

ELECTION ACCESSIBILITY PLAN



Town of Penetanguishene

2010 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

This Plan is for use in the 2010 Municipal Election in conjunction with the Town's current Accessible Customer Service Policy, guidelines, training and customer service feedback standards.

The Town of Penetanguishene abides by the following principles when conducting the Town's Election:

- **Integrity of process maintained throughout election.**
- **Secrecy and confidentiality of the individual vote**
- **Election is fair and non-biased**
- **Election is accessible to the voters**
- **Certainty that results reflect votes cast**
- **Voters and candidates treated fairly and consistently**

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Accessible Election Mandate

With respect to Accessibility, the mandate for the Town of Penetanguishene Municipal 2010 Election is as follows:

“It is the goal of the Town of Penetanguishene to ensure that Electors in the Town of Penetanguishene who have a disability or an issue with accessibility are provided with the best opportunity to vote as independently as possible in the 2010 Municipal Election.”

Municipal Elections Act Requirements

In addition to our pre-existing accessibility requirements and the Town’s current Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy, the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 S.O. 1996, CHAPTER 32, section 12 states:

“12.1 (1) A clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities. 2009, c. 33, Sched. 21, s. 8 (8).

Report

(2) Within 90 days after voting day in a regular election, the clerk shall submit a report to council about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities. 2009, c. 33, Sched. 21, s. 8 (8).

41. (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).

45. (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).”

Development of the Election Accessibility Plan

This plan will address the specific requirements pertaining to accessibility in relation to the 2010 Municipal Election in the Town of Penetanguishene.

This Plan is a “living” document which will be improved and updated as best practices are identified and new opportunities of improvement arise.

During the development process of the initial Election Accessibility Plan, the following steps will be implemented:

1. Meet with Accessibility Coordinator to obtain comments and recommendations on methods to meet accessibility needs.
2. In consultation with Accessibility Advisory Committee, reviewed proposed Accessibility Plan to substantiate needs are being met.
3. Establish staff training standards and practices directly related to the Election to ensure that people with disabilities are able to vote in a positive environment, and ensure that all Election Officials recognize that in every way possible a voter's needs are to be accommodated whenever possible.
4. Following the Election, submit a report to Council, the Accessibility Coordinator and the Accessibility Advisory Committee about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

Regard for the needs of Electors with Disabilities

The procedures within this plan must respect the dignity and independence of the Electors. The election process should ensure that the policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.

Disabilities can take many forms and can range from temporary to permanent. Often disabilities are non-visible and no one should ever make assumptions. Disabilities include developmental, cognitive and physical challenges/conditions of persons of any age.

Some examples of barriers to people with disabilities:

<u>Barrier Type</u>	<u>Example</u>
Physical	A doorknob that cannot be operated by an elderly person with limited upper-body mobility and strength.
Architectural	A hallway or door that is too narrow for a wheelchair or scooter.
Informational	Typefaces which are too small to be read by a person with low-vision.
Communicational	A speaker at a meeting who talks loudly when addressing a deaf participant.

Attitudinal	A campaign event that discourages persons with developmental disabilities from participating.
Technological	Information on a web site, which cannot be accessed by a person who is blind or visually impaired and who has reading software on a computer.
Policy/Practice	A practice of announcing important messages over an intercom that people with hearing impairments cannot hear clearly.

Types of Disabilities

Listed below is a brief description of types of disabilities. Understanding people’s needs and challenges may help you better communicate with them.

Physical Disabilities: There are many types and degrees of physical disabilities, and while people who use mobility aids like wheelchairs, scooters, crutches or canes are most recognizable, it is important to consider that not all people with physical disabilities require a mobility device.

Vision Loss: There are varying degrees of vision loss and a distinction between blindness and low vision. In some cases, it may be difficult to tell if a person has a vision loss.

Hearing Impaired, Deafness and Hearing Loss: Hearing loss ranges from mild to profound. The distinctions between the terms “deaf”, “deafened”, “hearing impaired” and “hard of hearing” are based principally on the individual’s preferred language (spoken or signed) rather than on the actual degree of hearing loss.

