



TO: GENERAL COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: POST-ELECTION REPORT - 2010 MUNICIPAL ELECTION ACCESSIBILITY INITIATIVES

PREPARED BY AND KEY CONTACT: W. SUTHERLAND, ELECTION CO-ORDINATOR, EXT. 5077

SUBMITTED BY: D. MCALPINE, CITY CLERK 

GENERAL MANAGER APPROVAL: E. ARCHER, GENERAL MANAGER OF CORPORATE SERVICES 

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER APPROVAL: JON M. BABULIC, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER 

RECOMMENDED MOTION

1. That the Staff Report entitled "Post-Elect Report - 2010 Municipal Election Accessibility Initiatives" be received for information purposes.

PURPOSE & BACKGROUND

2. In December of 2009, Bill 212 numerous amendments to the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 were adopted. Included within the amendments were changes to promote greater accessibility for voters and candidates with disabilities. Requirements for each voting place to be accessible to voters with disabilities and a report post election on accessibility measures implemented were included in the changes.
3. Section 12.1 of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, states that

"a Clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities and shall within 90 days after voting day, in a regular election, submit a report to Council about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities."
4. The City Clerk is responsible for conducting Municipal Elections in accordance with the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.
5. The purpose of this report is to describe the procedures and measures established by the Clerk to ensure that persons with disabilities had the opportunity to participate fully in the 2010 Municipal Election.

ANALYSIS

6. The City of Barrie is committed to providing exceptional and accessible service for its customers. Goods and services will be provided in a manner that is based upon the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity to all its customers. The City's 2010 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan highlighted a number of initiatives that were undertaken by the City to provide an election that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities while maintaining the integrity of the election process.

7. An overview of the actions taken to identify as well as remove and prevent barriers, comments regarding the actions and considerations for the 2014 Municipal Election has been included as Appendix "A" to this Staff Report.
8. The City of Barrie's Accessibility Advisory Committee was a valuable resource in the development of the 2010 Municipal Plan. The Committee provided positive and constructive input concerning the plan and any initiatives to reach out to the electorate. The Committee members completed a demonstration with the election equipment to ensure its suitability for use in the 2010 Municipal Election.
9. In general, there was little public feedback regarding election accessibility initiatives. The majority of the comments received regarding accessibility initiatives were very positive. One request was received to add the digits associated with 728-VOTE in the City's advertising materials. Upon receipt of the request, all remaining advertising was updated to address the request.
10. The following information is an overview of the actions taken to identify, remove and prevent barriers that impacting electors and candidates with disabilities:

ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

11. There are no environmental matters related to the recommendation to receive this report.

ALTERNATIVES

12. As this report is being presented for information purposes only, no alternatives are presented.

FINANCIAL

13. There are no direct financial implications associated with the recommendation to receive this report.

LINKAGE TO COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

14. 2010-2014 Council's Strategic Priorities have not been established as of the time of writing of this report.

Appendix "A"

Identification of Barriers

The following actions were undertaken to identify barriers that impact electors and candidates with disabilities:

Action	Comments	Considerations for 2014
Reviewed and obtained input on the 2010 Municipal Elections Accessibility Plan from the Accessibility Advisory Committee.	Committee provided advice and guidance that assisted in developing and delivering a comprehensive plan through two meetings.	Continue process for 2014 Municipal Election.
Created an accessibility checklist with input from the Accessibility Advisory Committee for use when conducting site visits of each voting location (Appendix "B").	Checklist was very effective for identifying any challenges with potential locations and determining the final voting locations as well as any measures that would be required to mitigate any accessibility concerns.	Continue to use checklist for review of 2014 voting locations with any additional insight on criteria as determined by best practices and the Accessibility Advisory Committee, specifically related to additional specifications.
Assessed voting equipment to ensure it met the needs of the electorate.	Issued Request for Information regarding alternative voting and vote counting technology. Reviewed technology with Committee. Touch screen voting equipment was selected and a demonstration completed with Accessibility Advisory Committee to ensure it was acceptable.	A review of available technology will be completed in 2013 to determine methods to be utilized for the 2014 Municipal Election.
Reviewed past election practices to identify any risk to accessibility of candidates and electors and identified the impact of the risk and developed measures to minimize the risk.	Evaluation of previous election assisted in determination of potential voting locations for 2010 as well as additional accessibility measures.	Post-election review meeting has taken place with the development of initial notes for 2014 Municipal Election.

