

Report to Council

Report Title:	2018 Municipal and School Board Election Overview and Accessibility Report		
Prepared By:	Fiona Hamilton, Clerk		
Department:	Clerk		
Date:	November 19, 2018		
Report Number:	CLK2018-16	File Number:	C11CL, C07EL
Attachments:	Report CLK2018-11 - 2018 Municipal and School Board Election Update Final Summary of Election Results		

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby receive Report CLK2018-16 – 2018 Municipal and School Board Election Overview and Accessibility Report, prepared by Fiona Hamilton, Clerk, for information purposes.

Report:

Background:

This report provides an overview of the 2018 Municipal and School Board Election and describes the steps taken to ensure accessibility for all Brockton Electors. Please note that the previous report titled 2018 Municipal and School Board Election Update, prepared by Fiona Hamilton, Clerk summarized the revisions to the Voter's List, the Voter Information Letters and the efforts made by staff to encourage voting has been attached for ease of reference.

Analysis:

Voting Period

The Voting Period for internet and telephone voting began at 8:30 a.m. on Monday, October 15 until 8:00p.m. on October 23, 2018. The Voting Period was originally scheduled to end at 8:00 p.m. on October 22, 2018 but was extended for an additional day for reasons explained below. Electors were able to use the information contained in their Voter Information Letter to vote online or using the telephone system provided by Dominion Voting Systems. Paper ballots were not used in this Election.

Voter Assistance

A toll free Voter Help Line was established to allow Municipal Staff to troubleshoot and assist voters having difficulty using the internet and telephone voting system. The most common problems experienced by

Electors were not typing the online voting site into the address bar, but rather into the search bar. Some Electors had difficulty logging in because their birth dates were noted incorrectly on the Voter's List.

Most of the calls to the Voter Help Line were from Electors using the telephone voting system. Some Electors needed assistance with providing their birth dates in the correct order, or using the pound key to enter information.

Voter Help Centres

A Voter Help Centre was also established in the Municipal Office at 100 Scott Street throughout the Voting Period. The Municipal Office was used to allow staff to remain in the Voter Help Centre throughout the Voting Period and also because the building has an accessible entrance. Any Voters who were having difficulty with the internet or telephone voting systems were encouraged to visit the Voter Help Centre. Large touch screen monitors were placed in the former Mayor's Office, just outside the accessible entrance, and in the former Council Chambers. Municipal Staff were able to expand the text on the screen and/or change the colour settings to assist Electors who were visually impaired. In addition, many Electors who were not comfortable using computers, particularly a mouse or touchpad, or who otherwise had fine motor difficulties commented on the ease of use of the large touch screens.

A Voter Help Centre was also set up at the Brockton Works Shop (Greenock) and the Elmwood Community Centre from 8:30 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. on October 22, 2018. A total of 179 individuals made use of the Voter Help Centres, most on October 22, 2018. Of these two locations, the Brockton Works Shop (Greenock) received the largest number of Electors. The Brockton Works Shop (Greenock) also provided more privacy for Electors as different rooms could be used if an individual was voting by telephone, or if a staff person was assisting someone who was hearing impaired. Door bells were installed prior to opening the Voter Help Centre to allow mobility impaired Electors to notify staff and arrange for doors to be opened.

In general, the vast majority of individuals who visited a Voter Help Center commented on the speed and ease of the online voting system.

Extension of Voting Period

The online voting system ran smoothly throughout most of the advance voting period. However, staff began to notice a serious slowdown in the system starting at approximately 5:45 p.m. on October 22, 2018. The system slowdown lasted until 8:00 p.m. Although 38 Electors were able to successfully cast their ballot during this time, the internet and telephone voting systems were largely inaccessible for most individuals. Dominion Voting Systems has confirmed that the system slowdown was caused by an unauthorized restriction on the bandwidth allocated to Dominion Voting System by its internet service provider.