Deaf-Blindness: A person who is deaf-blind has some degree of both vision and hearing loss. This results in greater difficulties in accessing information and managing daily activities. Most people who are deaf-blind will be accompanied by an intervener, a professional who helps with communicating.

Speech Impairments: People with speech disabilities may have problems communicating. For many reasons, people may have difficulty speaking clearly – for example, as a result of a stroke or cerebral palsy – which may result in difficulties with verbal communication. Some people may use communication boards or other assistive devices to help communicate. A speech disability often has no impact on a person’s ability to understand. Ask them to repeat the information if you don’t understand. Ask questions that can be answered “yes” or “no” if possible.

Cognitive Disabilities: Cognitive disabilities may affect understanding, communication, or behavior and can be attributed to brain injuries, developmental or learning disabilities. It is not always easy to identify someone who has a cognitive disability.

Mental Illness: Mental illness is a disturbance in thoughts and emotions that may decrease a person's capacity to cope with the challenges of everyday life. Mental illness can take many forms, just as physical illness does.

Voting Place

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

In order to ensure that each voting place is accessible to Electors with disabilities, a Site Evaluation Form (appendix A) will be completed prior to confirming the site as a voting place.

The Evaluation Form will include the assessment of the following areas within the voting place:

- Exteriors
- Parking Areas
- Entrances
- Elevators (if applicable)
- Fire and Life Safety
- General Layout and Services
- Interiors
- Public Washrooms
- Facility Signage and Information Systems

Upon completion of the Evaluation, a list of the barriers which have been identified will be reviewed to determine if they can be rectified in order to accommodate Electors with disabilities. This may include the implementation of site specific accommodations for that voting place on Election Day.

Voting Places in Institutions

The Municipal Elections Act requires that on voting day, a voting place shall be provided on the premises of the following:

"S. 45. (7)

- 1. An institution for the reception, treatment or vocational training of members or former members of the Canadian Forces.*
- 2. An institution in which, on nomination day, 20 or more beds are occupied by persons who are disabled, chronically ill or infirm.*
- 3. A retirement home in which, on nomination day, 50 or more beds are occupied."*

For the 2010 Municipal Election, the following institution locations have been identified:

- Bayfield House Retirement Lodge
- Beechwood Private Hospital
- Georgian Bay General Hospital (Penetanguishene Location)
- Georgian Manor
- Jennings Lodge Retirement Home
- Maplewood Retirement Residence
- Mental Health Centre Penetanguishene (Regional Division and Oak Ridge Division)

A Site Evaluation Form will be completed to identify any barriers at the voting place. Accessibility of the voting place in institutions will be addressed to the best of the Town's ability through the cooperation of the institution owners/operators.

The Deputy Returning Officer will attend to the Elector anywhere within the voting place to allow an Elector to vote with a mobility disability in an institution.

The time of the voting place within each institution will be arranged with the institution administrator.

Election Materials

The Town is required, as per the Accessible Customer Service Standard, to give 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 Town 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 Town or is supplied by a third party, the Town 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 Materials

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

Optical Character Recognition - This software converts text that is displayed on a computer monitor to voice (using a speech-synthesizer). Should the Elector not have access to OCR software, the Town can provide assistance through public access computers at the Townhall and/or Public Library to assist in viewing Election material prepared by the Town.

Website – Information generated by the Town on the website in relation to the election will be in a format for which OCR software can be utilized. In addition, website font can be sized in three (3) levels to aid the user in reading the information.

Voting Materials (Ballots)

Audio Format (Ballots) - The Ballot Marker Device add-on feature which will be available at all voting places allows the Elector to use headphones to hear the ballot presentation, and uses a handheld controller device to control the voting session and select votes. A paper ballot is printed which is completely indistinguishable from a paper ballot marked by hand, thereby maintaining the privacy of the accessibility voter.

Handheld Voting Controller (Ballots) - The Ballot Marker Device add-on feature which will be available at all voting places is equipped with an Accessible Voting Handheld Controller, with Braille labels and buttons of different colours and shapes for visually-impaired voters.

Other Assistive Devices – Each voting place will be equipped with magnifiers, hand-held ballot marker device, standardized icons as well as the assistance of Election Officials.

