



Township of

North Dundas

COUNCIL REPORT

To:	CAO, Mayor and Members of Council
From:	Jo-Anne McCaslin, Clerk
Date of Meeting:	January 11, 2011
Subject:	2010 Municipal Election Accessibility Commentary

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to inform Council on efforts to identify, remove and prevent barriers affecting electors and candidates with disabilities, pursuant to Section 12.1 of the *Municipal Elections Act, S.O. 1996, c.32, Sch., s.1(1)*, as amended.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council receive and adopt the Accessibility Report for the 2010 Municipal Election.

BACKGROUND

The following changes to the *Municipal Elections Act* were introduced by the provincial government in late 2009:

"12.1(1) Electors and candidates with disabilities

A clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities.

12.1 (2) Report

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."

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Clerk, as Returning Officer, took every effort to reduce barriers on a number of levels with regard to the planning and undertaking of the 2010 Municipal Election.

Municipal Elections must provide the public with equal access and an equal opportunity to cast a ballot. By providing electors the choice of voting electronically through the evoting solution, The Township of North Dundas provided a range of capability and convenience improving accessibility to disabled persons in our community.

The 2010 Election built on the efforts of the past with regard to Electronic Voting. An opportunity to cast a ballot from the comfort and convenience of a familiar setting, complete with the tools, equipment and/or software that assist citizens with disabilities in their day to day activities is addressed with internet and telephone voting. This method of voting was also used in 2003 and 2006 municipal elections.

Accessible customer service training received by Township staff was also a great benefit for election officials assisting candidates and electors. Voter participation in the Township of North Dundas has continually increased since the move to electronic voting.

DISCUSSION

Customer Service and Information Sharing - Providing Tools to Assist

All Township staff and elected officials received accessible customer service training in late 2009. This training was invaluable in providing strategies to identify and eliminate barriers in the provision of services. The role of election official was carried out by the Clerk with assistance of Township staff. Election officials play a central role in assisting electors at the Voter Help Centre or on the telephone. All election staff signed an official oath consistent with municipal election protocol to secure and safeguard the integrity of the election process.

Advertising of the 2010 Municipal Election and the method of voting to be conducted in the October municipal election began in January. Information was distributed to residents via local newspapers, Township Website and Community Notice Boards, and Canada Post. In addition, candidates were made aware of the alternative method of voting during filing procedures with the Clerk.

Voting Method - Access through E-Voting

E-voting combined with everyday tools like computers, telephones and other aids can present opportunities for persons with disabilities to vote, while being consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.

The supplier of the e-voting solution (Intelivote Systems Inc.) used by the municipality, created and operates a system that meets the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) requirements.

These accessibility requirements, architected into the solution, assist persons with disabilities and an aging population. The system complied with the guidelines as defined by the W3C technologies website principles. These guidelines cover a variety of initiatives including the organization, functionality and readability of information provided, as well as alternative ways of representing information over the web. Abiding by this standard ensured voters with a disability, with existing web aware technology, could connect to the voting website and interact with the voting system.

As an example, voters were offered the opportunity to make an audio selection of some of the security features required when entering a voting session via the web. This support afforded visually impaired voters the opportunity to successfully navigate the login security CAPTCHA challenge required to cast their ballot.

Persons with disabilities could access the e-voting services over the telephone, both mobile and land line. Communication barriers can make it difficult for people to receive or convey information. Barriers may come in the form of low volume, the use of language that is not clear or plain, and confusing or unorganized menus and menu options. The e-voting system was designed and implemented with the following telephone voting functional criteria taken into consideration:

- The telephone e-voting service is offered on all types of touch tone telephones and wireless devices.
- Clear natural language is used and is offered in English.
- Menu options are clear and easy to follow, advising when to select options and providing confirmations of voter selections.
- Standard volume is used to allow for adjustments dependent on the telephone or device of the user.

Persons with disabilities could also use the TTY (Teletypewriter) service to access e-voting services. It is required by law that the Relay service be confidential and not disclose any information from conversations and no record-keeping of conversations be stored.

