



2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan

Introduction In an effort to ensure that the 2022 Municipal Election is consistent with core principals of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, and current Gillies Township Accessibility Protocols, this document was created prior to the 2022 elections in order to identify measures to be taken to ensure the 2022 Municipal Elections are accessible. The plan will address specific accessibility requirements in relation to the 2022 Municipal Elections in Gillies Township and will address the requirements for conducting an election with regard for persons with disabilities as defined by the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996, S.O. 1996, SCHED 32*. Under the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, as amended Section 12.1 (1) A clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities. The focus of this Plan is to ensure that election services are accessible to all electors and candidates, to identify and eliminate barriers for persons with disabilities and to create a positive voting experience. This Plan is a “living” document which will be improved and updated as best practices are identified and opportunity for improvement arises. Staff will continuously review this Plan and review current information regarding providing accessible elections from sources such as the AMCTO, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and neighboring municipalities.

Objectives

Gillies Township’s 2022 Municipal Elections Accessibility Plan will ensure that:

- Individuals with disabilities, without exception, can independently and privately cast their ballot;
- Individuals with disabilities will have full and equal access to all information concerning the 2022 Municipal Election;
- Individuals with disabilities can fully participate in the Municipal Election as volunteers, electors and/or candidates;
- Gillies Township will make the public and candidates aware of accessibility measures available;
- This plan will be improved and updated as new opportunities are identified or become available.

Legislative Requirements

12.1(1) A Clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities. 2009, c. 33 Sch. 21, s. 8 (8)

12.1(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, part.

12.1(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, part.

45 (1) The Clerk shall establish the number and location of voting places for an election as he or she considers most convenient for the electors. 1996, c. 32, Sch., s.45(1).

45 (2) In establishing the locations of voting places, the clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities. 2009, c. 33, Sch. 21, s. 8 (23)

Definition of a 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 impairment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or in 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.

Accessibility Training for Election Staff

Staff Training

All staff carrying out election duties will complete 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. Staff will be available throughout the election to assist with any issues that may arise with respect to providing a barrier-free election. Accessible Customer Services Training and specific Election Training will include,

- How to interact/communicate with persons with various types of disability;
- 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, telephone and paper voting;
- What to do if a person is having difficulty accessing election information or services;

- 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 the Clerk.

Assistance to Voters and Candidates General

The 2022 Municipal Elections will be held on Wednesday, October 19, 2022 for an Advanced Poll and on Monday, October 24, 2022 for election day. Gillies Township will be offering voters paper ballots.

Every effort will be made to ensure the voting station is accessible to all voters and staff will be assessing the voting location prior to voting day, to ensure each voting station is accessible to all voters. The voting locations will be held at the following location on Wednesday, October 19, 2022 from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m and Monday, October 24, 2022 from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Gillies Municipal Office (Side of Whitefish Valley School)

Parking

Each voting location will have designated parking for individuals with disabilities that are clearly posted and located close to the entrance to the voting area.

Entrance

The voting location has automatic door opening devices or will be propped open in a safe manner. They are wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair or other mobility devices.

Interior

Access to the interior voting area is level. Carpeting and doormats are level with the floor to prevent potential tripping hazards. The voting area is well lit, and seating shall be made available.

Accessible Voting Booth

The voting area will be low in height and have a wide area to allow individuals using mobility aids to vote independently and secretively.

Voting Assistance

Persons with disabilities may be accompanied by a support person within the voting area or staff can assist the voter in casting their vote. A designated support person and/or 'Friend of the Voter' will be administered an oath of secrecy/ confidentiality by an Election Official prior to providing any such assistance. Voting area 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.

Service Animals/ Support Persons

Any individual voter or candidate is permitted to be accompanied by a service animal and/ or support person at all designated election locations.

Accessible Voting

Staff will be available to assist voters upon request. Support persons and service animals will be accommodated.

Service Disruption

The Clerk shall provide public notice on the municipal website 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.

Feedback Process

Feedback is encouraged and any received will be reviewed by the Clerk and appropriate action will be taken to remove barriers or provide accommodation if necessary. Any feedback provided to the Clerk will be summarized in the post-election Election Accessibility Report and will be used to improve accessibility measures in future municipal election.

General Election Materials

- **Large Print** Printed Ballots and election material generated by Gillies Township will be provided in an Arial font, minimum 12 point, and can be made available in a font (print) size that is 16 to 20 points or larger by request.
- **Website** Information generated by Gillies Township on the website in relation to the election will be compliant with WCAG 2.0 Level AA and allow for assistive software to be utilized. In addition, website font can be adjusted within the browser's functionality to aid the user in reading the information.

The 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan is available online and is also available at 1092 Highway 595 (Gillies Municipal Office). Staff are available throughout the election period to assist with any issues that may arise with respect to providing a barrier-free election.