Voting Provisions for Electors with Disabilities at the Voting Place

The following voting provisions are in place to accommodate the voting needs of Electors with disabilities:

Support Persons - In relation to a person with a disability, a Support Person accompanies him or her in order to help with communications, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services.

The Deputy Returning Officer may permit an Elector who needs assistance in voting to have such assistance as the Deputy Returning Officer considers necessary. The

Support Person, upon the completion of the prescribed oath, may accompany the Elector behind the voting screen to assist the Elector in the voting process.

Assistive Personal Equipment - Assistive personal devices include, but are not limited to, wheelchairs, walkers, white canes, walking canes, note taking devices, portable magnifiers, recording machines, assistive listening devices, personal oxygen tanks and devices for grasping.

Each voting place will be equipped with magnifiers and a hand-held ballot marker device. Personal Assistance from an Election Official is also available.

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 all voting places.

Physical Disabilities – Voting places including parking areas, entrances and voting areas will be selected and/or setup in a manner that enables Electors with physical disabilities to vote.

In the event an Elector is unable to access the established voting area due to a physical disability, the Deputy Returning Officer may attend to the Elector anywhere within the voting place.

Vision Loss - The Ballot Marker Device add-on feature, which will be available at all voting places, includes an Accessible Voting Handheld Controller with Braille labels and buttons of different colours and shapes for visually-impaired voters.

Hearing Impaired, Deafness and Hearing Loss – Each voting place will be equipped with a wipe board and/or pad of paper and pen to communicate with the hearing impaired in writing if required.

Speech Impairments, Cognitive Disabilities & Mental Illness – Personal Assistance from an Election Official will be available.

Accessibility Training for Election Officials

All Election Officials are required to complete the Town’s general Accessible Customer Service training which includes:

- The purpose of the Act
- How to interact with people with various disabilities
- How to interact with people who use the assistance of a service animal or support person

Election Officials will be provided with access to an online Guidebook to assist them in delivering and maintaining accessible customer service by:

- Being aware of accessibility features at/for the voting place
- Providing tips on how to maintain these accessibility features
- Being aware of various tools available to assist with customer service such as assistive devices
- Knowing when and how to report a disruption of service
- Knowing how to collect Customer Feedback

In addition to the Town's general Customer Service Training, all Election Officials will be provided with customized training on this plan and the related materials contained within, as well as the following:

- 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.;
- A requirement to ensure that Electors are aware that assistance (in varying forms) is available if required;
- Direction for Election Officials 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;
- Encouraging Election Officials to approach an Elector if it appears that the Elector requires assistance to get around in the voting place, offer assistance;
- Conduct routine checks of the voting place to ensure accessible features are maintained (eg. check the access doors frequently);
- Offer assistance and watch for Electors unable to easily enter the building;
- Ensure that Electors who have self-identified as voting curbside are met in a timely manner;

Upon completion of the training program, each Election Official will be required to complete and return an **Accessibility Compliance Form**.

Reporting

As per the Municipal Elections Act:

"S. 8 (8)

Within 90 days after voting day in a regular election, the clerk shall submit a report to council about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities. 2009."

In addition, said report will be provided to the Accessibility Coordinator and the Accessibility Advisory Committee. It will also be made available to the public via the Town's website and through the Clerk's Office at the Townhall.

Additional Information

Customer Service Feedback

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

The Customer Service Feedback Forms are available at the Townhall, will be available at the voting places or can be accessed online via the Town's website for download to submit a copy in writing, by FAX or by e-mail or by telephone, in person to:

Town of Penetanguishene

Attention: Accessibility Coordinator

10 Robert Street West

P.O. Box 5009

Penetanguishene, ON L9M 2G2

Phone: (705) 549-7453 x 211

FAX: (705) 549-3743

Email: scooper@penetanguishene.ca

Accessible Service Disruptions

From time to time and/or for unforeseen circumstances beyond the Town's control, temporary service disruptions may be experienced. 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 Town shall provide reasonable notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by persons with disabilities.

Notice of these temporary disruptions shall be provided in a conspicuous place and manner at the respective locations and information shall also be posted on the Town website.

