



Greater Napanee

GREATER FOR MANY REASONS

2022

**Town of Greater Napanee
Post Municipal Election
Accessibility Report**

January 2023

Introduction

The Town of Greater Napanee was committed to making the 2022 Municipal Election accessible for all electors by identifying, preventing and removing barriers to voting.

A 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan was prepared in advance of the election to ensure that the election process was consistent with principals of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, which are independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.

This post-election accessibility report will evaluate the various initiatives undertaken during the 2022 Municipal Election conducted by the Town of Greater Napanee to identify, remove and prevent barriers for persons with disabilities.

Post-election Reporting

In accordance with section 12.1(3) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, the Clerk shall prepare a report, within 90 days after voting day in a regular election, about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disability needs and make it available to the public.

Internet and Telephone Voting

Internet and telephone voting provided through Intelivote Systems Inc. were the only methods of voting used for the third time for the 2022 municipal election. Voter turnout in 2022 was 37.29%, a decrease from 50.4% in 2018, but slightly above the overall provincial average for the year of 36.30%. It is assumed that the acclamation of the mayoral position and low voter turnout throughout the region were also factors beyond accessibility.

The Intelivote voting system has been created to meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG-2 Level AA), so that persons with disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate and interact with the online voting system. It is compliant with the guidelines of the World Wide Web Consortium website principles, which include organization, functionality and readability of information provided, as well as alternative ways of representing information, such as with audio.

The Intelivote voting system provides voters the ability to vote from their own home. Voting from home facilitates the voting process for persons with disabilities who may have mobility restrictions, visual impairment, and/or have a difficult time with transportation. In addition, persons who have assistive devices set up in their homes can use the devices to assist with casting a ballot privately and independently. Intelivote supports and is compatible with these accessible technologies such as screen reader software.

By allowing persons with disabilities to vote from any location and with the option of two voting methods, there is an increase in the capability for the voter to vote with less assistance. This provides persons with disabilities the same independence and privacy in participating in the election process as other voters. This system also allowed

immunocompromised voters, and other voters with concerns about exposure to the COVID-19 virus, to vote in a contactless manner and reduce their exposure risk.

If persons with disabilities did require assistance in the voting process, trained Election Officials were present at the in-person Voter Help Centres offered by the Town of Greater Napanee, or by telephone or email to provide assistance throughout the voting period.

Comments were received at the Voter Help Centres that this method of voting posed an obstacle to voters who were less comfortable with online voting, had limited internet access, or otherwise preferred paper voting. A breakdown of the age and method of voter participation is attached for reference. Note that the in-person kiosks are included within the numbers for internet voters.

Internet Voting

Eligible electors were able to vote online using a smart phone, tablet, computer, gaming device, and any assistive devices or software, from anywhere that WiFi was available. Access to the voting system was done by an internet address provided in the Voter Information Letter and entering a personal identification number (PIN) and date of birth credentials to access the ballot.

A barrier experienced by some electors was a difficulty with a CAPTCHA challenge, which is used in systems to determine that the user is a human. This challenge required the voter to identify the numbers and letters shown in an image. The small size of the image made it difficult for some voters to see and follow the instructions, and therefore switching to a different voting method (telephone). The CAPTCHA challenge was not required for the registered in person voting kiosks, which helped to reduce the barrier. This will be further reviewed for the next election.

64.6% of the total votes were cast using the internet voting system without voter assistance.

Telephone Voting

Eligible electors were also able to vote using a touch-tone telephone, including cell phones and smart phones, by dialing a toll-free telephone number, entering their personal identification number (PIN) and date of birth credentials to access an audio ballot.

Intelivote's telephone voting system provided the following:

- Clear, plain language.
- Menu options that are easy to follow, advising when to select options and provision of confirmation of the voter's selections.
- Standard volume is used to allow for adjustment dependent of the telephone or device being utilized.
- Prompts are provided if no action is detected.

17.5% of the total votes were cast using the telephone voting system.

Voting Period

Voting was accessible from October 11, 2022 at 10:00 a.m. to October 24, 2022 at 8:00p.m. During this time, assistance was provided by election officials if required through the Voter Help Line, by email or in person.

