruption, the expected duration and an explanation of alternative methods of delivering the service.

Staff Assistance/Feedback

Staff are available throughout the election to assist with any issues that may arise with respect to providing a barrier-free election.

The Clerk welcomes feedback to identify areas where changes should be considered and ways in which the City can improve the delivery of an accessible election.

Contact information for assistance and feedback is as follows:

Email: customerservice@stthomas.ca

Phone: 519-631-1680 press “0”

In person/By Mail: City of St. Thomas

Clerk’s Office - Elections

545 Talbot Street

St. Thomas, ON N5P 3V7

Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Additional Information

City of St. Thomas Website Accessibility Page: www.stthomas.ca/city_hall/accessibility

City of St. Thomas Website Election Page: www.stthomas.ca/city_hall/city_clerk/2018_election