

2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan



Introduction

In accordance with the [Municipal Elections Act, 1996](#) (MEA), all municipalities are required to adhere to the following provisions:

Electors and candidates with disabilities

12.1 (1) A clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities. 2009, c. 33, Sched. 21, s. 8 (8).

Report

12.1 (2) Within 90 days after voting day in a regular election, the clerk shall submit a report to council about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities and shall make the report available to the public. 2016, c. 15, s. 11.

Accessibility

45. (2) In establishing the locations of voting places, the clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities. 2009, c. 33, Sched. 21, s. 8 (23).

The City of Guelph is committed to providing an accessible and barrier free community and services. The following plan has been developed in advance of the 2022 municipal election in order to identify measures to be reported on following the election, to ensure compliance with MEA, the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005](#) (AODA) and the City's [Corporate Accessibility Policy](#).

Objectives

This plan has been created to outline the measures that the City of Guelph will be implementing to ensure that all electors and candidates have an equal opportunity to participate in the 2022 municipal election.

The objectives of the plan include ensuring that:

- all voting locations are physically accessible, including accessible parking and transportation options;
- a range of voting methods and technologies are offered to support persons with disabilities in casting their ballot;
- persons with disabilities have full and equal access to all information on where and when to vote and on candidates;
- persons with disabilities can fully participate in the municipal election as electors and/or candidates in an equal way;
- electors and candidates living with disabilities are aware of the accessibility measures that are available.

Development of plan

When developing this plan, the following steps were taken to make sure that all legislated requirements were met and that a suitable implementation plan was in place.

- A review and analysis was conducted of related documents including the City's [Corporate Accessibility Policy](#), accessibility guides provided by the Association of Municipal Managers,

Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO), and other supporting materials from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

- Meetings and consultations between the Election Team and the Accessibility Services staff.
- Consultation and plan review with the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Alternative Voting Methods

The following alternative voting methods will be available during the advanced voting period.

Vote by mail

Vote by mail will be offered as a remote voting option for the first time in 2022. A vote by mail kit can be requested by contacting the City Clerk's Office or by completing an online form which will be available on guelph.ca/vote.

A kit will be mailed to the voter including the ballot, declaration card, secrecy envelope and a return envelope with postage pre-paid. Once completed, the ballot can be returned by mail or could be dropped off at City Hall.

This voting method may support voters who are unable to vote in-person for a variety of reasons. This could include supporting voters living with severe allergies, immunosuppression or limited mobility. Staff acknowledge that voters living with certain visual related disabilities may not be able to vote independently using this method. Depending on individual circumstances, assistance from a trusted friend or family member, as is permitted by the MEA, may be needed to mark the ballot, sign the voter declaration, assemble and return the vote by mail kit.

Vote from home service pilot

A vote from home service will be piloted for the first time in 2022 to support voters who cannot leave their homes due to illness, injury or disability. This will be used to anticipate the level of service that is required to plan for future elections and by-elections. This pilot will offer approximately 60 vote from home appointments, on designated advanced voting days during business hours. Additional appointments may be offered if they can be accommodated. This service is only available within the City of Guelph boundaries.

Starting in September, this service can be requested by emailing guelphvotes@guelph.ca or calling the election phone line. This service is only offered as a final option for voters who are otherwise unable to use any other method. The City Clerk's Office appreciates that there is increased need for considerations to support individuals who are immunocompromised in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Each request for an appointment would confirm that no other voting methods could be accessed. With over 95,000 eligible voters, the City cannot offer vote from home service appointments to all voters and will reserve appointments only for those who have no other options.

