



The Corporation of the Town of Atikokan

Election Accessibility Plan
2018 Municipal Elections

August, 2018

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	2
INTRODUCTION	3
MUNICIPAL ELECTION ACT REQUIREMENTS	3
REVIEW AND AMENDMENTS	4
REGARD FOR THE NEEDS OF ELECTORS WITH DISABILITIES	4
Barriers to People with Disabilities	4
Types of Disabilities	5
VOTING	6
Paper Ballots	6
Voting Places	6
Voting Institutions	6
ELECTION MATERIALS	6
Alternate Format	6 & 7
General Election Materials	7
Voting Materials (Ballots)	7
VOTING PROVISION FOR ELECTORS WITH DISABILITIES AT THE VOTING PLACE	7
ACCESSIBILITY TRAINING FOR ELECTION OFFICIALS	8
REPORTING	9
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	9
Customer Service Feedback	9 & 10
ACCESSIBLE SERVICE DISRUPTIONS	10

INTRODUCTION

This plan is for use in the 2018 Municipal Election in conjunction with the Municipality's current Accessible Customer Service Policy.

The Town of Atikokan abides by the following principles when conducting the Municipal Election:

- Integrity of the process is maintained throughout the election
- Secrecy and confidentiality of each individual vote
- Election is fair and non-biased
- Election is accessible to the voters
- Results reflect votes cast
- Voters and candidates treated fairly and consistently

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS ACT REQUIREMENTS

In addition to our pre-existing accessibility requirements and the Town of Atikokan's current Accessible Customer Service Policy, the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 S.O. 1996, Chapter 32, Section 12 states:

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

Plan re barriers

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.

Report

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.

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. 2009, c. 33, Sched. 21, s. 8 (23)."

REVIEW AND AMENDMENTS

This plan will address the specific requirements pertaining to accessibility in relation to the 2018 Municipal Election in the Municipality of Atikokan.

This plan is a “living” document which will be improved and updated as best practices are identified and new opportunities of improvement arise.

The Clerk, who is responsible for conducting the election, shall act on any accessible matter which may arise during the election as deemed necessary.

REGARD FOR THE NEEDS OF ELECTORS WITH DISABILITIES

The procedure within this plan must respect the dignity and independence of the Electors. The election process should ensure that the policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the core principles of independence, dignity, integrity and equality of opportunity.

Disabilities can take many forms and can range from temporary to permanent. Often disabilities are non-visible and no one should ever make assumptions. Disabilities include developmental, cognitive and physical challenges/conditions of persons of any age.

Some examples of barriers to people with disabilities:

Barrier Type	Example
Physical	A doorknob that cannot be operated by a person with limited upper-body mobility and strength.
Architectural	A hallway or door that is too narrow for a wheelchair or scooter.
Informational	Typefaces which are too small to be read by a person with low-vision.
Communicational	A speaker at a meeting who talks loudly when addressing a deaf participant.
Attitudinal	A campaign event that discourages persons with developmental disabilities from participating.
Technological	Information on a website which cannot be accessed by a person who is blind or visually impaired and who has reading software on a computer.
Policy/Practice	A practice of announcing important messages over an intercom that people with hearing impairments cannot hear clearly.

TYPES OF DISABILITIES

Listed below is a brief description of types of disabilities. Understanding people's needs and challenges may help you better communicate with them.

Physical Disabilities: There are many types and degrees of physical disabilities, and while people who use mobility aids like wheelchairs, scooters, crutches or canes are most recognizable, it is important to consider that not all people with physical disabilities require a mobility device.

Vision Loss: There are varying degrees of vision loss and a distinction between blindness, colour blindness and low vision. In some cases, it may be difficult to tell if a person has a vision loss.

Hearing Impaired, Deafness and Hearing Loss: Hearing loss ranges from mild to profound. The distinction between the terms "deaf", "deafened", "hearing impaired" and "hard of hearing" are based principally on the individual's preferred language (spoken or signed) rather than on the actual degree of hearing loss.

Deaf-Blindness: A person who is deaf-blind has some degree of both vision and hearing loss. This results in greater difficulties in accessing information and managing daily activities. Most people who are deaf-blind will be accompanied by an intervener, a professional who helps with communicating.

