

TOWNSHIP OF SOUTHGATE

Election Accessibility Plan



2022 Municipal Election

This Plan is for use in the 2022 Municipal Election in conjunction with the Municipality's current Accessibility Plan and Accessible Customer Service Policy

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1. Introduction

The Municipal Clerk is responsible for the proper legislative and administrative conduct of municipal and school board elections in the Township of Southgate and establishing policies and procedures to ensure that all electors have the opportunity to fully participate in the 2022 municipal election.

The Municipal Elections Act, (MEA), Section 12.1 (1) places responsibility on the Clerk to have regard to the needs of the electors and candidates with disabilities. Accessible Customer Service Standards must be followed when conducting municipal elections.

Section 12.1 (2) of the MEA requires that 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.

Section 12.1 (3) of the MEA requires that within ninety (90) days of voting day the Clerk who is responsible for conducting the election shall prepare a report regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities and shall make the report available to the public.

Section 45 (2) states that in establishing the locations of voting places, the clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities.

The Township of Southgate municipal elections will be conducted in a manner that shall ensure candidates and electors with disabilities have full and equal access to all election information and services, including the Help Centres located at the Southgate Municipal Office, Southgate Council Chambers Building and the Frank Macintyre Building. The election shall be conducted in a manner that ensures that persons with disabilities are able to vote independently and privately with access to voting assistance if required.

2. Purpose and Scope

This policy adheres to the objectives of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, and the Ontario Human Rights Code, 1990 and establishes procedures to assure equal access and opportunity for disabled persons to participate in the municipal election process with dignity and independence. This policy integrates election procedures regarding accessibility into the regular election process.

The scope of this policy applies to all facilities and election services of the Township of Southgate during municipal elections.

3. Definition of Disability

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) 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) 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 as amended 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
- adherence to the Township of Southgate accessible customer service policy and accessibility plan, throughout the election process.

4. Staff Training and Election Assistance

Staff Training

All staff carrying out election duties will have completed the Township of Southgate Accessible Customer Services Training and specific Election Training to comply with the

municipal Accessibility Plan and to recognize and ensure that persons with disabilities are served in a way that accommodates their individual needs.

Training will include:

- How to interact/communicate with persons with various types of disabilities;
- How to interact with persons with disabilities who use assistive devices, require the assistance of a support person or a service animal;
- How to clearly explain internet and telephone voting, as well as the touch-screen voting option;
- What to do if a person is having difficulty accessing election information or services; and
- How to provide voter assistance if requested.

Provision of Election Information

Election information will be provided to electors and candidates with disabilities in an alternative format, agreed upon between the requester and election staff.

Notice of the provision of information in an alternative format will be provided on the municipal website www.southgate.ca

Notice of Temporary Service Disruption

The Clerk shall provide public notice on the municipal website and in the local media if there is a temporary disruption in the delivery of election information or services. The Notice shall include the reason for the disruption, the expected duration and an explanation 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.

Staff Assistance

Election Staff are available throughout the election to assist with any issues that may arise with respect to providing an accessible election. For more information or staff assistance, please contact Lindsey Green, Clerk at the municipal office as follows:

519-923-2110 ext. 230

lgreen@southgate.ca

185667 Grey County Road 9
Dundalk, ON N0C1B0

5. Assistance to Electors

General

The 2022 Township of Southgate Municipal Elections will be conducted with Internet and Telephone Voting methods. Detailed information about each voting method is set out in the 2022 Election Procedures document, available on the municipal website or from the Clerk's Office and can be provided in an alternative format upon request.

Please contact Clerk Lindsey Green at lgreen@southgate.ca or by phone at 519-923-2110 ext. 230 if you require voter information in an accessible format.

The election staff are available throughout the election to assist with any issues that may arise with respect to providing a barrier-free election.

Help Centre's

Section 45(2) of the MEA requires that the Clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities.

There will be three accessible Help Centre's throughout the Voting Period (October 14 to October 24, 2022) as follows:

Municipal Administration Office

185667 Grey County Road 9, Dundalk

Friday, October 14th to Monday, October 24, 2022

During Regular Office Hours (Monday to Friday 8:30 am to 4:00 pm)

Dundalk Frank Macintyre Building - Dundalk

220 Owen Sound Street, Dundalk

Saturday October 22, 2022 – 10:00 am to 2:00 pm

Southgate Council Chambers – Holstein

123273 Southgate Road 12, Holstein

Saturday, October 15 – 10:00 am to 2:00 pm

Monday, October 24 – 10:00 am to close of voting at 8:00 pm

Accessible Voting Kiosk

An accessible Voting Kiosk will be located at the Help Centres and shall include a voting station low in height with sufficient area to allow individuals using mobility aids to vote independently and secretively.

Interior

Access to the interior is level and all doors leading into and throughout the building are automatic and/or accessible at each Help Centre location. Carpeting and doormats are level with the floor to prevent potential tripping hazards.

Voting Assistance

Persons with disabilities may be accompanied by a support person within the Help Centre or the election staff can assist the voter in casting their vote. Election staff shall, in conjunction with the person with the disability, determine the extent to which they need assistance and the best way to provide the assistance. All election staff are sworn to an oath of secrecy.

Accessible Voting Technologies

Voting Kiosks will have a touch screen tablet for internet voting that will assist voters with disabilities in casting their votes with independence and privacy. Election staff will be available at all times to assist voters at the kiosk upon request. Support persons and service animals will be accommodated.

6. Internet Voting

Internet voting allows voters to vote securely anywhere the service is available. This method provides for easy voting for persons with a variety of disabilities to cast their vote with independence and privacy as voters have the option of using the assistive tools they have on their own computer such as a thumbswitch or sip and puff technology.

This method of voting is designed to encourage voter participation as voters don't have to attend a physical location to cast their ballot and accessibility and privacy for persons where disabilities are maximized.

7. Telephone Voting

Telephone voting allows voters to vote from anywhere phone service is available which offers easy voting for persons with a variety of disabilities to cast their vote with independence and privacy. Land lines or cell phones can be used to vote and the method is compatible with assistive devices.

Voters can register their vote selections with the telephone keypad or voice commands, greatly increasing accessibility, privacy and independence for voters who do not have internet access.

8. Assistance to Candidates

General

The 2022 Township of Southgate Municipal Elections will be conducted with Internet and Telephone Voting methods as approved by By-law 2022-037. Detailed information about each voting method is set out in the 2022 Election Procedures document, available on the municipal website or from the Municipal Office. The document can be made available in an alternative format upon request.

Please contact the office at 519-923-2110 ext. 230 or the Clerk at lgreen@southgate.ca if you require your Candidate Package in an accessible format.

Election Staff are available throughout the election to assist with any issues that may arise with respect to providing a barrier-free election.

Service Animals/Support Persons

Candidates are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal and/or support person at all designated election help centres.

Campaign Expenses

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.

9. Feedback

The Municipal Clerk 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.

The feedback received on the Election Accessibility Plan will be reviewed by the Clerk and any necessary action taken in a timely manner.

10. Post-Election

Within 90 days of voting day, the Clerk shall prepare a report to Council about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.