



Corporation of the Municipality of Temagami

Report No.
2010-16

File No.

Subject:	Identification and Removal of Barriers to Accessibility in the 2010 Municipal Election.
Agenda Date:	November 4, 2010
Attachments:	

RECOMMENDATION - That Council consider the following motion:

WHEREAS the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, as amended, requires in section 12.2 that a clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall, within 90 days after voting day, submit a report to council about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect individuals with disabilities, concerning that election; and

WHEREAS the Clerk of the Municipality of Temagami has submitted Report 2010-16 concerning the identification, removal and prevention of barriers for the October 25, 2010 municipal election;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT: Council receive Report 2010-16.

BACKGROUND

Barriers to accessibility can be physical, such as the need to negotiate steps to enter a building; doorways that are too narrow to allow access for a person using a wheelchair or other mobility device; and insufficient lighting to allow for safe access to those with limited vision. They also include barriers to communication, whether due to vision or hearing impairments or learning disabilities.

ANALYSIS

Identification of Barriers

In order to identify barriers, I reviewed the steps involved in the voting process to ensure the information and forms required were accessible.

Prior to Voting Day, I reviewed the physical location to be used for the Voting Place on October 25th (the Public Library/Employment Resource Centre). There were several barriers noted.

1. The main entrance to the Public Library/Employment Resource Centre was not sufficiently wide to meet accessibility standards.
2. The outdoor lighting was insufficient after dark.
3. The accessible parking space provided at the Welcome Centre is on the upper level and there was no accessible parking space designated in the lower parking lot, which would be used for the voting place.

In addition, upon receipt of the proofs of the ballots to be printed by Canada Post, I became aware that the font size that they were using was small, which was a barrier for those with visual impairments, and that this was something that we were unable to change.

Removal and Prevention of Barriers:

Our accessible municipal website was used to provide information to both candidates and electors, including general information for candidates and voters as well as the nomination form and form EL15, required to add, change or delete information on the voters list. By providing this information on our website, it prevented the need for individuals to travel to or call the municipal office to obtain this

information or forms. Additionally, visually impaired persons who use a screen reader would be able to hear the posted information.

The Municipality of Temagami used the Vote By Mail alternate voting method, which also helped to prevent and eliminate barriers. Voting by mail allowed electors to vote from their own home, without being required to attend the voting place in person. This removed any physical barriers and allowed persons in need of assistance from a support person to do so at their own convenience. It also allowed persons to read the instructions and fill out the ballot at their own pace, which would address difficulties encountered by persons with learning disabilities who would require additional time to fill out their ballot. Person's requiring a variety of personal assistive devices would be able to use their own assistive devices in the comfort of their home environment, including magnifying devices to enable them to read the small font used for the Vote By Mail kits.

The barriers at the Voting Place were addressed in the following ways:

1. Instead of the main doors to the facility, we used the waterfront door, which meets the width requirements and has a level threshold. This doorway is easily accessed from the parking lot by a wide, interlocking brick walkway that is flat, level and easy to transverse.
2. A temporary accessible parking space was designated and signed at the corner of the lower parking lot closest to this entrance.
3. We enhanced the outdoor lighting in two ways. Although the lighting directly above the doorway was sufficient, there was insufficient outdoor lighting at the corner beneath the clock tower and at the steps from the upper level of the building to the lower parking lot. We used a portable halogen light stand placed on the balcony at the corner to shine down on the parking lot and walkway below. At the steps, there is no electrical power source to install lighting, so our Public Works Department installed solar powered floodlights along both flights of steps.
4. I addressed the issue of the smaller font size on the ballots in two ways. I provided a magnifying sheet in the voting booth to be used as required by electors. I posted a greatly enlarged copy of the ballot on the inside of the voting booth for reference by electors.
5. Blank paper was also provided in case the election officials needed to communicate in writing with electors who are hearing impaired.

In addition, I ensured that the Deputy Returning Officer and Election Official who worked at the Voting Place were provided with our Municipal Accessible Customer Service Policy and Procedure and also trained in providing Accessible Customer Service. A notice concerning Accessible Customer Service procedures and feedback was posted in the Voting Place and Feedback Forms were available on site.

FINANCIAL/STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

This item has been approved in the current budget: Yes No N/A

This item is within the approved budgeted amount: Yes No N/A

**Prepared and
submitted by:**

Reviewed by:

**Elaine Gunnell
Municipal Clerk**

**Patrick Cormier
CAO**