

RICHMOND HILL

VOTES

2020 School Board By-election Accessibility Plan

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Introduction

The 2020 School Board By-election Accessibility Plan reaffirms the City's commitment to provide all candidates and voters with the equal opportunity to participate in the electoral process with dignity and independence. The Plan's focus is to establish objectives and actions that will identify and eliminate barriers to accessibility. Ultimately, the goal is to create a positive voting experience and ensure that the By-election is accessible to everyone.

References

1) Richmond Hill's Internet Voting Procedures – Sections 3, 16, and 18

The City's commitment to accessibility is described in Section 3.3 of the Internet Voting Procedures, "Application of Procedures." Section 18 of the Internet Voting Procedures, "Accessibility," describes the accessibility standards met by the Internet Voting System. Section 16 of the Internet Voting Procedures, "Voter Assistance Centres," provides procedures for in-person assistance for individuals who require it, including the designation of one person who is not an Election Official to provide any support they might require. The person so designated will be required to take an oath for this purpose.

2) Richmond Hill's Accessibility Policy

This policy establishes the overarching framework to guide the City of Richmond Hill's compliance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, S.O. 2005, c. 11* (AODA) for the City of Richmond Hill. The City is committed to identifying and eliminating barriers to accessibility in the provision of goods and services that are accessible to everyone, and which are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of all people.

3) Accessible Customer Service Procedures

Our Accessible Customer Service Procedures reaffirm Richmond Hill's commitment to providing barrier-free goods and services. It supports the City's Accessibility Policy and outlines detailed processes and accommodations pursuant to the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service.

4) Municipal Elections Act, 1996 – Sections 12.1

The Clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of voters and candidates with disabilities. In addition, the Clerk shall prepare a plan regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect voters and candidates with disabilities and shall make the plan available to the public before voting day in a regular election. While not specifically required for a By-election, the Clerk has prepared this plan given the City's commitment to accessibility.

5) Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, S.O. 2005, c. 11* (AODA), aims to identify, remove, and prevent barriers for people with disabilities. The AODA is made up of five standards: Information & Communications, Employment, Public Spaces, Transportation, and Customer Service. The legislation and standards apply to all levels of government, nonprofits, and private sector businesses in Ontario.

6) Definition of Disability

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* defines "disability" as follows:

- (a) Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
- (b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- (c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- (d) a mental disorder, or
- (e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

Feedback

The City Clerk welcomes feedback to identify areas of improvement for the delivery of accessible municipal elections. Please feel free to contact us.

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Objectives

1) Review and Identify Barriers to Accessibility

Richmond Hill will review By-election processes to identify barriers and determine actions that can remove them.

Planned Initiatives	Planned Actions
Internal staff consultation and review	Staff in the Office of the Clerk responsible for the City's accessibility policies will provide advice on how to improve accessibility for the by-election.
Post-election accessibility report	Within 90 days after voting day, the Clerk will prepare a report about how Richmond Hill identified, removed and prevented barriers for voters and candidates with disabilities. The report will be made public and available on Richmond Hill's website.

2) Use Information & Communications to Remove Barriers

We will ensure information and communications for candidates and voters are accessible and available in alternative formats.

Planned Initiatives	Planned Actions
Develop an accessible and informative election website – Richmondhill.ca/RHVotes	<p>The elections website will be in compliance with WCAG 2.0 Level AA. The City will strive to ensure all important election information is posted to the website in an accessible format.</p> <p>The City will provide BrowseAloud, a free web page reader on the election website to assist individuals who have difficulty reading online.</p> <p>An opportunity to provide feedback on the website will be provided.</p>
Provide training, documents and supplementary information in alternative formats and through various channels	The Candidate Information Package, AMCTO's Candidate's Guide to Accessible Elections, and other associated information will be provided in various formats as needed.
Provide documents and information in alternative formats upon request	In cases where individuals require information in a format that has not been made available, the City will receive requests for alternative formats and consult with the individuals making the request in order to provide information in a suitable format.

3) Ensure Voter Assistance Centres are Accessible

Ensure Voter Assistance Centres and facilities are physically accessible.