Within the vote from home service pilot, there will also be a pilot of ballots with braille sleeves to allow more people who will vote from home to mark their own ballots. The vote from home service may not enable all voters living with disabilities to mark their ballot independently. A voter could request assistance from election officials. All vote from home workers are paid City staff that have sworn an oath of confidentiality. They may also be assisted by a caregiver, family member or friend to mark the ballot. If the voter would like a caregiver or family member to assist in marking the ballot, this would be allowed after the person assisting swears an oral oath indicating they will mark the ballot as directed by the voter and that the secrecy of the vote will be upheld. Election officials will be required to wear any personal protective equipment as directed by Wellington Dufferin Guelph Public Health (WDGPH).

Voting Locations

A comprehensive accessibility audit of each physical voting location will be conducted using the site audit form provided as Attachment 1. The following considerations are considered when determining which facilities will be used as voting locations.

Accessible route

Proximity of the voting location to accessible public transit routes will be considered in the selection of voting locations. The name and address of the voting location shall be clearly visible from street level. The voting area must be identified with clear and understandable signage. The route will connect to and be accessible from a municipal sidewalk.

Entrance and egress

The route to the entrance of the voting location shall be unobstructed and accessible. The route shall be wide enough to allow for an individual using a wheelchair, scooter or service animal to travel safely. Doors and pathways will be a minimum of 920mm (36 inches). Doors into the voting location and voting area should have an automatic door option and be easy to open. Easy to open will be defined according to an acceptable gauge of pressure as recommended by Accessibility Services. Routine checks of entrance and egress routes will be made throughout the voting days.

Parking

Accessible parking shall be available at all voting locations. The designated parking space(s) will be clearly marked with the international symbol of accessibility and be on firm and level ground close to the entrance of the voting location. There will be an accessible route from parking to an accessible entrance. By-law staff will monitor and enforce parking at voting locations throughout the day.

Interior voting area

Access to the interior voting area and voting booth will be level and slip resistant. Any doormats or carpeting must be level with the floor to prevent potential tripping hazards. The voting area will be well lit and seating shall be available. Entrance corridors must be clear of obstructions and tripping hazards and will allow sufficient space for use of a wheelchair or scooter. There will be clear signage directing voters to the voting area within the building.

Accessible voting booth

Accessible voting booths will be available at each voting place. These booths will be low in height and have a wide area to allow for individuals who use a wheelchair or scooter to vote independently and secretively. Pedestal tables will not be used at accessible voting stations.

Accessible voting options at voting locations

As part of the voting methods employed by the City Clerk, provisions for electors with disabilities have been planned for voting locations. Every effort has been made to ensure that every voting location is as physically accessible as possible.

During the advance voting period, all advance voting locations will be equipped with the Audio-Tactile Interface (ATI) Handheld Touch Pad that will allow electors to use an audio ballot to mark their ballot independently. This equipment also allows for paddles and sip and puff pneumatic devices to be attached to the ATI to allow those with limited mobility to access the audio ballot. The locations chosen for advanced voting are City Hall, Victoria Road Recreation Centre, the Evergreen Seniors Centre, the Shelldale Centre, West End Community Centre, University of Guelph and Arkell Road Bible Chapel.

On voting day, October 24, 2022, voters casting their vote by paper ballot will be able to vote at any location in their ward. For voters who wish to use the ATI Handheld Touch Pad, the paddles or the sip and puff devices, one voting location in each ward has been chosen that will be equipped with all three accessible ballot marking devices. The locations chosen in each ward were selected based on the convenience of the location, the amount of accessible parking available, proximity to main transit routes and accessible features of the facility. The voting locations selected to be fully accessible for voting day are the following:

- Ward 1: Victoria Road Recreation Centre
- Ward 2: Trinity United Church
- Ward 3: Dublin Street United Church
- Ward 4: West End Community Centre
- Ward 5: Delta Hotel Guelph Conference Centre
- Ward 6: Arkell Road Bible Chapel

When a voter receives their voter notification card in the mail it will list all of the voting locations they can choose from in their ward on voting day. On the card it will also indicate which location will have accessible devices available.

