

## **Election Accessibility Plan Township of Springwater**

### **A. Purpose**

The Township of Springwater is committed to the promotion of an accessible municipality in compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and meeting the accessibility needs of persons with a disability in a timely manner.

The Clerk shall have regard to the needs of electors with disabilities and give consideration to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 as amended and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 as amended, while providing all eligible electors full access and the right to vote during the election.

The Election Accessibility Plan will be in conjunction with the Township of Springwater's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and the Accessibility Policy.

### **B. Definitions**

**Accessible Communications** means depending on the situation and the person's needs, the format of communication may be altered to better suit the customer. The communication can be made more accessible in various ways including, but not limited to, changing the usual method of communication or using an assistive device for service.

**Accessible Formats** may include, but are not limited to, large print, plain language, recorded audio, or electronic, such as Word, PDF, or HTML, Braille, and other formats usable by persons with disabilities.

**Assistive Device** is a technical aid, communication device, or medical aid modified or customized that is used to increase, maintain or improve the functional abilities of people with disabilities.

**Barrier** is anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, information or communication barrier, an attitudinal barrier, or a policy or practice.

**Communication** means the process of providing, sending, receiving and understanding information.

**Communication Supports** may include, but are not limited to, captioning, alternative and augmentative communication supports, plain language, sign language, and other supports that facilitate effective communication.

**Council** means the Council for The Corporation of The Township of Springwater.

**Customer Service** means the provision of goods or services that members of the public are allowed to use.

**Disability means** (as defined in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005):

- a. Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
- b. A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- c. A learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- d. A mental disorder, or
- e. An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

**Election** is the process of a public vote to select a person(s) for municipal or school board office.

**Personal Assistive Device** means an assistive device that those with a disability may bring with them, such as a walker or a personal oxygen tank, which aid in their day-to-day functions.

**Principles of Dignity** means that policies, procedures and practices that respect the dignity of a person with a disability are those that treat them as customers and clients, who are as valued and as deserving of effective and full service as any other customer. Service delivery needs to take into account how people with disabilities can effectively

access and use services.

**Principle of Equal Opportunity** means having the same chances, options, benefits and results as others. In the case of services, people with disabilities have the same opportunity to benefit from the provision of goods and services as others. They should not have to make significantly more effort to access or obtain service and they should not have to accept lesser quality or more inconvenience. Equal opportunity can best be reached by taking steps to ensure that individual needs are taken into account when providing goods or services. Principles may need to be balanced in order to achieve the outcomes that meet the needs of the person with a disability.

**Principle of Independence** means freedom from control or influence of others and the freedom to make your own choices. It may also mean the freedom to do things in your own way.

**Principle of Integration** means services that allow people with disabilities to fully benefit from the same services, in the same place and in the same or similar way as other customers. Integration means that policies, practices and procedures are designed to be accessible to everyone including people with disabilities. At times when integration does not serve the needs of all people with disabilities, it may be necessary to use alternate measures to provide goods or services.

**Providing Services** means providing goods or services to members of the public.

**Public Sector** includes provincial government, municipal government, universities, colleges, hospitals, health care, school boards, and public transportation organizations.

**Service Animal** is:

- a. An animal, for the purpose of this policy, is a service animal for a person with a disability,
- b. Means it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to their disability, or
- c. Means the person provides identification or documentation from a recognized authority.

**Support Person** means, in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies them in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs, or with access to goods or services.

**Township** means The Corporation of The Township of Springwater.

## C. Requirements Under the Election Accessibility Plan

The Township is offering three methods of voting:

- Vote by Internet
- Vote by Telephone
- Vote by In-Person Electronic Method at a Voter Help Centre

The ability to offer three voting methods is a unique opportunity for an election and provides the voter with multiple options to vote that suit their needs and abilities. Voters have the ability to vote anywhere that has a phone or internet connection from a device they would already own that meets their specific needs.

### Training

All employees and election personnel shall be trained on accessibility policies, procedures and plans, which include the Election Accessibility Plan and Accessibility Policy. 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 accessibility needs due to a disability. Training will include:

- a) Review of the purposes of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and the Customer Service Standard's requirements of Ontario Regulation 191/11 for the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation.
- b) How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities.
- c) How to interact with persons with disabilities who use assistive devices or require the assistance of a service animal or support person.
- d) How to use voting equipment and assistive devices to deliver election services.
- e) What to do if a person is having difficulty accessing election information or services.

Note, a record will be maintained of all election staff training.

All employees and election personnel shall have regard to the Accessibility Policy and Multi-Year Accessibility Plan enacted by the Township of Springwater.

Each candidate shall be provided the Province of Ontario's Candidates Guide to Accessible Elections.

### **Voter Help Centers**

All designated voter help centers will be accessible to eligible electors with accessible parking spaces clearly marked, barrier free entrances that allow those with a mobile assistive device to enter freely, and ability to clearly navigate to the entrance point from the parking area.

The Clerk shall give regard in each voter help center for:

- A small seating area available for electors to rest a short time, if needed.
- Voting booths that are low and wide enough to enable wheelchair or other mobile assistive device access.
- Posting of a large print notice of the ballot and the method of voting.
- Corridors that are wide enough and easily traveled with a wheelchair or other mobile assistive device.
- Ensure that the voter help center is clearly marked, well-lit and visible.
- Provide for curb side voting to ensure every elector is provide an opportunity to vote.

The use of service animals and support people shall be accepted at all voter help centers.

### **Notice of Temporary Service Disruption**

If there is a temporary disruption in the delivery of election information or services, the Clerk's Department shall provide public notice on the Township's website, and social media, at the physical site of the disruption, and when possible in the local media. The notice shall include the reason for the disruption, anticipated duration, who is responding, and a description of alternative methods of delivering the information or service. Every effort shall be made to provide alternative methods of providing the information or service to persons with disabilities. Notice and updates shall be made regularly throughout the service interruption.

### **Campaign Expenses**

In accordance with Section 76(5) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996, as amended*, 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. Examples of these expenses are sign language interpreters for door-to-door campaigning, accessible transportation to attend campaign events/Candidates meetings, and cost of specialized software.

If requested, the elector shall be permitted to vote with assistance as provided in the Municipal Elections Act by having the person to assist swear an Affidavit of Secrecy.

To allow an eligible elector to vote, a Deputy Returning Officer shall attend on the elector anywhere within the area designated as the voter help center, if required.

If an elector is unable to attend an electronic voting station table within the voter help center, the alternative means of voting may be offered to them. This may include lending the voter a tablet or other electronic device so they may vote by internet or phone to cast their ballot.

Feedback from our electors gives the Clerk opportunities to learn and improve the voting process with regards to accessibility. The Township recognizes the right of our electors to make a complaint, compliment or suggestion on ways to improve our election services.

To assist the Township of Springwater in ensuring that the delivery of goods and services to those with disabilities is provided in an effective and timely manner, the elector is invited to provide their feedback in writing in accordance with the Township's Accessibility Policy's Accessible Customer Service Feedback Comment Form, which will be available on the Township's website and at all voter help centers.

All standards and requirements as outlined within the Township's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and the Accessibility Policy shall be met as required through the municipal election process.

#### **D. Authority of the Clerk**

The Clerk has the authority to amend all election plans, policies and procedures as required.