Removal and Prevention of Barriers

The following actions were undertaken to remove and prevent barriers that impact electors and candidates with disabilities:

Communications and Information

Action	Comments	Considerations for 2014
Offered communication initiatives and information for candidates and electors were available in alternate formats.	There were no requests for information in alternate formats.	Continue process for the 2014 Municipal Election. Additional accessibility features will be included on the City's new website.
Posted all information to municipality's website including links to: a Candidates Guide to Accessible Elections , produced jointly by the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerk's and Treasurer's of Ontario as well as other related material.	A separate Accessibility Information webpage under the 2010 Municipal Elections site was developed with links to the 2010 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan as well as resources from the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerk's and Treasurer's of Ontario and the Provincial guides for candidates.	Enhance and improve information available on the City's website for the 2014 Municipal Election.
Enlisted input from the Accessibility Advisory Committee as well as Canadian National Institute of the Blind (CNIB) related to ballot format and various communications materials.	Advice from Accessibility Advisory Committee as well as input from individual members was used to finalize communications materials and the ballot. CNIB information specifically utilized for ballot design.	Continue to utilize expertise of Committee and organizations supporting individuals with disabilities in future elections. For the purposes of the 2014 Municipal Election, provide presentations to various organizations as a further means of communicating to the electorate.
Provided candidates and staff with information relating to accessible customer service	Information was made available on the City's website related to accessible customer service including a variety of quick reference guides. A specific staff training session was held related to accessible customer service for all election officials.	Enhance and improve information available on the City's website for the 2014 Municipal Election.
Provided info to Candidates regarding Campaign Expenses and particular rules affecting disabled candidates	The City of Barrie's "What's New for 2010" information kit included details any election expenses incurred as a result of a disability. In addition, copies of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing's Candidate contained detailed information related to expenses. Both documents were provided to candidates.	Continue to utilize the candidate information kits to provide details concerning election expenses incurred as a result of a disability.

Voting Locations

Action	Comments	Considerations for 2014
Conducted site visits of all potential voting locations to ensure accessibility based on checklist requirements (Attached as Appendix "B").	Greeters were hired to provide assistance at voting locations that did not offer a push button automatic door opener at the building entrance. Doors were opened for every voter.	Review alternative locations in 2014 that offer a push button automatic door opener at the building entrance, in addition to all other accessibility features. Expand checklist criteria for 2014.
Provided accessible voting equipment at each permanent voting location, on all voting days.	Audio ballots were provided on every machine, at every location. In addition, the size of the text on the ballots was increased to enhance readability.	2014 equipment/technology should be selected to ensure that accessible features are available at each location, on all voting days.
Provided a voting opportunity at individual buildings with 100 or more dwelling units to increase accessibility.	Offering a voting opportunity within the buildings with 100 units or greater was very well received. A number of individuals commented that they would not have voted otherwise.	Expand in 2014 if feasible to smaller buildings.
Provided appropriate signage at voting locations.	Mobile signs were rented to identify voting locations as well as voting dates and times. The signs were highly visible and very effective.	Utilize mobile signage in 2014 with signs at each location.
Permitted service animals and support persons in all voting locations.	Election staff were trained to ensure that service animals would be permitted. Confirmation received from each voting location regarding access for service animals.	Continue process for the 2014 Municipal Election.
Ensured designated or reserved parking for persons with disabilities at each voting location.	Confirmed accessible parking spaces were available as part of site checklist.	Continue process for 2014 Municipal Election.
Provided Barrie Transit/BACTS passes to attend voting location as part of voter notification information letter.	Posted information on buses regarding voting and promoted transit as an alternative means to reach voting locations.	Continue process for 2014 Municipal Election.
Voting locations set up to allow for maximum accessibility.	Distance between voting machines, location of power cords, lighting, signage (internal), etc. all considered in the set up of the room, as feasible.	Continue to consider the interior set up of voting room for maximum accessibility. Additional seating to be provided at voting.

