

## **REPORT**

TO: Reeve Dobson & Members of Committee of the Whole  
FROM: Clerk Administrator J. Ralph  
DATE: January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019

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**RE: Accessibility in the 2018 Municipal Election**

**Recommendation:** That Council receive for information.

**Background:**

The Municipal Elections Act Section 12.1 (1) requires that the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities be considered when an election is conducted. Section 12.1 (2) further requires that a report be provided to Council and made publicly available after a municipal election on the “identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities”.

**Discussion & Options:**

The largest measure the Township took to address the issue of accessibility was the use of the telephone and internet as a method of voting. Attached is the Township of Montague 2018 Election Accessibility Plan which was implemented through the election period. It also includes information provided by Intelivote (the provider of the telephone and internet software) detailing the accessibility of their service.

There were no reported issues with the accessibility of the voting methods. The Township did receive some moderate feedback related to the audibility of the telephone voting, but staff were able to assist the majority of people with that issue. This item was addressed immediately with the providers and will be addressed again in the 2022 election so it does not recur.

**Financial Implications:**

All costs were included in the overall cost of the election

**Attachments:** Township of Montague 2018 Election Accessibility Plan

# Township of Montague



## 2018 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan

## **Introduction**

The Municipal Elections Act, Section 12.1 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. 2009, c. 33, Sched. 21, s. 8 (8).

(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.

The Township of Montague municipal elections will be conducted in a manner that will ensure candidates and electors with disabilities will have full and equal access to all election information and services. The election shall be conducted in a way that ensures people with disabilities are able to vote independently and privately with access to voting assistance if required.

The Township of Montague Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (2015-2018) states that The Municipality is committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in integration and equal opportunity. We are committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner, and shall do so by preventing and removing barriers to accessibility and meeting the accessibility requirements under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

## **Contact and Staff Assistance**

Staff are available throughout the election to assist with any issues that may arise with respect to providing a barrier-free election. Contact information for assistance:

Telephone: 613-283-7478

Email: [jralph@township.montague.on.ca](mailto:jralph@township.montague.on.ca)

In Person: Clerk's Office, 6547 Roger Stevens Drive, Smiths Falls, Ontario

By Mail: 6547 Roger Stevens Drive, PO Box 755, Smiths Falls, Ontario, K7A 4W6

## **Staff Training**

All staff carrying out election duties will complete Accessible Customer Service 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 needs.

## **Assistance to Electors**

### **General**

The 2018 election will be conducted with Internet and Telephone Voting methods. Detailed information about each voting method is set out in the 2018 Elections Procedure Manual, available on the municipal website or at the Clerk's office. The Procedure Manual can be provided in an alternative format if requested.

### **Provision of Election Information**

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

### **Accessible Voting Area**

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

With the adoption of Internet and Telephone voting methods, electors can access the voting module in any location equipped with internet or telephone service, including cell phones. Most electors can vote using equipment in their own home.

The Township of Montague will also have a Help Centre available in the Township of Montague Administration Offices at 6574 Roger Stevens Drive for electors to vote through telephone or the internet. The Help Centre will be available throughout the voting period during regular office hours and on Election day until 8:00 pm. The Help Centre is also equipped with a laptop and wireless internet which staff could take out to an elector's vehicle if necessary.

### **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. Voting staff shall, in conjunction with the person with the disability, determine the extent to which they need assistance and the best way to provide that assistance.

## **Accessible Voting Technologies**

### **Internet Voting**

The Township of Montague has a contract with Intelivote for the provision of internet and telephone voting in the 2018 Election. The Intelivote system has been created ensuring it meets the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) requirements guaranteeing that persons with disabilities and older people with changing abilities due to aging can perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with the Web. Web Accessibility encompasses all disabilities that affect access to the Web to allow individuals to more actively participate in society – including the ability to vote independently in elections. The standards set in the WAI respect visual, auditory, physical, speech, cognitive, and neurological disabilities, with the goal of providing equal access and equal opportunity. Web Accessibility also addresses ‘temporary disabilities’ that people may experience due to an illness or health circumstance.

Intelivote has taken measures and has been proactive in accommodating persons with disabilities facilitating their comfort with the availability of eVoting services. Intelivote’s online solution is compliant with the guidelines as listed by the W3C technologies website principles which include organization, functionality and readability of information provided, as well as alternative ways of representing information (audio). Additionally, the Intelivote system has full compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

In performing regular internal auditing against WCAG-2 and Section 508 standards Intelivote ensures the application is addressing the needs of disabled participants at all times. The Voter Module is coded with XHTML transitional document type and conforms to all W3C web standards. The Module also supports and is compatible with other accessible technologies such as screen reader software.

Online voting has afforded flexibility to many disabled persons across Canada in hundreds of elections conducted by Intelivote systems.

### **Telephone Voting**

Intelivote Systems Inc has created the telephone voting service taking the following into consideration:

- The telephone eVoting service is offered on all types of touch tone phones and wireless devices including cell phones and smartphones.
- Clear natural language is used and is also offered in English or French.
- Menu options are clear and easy to follow, advising when to select options and providing confirmations of selections made.

- Standard volume is used to allow for adjustments dependent on the telephone or device.
- Users are given a generous amount of time to complete ballot activity and prompts are repeated when no action is detected.

Persons who suffer from a vision loss or vision disability including total blindness and legal blindness have the ability to use the Intelivote telephone eVoting service to cast a ballot in an election. Telephone voting has allowed many individuals the opportunity to cast a ballot remotely with little to no assistance required. The application is also capable to integrate with TTY (Teletypewriter) service for users who are deaf, Deaf, deafened, hard of hearing, or who are deafblind and do not have access to a computer

## **Assistance to Candidates**

### **General**

The 2018 election will be conducted with Internet and Telephone Voting methods. Detailed information about each voting method is set out in the 2018 Elections Procedure Manual, available on the municipal website or at the Clerk's office. The Procedure Manual can be provided in an alternative format if requested.

### **Provision of Election Information**

Election information will be provided to candidates with disabilities in an alternative format, agreed upon between the requestor and Clerk. This includes the Candidates Package and any other information requested by the Candidate.

### **Campaign Expenses**

In accordance with Section 88.20(8) of the Municipal Elections Act, expenses that are incurred by a candidate with a disability or a registered third party who is an individual with a disability, 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.

### **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. Information received will form part of the post-election Accessibility Report and will be used to improve accessibility measures in future municipal elections.