



# **2010 Municipal Election**

## **ACTION PLAN**

### **Accessibility & Disability Issues**

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2010 Municipal Election Office

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# MANDATE

It is the goal of the City of Kingston's Election Team to ensure that electors' with a disability are provided with the opportunity to vote as independently as is possible in the 2010 Municipal Election.

# OVERVIEW

In 2006 the City of Kingston election team was very progressive and was recognized for the actions taken to ensure that the election was accessible.

In conducting the 2010 Municipal Election, the City of Kingston is faced with many challenges and opportunities. The City is a historic City and many of the buildings are older. The historic character and architecture of these buildings create challenges in finding voting locations that are accessible, particularly when trying to find two or three in each of the 26 polls in the 12 Districts. Our beautiful old churches and service buildings in many cases have been adapted to meet the needs of persons with disabilities; however, some have not advanced to the desired level of accessibility that allows for the conduct of the municipal election.

Many of our schools are also housed in older buildings. The newest school in Kingston was built at least 15 years ago. The School Boards continue to adapt their buildings to meet accessibility needs as they are able or required. School board staff worked with election office staff in their search for accessible accommodations.

Another consideration for the election staff is the use of schools during the time when students are present. In 2006, significant concern was expressed to the City Clerk about using schools while students were present. For 2010, School Boards have declared Final Voting Day as a P.A.Day and therefore no students will be present in the schools. The first Advance Voting Day has been scheduled on a Saturday when students will not be present. Only one school location is being used on the second Advance Voting Day as a voting location.

Staff visited over 60 locations in an attempt to satisfy as many accessibility challenges as was possible. Sites have been selected that allows for access to electors with disabilities. This, together with the use of new technology will significantly enhance the accessibility of the 2010 election.

# OVERVIEW OF ELECTION PROCESS

The City of Kingston is comprised of 12 Electoral Districts.

1 – Countryside	2 - Loyalist-Cataraqi
3 - Collins-Bayridge	4 - Lakeside
5 – Portsmouth	6 - Trillium
7 – Cataraqi	8 - Kingscourt-Strathcona
9 – Williamsville	10 - Sydenham
11 - King's Town	12 - Pittsburgh

## VOTING DAYS

**Two Advance Voting Days are being held on:**  
Saturday, October 16, 2010 (10:00 am to 8:00 pm) and  
Wednesday, October 20, 2010 (10:00 am to 8:00 pm)

### **FINAL VOTING DAY is:**

Monday, October 25, 2010  
10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

# POLL INFORMATION

The City of Kingston is divided into geographic areas referred to as Districts. Three Polls are established for two of these Districts due to their size. Two Polls are provided for the other 10 Districts. This results in 26 Polls operating on Final Voting Day.

Advance voting days are scheduled for Saturday, October 16, 2010 and Wednesday, October 20, 2010. A total of 24 voting locations will be available on these two dates, and residents in a District will be able to vote in either poll in their District during these days. Touch screens will be available for electors with visual impairments. These screens allow electors to use head phones and listen to the list of candidates. The vote is cast on a standard keypad. Traditional ballots will be available for those electors who wish to use them. These will be fed through a poll count tabulator. Votes cast on both machines are stored on a memory card until close of polls on Final Voting Day.

In addition to the 26 polls, on Final Voting Day, legislation requires that polls be provided on the premises of institutions as described hereunder:

- a) an institution in which 20 or more beds are occupied by persons who are disabled, chronically ill or infirm;
- b) a retirement home in which 50 or more beds are occupied.

In the 2006 Municipal Election there were 14 institutional polls provided in the City on Final Voting Day. For institutional polls, arrangements are made with the institution administrators, and the polls in each location may be open for two to three hours. The residents are able to vote during that time at specific locations within the institution. If a resident is bed-ridden, the ballot is taken to the resident, and he/she is able to vote from his/her bed and place his/her ballot directly into the ballot box. The ballot box is taken back to City Hall and the ballots are counted with all of the institutional polls. Therefore even if only one or two ballots are placed in each ballot box, the electors' anonymity is protected.

# CONSULTATION & DEVELOPMENT OF ACTION PLAN

1. Consulted with the Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee to ensure that potential needs for voters with disabilities are identified and addressed.
2. Met with the Accessibility Compliance Project Manager to obtain comments and recommendations on methods to meet accessibility needs.
3. Provided for improved training standards and practices to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to vote in a positive environment, and ensure that all election workers recognize that in every way possible a voter's needs is to be accommodated whenever possible.
4. Through discussions with the Manager of Kingston Access Bus, arrangements for free transportation were made for persons with disabilities who identify their destination as going to the polls to vote.
5. Increased number of polling locations for the two advance voting days.
6. Implemented the use of touch screen voting technology for the two advance voting days.
7. In consultation with members of the Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee, created an updated checklist for polling locations to ensure polls are accessible, and visited 60 potential voting locations in order to ensure the best possible sites were selected.
8. Met with stakeholder organizations/agencies i.e Canadian Hearing Society, CNIB, to discuss opportunities for addressing their needs and enhanced community outreach.