Accessible ballot marking devices

The accessible ballot marking devices that will be used in the 2022 municipal election are the ATI Hand Held Touch Pad, paddles and sip and puff devices. Each device connects directly to a printer, allowing an individual to use the devices to mark a ballot electronically. The printed ballot can then be fed into a tabulator like all other ballots. When a printed ballot is recorded by the Tabulator it is indistinguishable from any other vote cast on that machine. Election staff will be available to assist any voter when using any of these devices as requested. Further information on each device and how it works has been included below.

ATI hand held touch pad

The hand held device provides an audio ballot for voters with visual impairments. Each device has braille labels, and buttons with different shapes and colours to allow voters to listen to the audio instructions with headphones and hear the candidate options, and then touch the appropriate button to vote for the candidate of their choice. The controls allow each voter to adjust volume, pause and repeat audio messages, and adjust the audio speed based on their preference.

Paddles

The paddle device provides ease of use for voters with limited mobility. Paddles are attached to the ATI touch pad and voters follow audio instructions with headphones and press the appropriate paddle to indicate which candidate they wish to vote for. Since the paddles are connected to and use the audio feature on the ATI device, the same controls regarding volume, pause, repeat and speed adjustment apply to this method of voting.

Sip and puff

The sip and puff device provides ease of use for voters with mobility disabilities. The sip and puff device is attached to the ATI touch pad and voters follow audio instructions with headphones and a disposable mouth piece is provided near the machine. Voters then follow the audio instructions and vote by sipping/puffing for the candidate they wish to vote for. Similar to the paddles, since the sip and puff device is connected to the ATI touch pad, the same controls regarding volume, pause, repeat and speed adjustment apply to this method of voting.

Scent free and fully masked voting location

At City Hall, during the advance voting period on October 8-10th, a scent free and fully masked room will be available for voters by request. This is to assist voters who may have scent sensitivities and/or want extra safety in regards to COVID-19.

Voting Assistance

A voter may receive assistance in one of the following ways.

Support person or friend of the voter

Following Section 9 of the City's [Corporate Accessibility Policy](#), people with disabilities will be permitted to be accompanied by a support person at any voting location. A designated support person or friend of the voter will be administered an oath of secrecy and confidentiality prior to providing assistance.

Service animals

Electors and candidates are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at all voting locations.

Election officials

Election officials are available to assist any voter with a disability who is unable to mark a ballot or may have difficulty with reading or writing. All individuals working in the capacity of an election official are formally appointed and take an oath of secrecy.

Sign language interpretation

As a pilot program for the 2022 election, appointments will be made available to have an ASL sign language interpreter. Election communications and materials will provide information that these services are available should someone request for any of the voting days. An interpreter will be booked for a virtual session to assist the voter at the location they request. Staff will ensure that the technology is at the voting location on the day and at the time of the appointment with the interpreter. Additional language translation will also be supported through the use of an on demand call in service available at City Hall during advanced voting days to provide translation in approximately 140 languages.

Communications

The 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan will be made available on the City's election website at guelph.ca/vote and at ServiceGuelph on request. The plan will be available in any alternative formats upon request.

Application

In line with Section 4 of the [City's Corporate Accessibility Policy](#), all election officials will review this plan and will undertake required internal training with respect to providing accessible customer service.

Candidates must also have regard to the needs of electors with disabilities. Campaign offices, election materials and canvassing should all be reviewed to ensure that they are fully accessible.

Election Feedback

Any individual can submit feedback regarding the provision of accessible customer service. They can do so through the feedback process outlined in the City's [Corporate Accessibility Policy](#), that has been outlined below.

Anyone can provide feedback regarding election accessibility in the following ways.

- In person to the Returning Officer, Deputy Returning Officer or Accessibility Services;
- By telephone by calling the election line at 519-837-5625, the general inquiries line at 519-822-1260 or TTY: (519) 826-9771;
- By email to guelpvotes@guelph.ca or accessibility@guelph.ca, and
- In writing to the attention of Accessibility Services, 1 Carden St, Guelph, ON, N1H 3A1.

