



2022 Municipal Elections Accessibility Plan

Abridged Version

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Introduction

The City of Ottawa's Elections Office is committed to providing an accessible voting process for electors, election workers, and candidates. The *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* ("MEA") governs municipal elections for all Ontario municipalities.

Under the MEA, the City Clerk is responsible for the preparation and conduct of municipal elections. In accordance with Subsection 12.1(2), and in consultation with members of the Accessibility Advisory Committee, the City Clerk has prepared the following plan regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

In addition to the requirements set out in the MEA, the Elections Office will continue to comply with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA), the related standards and regulations, and the accessibility-related provisions of the MEA, while administering the 2022 Municipal Elections and providing day-to-day services.

The Elections Office has developed this plan for the 2022 municipal Elections any by-elections that occur in the 2022-2026 Term of Council from November 15, 2022, to November 16, 2026. Should any additional accessibility tools or services become available, the plan will be updated accordingly.

Overview of the 2022 Municipal Elections

Electors have a number of opportunities to vote in the 2022 Municipal Elections.

1. Voting in person



There are three separate in-person voting opportunities, with a total of seven voting days, for electors to cast their ballot in the 2022 Municipal Elections.

2. Voting by proxy



An elector may appoint a friend or family member to vote on their behalf as their voting proxy. A proxy is someone that can go to the voting place and cast a ballot on someone else's behalf.

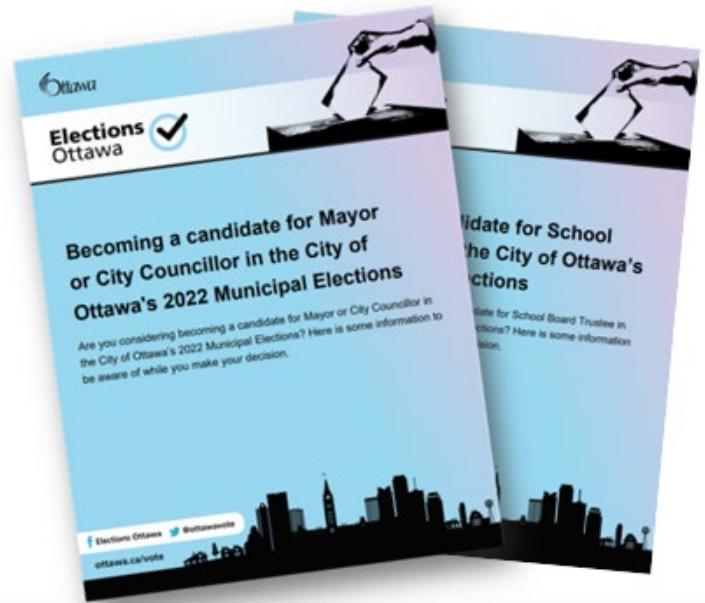
3. Voting by special mail-in ballot



This alternative method allows eligible electors, particularly those from high-risk groups, including older adults and electors with disabilities who are more susceptible to the effects of COVID-19, to mark their ballot at home.

Information at outreach

The Elections Office recognizes the importance of encouraging diversity and inclusion on City Council and worked with internal stakeholders, including the Accessibility Office, and various community groups and organizations, in an effort to provide more information about how to become a candidate in the 2022 Municipal Elections.



Voting places



Section 45 of the MEA prescribes that the City Clerk has the statutory duty to establish the number and location of voting places for an election as he or she “considers most convenient for the electors”. Pursuant to Subsection 45(2) of the MEA, “in establishing the locations of voting places, the clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities.”

Subsection 45(7) of the MEA mandates that on Voting Day, a voting place be provided on the premises of:

1. An institution for the reception, treatment or vocational training of members or former members of the Canadian Forces;
2. An institution in which, on September 1, 20 or more beds are occupied by persons who are disabled, chronically ill or infirm; and
3. A retirement home in which, on September 1, 50 or more beds are occupied.

Voting place accessibility checklist

As in past elections, the Elections Office has reviewed the accessibility of every location that will be used as a voting place. Staff has conducted a comprehensive review of the built environment of each location and has completed a detailed accessibility checklist to ensure that all voting places are accessible to electors and candidates with disabilities.

The accessibility checklist was previously developed in consultation with staff in the City's Accessibility Office and the City's former Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Department, and includes the evaluation of features such as parking, elevators, ramps, handrails, lighting, and door widths.

Voting place disruptions

In the event of a disruption in service related to accessibility, the City has a legal obligation to provide notice to electors. Disruptions of service include but are not limited to an elevator under repair; renovations that limit access to an area; and technology that is temporarily unavailable (for example, an accessible vote tabulator).

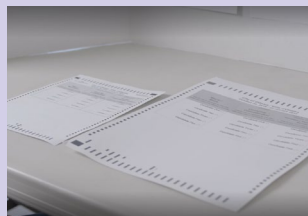
Election workers are instructed to post the sign in a highly visible location, with consideration of electors who are most affected by the disruption. The Supervisor Deputy Returning Officer will also notify the Elections Office of the disruption in service so that it might take additional measures to provide notice, such as positing information on ottawa.ca/vote and/or social media, depending on the circumstances.

Accessible voting tools at all voting places

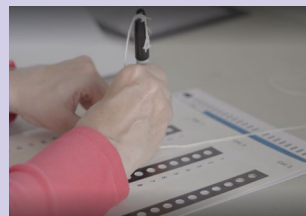
To ensure that the in-person voting process is accessible for all, the Elections Office offers several accessibility tools that allow electors to mark their ballot privately and independently.



