



MUNICIPALITY OF EAST FERRIS

2022 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

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1. Introduction

The Municipality of East Ferris 2022 Municipal Elections Accessibility Plan supports and strengthens the Municipality'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 Municipal 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 Municipal 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 2022 Municipal Elections. 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 Municipal Clerk's Customer Service Policy

The Municipal 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 Municipal 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.

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 Municipal Clerk’s Office AODA-Compliant Customer Service Policy (Appendix A) for providing services to people with disabilities must be followed throughout the election process.

2. Feedback

The Municipal Clerk’s Office welcomes feedback to identify areas where changes need to be considered and ways in which the Municipality 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: monica.hawkins@eastferris.ca

Phone: (705) 752-2740

Fax: (705) 752-2452

By Mail: Municipality of East Ferris, 390 Hwy 94, Corbeil, ON P0H 1K0

3. Communications and Information

The Clerk's Office will ensure election information is accessible and available in alternative formats.

4. Assistance to Candidates

The Clerk's Office will provide candidates with information on how to make their campaigns accessible to the public and provide candidates with the AMCTO's Candidates' guide to Accessible Elections.

5. Voting Places

The voting places will be accessible to all electors with disabilities. There will be barrier free path of travel from the parking lot/sidewalk, barrier free parking, and adequate lighting. The Clerk will inspect all voting places prior to the elections to ensure all locations are accessible.

6. Voting Provisions for Electors with Disabilities

Various initiatives regarding voting places are used to achieve our goals of a barrier free election. The Municipality welcomes the use of support persons and service animals in the voting places. The Municipality will also provide the 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.

The Municipality will provide for curb-side 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 within the voting place.

The Municipality will provide voting opportunities to Nipissing Manor in establishing voting place at the facility in order to allow eligible residents of the facility the opportunity to vote.

The Municipality will provide supplies to assist electors with disabilities at the voting station if required.

7. Accessibility Training for Election Officials

The Municipal Clerk will develop accessibility training and reference materials for all election staff inclusive of training sessions for election staff on accessibility requirements; serving people with disabilities; and on the accommodations and special services available to assist electors.

8. Post-election Report

The Municipal Clerk will comply with Section 12.1 (2) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, as amended, which 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.”

Appendix A: AODA-Compliant Customer Service Policy

The Municipal Clerks' 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 or have a comment or question, please contact us.

1. Our mission

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 Municipal 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 Municipal Clerk's Office is committed to excellence in service, including service to people with disabilities, and we carry out our duties 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.

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.

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 Municipal 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 will also be required to take an oath stating they require assistance to vote. The Municipal 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 is 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 Municipality 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 that deals with the public or is 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 Municipal 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 Municipal 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 Municipal Clerk's:

Email: monica.hawkins@eastferris.ca

Phone: (705) 752-2740

Fax: (705) 752-2452

By Mail: Municipality of East Ferris, 390 Hwy 94, Corbeil, ON P0H 1K0

Once received, 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 (1) business day. We will acknowledge receipt of fax and mailed feedback within four (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, our policy may be modified or revised when required.

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, please contact the Municipal Clerk's Office.