

2018 Municipal Elections Accessibility Plan



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1. Introduction

The Election's Accessibility Plan supports and strengthens the Town'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 all electors and candidates, to identify and eliminate barriers for persons with disabilities and to create a positive voting experience.

The Town Clerk's Office will continue to learn, develop and adjust our approaches in order to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. The review of accessibility issues and initiatives and addressing barrier prevention or removal is an ongoing practice. This plan will be improved and updated as new opportunities are identified or become available.

1.1 *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, as amended - Legislative Requirements

The Town Clerk is responsible for conducting municipal elections and establishing policies and procedures to ensure that all electors have the opportunity to fully participate in the 2018 Town of Milton's election.

The *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, as amended states the following:

- 12.1 (1) A clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities.
- 12 (2) The clerk shall prepare a plan regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities and shall make the plan available to the public before voting day in a regular election. 2016, c. 15, s. 11.
- 12 (3) Within 90 days after voting day in a regular election, the clerk shall prepare a report about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities and shall make the report available to the public. 2016, c. 15, s. 11.
- 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.

1.2 Town Clerk's Customer Service Policy

The Town Clerk's Office is committed to making our services accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities. We comply with the customer service standards of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

In fulfilling our mission, the Town Clerk's Office will at all times provide its services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. We give people with disabilities the same opportunity to access our services in the same place, and in a similar way as others. The full customer service policy is attached as Appendix A.

1.3 Definition of Disability

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* defines “disability” as follows:

- (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*.

Disabilities can take many forms, both visible and invisible. The following criteria were considered in the development of this Plan:

- Policies and procedures must be consistent with the principles of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* and must respect the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities,
- Access to electoral services must be integrated and equitable,
- Initiatives should address and accommodate a wide range of abilities, and
- The Town Clerk's Office AODA-compliant customer service policy for providing services to people with disabilities must be followed throughout the election process.

2. Feedback

The Town Clerk welcomes feedback to identify areas where changes need to be considered and ways in which the Town can improve the delivery of an accessible Election. This plan is a living document and will continue to undergo changes. Please provide us with your feedback so we know how to best provide an accessible election. Feedback on this Plan can be submitted through the following channels:

Email: MB-townclerk@milton.ca

Phone: 905-878-7252 x 2253

By Mail: Town of Milton
Town Clerk's Office
150 Mary Street
Milton, ON L9T 6Z5

If you require this information in a different format, please let us know.

3. Consultations

Consultations with the Milton Accessibility Advisory Committee and the Election Working Group provide greater knowledge and understanding in conducting elections that are accessible to all.

Initiative	Actions
Consult with the Milton Accessibility Advisory Committee (MAAC) and the Election Working Group in order to gain better understanding of any accessible needs and to obtain feedback on this Plan by:	Presenting election accessibility initiatives to the Town's MAAC Committee.
	Channel election information through the town's social media, such as Facebook, Twitter and the Town's website.
	Discussions with the Election Working Group members reviewing their municipality accessibility initiatives.
	Including accessibility initiatives in a post-election survey.

4. Communications and Information

Communication and information initiatives ensure election information is accessible and available in alternative formats

Initiative	Actions
Provide an informative and accessible election web site by:	Ensuring election information is available in clear, simple language.
	Continuously updating election information posted on the Town's website to reflect the most recent developments and information.
	Ensuring election web pages are W3C Consortium WCAG 2.0 Level AA Compliant.
	Continuously updating accessibility information on the elections web site that provides information on the initiatives undertaken by the Town Clerk's Office.

5. Assistance to Candidates

Providing candidates with information on how to make their campaigns accessible to the public and providing candidates with election information in accessible and alternative formats, upon request.

Initiative	Actions
Provide candidates with information on how to make their campaigns more accessible, upon request.	Providing candidates with links to the following provincial publications from our Election website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible Campaign Information and Communication • Accessible Constituency, Riding Association, Central Party and Campaign Offices • Accessible All-Candidates Meetings • Candidates' Guide to Accessible Elections (AMCTO)
Provide candidates with access to information in alternative formats by:	Ensuring the candidate's guide and/or other relevant publications are available in an accessible format, upon request.
Ensure candidate information sessions are accessible by:	Making the Town of Milton's voters' list available in an electronic format, free of charge, to all candidates.
	Holding candidate information sessions in accessible locations.
	Making accommodations and special services (for example, ASL interpreters) available upon request.

