



2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan

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INTRODUCTION

This plan will address the specific accessibility requirements in relation to the 2022 Municipal Election in the Township of O'Connor.

The Township of O'Connor has made great efforts in promoting a barrier free community. Commitment has been made in the provision of accessible customer service to persons with disabilities. In an effort to ensure that the 2022 Municipal Election is consistent with core principles of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, this planning document was developed in advance of the election in order to identify measures to be taken and reported following the election.

In addition to the Township's Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy, the following excerpts from the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996, S.O. 1996, SCHED 32*, define the requirements for conducting an election with regard for persons with disabilities:

Number and location of voting places

45 (1) *The clerk shall establish the number and location of voting places for an election as he or she considers most convenient for the electors. 1996, c. 32, Sched., s. 45 (1).*

Accessibility

(2) *In establishing the locations of voting places, the clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities. 2009, c. 33, Sched. 21, s. 8 (23).*

Plan re: barriers

(2) *The clerk shall prepare a plan regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities and shall make the plan available to the public before voting day in a regular election. 2016, c. 15, s. 11.*

Report

(3) *Within 90 days after voting day in a regular election, the clerk shall prepare a report about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities and shall make the report available to the public. 2016, c. 15, s. 11.*

Variations for electors with visual impairments

43 (3) *The clerk shall make such changes to some or all of the ballots as he or she considers necessary or desirable to allow electors with visual impairments to vote without the assistance referred to in paragraph 4 of subsection 52 (1). 1996, c. 32, Sched., s. 41 (3); 2001, c. 32, s. 30 (1).*

OBJECTIVES

This plan is intended to highlight measures that the Township will be implementing to ensure equal opportunity for all electors and candidates. These objectives include:

- That the voting location is accessible;
- That persons with disabilities are able to independently cast their vote and verify their selection;
- That persons with disabilities have full and equal access to all information on where and when to vote and on eligible candidates;
- That persons with disabilities can fully participate in the Municipal Election as an elector, candidate or election official;
- That efforts are made to ensure that electors with disabilities are aware of the accessibility measures available via the Township's newsletter and the Township's website.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN

This Plan is an active document which will be improved and updated as best practices are identified and new opportunities for improvement arise.

During the development process of the 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan, the following steps were implemented:

1. The Clerk/Returning Officer prepared the document taking into consideration all accessible needs of the Township of O'Connor Voters;
2. Staff training standards and practices directly related to the Election were established to ensure that people with disabilities are able to vote in a positive customer service environment, and ensure that all Election Officials recognize that in every way possible a voter's needs are to be accommodated whenever possible; and
3. Following the Election, a report will be prepared on the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

VOTING LOCATION

For the purpose of this plan, the Voting Location includes the exterior parking and walkways associated with the location.

Township owned building will be used as the Voting Location. An inspection of the entrance to the building and the voting room has been conducted to ensure that it is accessible to electors with disabilities.

Accessible Route

An easily navigable route will be marked for entry into the Voting Location and into the Voting Area within the location. The Voting Area will be identified with clear and understandable signage.

Parking

Designated parking for electors with disabilities is to be provided in close proximity to the entrance of the Voting Location where possible. Accessible parking spaces will be clearly marked and will be on firm and level ground. Routine checks will be made to ensure all entrances remain barrier free through the course of the day.

Entrance/Exit to the Voting Location

The entrance to the Voting Location will be easy to access and barrier free. The door into the interior Voting Area is wide enough for a wheel chair, scooter, other assistive device or service animal to pass through safely and easily. Should doors into the interior Voting Area not be accessible, the doors shall remain propped open for the duration of the voting location hours. Routine checks of the entrance and exit routes will be made throughout the day.

Interior Voting Area

Access to the interior Voting Area will be level and easily traversed. Any doormats or carpeting will be level with the floor to prevent potential tripping hazards. All Voting Areas are to be well lit and seating will be made available.

Support Persons

Electors with disabilities may be accompanied by a support person within the Voting Place. In addition, the Deputy Returning Officer or the Election Official in the Voting Place can assist the Voter in casting their vote. Prior to entering the voting booth, the Election Official shall, in conjunction with the Elector with the disability, determine the extent to which he/she needs assistance and the best way in which this assistance can be provided. This may involve marking the ballot as directed by the Elector with the disability.

Assistive Personal Equipment

Electors with disabilities may use assistive personal devices including wheelchairs, walkers, white canes, walking canes, note taking devices, portable magnifiers, recording machines, assistive listening devices, personal oxygen tanks and devices for grasping.

Service Animals

An animal is a Service Animal if it is readily apparent that the animal is used by a person with a disability for reasons relating to his or her disability, for example, a guide dog wearing a harness. Service Animals will be permitted in Voting Location.

Vision Loss

Each Voting Place will be equipped with magnifying sheets to assist an individual with low vision.