Persons who are deaf, deafened, oral deaf or hard of hearing could have made use of the Internet to cast their ballot in the election with little to no assistance. Persons, who have a vision loss disability, including total blindness and legal blindness, had the ability to use the telephone to cast their ballot for the election. The e-voting system addresses other types of disabilities (intellectual, learning, mental health) as described in the website accessibility requirements and telephone operating functions.

Using the e-voting system, disabled persons are given the opportunity to vote from the comfort of their own home. Voting from home facilitates the voting process for disabled persons who have mobility restrictions and/or have a difficult time with transportation due to physical disabilities. Travel to a physical polling location would no longer create a hardship or barrier to them.

Enabling persons with a disability the opportunity to vote from any location, using more than one method, (telephone or internet) increases the opportunity for these individuals to participate in the election without assistance. This level of independence affords them an increased level of privacy while casting their ballot without the usual involvement of a friend or relative, which might otherwise compromise their secret ballot.

Voter Help Centre 636 St. Lawrence Street:

The municipality hosted a Voter Help Centre from Wednesday October 20 to Monday October 25 between the hours of 8:30 to 4:30 where all members of the public, including persons with a disability, could visit or call to get assistance with their voting process. The Township Office is fully accessible. Three private customer stations were set up with telephone and Internet access. Election officials were trained to provide assistance if requested.

Outreach to Dundas Manor and Nor-Dun Senior Support Centre:

The e-voting system was also designed to accommodate the older population in the community. Internet and telephone voting allowed election staff to travel to senior citizen homes to assist in the voting process to ensure participation of residents. Seniors could choose the telephone or computer to complete their voting. Voting took place in secure staff offices to ensure complete privacy.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report. Accessibility was taken into account in the technical requirements outlined in the Request for Proposal for e-voting services, as well as for equipment and supply needs.

CONCLUSION

In general, e-voting offered electors choice in the way they were able to cast their ballot. The flexibility and choice afforded electors with disabilities, using the Internet or a telephone, positively impacted their accessibility.

The e-voting system combined with election staff support provided an equal and dignified opportunity for electors to cast their ballot.

Respectfully submitted,


Jo-Anne McCaslin

Approved by:


Howard F. Smith



Township of

North Dundas

COUNCIL REPORT

To:	CAO, Mayor and Members of Council
From:	Jo-Anne McCaslin, Clerk
Date of Meeting:	January 11, 2011
Subject:	Civil Marriage Services

BACKGROUND:

Since 2005 under the authority of By-law 16-2005 I have been authorized to perform civil marriages services to the residents of North Dundas. Commonly the services take place on Tuesdays or Fridays in Council Chambers of other municipal site. The fee is \$300.00 plus the cost of the marriage licence. To date I have performed 20 ceremonies. I have not received any payment for my services.

In September 2010, By-law 32-2010 was passed to repeal By-law 16-2005. By-law 32-2010 is less restrictive in nature in terms of service, therefore enabling me to assist my fellow clerks (marriage officiants) if and when needed.

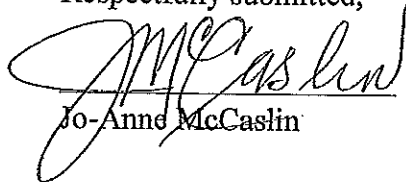
Interest is on the rise. On January 5/11, I received 4 inquires about conducting civil marriage services. While some couples are happy to be married during the week, most prefer Friday evening or Saturday afternoon weddings. Therefore I am proposing the follow recommendations for Council consideration.

RECOMMODATIONS:

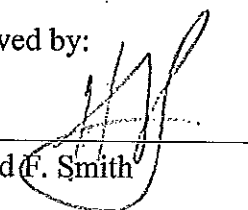
- 1) The fee for said service during regular business hours held in Council Chambers shall be \$300.00 payable to the municipality.
 - 2) The fee for said service outside of regular business hours shall be \$150.00 payable to the municipality and \$150.00 payable to the Clerk for time spent.
 - 3) The above fees do not include the cost for the marriage licence
 - 4) Additional rental fees apply to other municipal facilities (other than Council Chambers) and the bookings for these facilities will need to be made through the Recreation Dept. once the officiant's availability is determined.
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5) Wedding services will be provided at the availability of the Clerk.

Respectfully submitted,


Jo-Anne McCaslin

Approved by:


Howard F. Smith

