

Accessible Election
Procedures
2018 Municipal Election

Procedure Objective

Section 12.1 (1) and (2) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* (the Act), as amended, states the following:

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

12.1 (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.

The City of Pickering is committed to providing all residents with the equal opportunity to vote. Persons with disabilities have the same right to vote as everyone else. These procedures apply to an election conducted by the City of Pickering. The City Clerk may provide for interpretations of these procedures, in accordance with the principles of the Act.

Election procedures must respect the dignity and independence of electors. The election process should ensure that these procedures are consistent with the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity. Election processes must also be in a manner that takes into account a person's ability.

The City Clerk welcomes feedback to identify areas where changes need to be considered and ways in which the City can improve the delivery of an accessible Election. This procedure is a living document and will continue to undergo changes as required. Feedback may be submitted to the Clerk's Office in person, over the phone, or electronically. All feedback received will be reviewed by the City Clerk who will respond to the elector or candidate providing an anticipated action and timeframe for a full response where appropriate. In addition, consultation will take place with the Accessibility Advisory Committee to ensure our accessibility goals are relevant and effective.

Providing Election Information in Alternative Formats

Candidates and electors with disabilities will be able to receive information and copies of election documents in a format that takes into account their disability. The format will be agreed upon between the requester and the City Clerk and must be requested at least 14 days prior to requiring the documentation.

Information generated by the City on the website in relation to the election will be WCAG 2.0 Level AA Compliant, 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.

Assistance to Candidates

The City Clerk will provide candidates with information on how to make their campaigns accessible, which will include providing them with the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario Guide to Accessible Elections.

Expenses that are incurred by a candidate with a disability that are directly related to the disability and would not have been incurred but for the election to which the expenses relate, are excluded from the permitted spending limit for the candidate.

Voting Method for 2018 Municipal Election

The 2018 Municipal Election for the City of Pickering will be conducted with an Internet/Telephone Voting system which allows the voter the convenience and independence of voting anywhere via telephone, internet or in-person via internet/telephone at a Voter Assistance Centre during the specified voting period.

Internet/Telephone Voting provides voters with the capability to vote from the comfort of their own homes, work places, vacation homes anywhere in the world or for students away from home, from their college or university facilities.

Internet/Telephone Voting assists persons with casting a ballot privately and independently in a location of their choice who may have mobility restrictions, visual impairment, and/or transportation scheduling difficulties. This also provides them the ability to use their own assistive devices set up in their homes or places of work during an extended voting period.

By allowing persons with disabilities to vote from any location and from a wide 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 Voter Assistance Centres offered across the City throughout the voting period.

Telephone Voting

Eligible voters may vote using a touch-tone telephone, with the telephone number and PIN number contained in their Voter Information letter to access an audio ballot.

Internet Voting

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

Voter Assistance Centres

For those individuals without means to access voting via telephone or internet, or who require the assistance of a trained Election Official, several Voter Assistance Centres will be open to provide in-person telephone or internet voting opportunities.

Section 45(2) of the Act requires that in choosing a location for a voting place, the clerk shall have regard to the needs of electors with disabilities. City staff will be conducting voting location inspections to ensure that each Voter Assistance Centre is accessible. Inspections will examine all aspects of the voting location including the provision of accessible parking, accessible entrances and ensuring that there are no physical obstacles. The City will allow for the use of service animals and support persons at all Voter Assistance Centres.

Parking at Voter Assistance Centres - Designated accessible parking will conform to building code standards, will be available close to the entrance of each Voter Assistance Centre and will be clearly posted. If a voter has an accessible parking permit and there are no more accessible parking spaces, they may park along the curb but, not if designated as a fire route and not if blocking the flow of traffic.

Entrance to the Voter Assistance Centre – Each Voter Assistance Centre will have an accessible entrance and every effort will be made to ensure that the entrance is wide enough for a wheelchair or scooter to pass through and the door hardware is to be accessible and operated by a person using a closed fist. If the doors are heavy, awkward to open or have handles that are out of reach, where possible they will be propped open in a safe manner or an election official will be available to assist with the opening of doors. Prominent signage will be displayed to direct voters to the entrance.

Interior of Voter Assistance Centres - Access to the interior voting area and voting booth shall be level and easily traversed. Any doormats or carpeting shall be level with the floor to prevent potential tripping hazards. All voting areas are to be well-lit and seating made available. Accessible voting booths will be available at each voting location. These booths will provide a wide area to allow for individuals who use a wheelchair or scooter to vote independently and secretively. Large print will be used on instruction sheets and ballot faces to assist any individuals with low vision.

Support Persons and Service Animals in Voter Assistance Centres - Persons with disabilities may be accompanied by a support person and service animals within the Voter Assistance Centres. In addition, the Deputy Returning Officer (DRO) may assist the voter in casting their vote, if required. The DRO will determine, in conjunction with the individual, the extent to which they need assistance and the best way this assistance can be provided.

Voting by Proxy

As the City of Pickering is conducting the 2018 Municipal Election using an Internet/Telephone voting process with numerous opportunities and ways to vote, in accordance with section 42(5) of the Act, there is no requirement for and no opportunity to vote by proxy.

A person cannot give his or her Voter Information letter to another eligible elector or other individual for the purpose of voting. Acceptance or theft of another person's Voter Information letter including the actual voting thereof will be considered an illegal and corrupt practice and therefore subject to the penalty provision under the Act.

Special Voting Provisions

Election staff shall visit sites including long-term care facilities and retirement homes, to set-up on-site voting kiosks, or bedside voting opportunities for residents.

Accessibility Training for Election Officials

In accordance with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Regulation 429/07, the City must provide accessible customer service training for all election staff, including election officials and third parties. The scope of the training shall include a review of the purposes of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) and how to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities. Election officials will also become familiar with and follow the City's Accessibility Standards for Customer Service.

Notice of Temporary Disruptions

Municipalities must provide notice of temporary disruptions of service which include the reason, anticipated duration, a description of alternatives and must be placed in a conspicuous location. In the event that there is a temporary disruption of service during the election, the City must provide adequate notice which includes the disruption of access to voting locations, website or telephone interruptions and access to City Hall. Every effort shall be made to provide alternative methods of providing the information or service to persons with disabilities.

Post-election Report

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

"Within 90 days after voting day in a regular election, 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 report available to the public."

The City Clerk's post-election report will be posted on the City's website and distributed to Mayor and Council and the public as requested.

Contact Information

Clerk's Office staff are available to assist with any issues that may arise with respect to providing a barrier-free election and can be reached at;

Debbie Shields, City Clerk/Returning Officer
905.420.4660, ext. 2019
dshields@pickering.ca

Lisa Harker, Deputy Clerk
905.420.4660, ext. 2153
lharker@pickering.ca

Renée Michaud, Coordinator, Records & Elections
905-420-4660, Ext. 2097
rmichaud@pickering.ca

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One The Esplanade
Pickering, ON L1V 6K7

Declaration

In accordance with Section 12(1) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, I, Debbie Shields, City Clerk and Returning Officer, hereby declare the above to be the Accessible Election Procedures to be followed in conducting the 2018 Municipal Election in the City of Pickering.

Debbie Shields
City Clerk/Returning Officer

Date