Election Officials

All election officials were trained in providing accessible customer service.

Election Information and Communications

Election information was communicated using a variety of methods including: web site, social media, newspaper and radio.

Election Officials made electors aware of their availability to provide voting assistance if required during the voting period including being greeters when an elector attended a Voter Help Centre.

No requests for additional alternate methods of providing information were received.

Voter Help Centres

The hours and locations of advance voter help centres was increased from previous elections to support in person voting access. Centres were established in the north and south areas to decrease required driving time for residents living in rural wards. Issues were reported with the hours of these particular polls, and are recommended to be moved earlier in the day in future elections.

17.9% of voters used a voting kiosk at a voter help centre to cast their ballot.

Assisted voting was available at the following early voting centers:

Town of Greater Napanee former Community & Corporate Services Office
12 Market Square, Napanee, ON

- October 11, 2022 – 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- October 12 to 14, 2022 – 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- October 17 to 21, 2022 – 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- October 22, 2022 – 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

South Fredericksburgh Community Centre
2478 County Rd 8, Napanee, ON

- October 18, 2022 – 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Roblin Community Hall
3264 County Rd 41, Roblin, ON

- October 20, 2022 – 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

- Parking: Accessible parking space was available with signage
- Accessible Route: A ramp to the front entrance at 12 Market Square made the centre barrier free for those using a wheelchair, walker or other assistive device or having other mobility issues. Other centers had ground floor entrances that were level with no steps.
- Entry: Accessible door buttons are available.
- Signage: A yellow sign with black lettering was placed in front of the building directing electors to the correct door.

The Strathcona Paper Centre Lafarge Banquet Hall, 16 McPherson Drive, Napanee was open on Election Day, Monday October 24, 2022 from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. for voting assistance

- Parking: Accessible parking spaces are available with signage.
- Accessible Route: The entrance to the banquet hall from the parking lot is level with no steps.
- Entry: Accessible door buttons are available.
- Signage: A yellow sign with black lettering was placed in front of the building directing electors to the front door.

The number of staff available to provide voting assistance was increased from 2018 based on prior accessibility reports to better accommodate those electors who attend the voter help centre to vote in person. No delays were reported at the in-person voting centres.

On election day, Election Officials visited the following sites, consisting of long-term care facilities, the hospital and a retirement residence, to set-up on-site voting kiosks for the residents of the facilities only:

- The John M. Parrott Centre
- Village Green
- Friendly Manor Nursing Home
- Lennox & Addington County General Hospital
- The Riverine Retirement Residence

Other Assistive Devices

- Touch screen iPads and styluses were used for voting in the Voter Help Centres for voting.
- Magnifying sheets were available at all in-person Voter Help Centres for those persons with visual impairment.

- 'Find my Ward' interactive map was available on the Town's web site for electors to type in their address and be provided with their ward and candidate information.
- 'Am I on the Voters List' interactive tool was available on the Town's website to allow electors to look up their own voting information and request incorrect information to be updated through a virtual process.
- Seating areas were provided for electors at Voter Help Centres.

Other Obstacles

Once again, the quality and accuracy of the Voters List was noted as a barrier in making voting accessible. Voters who were not on the list did not automatically receive their voting credentials. While an online voter registration portal was provided for 2022, to allow a contactless option, the vast majority of voter registrations and amendments were made in person at a Voter Help Centre.

While there were no provincial COVID-19 restrictions in place at the time of the election, masks and hand sanitizer were made available to voters, and efforts were made to allow voters to keep their distance from each other.

Feedback

Public feedback about the manner in which election services were provided to persons with accessible needs may be submitted to the Town Clerk:

Telephone: 613-354-3351, Ext. 2199

Email: jwalters@greaternapanee.com

In Person: 99 Advance Ave, Napanee

Mail: 99-A Advance Ave, Napanee, ON K7R 3Y5

Web site: Report an Issue Form - www.greaternapanee.com

Any feedback received will be used to improve service delivery of future municipal elections.