



Township of The North Shore  
2022 Municipal Election  
Post-Election Accessibility Report  
Dated: January 2023

## **Introduction**

The Township of The North Shore is a community that respects the dignity and rights of persons with disabilities and strives to promote a barrier-free and inclusive community.

The focus of the Post-Election Accessibility Report is to evaluate the accessibility of the electoral services provided to all electors and candidates during the 2022 Municipal Election. This report outlines the actions taken to identify, remove, and prevent barriers that affect voters and candidates with disabilities and how these actions affected their voting experience.

The Township of The North Shore will continue to learn, develop, and adjust our approaches in order to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities. Reviewing accessibility issues and initiatives, removing barriers, and preventing them is an ongoing process.

## **Governing Legislative and Policy Framework**

Under the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, (The Act) the Municipal Clerk is legislatively responsible for conducting Municipal Elections and establishing policies and procedures to ensure that all electors have the opportunity to participate fully in the election. The Act requires the Clerk to have regard for the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities and to ensure that the voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities. The Clerk is also required, within 90 days after a regular election, to prepare a report on the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities and make the report available to the public.

In addition to the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, the Clerk must also comply with the requirements of the following legislation:

- The Ontario Human Rights Code, 1990 provides that all persons have the right to equal treatment without discrimination, including on the basis of disability, and that persons with disabilities be provided with accommodation short of undue hardship.
- The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) was enacted in 2005 and sets out clear goals and timeframes for making Ontario accessible by 2025. Under the AODA, private and public sector organizations across Ontario are required to comply with Regulations established by the Province.

These Regulations include the Customer Service Standard and the Integrated Accessibility Standards.

- The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations (IASR) brings together accessible standards for Information and Communications, Employment, Transportation, and Design of Public Spaces under one regulation and harmonizes the requirements common to each standard.

Each of the standards articulates specific requirements and compliance deadlines, which will be phased in across Ontario between 2011 and 2025.

In addition, the Township of The North Shore has prepared an Accessibility Plan that highlights the planned strategies for identifying, removing, and preventing barriers within the community.

## **Election Preparation**

To ensure compliance with the relevant legislation, the Clerk reviewed the legislation and implemented a number of initiatives in preparation for the 2022 Municipal Election. As required under the Act, the Clerk prepared a plan for the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

The Township of The North Shore's 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan highlighted the planned strategies and actions for the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers in the 2022 Municipal Election. Following the development of the plan, the Municipal Clerk continued to monitor the relevant legislation, standards, and deadlines as well as look at relevant court decisions to ensure any changes to the Election Accessibility Plan were incorporated into the implementation of the 2022 Municipal Election.

## **Strategies and Actions for the Identification, Removal, and Prevention of Barriers**

### ***Method of Vote and Voting System***

Municipal Council approved the method of voting for the 2022 Municipal Election on January 26<sup>th</sup> of 2022. It was determined by Municipal Council that online and telephone voting would be utilized for advance voting and voting on Voting Day.

This decision greatly enhanced the overall accessibility of the election, as it allowed electors to cast their ballot using a smartphone, tablet, or laptop from home anytime from Monday, October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022 at 10:00 am to Monday, October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022 until the closing of voting at 8:00 pm.

Electors were able to vote in person via a laptop provided by the Township of The North Shore at the Municipal Office Council Chambers for advance voting on October 20<sup>th</sup> and October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2022 between 10:00 am and 4:00 pm.

On Monday, October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022 (Voting Day), electors were able to cast their votes at the Township of The North Shore Municipal Office Council Chambers via a laptop provided.

The Clerk worked closely with Simply Voting and Voterview to evaluate the voting system, ensure that it was fully accessible, and secure for persons with disabilities. As part of the accessibility features built into the system, electors with disabilities had the option to enlarge the font size, adjust the colour contrast, and have the security text read aloud.

In addition, online voting allowed electors to cast their ballot from home, providing a greater level of privacy to electors with disabilities who may have difficulty voting at traditional paper-based voting locations due to the fact that they had no need for assistance from others to vote.

## ***Staff Training***

Election Officials for the 2022 Election engaged in a discussion of best practices on how to assist voters in voting locations, including those with disabilities, as well as accommodations and special support services for those with special needs.

All Election Officials for the 2022 Election were Township of The North Shore employees who have completed accessibility training.

## ***Voting Locations***

As part of the 2022 Municipal Election, one physical voting location was offered and it was ensured that accessibility was a key consideration when choosing the voting location. The voting location, being Township of The North Shore Municipal Office located at 1385 Highway 17 in Algoma Mills, was chosen in accordance with an accessibility checklist. The purpose of this was to ensure that the facility had a barrier-free path of travel from the parking lot and the sidewalk, a barrier-free path of travel inside the voting location, barrier-free parking, an accessible door, adequate lighting, and adequate slopes and surfaces.

Election Officials conducted final accessibility checks prior to the opening of the voting locations to ensure that it was set up in a manner that was accessible. They prioritized the identification of the voting location access routes and entrances by providing appropriate internal and external signage, ensuring that voters with accessibility needs were directed to the accessible voting entrance through prominent signage, and making the accessible entrance the same as the main entrance where possible.

All Election Officials responsible for setting-up the voting location were aware of legislative accessibility requirements in the event that last-minute changes needed to be made to voting locations.

During the entire voting period, personal assistive devices were permitted in all voting locations, such as wheelchairs, walkers and service dogs. Election officials, who were sensitive to the needs of each voter and recognized that certain voters required special attention, treated all voters with dignity and respect.

### ***Information and Communication***

The Township of The North Shore considered accessibility in all information and communication strategies for the 2022 Municipal Election. Upon requests from persons with disabilities, staff provided copies of election documents, or the information contained in the document, in a format that took into account the person's disability.

The municipal election website was designed to be both informative and accessible. All information for voters, candidates, and third parties was placed in distinct sections on the website, and they were directed to access all documents and forms through the website in an effort to promote accessibility and transparency. The information available online used clear and simple language and was continuously updated to reflect the most recent election developments and information.

Election information was communicated through various channels and alternate formats including social media, the Township of The North Shore website, bulletin boards located at the Canada Post mailboxes in each Ward, and on the Township of The North Shore Municipal Office front door. Before the election, information on how to be added

to the Voter's list through Voter Lookup was posted via social media, on the Township of The North Shore's website and was included in an insert put into tax bills (within the Township's Newsletter).

Voter Information Notices were mailed out to all eligible electors on the Voters' List as well as explaining where and when to vote in the election and how to have elector information on the Voters' List amended.

In the event of disruptions to electoral services or unforeseen circumstances that affected the accessibility of voting locations, a process was in place to facilitate notification.

### **Conclusion**

It was the goal of the Township of The North Shore to ensure that electors within the municipality who required accessible services were provided with the best opportunity to vote as independently as possible in the 2022 Municipal Election.

Additionally, the Clerk also worked hard to ensure that the nomination and registration process was as accessible as possible for candidates and third parties.

The 2022 Municipal Election total voter turnout was 36.0%.

Detailed debriefings have been conducted with all Election Officials, and the Municipal Clerk will take into account staff feedback regarding accessibility issues in preparation for the next election for the Township of The North Shore.