

# 2018 Municipal and School Board Election

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## Post-Election Accessibility Report

Office of the City Clerk

<b>2018 Municipal and School Board Post-Election Report on Accessibility</b> .....	2
Message from the City Clerk.....	2
Legislative Requirements – <i>Municipal Elections Act, 1996</i> , as amended.....	3
Accessible Customer Service .....	4
<b>About the Accessibility Plan</b> .....	5
Public Input .....	5
Plan Analysis and Outcomes .....	6
Elections Communication and Information .....	7
Poll Locations .....	8
Voting Methods .....	10
Recruitment and Selection of Election Workers .....	11
Accessibility Training for Election Officials .....	11
Assistance for Candidates.....	12
Conclusion .....	13
<b>Appendix A: Partners</b> .....	14
<b>Appendix B: Related Resources</b> .....	15

## 2018 Municipal and School Board Post-Election Report on Accessibility

### Message from the City Clerk

I am pleased to provide this summary report documenting the City of North Bay’s efforts to remove barriers to accessibility in the 2018 Municipal and School Board Election. This report represents the culmination of the lessons learned from previous elections, the efforts of the Elections Team as well as feedback and input from persons with disabilities, concerned citizens and any organizations that may represent them.

This is the third report on accessibility and we have learned a great deal about making elections accessible since 2010. As we continue moving forward, we remain committed to working with persons with disabilities to ensure their needs are effectively met. The feedback and concerns expressed by all concerned citizens

is welcomed and applied as a tool to improve the delivery of accessible customer service at future elections.

I thank all Election Staff, Canadore College Student Volunteers, City Staff, the Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee, members of the Low Vision Group and the many concerned citizens across the City of North Bay for their efforts and contributions to enhancing the accessibility of the 2018 Election. While much progress has been made, we recognize that we must continue to press on and work diligently to provide more accessible voting options to enable all electors to vote confidently, independently and privately. Your comments and feedback are invited as we evaluate the results of our 2018 Municipal Accessibility Plan.

Sincerely,

K McIsaac

## **Legislative Requirements – *Municipal Elections Act, 1996, as amended***

One of the underlying principles of the **Municipal Elections Act, 1996** (MEA) is that elections must be accessible to all voters. The City Clerk is responsible for conducting municipal elections and establishing policies and procedures to ensure all voters have the opportunity to fully participate in the 2018 Municipal and School Board Election. The *Act* requires the Clerk to have regard for the needs of electors and candidates 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 and make the report available to the public. (*The Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, 12.1(1); 12.1(2); 11.12.1(3).)

In addition to the MEA, the Clerk must also comply with the requirements of the following legislation:

✓ The **Ontario Human Rights Code**

This legislation 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)

This legislation 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 preparation for the 2018 Municipal Election, staff reviewed the relevant legislation and implemented a number of initiatives to ensure compliance. The City Clerk's Office will continue to monitor the applicable legislation, standards and deadlines to ensure that any new requirements are incorporated in future Accessibility Election Plans.

## **Accessible Customer Service**

The Municipal Elections Act, 1996, as amended (MEA), requires the Clerk to have regard for the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities and to ensure that all voting places are accessible to electors with disabilities. As such, the City Clerk's Office is committed to providing quality goods and services that are accessible to all persons in accordance with the City of North Bay Accessible Customer Service Standards and in compliance with the customer service standards of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. In fulfilling our mission, the City Clerk's Office will provide services that respect the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.

This report provides an overview of the Accessible Election Plan 2018 and highlights accessibility achievements from the 2018 Election. A further overview of how the Clerk will continue to improve the accessibility of municipal elections in North Bay and enable all electors to exercise their democratic right to vote is also included.

## About the Accessibility Plan

The City Clerk's Office formalized the Election Accessibility Plan to implement and communicate a strategy for providing services to electors and candidates with disabilities. The Plan supports and strengthens the City's commitment to accessibility and to respond to the needs of persons with disabilities. It is a living document that will continue to be updated and enhanced through the efforts of Clerk's staff and the valuable input and feedback provided by concerned citizens, persons with disabilities and the organizations that represent them.

The Clerk recognizes that consulting and collaborating directly with persons with disabilities and the organizations that represent them is a key factor in the ongoing evolution of the Plan. The feedback and input provided has given the Clerk a greater understanding of the barriers faced by persons with disabilities in the electoral process and, as such, has contributed to a more effective plan.