Hearing Impaired, Deafness and Hearing Loss

Each Voting Place will be equipped with a pad of paper and pen to communicate with the hearing impaired if required.

Voting Location Institutions

The Municipal Elections Act requires that on Voting Day, a Voting Location shall be provided on the premises of the following:

Voting places in institutions, retirement homes

45 (7) *On voting day, a voting place shall be provided on the premises of the following:*

An institution for the reception, treatment or vocational training of members or former members of the Canadian Forces;

An institution in which, on September 1, 20 or more beds are occupied by persons who are disabled, chronically ill or infirm;

A retirement home in which, on September 1, 50 or more beds are occupied. 1996, c. 32, Sched., s. 45 (7); 2016, c. 15, s. 34 (2, 3)

Attendance on resident

(8) *The deputy returning officer for a voting place described in subsection (7) may attend on an elector who is a resident of the institution or retirement home, to allow him or her to vote. 1996, c. 32, Sched., s. 45 (8)*

Attendance on electors with disabilities

(9) *To allow an elector with a disability to vote, a deputy returning officer shall attend on the elector anywhere within the area designated as the voting place. 2001, c. 32, s. 30 (3).*

For the 2022 Municipal Election, the Township of O'Connor does not have any Institutions.

PROXY VOTING

An Elector with a disability that is homebound or otherwise unable to go to a Voting Location may appoint another person to act as a Voting Proxy to cast a ballot on his or her behalf. The appointment must be made on the prescribed form available in the Clerk's Office. The person being appointed as a proxy will be required to take a

statutory declaration before a Commissioner of Oaths. Once completed, the Voting Proxy may be exercised at any advance Voting Location or on the final Voting Day. On the final Voting Day, the Proxy must be exercised at a Voting Location on behalf of the person who is unable to attend. The appointment of a proxy may only be made after 2:00 p.m. on Nomination Day, August 19, 2022 and is null and void after the final Voting Day.

ASSISTANCE TO CANDIDATES

Service Animals

Candidates and scrutineers are permitted to be accompanied by a Service Animal at all Voting Places and other designated election locations.

Campaign Expenses

Expenses directly related to an individual's disability which would not have been incurred if not for the Election, are not subject to the spending limit if they are incurred by a Candidate or a Registered Third Party who is an individual with a disability.

VOTING METHODS

The Township of O'Connor will be using paper ballots where on which electors choose their preferred Candidate(s) by placing a mark, with a pencil in the circle next to the name of the chosen Candidate(s).

An Elector with a disability can also choose to have a person assist them behind the voting screen.

Should an Elector with a disability not be able to enter into a Polling Location, Election Officials are able to attend with a ballot and ballot box outside of the Polling Location in the parking lot.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Township of O'Connor is required, as per the Accessible Customer Service Standard, to provide a copy of a document to a person with a disability, or the information contained in the document, in a format that takes into account the person's disability.

Alternate Formats

Alternate formats are other ways of publishing information besides regular print. Some of these formats can be used by everyone while others are designed to address the specific needs of a user. The Township and the person with a disability may agree upon the format to be used for the document or information.

In the event the information is not generated by the Township or is supplied by a third party, the Township will make every effort to obtain the information from the third party

in an alternate format and/or will attempt to assist the Elector by providing assistive equipment.

General Election Material

Large Print – printed material generated by the Township will be provided in an Arial font, minimum 12 point, and can be made available in a font (print) size that is 16 to 20 points or larger.

Website – information generated by the Township on the website regarding the election will be compliant with WCAG 2.0 Level A, and allow for assistive software to be utilized. In addition, website font can be adjusted within the browser’s functionality to aid the user in reading the information.

Service Disruptions

From time to time and/or for unforeseen circumstances beyond the Township’s control, temporary service disruptions may occur. In the event of a temporary accessible service disruption, Election Officials will commit to making reasonable efforts to ensure that services are reinstated as quickly as possible and that alternative services are provided where feasible.

In these instances of service disruptions, the Township will provide reasonable notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by persons with disabilities.

Accessible services in relation to this plan include Voting Places, election materials and/or voting provisions for Electors with disabilities at the Voting Location.

In the event of disruptions to service or unforeseen circumstances that affect the accessibility of Voting Location during the Advance Vote or on the final Voting Day, Notices of Disruption will be posted in real time:

- on the Township’s website;
- posted at the site of disruption; and
- where applicable, a media advisory will be issued.

FEEDBACK

The Township welcomes customer feedback to identify areas where changes need to be considered and ways in which the Township can improve the delivery of an accessible election.

Feedback can be provided by any one of the following methods from October 18th to November 4th:

- In Person or Mail: Township of O'Connor
330 Highway 595
RR #1, Kakabeka Falls, Ontario
P0T 1W0
- E-mail: twpoconn@tbaytel.net

The feedback process provides election staff with an opportunity to take corrective measures to prevent similar recurrences, address training needs, enhance service delivery and provide alternative methods of providing election information and service.