# BALLOTS

The City of Kingston is legislated to conduct the election for the four local school boards at the same time as the municipal election. As a result, an elector has the choice of receiving **one** of the following ballots:

- English Language Public School Ballot
- English Language Separate School Ballot
- French Language Public School Ballot
- French Language Separate School Ballot
- Non-resident Ballot

The ballots for the municipal portion of the election include the position of Mayor as well as the Councillor for each of the 12 districts unless the Councillor has been acclaimed. Each district has its own ballot for Mayor and Councillor, plus a ballot for each of the school boards and a non-resident ballot, resulting in five choices of ballot at each district. Therefore, 5 ballot choices per district results in a total of sixty (60) different ballot faces for the twelve districts making up the City of Kingston.

The City of Kingston has approved By-Law 2010-101, "A By-Law To Authorize The Use Of Optical Scanning Vote Tabulators (Poll Count Machines) and Touch Screen Voting Devices - For The Purpose Of The 2010 Municipal Election". This By-Law authorizes the continued use of electronic vote tabulators that were used in the 2003 and 2006 election. This equipment allows the ballots to be tabulated at the polls and the data is stored on a secure memory card. As well the use of the touch screen voting devices is authorized and will be used on advance voting days. The touch screen allows visually impaired electors to use ear phones to hear the list of candidates and cast their vote using a standard keypad.

On Final Voting Day once the polls have closed, the election data is downloaded directly from the tabulators and touch screen equipment to Election Headquarters at City Hall. The memory cards from the touch screen, that have been stored in a secure location, will be uploaded at City Hall Election headquarters.

# ACTIONS TAKEN TO DATE

Building on actions taken for the 2006 Municipal Election, the Elections Team has implemented the following solutions for the 2010 Municipal Election.

- 1) In 2006, staff reviewed the 2003 Election Accessibility Plan, changed the font and reduced the fading in the 2006 document to make it more easily read. This new format has been continued for the 2010 election.
- 2) Confirmed arrangements for free transport to the polls with the Kingston Access Bus for all individuals registered with Kingston Access Bus.
- 3) Corresponding with Kingston Independent Living, CNIB, and the Hearing Society to discuss opportunities for addressing their needs and enhanced community outreach to educate electors with various disabilities of the voting options available to them and encouraging them to vote on advance voting days where there will be touch screen technology and less lineups.
- 4) Developed the following solutions to be implemented for the 2010 municipal election:

# ACCESSIBILITY ACTIONS

## 1. USE OF TOUCH SCREEN:

In order to address the needs of visually impaired electors, touch screen voting machines may be used by all electors who vote on two advanced voting days. Ballot cards are programmed by the machine operators. The card is inserted into the machine by a worker, (TDRO) and the ballot is displayed for the elector. When the TDRO leaves the polling machine, the elector is able to vote for his/her selected candidate by the touch of a finger on the screen. The print on the machine is capable of being enlarged to meet electors' needs. For blind electors there is an ear set that can be used and the elector votes, using a key pad that is similar to a telephone key pad. When the elector 'casts his/her ballot', the machine will create sufficient sound to make the workers aware that the ballot has been cast. If assistance is required the elector will be helped out of the voting location.

## 2. USING A MAGNIFIER PAGE

Magnifiers will be placed at each poll location and left with the Technical DRO. The Election Team will ensure that election workers are trained to provide magnifier when requested. Workers will be provided with direction as to the best way to approach electors who may possibly benefit from the use of the magnifier.

## **ACCESSIBILITY ACTIONS** *(cont'd)*

### **3. ENSURE THAT ALL VOTING LOCATIONS ARE ACCESSIBLE**

Staff visited approximately 60 potential voting locations in an attempt to ensure that items identified in the past as hazards or barriers to electors with special needs were addressed.

Consideration was given to the following:

- a) Condition of the parking lot
- b) Ramping into the building
- c) Push bars to open doors
- d) Accessible push buttons on doors
- e) Location of polling area within the building
- f) Lighting of the parking lot and facility
- g) Washroom facilities
- h) Ease of movement in corridors and voting locations

### **4. DESIGNATE THE ENTIRE VOTING LOCATION, INCLUDING PARKING LOTS, AS THE POLL LOCATION**

In those instances when an elector is able to attend at the voting location but is unable to access the voting station inside the building, the election staff can be advised that there is a voter in the parking lot or at curbside who requires a ballot to be brought out to the vehicle.