Speech Impairments: People with speech disabilities may have problems communicating. For many reasons, people may have difficulty speaking clearly - for example, as a result of a stroke or cerebral palsy - which may result in difficulties with verbal communication. Some people may use communication boards or other assistive devices to help communicate. A speech disability often has no impact on a person's ability to understand. Ask them to repeat the information if you don't understand. Ask questions that can be answered "yes" or "no" if possible.

Cognitive Disabilities: Cognitive disabilities may affect understanding, communication, or behavior and can be attributed to brain injuries, developmental or learning disabilities. It is not always easy to identify someone who has a cognitive disability.

Mental Illness: Mental illness is a disturbance in thoughts and emotions that may decrease a person's capacity to cope with the challenges of everyday life. Mental illness can take many forms, just as physical illness does.

VOTING

Paper Ballot

The Paper Ballot system employs paper ballots on which the names of all candidates are printed. Voters record their choices by marking the boxes next to the candidate they select and drop the voted ballot in a sealed ballot box. This method allows the use of various means, (magnifying glass, large print, etc.) to read the text and allows improved accessibility for voters.

Voting Places

- On advance voting day - the Municipal Office, 120 Marks Street
- On voting day - the Pioneer Centre, 223 Burns Street & Royal Canadian Legion, 115 O'Brien Street

For the purpose of this plan, voting places includes the exterior parking and walkways associated with the location. Candidate's campaign election material and campaigning is prohibited at any municipal buildings, lands and respective parking areas, including the Pioneer Centre and Royal Canadian Legion.

VOTING PLACE INSTITUTIONS

The Municipal Elections Act requires that on voting day, a voting place shall be provided on the premises of the following:

45 (7) An institution in which, on nomination day, 20 or more beds are occupied by persons who are disabled, chronically ill or inform.

For the 2018 Municipal Election, the following institution locations have been identified:

- Atikokan General Hospital, 120 Dorothy Street

The time of the voting place within each institution will be arranged with the institution administrator.

Election Materials

The Municipality is required, as per the Accessible Customer Service Standard, to give a copy of a document to a person with a disability, or the information contained in the document, in a format that considers the person's disability.

Alternate Format

Alternate formats are other ways of publishing information besides regular print. Some of these formats can be used by everyone while others are designed to address the specific needs of a user.

The Municipality and the person with a disability may agree upon the format to be used for the document or information.

In the event the information is not generated by the Municipality or is supplied by a third party, the Municipality will make every effort to obtain the information from the third party in an alternate format and/or will attempt to assist the Elector by providing assistive equipment.

General Election Materials

Large Print - Printed material generated by the Municipality will be provided in Trebuchet MS font, 12-point and can be made available in a font (print) size that is 16 to 20-points or larger.

Website - Information generated by the Municipality on the website in relation to the election will be in a format for which OCR software can be utilized. In addition, website font can be made larger and contrast option selected to aid the user in reading the information.

Voting Materials (Ballots)

Assistive Devices - Each voting place will be equipped with magnifiers as well as the assistance of Election Officials.

VOTING PROVISION FOR ELECTORS WITH DISABILITIES AT THE VOTING PLACE

The following voting provisions are in place to accommodate the voting needs of Electors with disabilities:

Support persons - In relation to a person with a disability, a Support Person accompanies him or her to help with communications, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services.

The Deputy Returning Officer may permit an Elector who needs assistance in voting to have such assistance as the Deputy Returning Officer considers necessary. The Support Person, upon the completion of the prescribed oath, may accompany the Elector behind the voting screen to assist the Elector in the voting process.

Assistive Personal Equipment - Assistive personal devices include, but are not limited to, wheelchairs, walkers, white canes, walking canes, note taking devices, portable magnifiers, recording machines, assistive listening devices, personal oxygen tanks and devices for grasping.

Service Animals - An animal is a "Service Animal" if it is readily apparent that the animal is used by a person with a disability for reasons relating to his or her disability, for example a guide dog wearing a harness.

Service animals will be permitted in all voting places.

