



**SMITHS FALLS**



**TOWN OF SMITHS FALLS**

# **2018 Post Municipal Election Accessibility Report**

Pursuant to Section 12.1 of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, within 90 days after voting day, the Town's Clerk shall submit a report about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

The 2018 Town of Smiths Falls Accessibility Plan was developed to ensure that proactive accessibility considerations were included in the planning and implementation of the 2018 Municipal and School Board Elections. The Plan identified actions to be taken to ensure equal and equitable election practices not only for electors, but for candidates and election staff as well.

The Town of Smiths Falls has made great efforts in promoting a barrier free community. In an effort to ensure that the 2018 Municipal Election was consistent with the core principles of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, the planning document was developed in advance of the election in order to identify measures to be taken and reported to Council following the election.

This plan highlighted measures that the Town of Smiths Falls implemented to ensure equal opportunity for all electors and candidates. These objectives included:

- That persons with disabilities were able to independently cast their vote and verify their selection.
- That persons with disabilities had full and equal access to all information on where and when to vote and on eligible candidates.
- That persons with disabilities could fully participate in the Municipal Election as an elector, candidate, or election official.
- That efforts were made to ensure that electors with disabilities were aware of the accessibility measures available via channels such as the newspaper, media launches, the Town of Smiths Falls website and social media.
- That the Town Hall voting place on Election Day was accessible.

## **VOTING METHODS**

The 2018 Town of Smiths Falls Municipal Election worked with Intelivote Systems Inc. to provide eVoting services to eligible voters. This includes the convenience and independence of voting from anywhere via telephone, internet or in-person at the Town Hall on October 22, 2018.

Everyday tools like computers, telephones and other aids can present accessible opportunities for persons with disabilities to accomplish more, while being consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equal opportunity.

The Intelivote Voting System provided voters with the capability to vote from the comfort of their own home. Voting from home facilitated the voting process for persons with disabilities who may have mobility restrictions, visual impairment, and/or have a difficult time with transportation. Additionally, persons who have assistive devices set up in their homes could use them to assist with casting a ballot privately and independently.

By allowing persons with disabilities to vote from any location and from a selection of methods, there is an increase in the capability for the voter to vote without any assistance. This provides persons with disabilities the same independence and privacy in participating in the election as other voters. If persons with disabilities do require assistance in the voting process, trained Election Officials were present at in-person Polling Locations offered across Town of Smiths Falls, throughout the voting period.

### **Telephone Voting**

Eligible voters could vote using a touch-tone telephone, and the toll-free telephone number and PIN number contained in their Voter Information Letter to access an audio ballot. The Intelivote telephone voting application provides the following:

- Service on all types of touch tone phones and wireless devices.
- Clear, plain language.
- Menu options that are easy to follow, advising when to select options and provision of confirmation of the voter's selections.

- Standard volume is used to allow for adjustment dependent of the telephone or device being utilized.

### **Internet Voting**

Eligible voters could vote online, using a smart phone, tablet device, gaming device or computer and any accompanying assistive devices or software, along with their PIN and qualifying information, to access the internet address provided in their Voter Instruction Letter.

The Intelivote System was been created to meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG-2 Level AA), so that persons with disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate and interact with the online voting system. It is compliant with the guidelines of the World Wide Web Consortium website principles, which include organization, functionality and readability of information provided, as well as alternative ways of representing information, such as with audio.

### **In-person Voting at Voting Place**

For those individuals without means to access voting via telephone or internet, or who require the assistance of a trained Election Official, one voting place on Election Day was open to provide in-person internet voting and/or paper voting opportunities via a laptop, touch screen monitor or paper ballots.

Town staff also open the Municipal Complex on Saturday, October 20, 2018 to assist anyone with voting (not paper) or to be added to the Voter's List without having to worry about coming on Voting Day when the Town Hall was quite busy.

Access to the voting place interior and voting area was level and slip-resistant. All doormats / carpeting was level with the floor to prevent potential tripping hazards. The voting area was well lit and seating was available. Entrance corridors was clear of obstructions and tripping hazards allowed sufficient space for use of a wheelchair or scooter. The area allowed an individual to vote independently and secretively.

The following voting location was open on Election Day, Monday October 22, 2018 from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Town Hall, Reception Area (77 Beckwith Street North) for Internet and Paper voting.

### **Special Voting Provisions**

Election staff contacted long-term care facilities and retirement homes, to determine how best to administer/conduct voting opportunities for residents. To this end, two staff members visited all the local Nursing/Retirement Homes to assist with the election process on Election Day.

An accessibility assessment of the voting place was conducted taking the following considerations into account:

#### **Accessible Route**

- Accessible Voting Place
- Signage in place for Voters
- Seating Areas

Routine checks were conducted to ensure compliance.

#### **Entrance and Exit**

- Entrance of the voting location was unobstructed and accessible (wide enough to allow for an individual using a wheelchair, scooter, other assistive device, or service animal to travel safely), doors manned to assist those who requires assistance. Routine checks were conducted to ensure compliance.

#### **Parking**

- Accessible parking was available. By-law officers will monitor and enforce parking at voting locations throughout the day.

## **VOTING ASSISTANCE**

### **Support Person/Friend of the Voter**

Pursuant to the Town's Accessible Standards Customer Service Policy people with disabilities were permitted to be accompanied by a support person at the voting location. A designated support person and/or 'Friend of the Voter'

were administered an oath of secrecy/confidentiality by an Election Official prior to providing any such assistance.

### **Service Animals**

Pursuant to the Town's Accessible Standards Customer Service Policy individuals requiring service animals were permitted to be accompanied by a service animal the voting locations.

### **Election Officials**

Upon request, Election Officials were available to assist any voter who required assistance in casting their online or paper ballot.

## **COMMUNICATION**

The 2018 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan was made available at the Town Hall and by way of the Town's web site [www.smithfalls.ca](http://www.smithfalls.ca) . Alternative formats are available upon request.

### **Election Materials**

The Town of Smiths Falls is required, as per the Accessible Customer Service Standard, to provide a copy of a document to a person with a disability, or the information contained in the document, in a format that takes into account the person's disability.

The Returning Officer and/or Deputy Returning Officer and the person with a disability were to agree upon the format to be used for the document or information.

#### **General Election Materials**

**Large Print** – Printed material generated by the Town of Smiths Falls were provided in an Arial font, minimum 11 point, and could be made available in a font (print) size that is 16 to 20 points or larger.

**Website** – Information generated by the Town of Smiths Falls on the website in relation to the election will be compliant with WCAG 2.0 Level A, 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.

## CANDIDATES

Candidates were all given the following links as the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario had released several quick reference documents to assist candidates with accessible elections considerations:

- [Count Us In: Removing Barriers to Political Participation - Quick Reference Guide to Accessible Campaign Information and Communication](#)
- [Count Us In: Removing Barriers to Political Participation - Quick Reference Guide to Accessible Constituency, Riding Association, Central Party and Campaign Offices](#)
- [Count Us In: Removing Barriers to Political Participation - Quick Reference Guide to Accessible All Candidates Meetings](#)