Voting

Action	Comments	Considerations for 2014
Provided accessible equipment at all voting locations (Advance Voting and Voting Day)	Touch screen equipment was utilized for every voter. The equipment provided a larger text size and the availability of an audio ballot on each machine, at every voting location, every voting day.	Ensure that technology utilized in 2014 provides accessible equipment at each voting location, every voting day.
Provided instructions on use of accessible voting equipment including notice of availability of the Accessible Customer Service Policy and 2010 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan.	Signs posted at each voting machine. Video demonstration provided on the City's website and through Rogers Television. Information on accessible voting included in insert in the newspaper (special pull out feature).	Continue to enhance communication regarding accessibility features for the 2014 Municipal Election.
Scheduled extended advance voting opportunities.	Voting was held over a six day period of time in addition to Voting Day itself.	Continue to offer multiple advance voting dates for the 2014 Municipal Election.
Promoted advance voting opportunity for electors with disabilities	Notices for voting week, included a promotion to encourage voting early for all electors and information about accessible voting.	Continue to promote earlier voting for the 2014 Municipal Election.
Provided vote anywhere in the municipality at advance voting dates and on Voting Day	Promoted vote anywhere, on any voting day.	Continue to promote vote anywhere, on any voting day, if technology permits, for the 2014 Municipal Election.
Provided voting opportunities on the premises of a) an institution 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	An advance voting opportunity was provided at each of the institutions and retirement homes defined in the column to the left, as well as on Voting Day itself.	Continue to offer an advance voting opportunity at each of the institutions and retirement homes defined in the legislation.
Reviewed additional facilities eligible for reduced hours voting	Provided a voting opportunity at individual buildings with 100 or more dwelling units to increase accessibility	Expand in 2014 if feasible, to smaller buildings.
Added tools to assist with ensuring accessibility as identified	Provided American Sign Language interpreters at a facility occupied by the hearing impaired.	Continue to offer this service for the 2014 Municipal Election.

Staff Training

Action	Comments	Considerations for 2014
Staff training incorporated provisions to meet accessible customer service standards – including a section of the staff manual.	A training session on accessible customer service was provided for all election staff – including potential scenarios related to providing assistance to electors with disabilities. Manual included information on accessible customer service.	Continue to enhance training and information available to election staff for the 2014 Municipal Election.
Encouraged election staff to monitor elector's concerns and needs to ensure they 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 or offered assistance to help (did not assume assistance was required)	Election staff attempted to address needs where feasible. Additional seating was limited at many locations.	Review alternative locations in 2014 that offer sufficient room for additional seating.
Election staff was trained to identify a service animal and followed the Municipality's Accessible Customer Service Policy	Review of details related to service animals was completed as part of the training sessions held for staff.	Continue to include details related to service animals in training for the 2014 Municipal Election.
Checked the access doors frequently to offer assistance and watch for electors unable to easily enter the building	Greeters opened doors at locations without push button automatic door openers for every elector.	Review voting locations for the 2014 Municipal Election to determine if all locations could be fully accessible.
Evaluated effectiveness of training post-election	Accessible customer service training was well received by election staff. Scenarios/case studies appeared to be a very effective method of discussing accessibility matters. None of the customer feedback forms provided for use concerning accessibility features were utilized.	Continue to offer training sessions with scenarios/case studies for the 2014 Municipal Election.

Appendix "B"

City of Barrie – Voting Location Accessibility Checklist

Name of Voting Location: _____

Address: _____

Inspection Date: _____

	Yes	No
Inside Building		
Is the parking lot well lit?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the voting location on a bus route?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the name and address of the building clearly visible from the street and sidewalk?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a pedestrian sidewalk nearby?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is accessible parking available?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the accessible parking clearly marked with the International symbol of Accessibility?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the parking space firm and level, in good condition?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are curb cuts provided at sidewalks, near parking and along the route to the primary entrance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the accessible parking large enough to meet the needs of an elector using a wheelchair lift?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the route to the entrance accessible?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
free of obstruction?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
well maintained?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
no stairs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
wheelchair ramp?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
wide enough for a wheelchair or scooter?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the building clearly identified by signage easy to read and understand?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Entrance to Building

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Does it have a self-opening door? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A power button? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A doorbell with signage? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Entrance area well kept - free of obstacles? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| An elevator if stairs are present? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Ramps if stairs are present? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Interior doors with lever handles? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Glass doors marked at eye level? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Inside Building

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Wide entrance into proposed unit space? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Floors - slip free and free of trip hazards? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Well lit? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Stairs involved? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |