The TOWNSHIP of
NORTH DUMFRIES

Report No. CLK-25-2018

GOVERNANCE & PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE
December 10, 2018

2018 ELECTION EVALUATION & ACCESSIBILITY REPORT

RECOMMENDATION

The Clerk recommends:

> **1. THAT Report CLK-25-2017 be received.**

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the 2018 municipal elections held on October 22, 2018, to report on the accessibility initiatives taken throughout the election process and to make this report publicly available. The submission of this report is a requirement of the *Municipal Elections Act*.

2. BACKGROUND

The 2018 municipal election was held on October 22, 2018. For the 2018 municipal election, Council opted to vote exclusively by internet and telephone. The internet and telephone voting method was authorized by By-law 2844-17, which was passed on May 1, 2017.

Section 12.1 (3) of the *Municipal Elections Act* requires the Clerk to prepare a report within 90 days after Voting Day about the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers affecting electors and candidates with disabilities and to make the report available to the public

In accordance with section 12.1(2) of the *Municipal Elections Act*, the Clerk prepared a plan prior to Voting Day regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities and to make the plan available to the public. The plan was posted to the Township website for viewing and was also incorporated into the Election Procedures that were provided to all candidates upon filing their Nomination Papers with the Clerk.

3. OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS

Municipal elections are the foundation of the local democratic process and are held every four years in accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act.* The Clerk for the Township of North Dumfries administers the election for the positions of Mayor and Council, in addition to administering elections for school board trustee(s) in all four of the local school boards. The Clerk of the Region of Waterloo administers the nomination process for the office of Regional Chair and provides candidate information to the Township Clerk for voting purposes.

Election Results

Election results were generated by the Clerk and Auditor shortly after 8:15 p.m. on October 22nd. Results were communicated to all candidates by telephone around 8:30 p.m. and subsequently shared publicly on the Township website.

The Official election results were certified by the Clerk on October 23, 2018 and posted to the website, as well as shared with the Region of Waterloo Clerk for the Regional Chair position, City of Cambridge Clerk for the English Public and English Catholic School Board Trustee position (Waterloo Region District School Board and Waterloo Catholic District School Board), and the City of London Clerk for the French Public-School Board Trustee position (Conseil Scolaire Viamonde).

Voter Turnout

The voter turnout in North Dumfries for the 2018 municipal election was 37.6%, which was consistent with the Provincial average. North Dumfries posted one of the highest voter turnouts of the seven (7) area municipalities within Waterloo Region. Voter turnout for the 2014 municipal election was 39.6%. A significant factor in voter turnout is an electorate who is engaged with the issues and with the candidates. Staff do not feel that the voting method is the sole reason for the decrease in the voter turnout.

Voter Demographics

Voter turnout information for age and gender are shown in the tables below. Election research suggests the voting method has little impact on voter demographics; if a person is going to vote, they will generally use whatever voting method is provided.

Age Range	Voter Turnout
18-29	21.1%
30-44	26.6%
45-59	43.8%

Gender	Voter Turnout
Female	39.2%
Male	36.3%

Age Range	Voter Turnout
60-74	55.7%
75-89	54.4%
90+	36.2%

| Gender	Voter Turnout

Voters between 60-74 years old had the highest turnout at 55.7%, followed closely by voters aged 75-89. Turnout was lowest among voters aged 18-29 with only 21.1% turnout. Turnout among female and male voters was very similar, with slightly more women voting than men. Demographic information for voters was not available from previous elections.

Voting Patterns

The below table provides a breakdown of the voter turnout in each ward and the percentage of electors who voted using each method. The dominate voting method in each ward was internet voting. Township wide, 83.6% of those who cast their ballot did so using the internet and 16.4% used the telephone.

Ward	Voter Turnout	Voted Using Internet	Voted Using Telephone
1	37.9%	85.5%	14.5%
2	42.9%	88.8%	11.2%
3	36.7%	80.1%	19.9%
4	33.5%	79.2%	20.8%

The voting period for the 2018 municipal election opened at 10:00 a.m. on October 9th and closed at 8:00 p.m. on October 22nd. This allowed electors to vote at any time during this period, from any location using the internet or telephone. The below figure shows the number of electors who voted on each day of the voting period used. Many electors took advantage of the two-week voting period (57.4% voted in advance of Election Day), however, the Township still experienced a large number of electors (42.6%) who cast their ballot on Election Day.

Vote Dates and Method Used
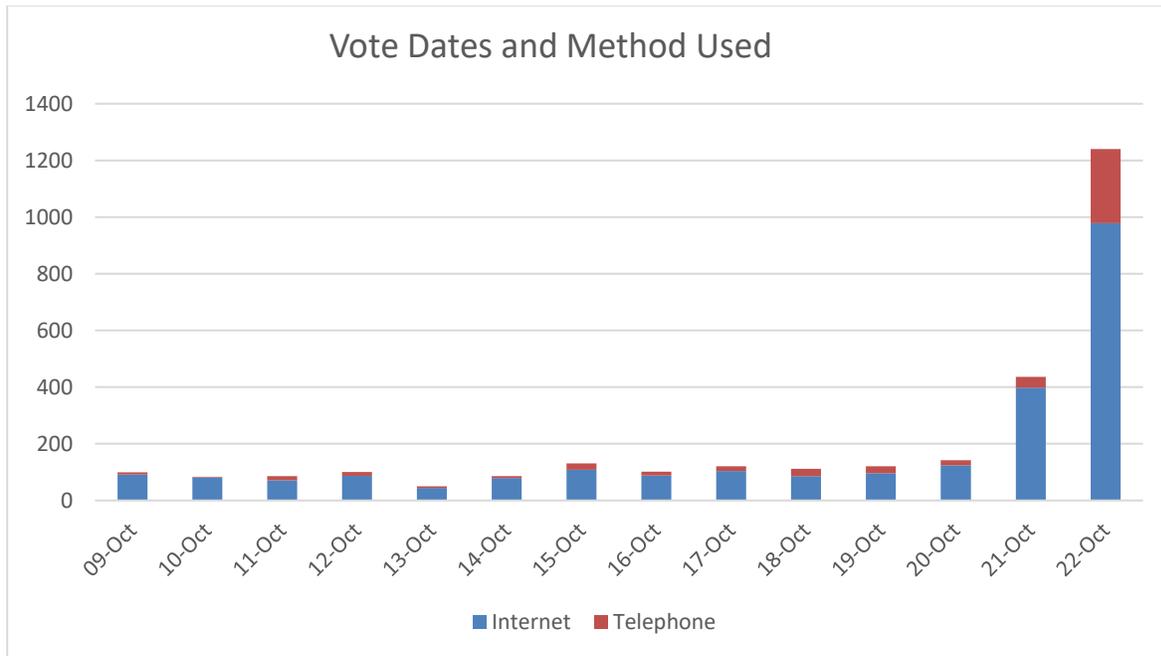
From October 9th to October 22nd, the Township offered Voter Help Centre locations and extended hours to accommodate those who were unable to make office hours, and those who geographically lived in a portion of the Township that was less conveniently located in relation to the North Dumfries Community Complex (NDCC). Staff helped residents who required assistance voting and provided other election services, such as adding to or amending the Voters' List and answering election-related questions. The locations were chosen to be convenient for voters and to help promote the election. The Voter Help Centre at the Clyde-Scott Women's Institute was well attended. Of the 12 hours scheduled there, approximately 40 people attended. The locations and hours of the Voter Help Centres was as follows:

Location	**Dates and Times**
North Dumfries Community Complex 2958 Greenfield Road, Ayr, ON	October 9 – 12: 8:30 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. October 13 – 14: 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. October 15 – 19: 8:30 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. October 20 – 21: 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. October 22, 2018: 8:30 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Clyde-Scott Women's Institute 1459 Sheffield Road, Cambridge, ON	October 9: 5:00 – 8:00 p.m. October 16: 5:00 – 8:00 p.m. October 20: 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Public Response

The Township received mixed responses pertaining to the voting methods. Feedback was received by email, verbally at Voter Help Centres, phone, social media, and those who spoke directly with the Mayor and/or their Ward Councillor. The common feedback that staff received can be summarized as follows:

- Online voting was easy to use and very user friendly.
- Was fast to vote – saved a lot of time not having to go to a polling station.
- Very progressive voting method – this is the way of the future.
- Telephone voting voice was difficult to understand/hear (static, garbled recording)
- I want to mark my ballot and put it in a box.
- Concerns about multiple Voter Instruction Letters (VIL) sent to voters.
- Concerns about fraud.
- I was on the Voters' List for the Provincial election, why am I not on the Voters' List for the municipal election?
- Why do I have to come to the Township office to be added to the Voters' List or correct my birthdate to receive a new VIL? Defeats the purpose of voting from home and not having to go anywhere to vote.
- Would love to be able to use this voting method for the provincial and federal elections.
- Township residents who don't have internet access and utilize a rotary dial phone unable to vote unless they attended a Voter Help Centre.
- Friendly staff available at the Voter Help Centre's to assist.

Staff feel the feedback received is beneficial for planning for the 2022 municipal election and will be assessed in the context of technology advances, potential changes in Provincial legislation, and, outcomes of future Federal or other elections. It is also fair to note that since this was the first time using a new voting method that many individuals were unfamiliar with using it, and with change there is always an adjustment period.

Accessibility Reporting

i) Election Accessibility Plan

The Township established an Election Accessibility Plan that was reviewed by the Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee (GRAAC). Staff followed and adhered to the Plan throughout the election process.

This report (and attachment 1) constitutes the Post-Election Accessibility Report required by the plan and section 12.1 of the *Municipal Elections Act.*

Many electors liked not having to travel to a polling station to vote, which would have greatly improved accessibility for voters with accessibility concerns.

ii) Election Communications

There were several comments related to communications which could be linked to accessibility for all voters:

- it was difficult to input the voting website URL exactly as written;
- it was hard to understand the recorded voice on the phone system;
- several electors visited the North Dumfries Community Complex on Election Day thinking it was a polling station.

The issue of the voice commands on the telephone voting system represents an area where improvement is warranted. Clear and concise voice commands are imperative to ensure that all participants can be properly informed when voting. If telephone voting is pursued in the future, this aspect needs to be bolstered and reflected in any bid document in terms of specifications and expectations.

Staff spent considerable effort on communications, but are aware that this is an area that is constantly evolving and could always be further improved. There were no other comments from voters with accessibility concerns about accessing the system. Clerk's staff will continue to accept feedback about election accessibility.

In support of the 2018 Municipal Election, staff from the Township of North Dumfries joined representatives from all municipalities in Waterloo Region, in joint effort to prepare communications materials to best inform the public of Waterloo Region as a whole about the election. Joint communications projects included:

- the creation of posters, social media graphics, and promotional videos;
- paid ads in the Waterloo Region Record newspaper and 570 radio News;
- three paid ads a day for eight days before the election on a group of radio stations including 91.5 the Beat and Chym FM;
- paid online ads through the Weather Network Mobile App which were seen by 219,583 individuals and clicked on by 392 times;
- a joint website www.wrvotes.ca which directed visitors to their municipality's website for election information; and
- a Regional float in the 2018 Oktoberfest parade promoting the municipal election, which had crowds of roughly 150,000 people.

North Dumfries also undertook Township-only communications efforts to complement the above area wide measures. The local initiatives included attending local events, such as the Ayr Paris Band concerts in Centennial Park on July 4th and August 8th to promote the upcoming election. Township staff also attended two seniors' events, one at North Dumfries Community Complex Seniors' Room on July 16th and the other at Kirkwood Apartments on July 19th to discuss the voting methods, the upcoming election, and answer any questions that residents may have had.

A primary means of communication with voters was the Township's website, which recorded roughly 320 people visiting the election page on the Township website in the month of September and 1,458 people in October. The Township also utilized the Township Facebook and Twitter pages for posting videos, information and messaging to communicate information and encourage electors to vote. The "I Will Vote" videos posted on Facebook were very well received, with the first video posted on September 4th reaching over 1,171 people and received close to 500 views.

Township staff conducted several interviews, shared numerous media releases about the election, and the Township was featured in numerous print and online articles from the CBC Kitchener, Global News, Cambridge Times, The Record, Rogers TV, CTV Kitchener and the Ayr News. The Township paid for six ads to feature election information in the Cambridge Times and the Ayr News.

The Township prepared posters and incorporated elections information into the tax insert mail out that occurred in early summer, which were circulated throughout the community. VoterLookUp posters were distributed to the North Dumfries Community Complex / Langs, Foodland, library, pharmacy, convenience store, preschool, and the Clyde Scott Women's Institute. Additional signage, including three retractable banners were also used to promote the voting methods, Voter Help Centres hours and locations, and the election in general. Candidates' campaign signs also heighten awareness of the election.

Through these efforts, staff tried various methods to reach as many voters as possible to ensure the public was properly informed about the upcoming election. Staff recognize that informing an electorate about a new voting method, the voting dates, and encouraging voting can always be improved.

In addition to the extensive communication efforts taken by staff to remove and prevent barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities, staff also ensured election information for candidates and electors were available in alternate formats upon request.