6. Voting Places

These initiatives cover all aspects of obtaining voting places that are accessible to all.

Initiative	Actions
<p>Ensure all voting places are accessible to electors with disabilities by:</p>	<p>Creating an accessibility checklist for election staff to use when conducting site visits of each voting place ensuring each facility has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • barrier free path of travel from the parking lot / sidewalk • barrier free parking, where parking was provided • door operators or accessible doors • adequate lighting
	<p>Inspecting all voting places to ensure all locations are accessible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where possible, make modifications to existing voting places to make them accessible, for example, temporary ramps • Places that cannot be made accessible will be relocated or merged with other voting places in the vicinity
	<p>Conduct an additional accessibility check in August / September to ensure there have been no changes to the locations.</p>
	<p>Have election staff perform final accessibility checks during the advance vote and on Election Day to verify the accessibility of the voting place.</p>

Initiative	Actions
<p>Ensure all voting place access routes and entrances are clearly identified by:</p>	<p>Ensuring there is designated or reserved parking for persons with disabilities at each voting location where parking is available.</p>
	<p>Marking parking spaces clearly with accessibility symbol or sign.</p>
	<p>Providing appropriate signage at voting places.</p>
	<p>Ensuring electors with accessibility needs are directed to the accessible voting entrance by prominent signage.</p>
	<p>Where possible the accessible entrance is the same as the main entrance.</p>
<p>Ensure all voting place owners and managers are aware of accessibility requirements by:</p>	<p>Notifying all facility owners and managers of the proposed voting places of legislative accessibility requirements in order to prevent last minute changes to voting rooms.</p>

Initiative	Actions
Set up process to facilitate notification of disruptions to service or last minute changes to voting places so that:	<p>In the event of disruptions to service or unforeseen circumstances that affect the accessibility of voting places during the advance vote or on election day, notices of disruption will be posted in real time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on the Town's website • on Facebook • on Twitter • at the site of the disruption <p>When applicable, a media advisory will be issued.</p>
Provide a dedicated contact centre to deal with accessibility issues, concerns or complaints by:	<p>Establishing channels so that an elector with a disability who encounters an accessibility issue can contact Town Clerk's staff:</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Phone: 905-878-7252 x 2253 Email: MB-townclerk@milton.ca</p>

Initiative	Actions
Welcome the use of support persons and service animals in voting places:	Any person with a disability accompanied by a support person or service animal may enter the Town Clerk's Offices or any voting place with his or her support person or service animal.
Provide assistance to electors with disabilities as required by:	Having an election official in the voting place to assist a voter in casting his/her ballot when requested.
	Making accommodations for electors with disabilities as required.
Provide for proxy voting:	In cases where an elector is unable to attend a voting place, the elector can appoint another person to act on their behalf.
Provide for curbside voting:	While all voting places are accessible to all electors, electors with a physical disability can request that the ballot be brought out to their vehicle or to another location within the voting place.

Initiative	Actions
Provide voting opportunities in institutions and retirement homes by:	Establishing voting places at the following facilities in order to allow eligible residents of the facility the opportunity to vote: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • any institution in which 20 or more beds are occupied by persons who are disabled, chronically ill or infirmed • a retirement home in which 50 or more beds are occupied
	Having election staff provide for bedside voting where required.
Review ballot design to increase legibility through:	Increase legibility of ballots through use of accessible font styles and sizes, appropriate case usage, and colours, where possible.
Provide supplies to assist electors with disabilities	Having magnifying sheets available at all voting places to assist electors with low vision.
	Having note pads and pens available at all voting places to assist communication with electors who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.

8. Accessibility Training for Election Officials

Develop accessibility training and development of reference materials for all election staff.

Initiative	Actions
Ensure all election officials receive accessible customer service by training by:	Holding training sessions for election staff on accessibility requirements, serving people with disabilities and on the accommodations and special services available to assist electors.
	Requiring all staff to sign that they received elections and accessibility training.
Develop reference materials for all election officials highlighting how to serve voters with disabilities by:	Including AODA, customer service standard, and serving people with disabilities messaging in all training materials and classroom training being provided to all elections staff.
	Making individual accommodations available upon request to staff during training, for example, ASL interpretation or communication devices.

