



# INFORMATION REPORT

<b>TO:</b>	Mayor and Members General Issues Committee
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b>	January 14, 2015
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b>	Accessibility Initiatives Undertaken for 2014 Municipal Election (CL15001) (City Wide)
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	City Wide
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<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

## **Council Direction:**

No applicable.

## **Information:**

The *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* requires the City Clerk to submit a report to City Council within 90 days of voting day regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors with disabilities.

In preparation for the Municipal Election consultation was done with the Customer Service, Access and Equity Division of Corporate Services, the AMCTO Municipal Election Project Team, the Disabled and Aged Regional Transportation System (D.A.R.T.S.), and the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities.

## **Polling Locations**

With the assistance of the Access and Equity Coordinator a revised Polling Location Report form was designed to ensure that all polling locations were accessible to electors.

Approximately 350 potential locations were visited and examined for parking, lighting, room size, proximity within the poll for residents, Hamilton Street and Rail routes and accessibility issues.

From this review a determination was made for the 192 Election Day locations, the 18 Advance Poll sites and the 21 Special Advance Poll sites.

To ensure accessibility requirements two of the sites required the paving of parking lots and one required the building of a ramp.

All impediments in hallways and low hanging signs were removed, and the International Symbol of Accessibility was prominent at access doors and polling rooms.

Additionally, sites deficient of automatic door openers were provided with staff, identified as greeters, to ensure that electors with accessibility issues could enter the premises and make their way unimpeded to the polling location.

### **Voting at the Polls**

At all Advance Poll locations Touch Screen Voting Tabulators were used to accommodate electors with accessibility issues. These tabulators were extremely advantageous to electors with sight, hearing and mobility impairments.

On Election Day a lower and wider voting table was provided to accommodate wheel chairs, and locations were selected to allow ease of use throughout the poll for wheel chair and scooter users.

Information and direction at each poll was provided in large font and all polling locations had magnifying sheets to assist in reading ballots and instructions.

At all locations, where the elector was unable to leave the vehicle, curb side voting was provided. At all times the privacy and security of how the elector voted was secured.

Any elector identified by the election polling staff, or someone who has identified themselves to the election polling staff with accessibility requirements, was provided with "Front of the Line" service. This allowed any elector with an accessibility requirement to move to the front of the line and through to the voting booth. This was precipitated by the negotiations with D.A.R.T.S., which took into consideration the idling by-law for the City of Hamilton.

### **Training**

All Election Day staff were trained using the City Council approved Customer Service Standard for the City of Hamilton.

This training used the accessible customer service principles which dealt with the following:

- Treating all customers with dignity and respect,
- Flexible service to meet the needs of the individual,
- Putting the person first,
- Asking, "How may I help you",
- Understanding that all methods do not work for everyone,

- Allowing for comments and suggestions on how to provide accessible customer service, and,
- Provide as much notice as possible if there is a disruption in service.

Additionally training involved the following general guidelines for providing services to people with disabilities:

- Never turn a resident away without delivering a service to them. If necessary, provide an alternative way to provide service.
- Treat persons with disabilities with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else.
- Patience, optimism, and willingness to find a way to communicate are your best tools.
- Smile, relax and keep in mind that people with disabilities are just people like you and I.
- Don't make assumptions about the type of disability a person has.
- Be patient.
- If you can't understand what a person is saying, politely ask again.
- Ask before you offer to help, don't just jump in.
- Find a good way to communicate.
- Don't touch service animals without the person's permission.
- Address the person with the disability first not their support person.
- Ask permission prior to touching a wheelchair or a piece of equipment.

### **Transportation**

The Elections Office was able to negotiate a program with D.A.R.T.S. for picking up electors, providing a ride to a polling location, and waiting for the elector to return to the vehicle from voting.

This program is unique to the City of Hamilton and the D.A.R.T.S. team is to be congratulated on providing this service to the disabled electors of Hamilton.

### **Advertising**

The Hamilton Spectator and local community newspapers were provided with advertising dealing with the various aspects of the election process.

These included the following:

- Checking for, and adding, your name to the Voters' List,
- Notification of the Nomination process and the positions available,
- Notification of all Advance Poll dates, locations and times.
- Notification of Election Day
- Notification of Proxy Forms
- Listing of the Municipal Election website.

D.A.R.T.S. also provided information in their newsletter regarding polling locations and the availability of the D.A.R.T.S. Election Day voting service being provided.

The Accessibility Channel was used to disseminate information on Advance Poll and Election Day dates and times.

All of the above noted information was also available on the City of Hamilton Municipal Election website.