I was not able to access the Administration Portal of Dominion Voting Systems in order to close voting as originally scheduled as a result of the system slowdown. I declared an emergency pursuant to section 53(1) of the *Municipal Elections Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. 32 Sched. in conjunction with the other Clerks in the County of Bruce. The Voting Period was extended for an additional day to ensure that all individuals were provided with the opportunity to successfully cast their ballots. Staff in the Voter Help Centres recorded the names and contact information of those individuals present in the building when the slowdown happened. Staff

contacted each person to provide them with an update and inform them that the Voting Period had been extended by an additional day.

In an effort to control staff costs, the Municipal Office was the only Voter Help Centre open on the extended voting day of October 23, 2018. Staff noticed a significant slowdown in the number of ballots being cast across all voting methods in the evening of October 23, 2018, which may indicate that all individuals who intended to vote had already done so.

Results

The total number of eligible electors was 7711 with 3781 total ballots cast. The voter turnout was 49.03%. There were 7,710 eligible electors and 4,036 total ballots cast for a voter turnout of 52.35% in the 2014 Municipal and School Board Election. The voter turnout declined by 3.05%. It is difficult to determine whether this decline is attributable to frustrations with the voting methods or other reasons – it should be noted that all incumbents who ran were re-elected.

The unofficial election results were posted on the Brockton website. All traffic to the site was automatically redirected to the results page. Candidates, Council and the Media were informed that the unofficial results were available via email. The Final Summary of Election Results has been attached. The results were made available prior to 9:00 p.m. on October 23, 2018. Other Social Media sites were also used to inform people that the results were available.

Social Media

Staff used various social media throughout the Voting Period, and also before the Voting Period. The “Brockton Votes” logo was developed to integrate with the overall new branding of the Municipality of Brockton. The Brockton Votes logo was used on various signs and social media posts. Staff posted regular updates about the voter turn-out and created various infographics to help generate interest. Staff also monitored facebook posts and other social media accounts to direct individuals to the Voter Help Centres as needed.



Staffing

Staffing for the 2018 Municipal and School Board Election included myself as Returning Officer, three (3) Assistant Returning Officers and nine (9) Election Officials. Each Voter Help Centre had at least two (2) staff members present throughout the day, with an additional staff person assisting on the evening of October 22, 2018. Six (6) staff members were required for the extended voting day on October 23, 2018, although most were only required for a few hours. Most of the Election Officials were trained in completing the forms to revise the Voter’s List, issuing Voter Information Letters and answering general inquiries. The Returning Officer remained at the Municipal Office throughout the Voting Period.

Staff in the Voter Help Centre should be applauded for their dedication and professionalism throughout the Voting Period, but particularly during the system slowdown.

Candidates

If requested, Candidates were provided with extracts of the Voter Strike-Off List showing which Electors had cast their ballot throughout the election period. Some Candidates requested the Voter Strike Off List multiple times per day and in multiple formats (paper or electronically). Many Candidates personally attended the front counter at the Municipal Office to request these lists, although they were asked to send an agent. The concern was that individuals were using both entrances to the Municipal Office. All Candidates were very respectful of Electors and their privacy when in the Municipal Office, but this process could be improved in the 2022 Municipal and School Board Election.

In the next election, I would recommend that Candidates be provided with the Voter Strike-Off list only once per day, at a pre-set time, on a USB stick clearly marked "Property of the Municipality of Brockton". The Voter Strike-Off List could be provided at Victoria Jubilee Hall, or another central location that is not being used as a Voter Help Centre. Candidates are required to return the Voter Strike Off List to staff for destruction in accordance with the provisions of the *Municipal Elections Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. 32 Sched.

When Candidates asked questions or requested information, staff attempted to provide email answers or information that were circulated to all Candidates to ensure fairness and transparency. Candidates were also encouraged to direct individuals to the Voter Help Centres if they required assistance. I would also recommend holding a Candidates information meeting to communicate the procedures that will be adopted by staff and ensure that Candidates do not accidentally provide Electors with incorrect information.

