



CORPORATE SERVICES *Staff Report*

REPORT NO: COR 2023-01

TO: Council

SUBMITTED BY: Patrick Kelly CPA, CMA Director of Corporate Services / Treasurer

PREPARED BY: Chad Curtis, Deputy Clerk

REVIEWED BY: Sharon Chambers, CAO

DATE: January 16, 2023

SUBJECT: Municipal Election 2022 – Post Election Accessibility Report

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report COR 2023-01 be received for information purposes.

SUMMARY:

Municipal elections are the foundation of the local democratic process and are held every four (4) years in accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*. Section 12.1 (3) of the Act requires the Clerk to publicly report about the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers affecting electors and candidates with disabilities.

BACKGROUND:

The Clerk for the Township of Wilmot administers elections for the positions of Mayor and Council, in addition to administering elections the Regional Chair and school board trustee(s) in all four (4) local school boards (English Separate, English Catholic, French Separate, and French Catholic).

For the 2022 municipal election, Council approved three (3) voting methods to offer choice, convenience, and a high level of accessibility for voters. The three (3) voting methods implemented for the 2022 municipal election were Internet voting, telephone voting and hand-

counted paper ballots. Internet and telephone voting was made available to electors to cast their vote between October 14th and October 24th. In-person voting took place on October 15th, October 16th, October 22nd, and October 23rd.

REPORT:

The Township of Wilmot created the Election Accessibility Plan – 2022 Municipal Election as a guiding document to ensure that the 2022 municipal election went above and beyond the general requirements of accessibility.

With respect to accessibility, the mandate of the Township of Wilmot Municipal Election was as follows:

“It is the continued goal of the Township of Wilmot to ensure that Electors in the Township of Wilmot to ensure that Electors in the Township of Wilmot who have a disability or an issue with accessibility are provided with the best opportunity to vote as independently as possible in the 2022 Municipal Election.”

The plan addressed specific accessibility requirements in relation to the 2022 Municipal Election in the Township of Wilmot. The Plan was a “living” document which was updated and improved as best practices were identified and new opportunities of improvement arise.

The Election Accessibility Plan provided guidance on how to achieve accessibility compliance on the following topics:

- Reviewing comments from electors, candidates, and election workers regarding the 2018 election.
- Consultation with the Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee (GRAAC) for feedback on potential barriers and methods to overcome these barriers
- Collaboration with individuals and community groups to increase understanding of providing an accessible election
- Providing election information in an accessible format
- Providing election information in a clear and easy to understand manner
- A section of the Township’s election website dedicated to accessibility
- Ensuring website is W3C Consortium 2.0 Level AA Compliant
- Providing candidates with accessible resources upon request

The Election Accessibility Plan also ensured Internet, telephone and paper ballots were accessible. A few of the highlights include:

- Internet and telephone voting method allowed electors to vote using accessibility features such as screen magnifiers, brightness or contract views, screen readers, TTY telephone assistance or any other assistive device they may use.

- Internet and telephone voting allowed the elector to vote anywhere in the world with an Internet connection or telephone. These two (2) methods negated the need to travel to polls
- Staff created an Accessibility Checklist for each voting location which ensured each location was accessible
- An accessibility kit was provided to each voting station which included notepads, pens, magnifying sheets, etc.
- Support persons accompanied electors to assist with communications, mobility, personal care or medical needs
- Service animals were permitted in all voting places

Overall, staff determined the 2022 Municipal Election in Wilmot met our pre-established goal of providing the best opportunity for all electors to vote as independently as possible.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE TOWNSHIP OF WILMOT STRATEGIC PLAN:

- Responsible Governance – By ensuring the Township of Wilmot is going above and beyond the requirements of the Municipal Election Act, 1996 in regards to accessibility.
- Quality of Life – Electors of the Township of Wilmot were provided an opportunity to vote in an accessible manner which maintained dignity and respect for all
- Community Engagement – An accessible election allows all electors of the Township of Wilmot an opportunity to participate in the democratic process.

ACTIONS TOWARDS UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS:

None

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

The accessibility related expenditures associated with the administration of the 2022 Municipal Budget were funded through the 2022 municipal operating program. Under the current reserve fund by-law, a dedicated reserve fund exists to fund election related expenditures every four (4) years.

ATTACHMENTS:

None