This notice shall include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

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

Appendix A – Voting Place Site Evaluation Form

Name of Voting Place: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Contact Name: _____

Checklist		
Exteriors	Yes	No
Accessible pedestrian route(s) or path(s) are wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs, scooters, or other mobility devices		
Curb cuts or ramps are wide enough for wheelchairs and scooters, have a non-slip finish and are kept clear of snow and ice in winter weather		
Routes are not obstructed by poles, plants, bicycle racks, etc.		
Accessible entrances are clearly marked with the International Symbol of Accessibility		
Building and route signage is provided in large, high contrast lettering		
Accessible passenger loading zone accommodates accessible vehicles		
On exterior steps, forward edges are highly colour contrasted for easy visibility		
On both sides of ramps or exterior stairs, continuous handrails are a bright contrasting colour and have horizontal or vertical rails to prevent people from slipping through		
Parking Areas	Yes	No
Accessible parking spaces are clearly marked with the International Symbol of Accessibility		
There is a safe, clearly marked, accessible pedestrian route from the designated parking area to		

an accessible building entrance or elevator lobby		
Accessible pedestrian route is made of firm, level material		
Entrances	Yes	No
Entrances are accessible to people using wheelchairs or scooters		
Accessible door: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - opens automatically - has power assisted door operators, or - can be easily opened with one hand 		
Mats are level with the floor and door thresholds are beveled so they do not create a tripping hazard		
People can easily find information, at a reception counter, an accessible call bell or information phone for persons requiring assistance		
Elevators (if applicable)	Yes	No
Elevator doorways are wide enough and stay open long enough to allow persons using wheelchairs to pass through easily		
In accessible elevators, Braille signage and controls can be easily reached and a two-way emergency call system or telephone provided		
Audible signals announce floors and up/down direction of elevator cars		
Fire and Life Safety	Yes	No
A fire policy and/or fire safety plan is available to Election Officials and includes provisions for the evacuation of people with disabilities		
Main exit routes and exit doors are easily accessed and used by people using mobility aids		
Exit instructions are printed in large text, and mounted in an accessible, highly visible location		
Fire alarms have both visual and audible signals		
Fire hose cabinets and fire extinguishers are in a highly contrasting colour		
A first aid station/kit is available to Election Officials		
General Layout and Services	Yes	No
Queuing areas and serving aisles are wide enough for people using mobility aids including electric wheelchairs and scooters		

Counters/tables are accessible to and useable by patrons using wheelchairs or scooters		
Appropriate lighting is installed to ensure that people with vision disabilities may clearly identify colours, patterns and signage		
Interiors	Yes	No
Floor finishes have non-slip surfaces under wet and dry conditions		
Open-concept, accessible routes are marked by bright colour or textural changes at floor level, to provide directional cues for people with vision disabilities		
There are no protruding objects or tripping hazards in accessible routes, and if so, they are clearly marked with a bright colour, a cane-detectable floor finish, or a guard		
Where floors are carpeted, the carpet is of firm, dense construction and easy for a wheelchair user to roll over without difficulty		
Thresholds are beveled to accommodate different floor materials		
Walls in busy areas, corridors, ramps or staircases are finished in smooth, non-glossy, non-abrasive finishes		
Colour of doors or door frames in hallways contrast with surrounding wall colours		
Public Washrooms	Yes	No
An accessible stall is provided for each sex when integrated into regular washrooms or an accessible stand-alone unisex washroom is located nearby		
The following washroom features are accessible to people with a wide range of disabilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • grab bars • coat hooks • flush controls • wash basins • toilet paper dispenser • mounted automatic hand-dryers or paper towel holders 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lever-handled faucets or automatic faucet 		
Facility Signage and Information Systems		
Show the International Symbol of Accessibility	Yes	No
Include appropriate pictograms, wherever possible (e.g. on washroom doors)		
Include large high contrast text, clear, light-coloured lettering or symbols on a dark background, or dark characters on a light background		
Are mounted at a convenient height for both wheelchair users and people with vision disabilities		

Person who Completed Evaluation: _____

Areas of Concern: _____

Site Selected: Yes ___ No ___

Special Accommodations for Site: _____