Physical Disabilities - Voting places including parking areas, entrances and voting areas will be selected and/or setup in a manner that enables Electors with physical disabilities to vote. In the event an Elector is unable to access the established voting area due to a physical disability, the Deputy Returning Officer may attend to the Elector anywhere within the voting place.

Vision Loss - Each voting place will be equipped with magnifiers. Personal assistance from an Election Official is also available.

Hearing Impaired, Deafness and Hearing Loss - Each voting place will be equipped with a pad of paper and pen to communicate with the hearing impaired in writing if required.

Accessible Voting Booths - Accessible voting booths will be available at each Voting Place. Voting booths will have a wide area to allow individuals utilizing mobility aids to vote independently and secretively.

Voting by Proxy - A person with a disability that is homebound or otherwise unable to go to a Voting Place 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 the Municipal Office and on the Municipality's election website. The person being appointed as a proxy will be required to take a statutory declaration before a Commissioner of Oaths. The Clerk, Treasurer and Deputy Treasurer can administer this oath at the Municipal office at 120 Marks Street. Once completed, the voting proxy may be exercised at any advance voting location or on Voting Day. The appointment of a proxy expires after the close of voting on Voting Day.

ACCESSIBILITY TRAINING FOR ELECTION OFFICIALS

Election Officials will be provided with the Town of Atikokan's Accessible Customer Service Policy and this Guidebook to assist them in delivering and maintaining accessible customer service by:

- Being aware of accessibility features at/for the voting place;
- Providing tips on how to maintain these accessibility features;
- Being aware of various tools available to assist with customer service such as assistive devices;
- Knowing when and how to report a disruption of service;
- Knowing how to collect Customer Feedback.

All Election Officials will be provided with training as well as the following:

- A requirement to monitor Electors with disabilities to ensure that their needs are met, i.e. if an individual with a walker is in a long line, staff are to observe, and if it is felt that the Elector is having difficulties, then offer a chair, ensure that their place is saved in the voting line-up, etc.;

- A requirement to ensure that Electors are aware that assistance (in varying forms) is available if required;
- Direction for Election Officials to observe Electors during discussions with them, and if it appears that the voter is having difficulty understanding, ensuring that the voter can clearly see the speaker;
- Encouraging Election Officials to approach an Elector if it appears that the Elector requires assistance to get around in the voting place, offer assistance;
- Conduct routine checks of the voting place to ensure accessible features are maintained (i.e. check the access doors frequently);
- Offer assistance and watch for Electors unable to easily enter the building.

REPORTING

As per the Municipal Elections Act:

Section 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.

This report will be made available to the public via the Municipal website and at the Municipal Office.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Customer Service Feedback

The Town of Atikokan welcomes customer feedback to identify areas where changes need to be considered and ways in which the Municipality can improve the delivery of an accessible Election.

To assist the Municipality in ensuring that the delivery of goods and services to those with disabilities is provided in an effective and timely manner, the customer is invited to provide their feedback as follows:

In writing, person, e-mail, telephone, addressed to:

Municipal Clerk
 Town of Atikokan
 120 Marks Street, Box 1330
 Atikokan, ON P0T 1C0
 Phone: 807-597-1234

In order to assist in a proper response, customers will be asked to provide their name, address, phone number and any other contact information necessary.

The comments provided will be reviewed by staff and the Clerk will respond either in writing, in person, e-mail, or telephone acknowledging receipt of the feedback and will set out the actions to be taken in response to any complaint or suggestion.

ACCESSIBLE SERVICE DISRUPTIONS

From time to time and/or for unforeseen circumstances beyond the Town of Atikokan's control, temporary service disruptions may be experienced. In the event of a temporary accessible service disruption, Election Officials will commit to making reasonable efforts to ensure that the services are reinstated as quickly as possible and that alternative services are provided where feasible.

In these instances of service disruptions, the Municipality shall provide reasonable notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by persons with disabilities.

Notice of these temporary disruptions shall be provided in a conspicuous place and manner at the respective locations and information shall also be posted on the Municipality's website. This notice shall include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

Accessible services in relation to this plan include: voting places, election materials and/or voting provisions for Electors with disabilities at the voting place.