9. Post-election Report

Section 12.1 (2) of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 as amended states the following:

“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.”

The Town Clerk’s post-election report will be posted on the Town’s web site in a format accessible to persons with disabilities and distributed to disability groups and other stakeholders as requested.

Town Clerk's Office Customer Service Policy Statement Providing Services to People with Disabilities

The Town Clerk's Office is committed to making our services accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities. We comply with the customer service standards of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. If you would like information about our compliance, have a comment or question, please contact us as shown below.

1. Our mission

Is to build public trust and confidence in local government.

2. Our services

We elect government, make government work, and make information accessible.

3. Our commitment

In fulfilling our mission, the Town Clerk's Office will at all times provide its services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. We give people with disabilities the same opportunity to access our services in the same place, and in a similar way as others.

4. Providing service to people with disabilities

The Town Clerk's Office is committed to excellence in service, including service to people with disabilities, and we carry out our functions and responsibilities in the following areas:

4.1 Communication

We communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability. We train our staff who communicate with customers on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.

4.2 Telephone services

We provide fully accessible telephone service to all. We offer to communicate by email or TTY or other methods if regular telephone communication is not suitable to someone's communication needs.

4.3 Assistive devices

We serve all people with disabilities, including those who use assistive devices. We ensure that our staff are trained and familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by people with disabilities while accessing our services.

We also ensure that staff know how to use the assistive devices at their respective work locations which are applicable to their positions.

5. Use of service animals and support persons

We welcome people with disabilities, including those who are accompanied by a service animal, on the parts of our premises that are open to the public and other third parties.

We welcome people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person is allowed to enter the Town Clerk's Office's premises with his or her support person. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to his or her support person while on our premises.

During an election or by-election, a support person assisting a voter will be required to take an oath, stating their commitment to confidentiality and that they will mark the ballot as directed by the voter (if the voter requests this type of assistance). The voter may also be required to take an oath stating they require assistance to vote. The Town Clerk's Office does not normally charge admission to access events or programs, but if we do, we will not charge support persons.

We ensure that all staff dealing with the public are properly trained in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by either a support person or a service animal.

6. Notice of temporary disruption

We give notice when our services are disrupted or our facilities closed in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities. This notice includes information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

Depending on circumstances we post notice using such methods as signage, websites, email, and media advisories.

7. Training for staff

The Town Clerk's Office provides training to employees, including those who deal with the public and all those who are involved in the development and approval of customer service policies, practices and procedures. The training is in accordance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. This training is provided to all staff who deal with the public or are involved in the development and approvals of customer service policies, practices and procedures within three months of their start date.

8. Feedback process

The goal of the Town Clerk's Office is to meet and surpass expectations while serving people with disabilities. Comments on our services regarding how well those expectations are being met are welcome and appreciated.

Feedback regarding the way the Town Clerk's Office provides services to people with disabilities can be made by e-mail, verbally, and in writing. All written feedback will be directed to the Town Clerk:

Email: MB-townclerk@milton.ca

Phone: 905-878-7252 x 2253

Address: Town Clerk
Town Hall
150 Mary Street
Milton, ON L9T 6Z5

Once received, the feedback is redirected to the appropriate director / manager / supervisor. In person feedback should be provided directly to the applicable manager / supervisor. We will acknowledge receipt of phone and email feedback within one business day (24 hours). An acknowledgement will be sent to mailed feedback within 4 business days of receipt.

9. Modifications to this or other policies

Given our commitment to respecting the dignity and independence of people with disabilities, any policy of the Town Clerk's Office that does not do this will be modified or removed.

10. Questions about this policy

This policy exists to achieve service excellence to people with disabilities. If anyone has a question about the policy, or if the purpose of this policy is not understood, an explanation should be provided by the Town Clerk's Office:

Email: MB-townclerk@milton.ca

Phone: 905-878-7252 x 2253

Address: Town Clerk
Town Hall
150 Mary Street
Milton, ON L9T 6Z5