



# **Town of Fort Erie**

## **Municipal Election 2022**

Report Regarding the Identification,  
Removal and Prevention of Barriers  
Affecting Electors and  
Candidates with Disabilities

November 18, 2022

## INTRODUCTION

The Clerk is responsible for the legislative and administrative conduct of the Municipal and School Board Elections in the Town of Fort Erie. In accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, the Clerk is required to prepare a report about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affected electors and candidates with disabilities and make the report available to the public.

The 2022 Municipal and School Board Elections were conducted in such a manner to ensure that:

1. Candidates and electors with disabilities had reasonable access to all election information and services.
2. Persons with disabilities had full access to Voting Places.
3. Persons with disabilities had access to alternative methods of voting assistance to permit them to vote independently and privately mark their ballot and, in the event, their disability could not be accommodated through such alternative methods, a person with disabilities had access to assistance from an Election Official who received accessible customer service training in accordance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. Homebound electors who contacted the Clerk's Office were informed on how to vote by Proxy.
4. Feedback regarding the accessibility of the 2022 Municipal and School Board Elections from persons with disabilities was collected and documented so that in future Municipal Elections, available resources for the accommodation of persons with disabilities can be effectively directed to best satisfy community needs.

## IDENTIFICATION, REMOVAL AND PREVENTION OF BARRIERS

The following describes actions taken to identify, remove and/or prevent barriers that may affect electors and candidates with disabilities:

### Election Information Delivery

All election information was made available in alternative formats upon request and notices to that effect were included in election advertising and on the Corporation's website.

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The "Procedure Governing the Provision of Election Information and Services to Persons with Disabilities" was provided to every registered candidate and was posted on the Corporation's website.

The Corporation's website included instructions for adjusting the browser font size for the visually impaired.

In addition:

- Each ballot face was designed with accessibility standards in mind
- Every voting booth included voting instructions in large print
- Every voting booth was equipped with an 8½ X 11 magnification sheet to assist the visually impaired

**Poll Location Audits & Actions**

Voting locations were inspected and audited against accessibility standards prior to Advance Polls. The audit team included two members of the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Measures taken to address identified barriers included:

- Doors without automatic openers were wedged open
- Additional parking spaces were designated for persons with disabilities
- Potential trip hazards were either removed, marked or addressed on site (i.e. thresholds, power cords)
- Chairs were provided for persons who could not remain standing for extended periods
- Directional signage was provided at Poll 400 to identify the location of the accessible parking area

**Voting Assistance**

Persons with disabilities were accompanied by a support person within the Voting Place. In addition, when requested, a Deputy Returning Officer in each Voting Place assisted voters in casting their vote including roadside assistance. All persons assisting a voter with a disability were required to swear an oath.

Where a Voting Place was located in an institution (retirement home), the Deputy Returning Officer attended on voters in their specific living areas or at their bedside to assist them to vote. All Deputy Returning Officers were sworn to an oath of secrecy.

### **Accessible Voting Ballot Marker Device**

Accessible Voting Ballot Marker Devices were provided at all Advance Polls, and was available for deployment on Voting Day to a poll if requested. This device allows an accessible voter the ability to mark their paper ballot, using an audio presentation and a hand-held vote selector device (or paddles device, or sip-and-puff device). Once the ballot is marked by the device, it is indistinguishable from a ballot marked by hand, since the vote markings printed on the ballot are actual random images of hand-made marks stored on the unit. This maintains accessible voter privacy, since accessible ballots cannot be discerned from ballots marked by hand. Once the accessible ballot is marked, it is fed into the tabulator and scanned, as per normal. The tabulator running the Ballot Marker Device also simultaneously services standard voters, who insert their hand-marked ballots into the tabulator while the accessible voter is using the Ballot Marker Device feature. The fact that one tabulator can service both standard voters and accessible voters at the same time greatly increases efficiency in the voting locations. In addition, the process creates an equal voting experience for all voters of differing abilities.

The 2022 Municipal and School Board Elections was the second Election where the Accessible Voting Ballot Marker Device was made available to persons with disabilities.

### **Accessible Customer Service Feedback**

Feedback Forms were available at all voting locations for electors and were collected. Comments will be taken into consideration for the next Election (Example, seating provided if necessary).