

# **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 paper ballot with tabulators.
- Vote by internet.
- Vote by phone.

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.

All employees and election personnel shall be trained on accessibility policies, procedures and plans, which include the Election Accessibility Plan, Accessibility

Policy and Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. The Clerk shall keep a record of those personnel trained for election purposes.

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.

All designated voting places, including any advance vote, 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 voting place 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.
- The provision of magnifying sheets to assist a person with low vision impairment.
- Corridors that are wide enough and easily traveled with a wheelchair or other mobile assistive device.
- Ensure that the voting place is clearly marked, well-lit and visible.
- Provide for curb side voting to ensure every elector is provide an opportunity to vote.

All Deputy Returning Officers (DRO) will be provided with sight improvement implements to assist eligible electors with sight impairments.

The use of service animals and support people shall be accepted at all voting locations.

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 voting place, if required.

If an elector is unable to attend a traditional voting station table within the voting place, 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 regard to accessibility. The Township recognized 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 voting places.

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.

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Reviewed by Joint AAC:

October 19, 2017