Five key areas of focus were identified for the 2018 Municipal Election:

1. Elections Communication and Information
2. Poll Locations
3. Voting Methods
4. Recruitment and Staffing
5. Assistance to Candidates

## Public Input

Feedback on election accessibility initiatives is an important component of developing an Accessible Election Plan. The knowledge and feedback provided by the members of the Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee (MAAC) enabled the Clerk's staff to gain a better understanding of the barriers faced by persons with disabilities and develop a more effective accessibility plan to better support their participation in the Municipal Election. The Clerk also recognizes that more work is yet to be done to reach persons with disabilities who are not associated with the MAAC or other community accessibility group and persons who do not identify themselves as having a disability but who may encounter barriers to voting.

### Highlights

- Staff attended the Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee monthly meeting in May 2018. Staff attended the Low Vision Networking Group in

June 2018. Both meetings played an important role in identifying voting barriers, encouraging networking opportunities within the accessibility community and building strong partnerships.

- Staff hosted a media event and public testing of the Accessible Election Equipment for use at all Advance Polls of the 2018 Municipal and School Board Election in September 2018. This provided an opportunity for the Clerk's office to promote accessible services that respect the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities. The City Clerk's office provided accessible ballot-marking devices for independent voting at **all advance polls**. The AutoMARK™ Voter Assist Terminal (VAT) offers multiple ways for voters to interact and make choices on the ballot: directly on the touch screen, the keypad (includes Braille), Sip-N-Puff Device, and Audio Headphones.

### Moving Forward

- Provide additional opportunities to enable persons with disabilities to provide feedback on accessibility initiatives and work to eliminate barriers in the election process, including workshops, meetings and information sessions.
- Use the feedback provided by concerned citizens, persons with disabilities, and the organizations that represent them to update and enhance the Plan.
- Develop internal and external partnerships to expand the audience for election information and find new ways to reach people who do not identify themselves as having a disability but who may encounter barriers to voting.
- Investigate increasing resources to enable Clerk's staff to attend additional community events and enhance the level of public consultation for future elections.

## Plan Analysis and Outcomes

The City of North Bay's Accessible Election Plan 2018 was developed by members of the City Clerk's Elections Team, in consultation with the Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee and the Low Vision Community Group.

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](#), [the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001](#), and [the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005](#), and respect the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities. This Plan is a "living" document which will be improved and updated as best practices are identified and new opportunities for improvement arise. The City Clerk's Office will continue to learn, develop and

adjust the Accessible Election Plan 2018 in order to meet the needs of persons with disabilities in future Municipal and School Board Elections.

## Elections Communication and Information

The AODA requires that websites meet the accessible design and technical standards identified in the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) to be accessible to persons with disabilities. The WCAG 2.0 Level A standard came into effect in 2014.

While the Internet allows information to be made widely available, making that information accessible to persons with disabilities requires expertise, time and significant effort. Alternative text must be added for images, content must be organized in such a way that it can be read by screen-readers, the ability to change or adjust contrast should be implemented and options to re-size text must be included. Many thanks to the City's Information Systems staff for their support and efforts in this regard.

The City of North Bay Election website is fully compliant with the WCAG 2.0 Level A standard. All web pages, applications and documents are reviewed to ensure that they are fully accessible prior to posting on the website.

## Highlights

- **Redesigned the Election website**, ensured it was compliant and fully accessible to persons with disabilities and that information was presented in an easy-to-navigate manner using clear language. Content on the Election website is written at a level to assist with readability for electors with English as a second language and special needs. The Election website was updated regularly with current information about election candidates and any relevant election information.
- **Implemented the Find My Poll application** with new and enhanced features that provided voters with essential election information in one central location including a detailed mapping feature. This is the first time that an electronic self-serve voting location application was used. When a voter provided their address, the application provided the poll location they were to attend in order to cast their vote. The "Find My Poll" application received 2,702 unique page views on the poll locator between Sep 1 and Oct 23. The Average time spent on the page was 28 seconds.
- **Included accessibility information where possible in election communications** to ensure voters were aware of the accessibility

initiatives in place, including the **AutoMARK™**, curbside voting and processes to allow a friend or election official to assist a voter with marking their ballot.