North Dumfries Township Clerk's staff were assisted by other area Clerks' and municipal staff with communications, advice, legislative interpretation, policy development, and staffing Voter Help Centres.

4.   FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

5.   ATTACHMENTS

1. 2018 Election – Accessibility Report.

Report No. CLK-25-2018
December 10, 2018

For further information on the contents of this Report, please contact Ashley Sage, Clerk, at 519-632-8800 ext. 122 or via email at asage@northdumfries.ca**.**

Report Prepared and Respectfully
Submitted By:

Ashley Sage

Ashley Sage,
Clerk

Report Reviewed By:

Andrew McNeely,
Chief Administrative Officer

2018 MUNICIPAL ELECTION – ACCESSIBILITY REPORT

Purpose of Report

The following represents the report to Council as required by Section 12.1 of the *Municipal Elections Act* regarding the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

Identification of Barriers

The following actions were taken to identify barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities:

1. Review available information from the 2014 election and improve upon what was previously done.

2. Consult with the Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee (GRAAC) early for feedback on potential barriers and methods to overcome these barriers.

3. Collaborate with individuals and groups to increase understanding of providing an accessible election and encourage feedback.

Removal and Prevention of Barriers

Consultation
1. Review comments from electors, candidates, and election workers regarding the 2014 election.
2. Consult with Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee (GRAAC) for feedback.
3. Collaborate with individuals who expressed accessibility concerns to staff and senior groups to increase understanding of providing an accessible election and encourage feedback on this plan.

Communication
1. Provide election information in an accessible format and provide alterative formats upon request and free of charge.
2. Provide election information that is informative, clear, and easy to understand.
3. A section of the Township's election website was exclusively dedicated to accessibility.
4. The Township's election website received continuous updates before and throughout the 2018 election.
5. Ensuring web pages were W3C Consortium WCAG 2.0 Level AA Compliant.
6. Collaborate with senior groups to help disseminate election information through the Township's website, social media, etc.

Candidates
1. Provide candidates with election information on how to make their campaigns accessible and election information that is accessible.
2. Candidate information session(s) were held in an accessible location.
3. Provided alternative formats for information regarding a candidates' campaign available upon request.
4. Provide candidates with accessible resources upon request.

Voter Help Centres
1. Ensured Voter Help Centre Locations had an accessible entrance for those coming and going from the building.
2. Ensured Voter Help Centres had adequate signage for easy navigation.
3. Ensured main entrance to Voter Help Centres was easily accessible.

Voting Process
1. Internet and telephone voting allowed electors to cast their ballot from anywhere with an internet connection or telephone, whether the elector is coping with an illness, working days or nights, has a disability or had trouble travelling.
2. Internet and telephone voting method allows electors to vote using accessibility features like screen magnifiers, brightness or high contrast views, screen readers, TTY telephone assistance or any other assistive device they may use at home.
3. Telephone voting method allows electors to service on all types of touch tone phone and wireless devices, use plain language, has menu options that are easy to follow advising them to select options/provisions of confirmation of the voters' selection and offers standard volume that can be adjusted depending on the telephone or device being utilized.
4. Internet voting method met 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.
5. Internet voting method allowed electors to use web translation software on their browser if they are more comfortable reading a different language.
6. Internet and telephone voting meant travelling to a poll was not necessary, but Voter Help Centers were available to assist voters if required.
7. Election staff was trained to assist voters with a disability upon request.
8. Notepads/paper was available to increase communication to assist electors who were hard of hearing or deafened if required.
9. Chairs or stools were available at Voter Help Centers for electors waiting in line who could not stand for a prolonged period.

Training of Election Officials
1. Election staff was trained on the accessible voting options and processes.
2. Election staff was trained on assisting electors with a disability upon request.
3. Election staff was trained not to restrict service persons, or animals who are assisting a person with a disability.

4. Election staff were provided accommodations upon request to ensure training is accessible to all election workers.

In conclusion, Township of North Dumfries staff believe that the needs of the electors and candidates with disabilities were well addressed for the 2018 Municipal Election utilizing the above-noted measures and voting methods.

A frequent concern that staff noted for the 2022 municipal election was the telephone voting recorded voice was difficult to understand/hear (static, garbled recording) for electors who were older, or individuals that had a hearing impairment. Overall though, staff would recommend utilizing the above accessibility initiatives in the 2022 Municipal and School Board Election. Clerk's staff will continue to accept and encourage feedback and input regarding election accessibility, as to continue to improve processes and procedures for the 2022 election.