Once feedback has been received, the following process will take place:

- Feedback will be directed to the City Clerk and Accessibility Services.
- The City Clerk will forward the feedback to the relevant department or employee.
- The relevant employee will take appropriate action in a timely manner with the assistance of Accessibility Services and members of other departments if needed.
- Whether the feedback is intended to be a helpful suggestion or a complaint, the employee along with Accessibility Service will assess current policies, practices, and procedures to determine if any changes are required.
- Employees will follow up with the person who submitted the feedback if more clarification is needed, or if the person has requested that follow up take place.
- Employees will keep records of all steps taken, including any discussions with the person submitting the feedback and any actions taken.

Reporting

In accordance with Section 12.1 of the MEA, within 90 days after voting day, the City Clerk will prepare a report about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities and will make the report available to the public. This report will be available on the municipal election website, guelph.ca/vote, and in alternative formats upon request.

Additional Resources

More information can be found on the City's [accessibility webpage](#) or by contacting any one of the following individuals:

Accessibility Services

519-822-1260 extension 3536 or TTY 519-826-9771

accessibility@guelph.ca

Stephen O'Brien, City Clerk/Returning Officer

519-822-1260 extension 5644

stephen.obrien@guelph.ca

Jennifer Slater, Manager, Information, Privacy and Elections/Deputy City Clerk

519-822-1260 extension 2605

jennifer.slater@guelph.ca

Marilyn Hoffmann, Election Coordinator

519-822-1260 extension 2468

marilyn.hoffmann@guelph.ca

Attachments

Attachment-1 Voting Location Site Audit Form

Section 1: Facility Contract Information

Facility Name _____ Date of Site Audit _____

Ward _____ Street Address _____

Section 2: Facility Exterior – Greyed out cells are likely N/A

Element	1. Minimum Requirement (includes safety in all cases)	2. Meets minimum requirements 3. Somewhat? (Note possible solutions)	4. Accessible connection (eg. includes curb ramps) 5. Somewhat - Note any obstructions	6. Sign(s) noting accessibility	Notes How can elements that don't meet the requirements be altered?
Parking lot spaces	At least 1 parking space	Yes No Somewhat	Yes No Somewhat		
On-street parking spaces	No minimum on-street required if there are 25 or more parking spaces	Yes No Somewhat	Yes No Somewhat		

Element	1. Minimum Requirement (includes safety in all cases)	2. Meets minimum requirements 3. Somewhat? (Note possible solutions)	4. Accessible connection (eg. includes curb ramps) 5. Somewhat - Note any obstructions	6. Sign(s) noting accessibility	Notes How can elements that don't meet the requirements be altered?
Accessible Parking	a) At least 4m wide or 2.4m+ accessible aisle? 1 - 25 parking spaces = 1 accessible parking space b) Closest parking to the main entrance c) Firm and stable surface	Yes No Somewhat	Yes No Somewhat		
Drop off area?	To be a reasonable distance to main entrance	Yes No Somewhat	Yes No Somewhat		

Element	1. Minimum Requirement (includes safety in all cases)	2. Meets minimum requirements 3. Somewhat? (Note possible solutions)	4. Accessible connection (eg. includes curb ramps) 5. Somewhat - Note any obstructions	6. Sign(s) noting accessibility	Notes How can elements that don't meet the requirements be altered?
Lighting in the parking lot and on sidewalks?	Well-lit accessible parking and accessible route not set with a timer while City uses the building	Yes No Somewhat			
Property sidewalk from the municipal sidewalk	Accessible connection should be the primary connection but if secondary note if there are directional signs	Yes No Somewhat	Yes No Somewhat		
Facility identification sign	Clearly visible from the street and sidewalk	Yes No Somewhat	Yes No Somewhat	Yes No Somewhat	