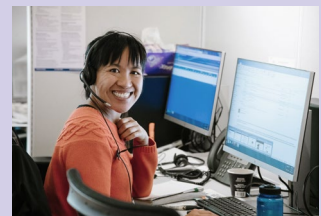
Large print ballots



Magnifying sheets



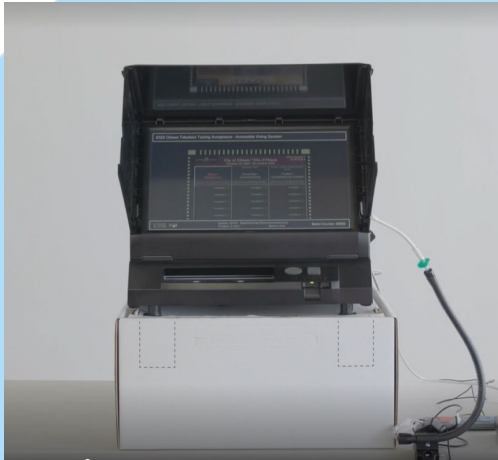
Braille templates
and listing of
candidates



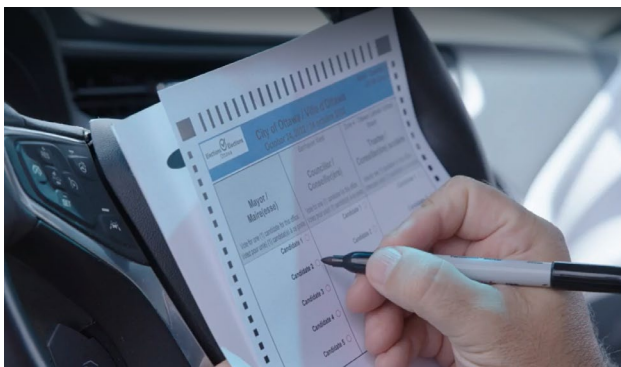
Cell phone with
elections call centre
staff on standby

Accessible Vote Tabulators

All special advance voting places, area-wide advance voting places and voting places in retirement residences and long-term care facilities offer an Accessible Vote Tabulator (AVT). The AVT allows electors with disabilities to vote privately and independently through the use of its accessible features, which include bilingual visual support through a 19-inch screen with zoom with high contrast features, a braille keypad, left-right paddles (colour coded left and right paddles), a sip 'n' puff device and bilingual audio through headphones.



Accessible voting services at all voting places



If an elector is physically unable to go inside the voting place, they can request to have their ballot brought to their vehicle, outside of the building, or to another area within the voting place.

Voting in long-term care facilities and institutions

Subsection 45(7) of the MEA states that, on Voting Day, a voting place shall be provided in the premises of institutions in which 20 or more beds are occupied by persons who are disabled, chronically ill or infirm and a retirement home in which 50 or more beds are occupied.

Election workers that work in long-term care facilities or institutions may assist an elector in casting their ballot by their bedside if the elector is unable to make it to the designated voting area.



Feedback cards at voting places

Feedback cards will be available at all voting places listing ways for electors to provide feedback to the Elections Office, as required by the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR). The feedback cards are printed to the Canadian National Institute for the Blind's (CNIB) guidelines for clear print and include Braille.



Transportation

New to the 2022 Municipal Elections, Para Transpo customers can reserve their trip to and from a voting place one week in advance on any of the seven in-person voting days. This extended booking timeline ensures that Para Transpo customers have the opportunity to schedule their trips ahead of the routine 24-hour bookings.



Election workers



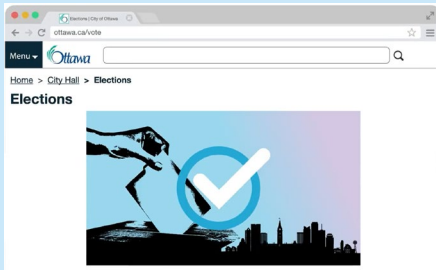
The Elections Office will continue to make workplace disability accommodations for all elections workers, as requested.

For the 2022 Municipal Elections, all election workers will be required to complete election worker training, which includes a formal section on accessibility.

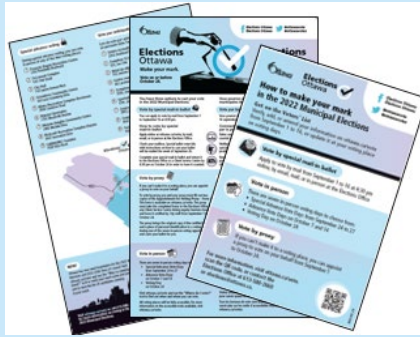
In addition, every City employee who participates in the 2022 Municipal Elections will have completed mandatory AODA training. Training for the 2022 Municipal Elections provides information about the AODA and emphasizes service delivery to all electors. In keeping with the AODA and the City's Accessibility Policy, the training program covers various processes to ensure that electors with disabilities have equal opportunity to cast their ballot independently and privately.

Information for electors

Information about the 2022 Municipal Elections, including information about accessibility tools and initiatives, are communicated to electors through a number of bilingual and accessible communications platforms.



Online content and tools



Advertising and printed material



Public outreach events

Information for candidates

The Elections Office provided candidates with a copy of the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks, and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO) "Candidate's Guide to Accessible Elections" upon the filing of their nomination forms.

Through out the election cycle, information regarding accessible communications, selecting an accessible campaign office, budgeting for accessibility, and accessible customer service is provided to candidates through candidate updates and information sessions.

Contact

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