Planned Initiatives	Planned Actions
Voter Assistance Centre inspections	<p>The City will only use fully accessible municipal facilities that were identified in the 2018 municipal elections as Voter Assistance Centres.</p> <p>Election staff will assess physical accessibility of Voter Assistance Centres using inspection criteria and reports from the 2018 municipal elections.</p> <p>Election officials will also perform a final accessibility check on the first day that Voter Assistance Centres are open.</p>
Accessible Candidate Nominations	<p>Any Candidate Nomination will occur in an accessible location. Additional accommodations will be available upon request.</p>
Flexible voting requirements – Continuous voting	<p>During continuous voting, voters will be able to cast their ballot from any location using any internet connected device with compatible internet browsing capabilities. This will provide significant flexibility for all voters and especially voters with physical disabilities. Continuous voting will begin at 10 a.m. on October 14, 2020, and will end at 8 p.m. on October 19, 2020.</p>

Planned Initiatives	Planned Actions
Accessible signage at Voter Assistant Centres	Staff will ensure that signage is placed in the appropriate areas to guide voters to the voting place. Signage will be accessible, follow guidelines to accessible signage, and will be easy to read and understand. Where possible, accessible signage will indicate that the accessible entrance is the same as the main entrance.
Accessible notification process	If applicable, Richmond Hill will post notifications regarding Voter Assistance Centre location changes, emergencies, and other information on the election website and social media.

4) Ensure Voting is Accessible

We will ensure all voters have the equal opportunity to vote, with integrity and as independently as possible

Planned Initiatives	Planned Actions
Provide alternative voting methods (Internet Voting)	<p>The 2020 By-election will be conducted using Internet Voting. Internet Voting allows all eligible voters, including those with disabilities, to vote on any computer or smart phone from anywhere during the continuous voting period.</p> <p>The Internet Voting System will meet WCAG 2.0 Level AA accessibility standards. Voters with disabilities can use various accessibility features and tools on their internet enabled computers and devices to vote independently.</p> <p>Eligible Voters can receive additional support in the use of the Internet Voting System by attending a fully accessible Voter Assistance Centre.</p>
Permit support persons and service animals in Voter Assistance Centres	<p>Any person with a disability accompanied by a support person or service animal may enter any Voter Assistance Centre with their support person or service animal.</p>

Planned Initiatives	Planned Actions
Schedule Continuous voting	Continuous voting will be scheduled to allow more flexibility for those that cannot vote during regular business hours on Voting Day. Continuous voting will be available 24 hours a day beginning at 10 a.m. on October 14, 2020 and ending at 8 p.m. on October 19, 2020. Voter Assistance Centres will offer a range of hours of operation including daytime, evenings, and weekends.
Provide other voting opportunities for seniors and persons with disabilities	<p>Having regards for the COVID-19 pandemic, wherever possible, Voter Assistance Centres will be provided to voters on premises of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retirement homes where 50 or more beds are occupied; • Institutions where 20 or more beds are occupied by persons with disabilities or chronic illness. <p>If a Voter Assistance Centre is not possible due to COVID-19, the Clerk will ensure that an affected facility has the correct technology to use the Internet Voting System.</p>

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Planned Initiatives	Planned Actions
Voter lookup	The City will use an electronic voters' list management service to allow residents to check if they are on the voters' list, add their name if they are not, and complete or amend their information if required. The voters' list service will be embedded on the City's website and can be found under Voter Registration at Richmondhill.ca/RHVotes . Voters may also receive assistance with these services by calling the Voter Assistance Helpline at 905-771-5555.

5) Provide Accessibility Training

Richmond Hill will ensure elections officials receive or, in the case of municipal staff, have previously received, training on AODA legislation and standards, which includes training on providing accessible customer service.

Planned Initiatives	Planned Actions
Provide candidates with information on how to make their campaigns more accessible	Candidates will be provided with a copy of AMCTO's "Candidate's Guide to Accessible Elections." Links to Ontario government resources on accessibility will be shared under the Elections Resources section of the City's election website at RichmondHill.ca/RHVotes .
Develop accessibility training for election staff	<p>All City Staff are required to take accessibility training as part of their onboarding requirements. The Office of the Clerk will ensure that all City Staff appointed as election officials have completed this training.</p> <p>Richmond Hill will ensure that any temporary election workers have or receive appropriate accessibility training.</p>