Election staff will bring a ballot out to the curb/parking lot to meet the elector's needs. Once the elector has voted, the ballot will be placed in a privacy sleeve. The individual who brought the elector to the polling location is required to escort the election official back into the voting location in order to witness the official inserting the ballot into the vote count equipment.

## **ACCESSIBILITY ACTIONS** *(cont'd)*

### **5. ADEQUATE LIGHTING AROUND VOTING LOCATIONS**

When staff selected the voting locations, one of the criteria considered is lighting around and in buildings. Particular consideration was given to lighting in the rural areas.

The school locations selected have standardized lighting in their parking areas that is sufficient for evening voting.

It is anticipated that with the earlier election date that this will no longer present a problem with the time change being the weekend following the election.

### **6. ENSURE DOORS ARE EASILY OPENED BY PEOPLE WITH MOBILITY ISSUES**

During the review of voting locations the access to the doors was reviewed and although not all of the facilities selected for voting locations included the automatic push button, most locations did have the automatic push button or a push bar on the door to allow for ease of access.

Two particular locations were identified as requiring additional staff at the voting location to assist at the door when necessary. If the weather allows, the exterior doors will be propped open where possible. Interior doors may be adapted for easier access by removal of the centre bar.

### **7. ENCOURAGING PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS TO VOTE PRIOR TO FINAL VOTING DAY**

Election staff will be launching an extensive media campaign to highlight the advantages of voting at Advance Voting Days and to encourage voters with disabilities or accessibility issues to vote at Advance Voting Days to reduce the waiting in long lines.

Times that have been previously identified as peak voting times (i.e. between 4:30 and 6:30) will be highlighted as the times that voters with disabilities would be encouraged to not attend at the polls.

## **ACCESSIBILITY ACTIONS** *(cont'd)*

### **7. ENCOURAGING PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS TO VOTE PRIOR TO FINAL VOTING DAY** *(cont'd)*

Note that voters who choose not to vote at the Advance Voting Days may be required to bring someone to assist them at the Poll.

Election staff has met with supporting organizations for persons with disabilities and where possible have made arrangements to distribute information either in a separate mailing or in conjunction with the organizations.

### **8. INCREASED STAFFING LEVELS ON FINAL VOTING DAY**

Election staff will be tested prior to their appointment to work in an election in an attempt to ensure they are able to deal with the pressure of high volume voting on final voting day.

Additional staff will be hired to work on Final Voting Day to assist in handling high volumes of electors.

Staff will be building on problem areas identified during the last municipal election to correct any potential problems.

### **9. ADDITIONAL TRAINING FOR WORKERS**

Staff training will include sensitivity training in accordance with the customer service regulation. Accessibility training similar to that provided to some City staff will be provided to the election workers. Election workers will be instructed to take extra steps to accommodate electors with disabilities to ensure that their voting experience is a positive one.

## **ACCESSIBILITY ACTIONS** *(cont'd)*

### **10. TRANSPORTATION BY KINGSTON ACCESS BUS**

Arrangements have been made with the Kingston Access Bus for registered users to receive free service to and from their polling location. Electors can contact Kingston Access Bus to arrange transportation to and from their voting location starting 14 days prior to the day requiring transportation. When contacting Kingston Access Bus for scheduling transportation, users are requested to indicate their polling location. Due to the anticipated demand for Kingston Access Bus on voting days, voters are urged to book their return trip home 30 – 45 minutes after their drop off time at the polling station. When possible, the driver will wait for the elector to complete their voting in the event they finish sooner than anticipated, however this will not always be feasible and the voter will be transported at the time of the scheduled return trip.

### **11. MORE VOTING LOCATIONS AND EXTENDED HOURS**

Electors have the option of voting at the location most convenient to them within their district during the two advance voting days. The hours have been extended for more convenience.

# TRAINING

Training will include:

- a) A requirement to monitor electors with disabilities to ensure that their needs are met, i.e. if an individual with a walker is in a long line, staff are to observe, and if it is felt that the elector is having difficulties, then offer a chair, ensure that their place is saved in the voting line-up, etc.;
- b) A requirement to ensure that electors are aware that magnifiers are available if required throughout the day by routinely advising line-ups that may occur;
- c) Direction for election staff to observe electors during discussions with them, and if it appears that the voter is having difficulty understanding, ensuring that the voter is able to clearly see the speaker;
- d) Encouraging election workers to approach an elector if it appears that the elector requires assistance to get around in the polling location, offer assistance;
- e) Maintain a friendly and approachable demeanour, regardless of how tired, upset or hassled a worker may feel;
- f) Check the access doors frequently to offer assistance and watch for electors unable to easily enter the building;
- g) Ensure that voters who have self-identified as voting curbside are met in a timely manner;
- h) Election Officials will be required to sign a Compliance Form to indicate that they have read additional material, in accordance with Customer Service Standards training.
- i) Be vigilant!