Third Party Advertiser

Since the 2014 election, the *Municipal Elections Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. 32 Sched. was revised to include provisions regulating the actions of third party advertisers. A Third Party Advertiser is an organization or individual that supports or opposes a particular candidate, but is not actually running for office. There are limits on the amount Third Party Advertisers can spend on advertising and they are required to file Financial Statements with the Clerk of the municipality. The Campaign Life Coalition with a head office in Toronto was the only Third Party Advertiser registered in the 2018 Municipal and School Board Election.

Accessibility

Section 12.1 of the *Municipal Elections Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. 32 Sched. stipulates that a report must be made available to the public regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities. The use of the telephone and online voting systems helped the Municipality of Brockton to ensure that the 2018 Municipal and School Board Election was as accessible to all Electors as possible. The primary objective was to allow Electors to vote on their own without assistance if at all possible.

- 1) The telephone voting system provided an option for electors with a visual impairment or mobility issues who could not otherwise attend the Voter Help Centre. The internet voting system also allowed many individuals with mobility issues to remain at home or even in the hospital and still vote. The

telephone system will need to be reviewed in the next election to ensure that the instructions are clear and concise.

- 2) The internet voting system also provided options to assist those with visual impairments. The font size could be enlarged and the colours could be changed for greater contrast. In addition, the site itself was designed for ease of use for individuals using a screen reader (choice of font, contrasting colours, etc.).
- 3) As mentioned previously, touch screens were available at all Voter Help Centres. These touch screens could be manipulated to zoom in or enlarge the text for individuals who were visually impaired. Magnifiers and telephones were also available at all Voter Help Centres.
- 4) Many individuals noted that it was much easier to touch the screen when voting rather than trying to precisely mark a paper ballot.
- 5) Community Living clients were directed to the Municipal Office if they required assistance and the Contract Elections Assistant made a presentation at Community Living to provide information and encourage voting.
- 6) Accessibility was also a significant consideration when determining the locations of the Voter Help Centres. The Municipal Office was used as the front door is an accessible entrance and individuals could vote easily and privately in the front office. Individuals using mobility devices were able to enter the Brockton Works Shop (Greenock) and the Elmwood Community Centre, provided a staff person was available to open the doors. Doorbells were installed at these locations to ensure that staff knew when assistance was required. Site visits were conducted at each location to arrange the Voter Help Centre in the most accessible manner possible. Signage was used at each Voter Help Centre as appropriate.
- 7) The fact that there was a Voting Period rather than a single voting day also made voting more accessible for individuals as large line-ups were avoided and people were not forced to stand for long periods of time or face large crowds.
- 8) Efforts were made to ensure that communication and information was made available to candidates and Electors in alternate formats and all information was posted to the Municipality of Brockton website.
- 9) The Returning Officer, Assistant Returning Officers and the Elections Officials were trained in the accessible customer service standards.

Some Electors did require assistance from the Assistant Returning Officials or the Election Officials. Staff visited Brucelea Haven on October 17, 2018 and Maple Court Villa on October 16, 2018 to assist those residents with voting. These strategies should be reviewed, updated and revised prior to the next election to ensure the next election is as accessible as possible.

Sustainability Checklist:

What aspect of the Brockton Sustainable Strategic Plan does the content/recommendations in this report help advance?

- Do the recommendations help move the Municipality closer to its Vision? N/A
- Do the recommendations contribute to achieving Cultural Vibrancy? N/A
- Do the recommendations contribute to achieving Economic Prosperity? N/A
- Do the recommendations contribute to Environmental Integrity? N/A

- Do the recommendations contribute to the Social Equity?

N/A

Financial Impacts/Source of Funding:

- Do the recommendations represent a sound financial investment from a sustainability perspective?
N/A

The Municipality of Brockton has not received a final invoice from Dominion Voting Systems and therefore the complete costs are not available at this time.

Respectfully Submitted by:



Fiona Hamilton, Clerk

Reviewed By:



Chief Administrative Officer