

**Subject:                   ACCESSIBLE ELECTION**

---

**Purpose Statement:**

The procedures describe all the accessibility requirements outlined under the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

Election staff will ensure reasonable efforts are made to provide election information and services in a manner that respects the independence and dignity of persons with disabilities. Equal opportunity shall be given to all persons to use, benefit and obtain election information and services.

The delivery of election information and services to persons with disabilities shall be:

- emphasized through mandatory election training
- made accessible by the use of service animals, support persons, assistive devices, unless otherwise prohibited by law
- a component of the standard Election practice

**Scope:**

These procedures are applicable to all Election Staff performing works on behalf of the Township Clerk.

**Definitions:**

**Barrier** is defined by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, and means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, information or communication barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice.

**Disability** is defined by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, and means:

- (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 and Insurance Act, 1997*.

**Service Animal** as outlined in Ontario Regulation 429/07 is a service animal for a person with a disability if it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability; or if the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

**Support Persons** as outlined in Ontario Regulation 429/07 means a support person in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies him or her in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services.

## **Procedures:**

### **1. Staff Training**

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

Training will include:

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

### **2. Staff Assistance**

#### **Election Information**

Candidates and electors with disabilities will be able to receive information and copies of election documents in a format that takes into account their disability. The format may be agreed upon between the requester and the Township Clerk. Notice of this provision is located on the Township's Accessibility Webpage at [www.puslinch.ca](http://www.puslinch.ca) and is included in election notices placed in the local media.

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

If there is a temporary disruption in the delivery of election information or services, Township Staff shall provide public notice on the Township's Election Webpage, at the

physical site of the disruption and when possible in the local media. The notice shall include the following information:

- reason for the disruption,
- expected duration of the disruption,
- if available, an alternative means of obtaining the service.

Every effort shall be made to provide alternative methods of providing the information or service to persons with disabilities.

Township Staff are available to assist with any issues that may arise with respect to providing a barrier-free election and can be reached by way of the following contact information:

Telephone: 519-763-1226

In Person: Municipal Offices  
7404 Wellington Road 34  
Puslinch, ON N0B 2J0

Email: [elections@puslinch.ca](mailto:elections@puslinch.ca)

Mail: Township of Puslinch  
7404 Wellington Road 34  
Puslinch, ON N0B 2J0

### **3. Assistance to Candidates**

#### **Service Animals**

Candidates and scrutineers are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at all Voting Locations and other designated election locations.

#### **Campaign Expenses**

Expenses that are incurred by a candidate with a disability 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.

### **4. Assistance to Electors**

#### **Voting by Proxy**

A person 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 at Township Municipal Offices. The person being appointed as a proxy will be required to take a statutory declaration before a Commissioner of Oaths. Township Staff can administer this oath (Municipal Offices, 7404 Wellington Rd 34, Puslinch, ON N0B 2J0). Once completed, the voting proxy may be exercised at any advance voting location or on Election Day. On Election Day the proxy must be exercised at a Location for whom the proxy is voting. The Voting Proxy Form will be available August 1, 2018.

### **Voting Locations**

Information regarding Advance Voting opportunities and Election Day voting information will be available on the Township's election webpage at [www.puslinch.ca](http://www.puslinch.ca).

### **Parking**

Accessible parking spaces will be clearly marked and in full compliance with the Township's Parking By-law 5000-05. Routine checks will be made to ensure all entrances remain barrier free through the course of the day.

### **Entrance to the Voting Locations**

All entrances to the Voting Location will be easy to access and barrier free. Every effort shall be made to ensure that the door into the Voting Location is wide enough for a wheelchair or scooter to pass through easily. The door hardware is to be accessible and operated by a person using a closed fist. If the doors are heavy, awkward to open or have handles that are in close reach, where possible they will be propped open in a safe manner, an alternative entrance will be provided, or election staff will be available to assist.

### **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 are to be well lit and seating made available.

### **Accessible Voting Booths**

Accessible voting booths will be available at each Voting Location. Voting booths will be low in height and have a wide area to allow for individuals who use a wheelchair or scooter to vote independently and secretively. Magnifying sheets will be made available to assist an individual with low vision.

