



# Township of Amaranth

Administration Office

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TO: Mayor Currie and Members of Council

FROM: Susan M. Stone, CAO/Clerk

DATE: January 16, 2018

REPORT: **Accessibility Report for the 2018 Municipal Election**

## **PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this report is to comply with Section 12.1 of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, as amended, regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

## **BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION:**

Section 12.1 (3) of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, as amended states 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.

Accessibility was considered during every aspect of the election, and the attached appendix indicates actions taken to make the voting process more inclusive.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

There are no financial impacts.

## **VISION AND VALUES**

This report is to comply with Provincial legislation.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That Council hereby receive the report and appendix.

Respectfully submitted,

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Susan M. Stone, CAO /Clerk -Treasurer

## APPENDIX 2018 ACCESSIBLE ELECTIONS ACTIONS INITIATIVE REPORT

Municipal election processes, practices and procedures were reviewed to ensure an accessible election through appropriate actions and initiatives.

The following are the various initiatives undertaken during the 2018 Municipal Election:

- Vote by Internet, telephone and paper ballot provided the elector with the ability to mark their ballot from home at their convenience or attend the administration office to cast their ballot. This allowed increased rights of privacy to electors with disabilities who may have found voting at traditional paper-based voting locations more difficult, as they had the ability to vote with little or no assistance required from others.
- Instructional videos (with closed captioning) on how to cast a ballot by Internet or telephone were available on the Township website.
- In addition to paper ballot stations computers and a telephone were available at the Voter Help Centre located at the Township Municipal office, being an accessible facility, for any elector who needed assistance voting.
- Extended office hours for the Voter Help Centre were provided closer to the election to assist those residents who were not able to visit the Township Municipal office during regular office hours.
- Election Officials and staff were positioned to greet electors as they came in to the Voter Help Centre and assist as necessary.
- Voter Instruction Letters were mailed to electors and included the following information:
  - Dates and times for Voter Help Centre (located at the Township Administration office)
  - Voter Help Centre contact information, including email address and phone number
  - Township website address
  - Candidates' names

- Election signage was clearly marked in large font at the entrances of the Township Office/Voter Help Centre throughout the election process.
- Electors with a disability had the ability to have a support person, a friend or the Deputy Returning Officer assist them with casting their ballot by Internet, telephone or paper ballot, after the taking the appropriate oath.
- Election information was communicated through various channels and alternative formats including emails, social media, and local newspapers. For election related inquiries or feedback, all residents were able to contact the Voter Help Centre by telephone, through a designated email or in person.
- A separate website page was established for the 2018 Elections which referenced and linked to the Township's accessibility website page.
- The Township's accessibility website page has a Customer Feedback Form to receive feedback on accessibility initiatives. Customer Feedback Forms are also available at the Township office. No forms have been submitted to date.
- Election staff ensured that all information was made available to candidates and electors in alternate formats upon request. All relevant information was posted to the Township website.
- Documents and forms were available to candidates and electors in alternative formats upon request and in a manner that was mutually agreed upon. Notice of availability of documents is provided on the Township website page and at the Township office.
- Our office provided the ability for an elector to confirm that they were on the Voters' List by telephone, email or by attending the Township office.
- Copies of the Voters' List were available to all candidates, upon written request, in paper copy, in electronic copy, or in both formats. Candidates were also provided with an online account to a portal from VoterView where they could produce an electronic Voters' List and view other details at their convenience.
- Resource materials were provided to candidates by paper and electronically through links on the Township website.

**CONCLUSION:**

Significant improvements have been made in regard to accessible elections. The principles of policies, practices and procedures must respect the dignity and independence of the electors and the election process should ensure that the policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity. Ensuring that electors and candidates with disabilities are able to participate in the election process is essential. Regard for accessible voting systems and site access requirements are necessary. Township staff will continue their efforts to review, address and improve election processes.