

Township of Selwyn Accessibility Plan Election 2022

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Contents

The Township of Selwyn Election Accessibility Plan Introduction	3
Customer Service Standard	4
Voting Methods.....	4
Telephone Voting.....	4
Internet Voting	4
Long-Term Facilities and Retirement Homes	4
Voting Assistance	5
Customer Service Feedback	5
Training.....	5
Assistance to Candidates	5
Parking	6
Information and Communications Standard	6
Election Materials	6
Alternate Formats	6
Large Print.....	6
Web Content.....	6
Service Disruptions.....	6
Employment Standard.....	7
Design of Public Spaces Standard	7
Voting Location Inspection Checklists	7
Entrance to the Voting Location.....	7
Interior Voting Area.....	7
Summary.....	8

The Township of Selwyn Election Accessibility Plan Introduction

The Township of Selwyn recognizes that persons with disabilities should be provided with an equal opportunity to access information in a manner consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality as stated in the regulations of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA). This Plan supports and strengthens the Township's commitment and efforts to respond to the needs of persons with disabilities.

The focus of this Plan is to ensure that electoral services are accessible to everyone – candidates, electors and staff. This Plan identifies ways to eliminate barriers for persons of all abilities and to create a positive electoral experience for everyone.

The identification, prevention and removal of barriers is an ongoing process. As such, the Township will continue to learn, develop, and adjust its approach in order to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. This Plan will be improved and updated as new opportunities are identified or become available.

The actions listed in this Plan have been developed under the guidelines of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA), which include:

Customer Service – provide accessible customer service to people with disabilities so that they can access the same goods and services as everyone else.

Information and Communications – create, provide and receive information and communications in ways that are accessible for people with disabilities.

Employment – employers will include accessibility practices for employees across all stages of the employment cycle including recruitment, assessment and selection.

Design of Public Spaces – newly designed or renovated public spaces will include specific accessibility features, which will make it easier for everyone to use.

Customer Service Standard

The Customer Service Standard guides organizations on how to provide services to people with disabilities using the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.

To do this, organizations must make sure that they:

- Establish policies, practices, and procedures
- Provide staff training on customer service
- Provide goods and services in an accessible manner
- Provide accessible communication and documents
- Allow for service animals and support persons
- Have a method to provide feedback
- To provide notice of service disruption
- Ensure that all emergency procedures, plans, and public safety information are available in accessible formats, if requested

Voting Methods

The Township will offer internet and telephone voting for the 2022 election. Both of these methods allow electors to vote from anywhere within the defined voting period using a telephone or the internet. Electronic and telephone voting stations will also be available at the Municipal office during the defined voting period for public use.

Telephone Voting

Telephone voting will provide eligible voters with an audio voting option. Instructions, such as listing candidate names in alphabetical order, are heard through a handset and electors make their selections when prompted using the keypad. The voter hears the audio ballot and uses the telephone key pad to select the candidates they wish to vote for.

Internet Voting

Internet voting allows any elector with access to a smartphone, tablet or computer to independently cast a ballot at any time, or in any place that is most convenient to them. This method of voting provides persons with disabilities, electors who may have mobility restrictions, visual impairments, and/or do not have access to transportation the same independence and privacy as other voters to participate in the election.

Long-Term Facilities and Retirement Homes

These sites will be visited by election staff to setup on-site voting for residents. Election staff will work with the administrators of identified sites to coordinate what the most appropriate method and time is for their residents.

Internet voting is compliant with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0), which include organization, functionality and readability of information provided, as well as alternative ways of representing information, such as with audio. Additionally, persons who have assistive devices set up in their homes could now use them to assist with casting a ballot privately and independently.

The Township will use a two-step process for online voting. Eligible voters will receive a personalized voting instruction package by mail before Election Day. The voting package will provide details on how to vote online or by phone. The information package will also include a secret PIN number that electors use to access the voting system. The PIN number, in conjunction with a personal piece of information would be required for voters to vote. By combining these two pieces of information, the integrity of the vote is maintained. Electors may request the personalized voting instructions via email as well.

The voting period for the Township of Selwyn will run from October 11 – 24, 2022.

Voting Assistance

Anyone requiring assistance to vote is entitled to be assisted by a support person. The person assisting the elector will need to make an oral oath with the Deputy Returning Officer prior to providing any such assistance.

Electors are also entitled to be accompanied by a service animal. Service animal identification should be clearly visible to staff and other electors to avoid confusion.

Customer Service Feedback

Election Staff encourage anyone to submit feedback about any aspect of their voting experience using the Township's Customer Service Feedback Form. It will be available and can be submitted in person at the Township office or through regular mail or email, and alternate formats can be made available upon request.

This feedback will be gathered and presented to council in a report at the end of the election to report on the success of efforts made to improve accessibility.

Training

All staff carrying out election duties will be trained to recognize and ensure that persons with disabilities are served in a way that accommodates their individual needs. Training will include:

- How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities;
- How to interact with persons with disabilities who use assistive devices or require the assistance of a service animal or support person;
- How to use voting equipment to deliver election services; and
- What to do if a person is having difficulty accessing election information or services.

Assistance to Candidates

The Township will provide candidates with information on how to make their campaigns accessible, which will include providing them with resource material. Expenses that are incurred by a candidate with a disability that are directly related to the disability and would not have been incurred but for the election to which the expenses relate, are excluded from the permitted spending limit for the candidate.

Parking

Designated or reserved parking for individuals with disabilities and seniors will be provided close to the entrance of the Voting place (municipal office). Accessible parking spaces will be clearly posted and easy to see from the road and marked with the International Symbol of Access.

Information and Communications Standard

Under the information and communication standard, organizations must make sure that public communications are accessible to people with disabilities.

To do this, the Township will:

- Ensure website accessibility by following the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0.
- Make sure that all public feedback channels (e.g. Online, in-person, phone, email) are accessible.
- Provide or arrange for accessible formats in communication supports, upon request

Election Materials

The Township will provide a copy of any election document, or the information contained in the document, in an alternate format that takes into account the person's disability upon request.

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.

In the event the information was 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 would have attempted to assist the elector by providing assistive equipment.

Large Print

Printed material generated by the Township will be provided in Arial font, minimum 12 point, and is available in a larger font upon request.

Web Content

Information published by the Township on the election website or any digital information in relation to online voting will be compliant with WCAG 2.0, and allow for assistive software to be utilized. In addition, website font can be adjusted within the browser to aid the user in reading the information.

Service Disruptions

Unforeseen circumstances beyond the Township's control may result in temporary service disruptions. Where service is disrupted, election staff will make reasonable efforts to maintain services or to provide alternative services until normal operations can

resume. In extenuating circumstances, the Clerk (Returning Officer) may extend the hours of voting.

In the event of disruptions to ordinary service or unforeseen circumstances that affect the accessibility of voting during the advance vote or on Election Day, notices of disruption will be posted in real time:

- on the Township's website
- at the site of the disruption
- where applicable, a media advisory will be issued

Employment Standard

This standard tells employers that they must make accessible accommodations available, if requested, in all stages of the employment life cycle (e.g. assessment, selection and retention).

- The Township is committed to identifying and removing barriers so that all future and current employees can reach their full potential
- Ensure everyone working the election receives training on accessibility

The Township is an organization that strives to embrace the spirit of inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility. We are an equal opportunity employer committed to building an inclusive and barrier-free environment in which all individuals have access to the Township's goods, services and facilities.

Design of Public Spaces Standard

The Design of Public Spaces Standard applies to public spaces that have been newly constructed or renovated. Election staff have reviewed the voting location to ensure that it reflects the appropriate accessibility standards.

Voting Location Inspection Checklists

A site audit for the Voting location to be used and shall be conducted by the Election Team. The purpose of the audit shall be to ensure that the Voting location is conducive to the needs of election officials and voters.

Entrance to the Voting Location

Election staff will ensure that the voting location adheres to the standards in Ontario Building Code.

Every effort shall be made to ensure that the path of entry to the Voting location is accessible. The Voting location will have ramps, doors wide enough for a wheelchair or scooter to pass through easily, door hardware that can be operated by a person with limited dexterity, and/or have a power assist function.

Interior Voting Area

Access to the interior voting area and voting booth shall be level and easily traversed. Any doormats or carpeting shall be level with the floor to prevent potential tripping

hazards. All voting areas will be well lit and seating shall be made available. At least one voting booth will be high enough to accommodate wheelchairs.

Summary

The Township of Selwyn's Municipal Election Accessibility Plan is meant to help the Township provide the best possible customer service during the election. If anyone would like to provide feedback, or ask questions regarding our standards please contact us.

We can be reached using the contact information provided below:

Telephone: 705-292-9507

In Person: Township of Selwyn Municipal Office – 1310 Centre Line, Selwyn, ON

Website: www.selwyntownship.ca

Additionally, the Clerk can be contacted directly for assistance:

Angela Chittick - Clerk/Returning Officer

Telephone: 705-292-9507 ext. **221** Email: achittick@selwyntownship.ca

Appendix A: Voting Location Inspection Checklist