



MERRICKVILLE-WOLFORD
Jewel of the Rideau

POST- ELECTION ACCESSIBILITY REPORT

2022 Municipal and School Board Elections

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide the public with the processes that were followed for the duration of the 2022 Municipal Election period in the Village of Merrickville-Wolford, and to outline the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

Background

In Section 12.1(3) in the *Municipal Elections Act*, it states the following:

12.1 (3) Within 90 days after voting day in a regular election, the clerk shall prepare a report about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities and shall make the report available to the public.

There are no financial implications associated with the matters addressed in this report.

Analysis

Staff endeavoured to make the 2022 Municipal and School Board Elections accessible and inclusive. Leading up to the election, the Village of Merrickville-Wolford Election Accessibility Plan was completed and was posted on the Village election website, and was available to be provided upon request. This plan was created to highlight specific accessibility requirements for election purposes and identified measures that the Village took to ensure the election was accessible to all residents.

Previous site inspections and/or reviews were conducted in order to choose the most accessible location to host a paper ballot polling station on voting day. It was decided that the Merrickville Community Centre provided the most barrier-free location, as similar to the 2018 election, due to its large size and wheelchair accessibility. The parking lot has an accessible parking spot near the entrance, complete with painted pavement and parking signage for those electors who required accessible parking.

Further signage was provided on voting day to identify the voting place. There were two large signs located at both the North and South ends of the Community Centre which identified it as the voting place. The size, colour and font of these signs were taken into account at the time of design to ensure accessibility was considered.

The size, colour and font of the paper ballots themselves were also taken into consideration with a view to maximize accessibility. It was decided to use a colour-

coded ballot system, with each race having a different coloured ballot, with black printing to assist with any sight disabilities.

The Village utilized software provided by Datafix, known as VoterView, to manage and put together the early versions of the Voters' List to ensure that residents had an outlet to amend and update their address information and to confirm if they were on the Voters' List. Residents had the option to go on to www.voterlookup.ca to update and change their information, which was provided to VoterView by MPAC. Voter information letters were then sent directly to eligible electors in the mail. Unfortunately, there were some errors in the Voters' List that staff incurred, but these changes were able to be rectified through the EL15 election form to make an amendment to the Voters' List, both prior to the election and on Voting Day. Staff were available leading up to the election at the Municipal Office to provide voter information letters to those who did not receive their letters in the mail or for those who had to be added to the Voters' List.

Further to providing paper ballots on voting day, an advanced voting period was held from October 17th at 10:00 a.m. until the close of voting at 8:00 p.m. on October 24th through online and telephone voting methods. These methods were compliant with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Through the implementation of these methods, eligible electors with limited mobility were provided with various options which allowed them to vote from the comfort of their own residence. In the event an elector did not have access to a phone or computer during the advanced voting period, the paper ballot voting in-person option was made available on October 24th from 10:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m.

To ensure further accessibility, advanced polls were held on Wednesday, October 19th and Thursday, October 20th at Rosebridge Manor and Hilltop Manor, respectively. This ensured that residents at both facilities had the opportunity to vote, should they so choose. The Deputy Returning Officer also provided an opportunity for residents at both locations to vote on Election Day. Staff would like to extend their appreciation to the staff at both facilities for their efforts and assistance in arranging for these advanced polls to take place, with the added obstacle of COVID-19 measures still being in place.

Election Officials were equipped with Oral Oaths of Friends of Electors and Oral Oaths of Interpreters should the need to assist an elector with casting their vote arise. The oaths included a declaration of secrecy and honesty in correctly marking a ballot in compliance with the wishes of the elector.

All required information was placed on the Village's Election website, on social media, and was available at the Municipal Office. Certified copies of the Official List of Candidates following the nomination period and the certified election results were posted on the website, as well as the bulletin board at the Municipal Office.

Conclusion

Staff worked diligently in the months leading up to the election to ensure that all eligible electors had the opportunity to place their votes and participate in the voting process. By providing various voting methods – paper ballots, online, and by telephone – the municipality had a 53% participation rate in the election. According to the AMO municipal election statistics, there were 417 municipalities reporting, and there was on average a 36.3% voter participation rate.

The processes and practices used in the 2022 election will be noted for the next election in 2026 to maintain high voter participation and accessibility for electors. Staff have identified areas of improvement, including but not limited to:

- improved communication to residents on election updates and resources for voting;
- improvements to the process of making changes to the Voters' List; and
- promotion of telephone and internet voting and help to better understand the process for these voting methods.

Feedback from the electorate is welcomed and encouraged by staff to continue removing and preventing barriers for those electors and candidates that have disabilities, in order to ensure that the voting process continues to be accessible.

To provide any feedback, please send it:

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