- **Provided multiple communications channels**, including the Election website, print ads, email and in-person.
- **Produce a “How to Vote” booklet in English and French.** Although set as a goal for the 2018 Municipal and School Board Election cycle, limited resources made creating a “How to Vote” booklet challenging. This initiative is flagged as a potential goal for the 2022 election.
- Produce a **city-wide mail-out about “VoterLook Up.ca”** which allows voters to confirm if they are on the voters list. The election insert was mailed to each of the 13,000 households in the City of North Bay and also provided to election candidates and posted on the City of North Bay Website. The insert was also posted on the City’s Water Portal. (Copy of Insert in Appendix B)

### Moving Forward

- Continue to provide multiple communication channels to enable persons with disabilities to interact with Clerk's staff using their preferred communication method.
- Continue to make election information available through multiple channels and formats.
- Ensure accessibility information is included in all elections communications to reach persons with disabilities and persons who do not identify themselves as having a disability but may face barriers to voting.

### Poll Locations

Under the MEA, the Clerk is required to establish voting places that she considers most convenient for electors, and that are accessible to electors with disabilities. As the Clerk does not have the power to compel building owners to install accessible features, finding voting places that are convenient, accessible and available continues to be a significant challenge.

Clerk’s staff recognized the need to inspect each voting place on multiple occasions and at different times of the year to ensure their accessibility and availability on voting day. In addition to the challenge of finding voting places that are available and accessible, feedback from community members indicated that the availability of accessible transportation on voting day is a concern for many persons with disabilities. Although providing transportation to voting places does not fall within the Clerk’s purview under the MEA, locations were chosen that were



central to the polling area with consideration given to ease of access to transit stops and to accessible parking.

## Highlights

- **Review and update the Poll Location Accessibility Checklist.** The accessibility checklist was enhanced and used by staff to assess each voting place. Accessibility criteria included parking, route of travel, slope and surface, entrances, level access, lighting, and availability of a power door operation. Feedback was received from 3 concerned citizens regarding Poll locations #9 and #10 as well as the first Advance Poll at Memorial Gardens. Election staff acted quickly to mitigate the concerns of length of walking distance at Memorial Gardens by modifying the layout of the poll. This feedback was essential and contributed to a successful Poll for Memorial Gardens on Election Day. The Power Door function was a concern at Poll #9 and Poll #10. Staff worked with school staff to mitigate these concerns and provide assistance to electors at both sites.
- **Review** all potential poll locations **with consideration for public transit access**; provide information to voters on public transit access. North Bay Transit provides fully accessible transit services on selected routes in the City of North Bay. Fully accessible transit services provide people who use wheelchairs, other mobility devices and people that have difficulty in using stairs, the flexibility of using conventional transit routes throughout North Bay. Voting locations were chosen with consideration to the proximity of the existing transit route. City Transit also utilizes the **My Ride NBT application** to assist citizens with knowing when their bus will arrive at the designated location.
- **Parking spaces at all voting locations met the minimum standard of at least two (2) accessible parking spots** in addition were marked clearly with an accessibility symbol or sign. All accessible parking locations were located within a brief distance of the main doors of voting locations.
- Ensure voters with accessibility needs are directed to the accessible voting entrance by **prominent signage**. Election staff were provided with an ample supply of signs to ensure access route and doors were clearly identified. There were no issues identified with signage.
- Welcome the **use of support persons and service animals in voting places**. Educate elections staff on appropriate communication with voters and service animals. There were no issues identified with the use of support persons and service animals.
- There were **no disruptions to service at the Advance Polls or on Election Day**.

## Moving Forward

- Continue to monitor the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations and include any established building standards into voting place inspection checklists.
- Include transit route availability in the voting place inspection checklist.
- Review the possibility of hiring Greeters as accessibility support persons to work in voting places without automated power door openers.
- Explore expanding voting place accommodations, such as additional seating and signage.

## Voting Methods

The MEA requires the Clerk to have regard for the needs of candidates and electors with disabilities. Recognizing that persons with disabilities have different needs, the Clerk provided a variety of voting options and provisions for the 2018 Election, including the **AutoMARK™**, curbside voting, processes to allow a friend or election official to assist a voter with marking their ballot and proxy voting.

Clerk's staff received feedback from electors who were house-bound that there were insufficient options available to enable them to vote privately and independently other than by proxy voting. The Clerk will continue to investigate alternative voting strategies in preparation for the 2022 Election to address these concerns.