### **Accessible Voting Technologies – Advance Voting**

The Advance Voting Location will be equipped with a ballot marking device for a voter with a disability. The Ballot Marker Device produces a human and machine readable marked paper ballot from a blank sheet of paper, completely indistinguishable from a paper ballot marked by hand. The voter uses headphones to hear a ballot presentation and a handheld controller can also be operated by assistive devices such as a sip and puff or hand and foot paddles, for voters who are unable to use their hands to press the selection buttons.

When a voter wishes to use the accessible voting features, the election worker positions the voter behind a privacy screen near the tabulator equipped with the ballot marking device. The election worker then inserts a blank sheet of ballot paper into the printer slot of the device and provides the voter with the headphones and the handheld controller.

The voter hears the audio ballot and uses the controller to adjust volume, speed of the audio presentation, move between contests, and select votes. The audio presentation will confirm votes selected for voter verification. When the vote has been made and confirmed all their vote selections they use the handheld controller to print their actual paper ballot. The printer device will automatically process the blank sheet of paper, printing the full ballot on the sheet complete with the vote markings selected by the voter.

The printed ballot is indistinguishable from a ballot marked by hand because the unit has a library of random handmade marking images which it prints on the ballot, so that the printed markings look just like marks made by hand with a pen. This feature ensures that if the paper ballots are later reviewed by election officials, they will not be able to determine which ballots were made by the Ballot Marker Device, thereby maintaining voter privacy.

The paper ballot printed by the Ballot Marker Device will emerge from the unit into a secrecy folder. The election worker will then insert the ballot into the tabulator.

While an accessible voting session is in process, the tabulator can simultaneously process paper ballots inserted by other voters, allowing the single tabulator to handle both voting channels and maintain the flow of voters.

### **Service Animals**

Electors requiring service animals are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at all voting locations.

### **Support Persons**

Persons with disabilities may be accompanied by a support person within the Voting Location. In addition, an Election Official in each Voting Location can assist a voter. Prior to entering the voting booth, the Election Official shall, in conjunction with the person with

the disability, determine the extent to which they need assistance and the best way in which this assistance can be provided. Where a Voting Location is located in an institution or retirement home, the Election Official can attend on voters in their specific living areas or at their bedside to assist them to vote. All Election Officials are sworn to an oath of secrecy.

It is the responsibility of all Election Officials to make as many accommodations as needed to ensure an elector with a disability is able to cast a vote with comfort and ease.

## **5. Feedback Process & Additional Information**

### **Feedback Process**

Feedback regarding the manner in which the election services are provided to persons with disabilities may be submitted to Township Staff by the following methods:

Telephone: 519-763-1226

In Person: Municipal Offices  
7404 Wellington Rd. 34, Puslinch, ON N0B 2J0

Email: [elections@puslinch.ca](mailto:elections@puslinch.ca)

Mail: Municipal Offices  
7404 Wellington Rd. 34, Puslinch, ON N0B 2J0

Website: [www.puslinch.ca](http://www.puslinch.ca)

In addition, the Township does offer an Accessible Customer Service Feedback Form located on the Township's website at [www.puslinch.ca](http://www.puslinch.ca) under the Bulletin and Events Page.

Once completed this form will be forwarded to Township Staff for action. In addition, staff working in the Township offices can complete the feedback form and submit feedback on behalf of the persons with a disability. Alternatively, the form may be printed and provided to the person for manual completion. Completed forms are date stamped and forwarded to Township staff who will respond to the candidate or elector directly within three (3) business days providing an anticipated action and timeframe for a full response, where appropriate.

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 services.

## **Additional Information**

### **Administration Department**

The Administration Department is located at the Municipal Offices (7404 Wellington Rd. 34, Puslinch, ON N0B 2J0). Administration staff can answer any questions you may have about running for office, the election in general or specific provisions for those persons with disabilities.

### **Election Website**

The Township of Puslinch's Website is continuously updated to reflect the most recent developments and information. Visit the site for an up-to-date list of candidates and other important messages or events throughout the election year at [www.puslinch.ca](http://www.puslinch.ca).

### **Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing – Election Website**

This website contains information about municipal elections, the Province of Ontario 2018 Municipal Elections Candidates and Voters Guide and the Ministry's commitment to promote greater accessibility for voters and candidates with disabilities <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page219.aspx>

### **Service Ontario – e-Laws**

This website contains all current statutes including the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, [www.e-laws.gov.on.ca](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca).

## **Reference and Related Documents:**

Accessibility Policy