Element	1. Minimum Requirement (includes safety in all cases)	2. Meets minimum requirements 3. Somewhat? (Note possible solutions)	4. Accessible connection (eg. includes curb ramps) 5. Somewhat - Note any obstructions	6. Sign(s) noting accessibility	Notes How can elements that don't meet the requirements be altered?
Terrain	Facility sidewalk slopes shall not be steeper than 8.3%	Yes No Somewhat	Yes No Somewhat		
Main Polling Entrance	d) Easy to see e) Well lit f) Easy to open door/ Door operator – if no operator, max 5 pound to open door and have a lever handle g) Door is 36 inches wide	Yes No Somewhat	Yes No Somewhat		
Bus Stop	A bus stop within 2 blocks of the facility	Yes No Somewhat	Yes No Somewhat	Yes No Somewhat	

Element	1. Minimum Requirement (includes safety in all cases)	2. Meets minimum requirements 3. Somewhat? (Note possible solutions)	4. Accessible connection (eg. includes curb ramps) 5. Somewhat - Note any obstructions	6. Sign(s) noting accessibility	Notes How can elements that don't meet the requirements be altered?
Crosswalk or light to cross traffic close to the facility	Not a requirement	Yes No Somewhat	Yes No Somewhat		

Section 3: Facility Interior

Advanced voting location and details:

Election day location and details:

Equipment

- # of required chairs
- Required chairs supplied? (Y/N)
- Are all lights working?
- # of required tables
- Required tables supplied? (Y/N)
- Is first aid available?

Power Supply

- Plug distance from location to election staff (in feet)
- Plug distance from location to Vote Tabulator (in feet)
- All plugs tested? (Y/N)
- Do plugs by election staff have a 110V/15A capacity? (Y/N)
- Are any extension cords required? (Y/N)
- If yes, how many?
- Will extension cords be supplied by the facility? (Y/N)
- Are power bars available and supplies by the facility? (Typically only 1 needed) (Y/N)

Accessibility

Element	7. Minimum Requirement (includes safety in all cases)	8. Meets minimum requirements 9. Somewhat? (Note possible solutions)	10.Accessible connection (eg. includes curb ramps) 11.Somewhat - Note any obstructions	12.Sign(s) noting accessibility	Notes How can elements that don't meet the requirements be altered?
Polling location within the building	Location on same level as entrance, if not, elevator or ramp is required	Yes No Somewhat	Yes No Somewhat		
Flooring surface	Flooring surface is non-slip and level	Yes No Somewhat	Yes No Somewhat		

Element	7. Minimum Requirement (includes safety in all cases)	8. Meets minimum requirements 9. Somewhat? (Note possible solutions)	10.Accessible connection (eg. includes curb ramps) 11.Somewhat - Note any obstructions	12.Sign(s) noting accessibility	Notes How can elements that don't meet the requirements be altered?
Lighting	Voting area must be well lit	Yes No Somewhat	Yes No Somewhat		
Seating	Seating on polling day can be located in logical rest spaces such as line-ups or people waiting for others to vote	Yes No Somewhat	Yes No Somewhat		
Corridors/doorways Wayfinding	a) Corridors need to be at least 43" wide and door are 36" wide b) Voting day wayfinding sign locations will be logical	Yes No Somewhat	Yes No Somewhat	Yes No Somewhat	

Element	7. Minimum Requirement (includes safety in all cases)	8. Meets minimum requirements 9. Somewhat? (Note possible solutions)	10. Accessible connection (eg. includes curb ramps) 11. Somewhat - Note any obstructions	12. Sign(s) noting accessibility	Notes How can elements that don't meet the requirements be altered?
Space within the voting space	A 2m (78-3/4") unobstructed turning space is required where a person needs to turn their wheelchair	Yes No Somewhat	Yes No Somewhat		
Accessible washrooms	Minimum, an accessible washroom stall is required. Note door width into the washroom and the stall.	Yes No Somewhat	Yes No Somewhat	Yes No Somewhat	

Additional Remarks & Notes

SECTION 4: FACILITY DIAGRAM