## Highlights

- **AutoMARK™ Voter Assist Terminals (VAT)** were available at all 7 Advance Vote locations between October 3, 2018 and October 12, 2018. The **AutoMARK™** Voter Assist Terminal (VAT) offers multiple ways for voters to interact and make choices on the ballot: directly on the touch screen, the keypad (includes Braille), Sip-N-Puff Device, and Audio Headphones. A total of **7 electors used the Auto Mark in 2018.**
- **Curbside voting** allowed voters who were unable to enter the voting place to request to have their ballot brought out to them for completion curbside.
- **Magnifying sheets**, which allowed voters to magnify the size of printed materials (4X magnification) were available in each voting place.
- Processes were in place at each voting place that allowed a friend or election official to **assist a voter with marking their ballot**, if requested.
- **Proxy voting** allowed voters who were unable to vote for any reason to appoint another eligible elector to vote on their behalf.

## Moving Forward

- Continue to investigate new technologies available and alternate forms of voting to better meet the needs of electors with disabilities.
- Investigate alternative voting initiatives to be considered for implementation in the 2022 Election that would meet the needs of electors with disabilities.
- Research accessibility initiatives and voting initiatives utilized in other municipalities.

## Recruitment and Selection of Election Workers

The Employment Standard under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation requires organizations to proactively remove barriers to employment for persons with disabilities and provide a framework for integrating accessibility into workplace processes.

## Highlights

- **Promoted voting place employment** opportunities on the City of North Bay website and in the North Bay Nugget newspaper.
- **Provided accommodations** upon request during interviews and classroom training sessions. No accommodation requests were received for training. No Accommodation Plans were requested through the AODA's Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations (IASR).

## Moving Forward

- Continue to work to promote employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.
- Highlight the availability of employment accommodations available, upon request, in communications about election employment.
- Hire persons with disabilities to assist in the **delivery of accessibility training**. This will provide election workers with a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of potential accessibility issues in the voting place.

## Accessibility Training for Election Officials

To provide a fully accessible voting experience for persons with disabilities, voting place staff must understand the importance of providing excellent customer service to all voters. Clerk's staff recognized the importance of developing specific

and detailed training to provide voting place staff with the information, tools and resources required to enable them to provide accessible customer service to all voters.

In order to provide voting place staff with more specific information on effectively serving persons with disabilities, Clerk's staff revised the Accessible Customer Service Handbook to include specific tips on how to serve voters with different disabilities.

## Highlights

- Included tips on **providing accessible customer service** to all voters in all training manuals for voting place staff.
- Provided the **Accessible Customer Service Handbook** to over 100 staff hired for the 2018 Election.
- Provided detailed **accessibility training to all election staff**. Over 100 election staff hired externally were trained in Accessible Customer Service. Any City staff that participated in the election were previously trained in Accessible Customer Service as a part of onboarding in employment at the City of North Bay. All City Staff volunteers received the Accessible Customer Service Handbook as part of their training packages.

## Moving Forward

- Continue to build awareness of the importance of human rights, accessible customer service and how to best serve persons with disabilities.
- Continue to review and enhance accessibility training materials to ensure voting place staff are provided with the tools and resources required to provide excellent customer service to all voters.

## Assistance for Candidates

Under the MEA, the Clerk must have regard to the needs of candidates with disabilities. Although all information and publications for candidates was available in alternative and accessible formats, no candidate requested information in alternative formats in 2018.

In preparation for the 2018 Election, the Clerk provided to all candidates materials from the Municipal Affairs and Housing regarding how to make their campaigns accessible.

## Highlights

- Provided all candidates with information on **how to make their campaigns accessible** to persons with disabilities.

- Provided all candidates with information on the various accessibility initiatives so they, their staff and volunteers could **better serve persons with disabilities**.

## Moving Forward

- Continue to build awareness of the importance of accessible campaigns and accessible all-candidate meetings.

## Conclusion

Everyone has the right to participate in the democratic process and the 2018 Municipal and School Board Election represented another important step forward in providing an accessible election. Experiences from the 2018 Election reinforced the importance of collaborating directly with persons with disabilities when planning and conducting elections and more work is needed in this area. Working closely with the MACC reinforced the idea that there is no single solution to making elections accessible for all voters. Persons with disabilities have different needs and Clerk's staff must continue to investigate new and emerging ways to communicate, engage and partner with persons with disabilities and the organizations that represent them in order to make the election process fully accessible.

Findings of the 2018 Election also made it clear that even small steps can have an enormous impact. Many thanks to the concerned citizens that took the time to provide accessibility feedback regarding the Advance Poll at Memorial Gardens, Poll #9, and Poll #10. The feedback provided was acted on quickly in order to address concerns related to door access at Polls #9 and #10 as well as the layout and design of Memorial Gardens. The Clerk will continue to work diligently to address concerns and provide accessible voting options to all electors to vote confidently, independently and privately.

In preparation for the 2022 Election, the Clerk will:

- Find new ways to reach persons who do not identify themselves as having a disability but who may still encounter a barrier to voting;
- Continue to investigate alternative voting options that meet the principles of the MEA, including Internet voting.
- Explore options to expand the communication channels for providing accessibility information;
- Continue to build awareness of the importance of accessible campaigns and accessible all-candidate meetings; and
- Continue to work closely with the MAAC and persons with disabilities to eliminate barriers in the election process.

The City Clerk is committed to ensuring persons with disabilities have full and equal access to vote privately and independently at Municipal Elections. Feedback to identify areas and ways in which the City of North Bay can improve the delivery of accessible services during the municipal election is welcomed.

Feedback on this report may be submitted through any of the following options:

**Email:** clerksoffice@cityofnorthbay.ca  
**Phone:** 705-474-0626, ext. 2510  
**Fax:** 705-495-4353  
**Mail:** The Office of the City Clerk  
P.O. Box 360  
200 McIntyre St. East  
North Bay, Ontario P1B 8H8

Please contact us if you require this information in an alternative format.

## Appendix A: Partners

Thank you to the following partners for providing their input, feedback and/or sharing election information with their members.

- North Bay Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee
- North Bay Low Vision Group
- Accessibility Directorate of Ontario
- Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
- Municipal Property Assessment Corporation
- Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario (ACEPO)
- Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques (AFOCSC)
- Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association (OCSTA)
- Ontario Public School Boards Association (OPSBA)

Thank you to the following partners for providing assistance with the set-up and coordination of the 7 Advance Polls, 11 Regular Polls and 7 Special Polls. The support and assistance from staff in each of these Poll Locations facilitated the delivery of an efficient election.

- Memorial Gardens Arena
- Castle Arms II
- Physically Handicapped Adults' Rehabilitation Association (PHARA)
- Place Richelieu
- Davedi Club
- Vincent Massey School – The Annex
- Woodland Public School

- St. Joseph-Scollard Hall
- École Publique l’Odysee
- École Algonquin Secondaire
- Canadore College – Commerce Court Campus
- St. Francis School
- Our Lady of Fatima School
- Sunset Park School
- North Bay Regional Health Centre
- Waters Edge Care Community
- Northeast Mental Health Centre
- Cassellholme
- Marina Point
- Empire/Terrace Suites
- Barclay House

## **Appendix B: Related Resources**

### **Election Services Website: [Election 2018](#)**

- [Municipal Act](#)
- [Municipal Elections Act](#)
- [Municipal Conflict of Interest Act](#)
- [Ministry of Municipal Affairs Election Resources](#)
- [Association of Municipalities of Ontario \(AMO\) - Ontario Municipal Elections](#)
- [Municipal Property Assessment Corporation \(MPAC\)](#)
- [Education Act](#)
- [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Section 23](#)
- [AMO Municipal Education Catalog, So You Want to Run for Council - Course Brochure](#)

### **Election Accessibility:**

- [2018 Accessible Election Plan](#)

### **Election Voters:**

- [How To Vote](#)
- [Poll Locator](#)
- Voter Look Up.ca mail-out:

# Voter LookUp.ca

Are you on the list to vote in  
the 2018 municipal and school  
board elections?

Visit [voterlookup.ca](http://voterlookup.ca)  
to confirm, update or add  
your information.

All it takes is a few minutes.

HAVE YOUR SAY  LOG ON TODAY



Questions? Call 1 866 296-6722

If you have accessibility needs, please let our representatives  
know how we can best accommodate you.

# Voter LookUp.ca

Êtes-vous sur la liste électorale  
pour les élections municipales  
et scolaires de 2018?

Consultez le site à [voterlookup.ca](http://voterlookup.ca)  
pour confirmer ou mettre à jour  
les renseignements qui vous  
concernent en qualité d'électeur.  
Il vous suffit de quelques minutes.

VOUS  POUR VOUS FAIRE  
CONNEXTEZ ENTENDRE



Vous avez des questions?  
Composez le 1 866 296-6722

Si vous avez des besoins en matière d'accessibilité,  
veuillez informer nos représentants de ce que nous  
pouvons faire pour mieux répondre à vos besoins.



# Poll Map:

