Accessible Election Policies and Procedures

Purpose:

The Township of Bonnechere Valley is committed to ensuring that persons with disabilities have an opportunity to fully participate in the Municipal Elections with dignity and in a consistent manner with all Bonnechere Valley electors. This procedure shall set forth the process for ensuring this commitment is successfully achieved.

Procedure:

1 Introduction

The Municipal Clerk is responsible for the proper legislative and administrative conduct of municipal elections in the Township of Bonnechere Valley. In accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005,* the Municipal Clerk is required to establish procedures and provide appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities have the opportunity to participate fully in the 2026 Municipal Elections. Specifically, the principles of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* include:

a) the secrecy and confidentiality of the individual votes is paramount;
b) the election should be fair and non-biased;
c) the election should be accessible to the voters;
d) the integrity of the process should be maintained throughout the election;
e) there be certainty that the results of the election reflect the votes cast; and
f) voters and candidates should be treated fairly and consistently within a municipality.
g) a proper majority vote decides the election by ensuring, so far as reasonably possible, that valid votes be counted and invalid votes be rejected.

Accordingly, the 2026 Municipal Elections will be conducted in such a manner to ensure that:

a) Candidates and electors with disabilities have full and equal access to all election information and services.

b) Persons with disabilities have full access to Voting Places.

c) Alternative methods, and of voting assistive devices are made available to all electors to ensure persons with disabilities are able to independently and privately mark their ballot.

In accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996, as amended,* following the election, the Municipal Clerk will submit a report to Council concerning the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

2 Staff Recruitment, Training, and Election Assistance

2.1 Recruitment / Assessment / Selection

The Township of Bonnechere Valley will accommodate individual applicant needs in accordance with the Employment Standard's requirements of Ontario Regulation 191/11 for the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

During the application process, the applicant may disclose, that they have accessibility needs and the type of accommodations they require due to a disability. Accommodation will be undertaken in a manner that takes into account the applicant's accessibility needs due to a disability.

Applicant accommodations are available upon request throughout the recruitment process.

2.2 Staff Training

All staff carrying out election duties will be trained to recognize and ensure that persons with disabilities are served in a way that accommodates their accessibility needs due to a disability. Training will include:

a) Review of the purposes of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and the Customer Service Standard's requirements of Ontario Regulation 191/11 for the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation.

b) How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities.

c) How to interact with persons with disabilities who use assistive devices or require the assistance of a service animal or support person.

d) How to use voting equipment and assistive devices to deliver election services.

e) What to do if a person is having difficulty accessing election information or services.

Note, a record will be maintained of all election staff training, including dates and time.

2.3 Provision of Election Information

Candidates and electors with disabilities may request to receive information and election documents in a format that takes into account their accessibility needs due to a disability. The Municipal Clerk, or designate, shall consult with the requester and shall provide or arrange for the provision of a suitable format. In addition, candidates with disabilities may access the election information on the Municipality's election website using technologies such as screen readers.

2.4 Notice of Temporary Service Disruption

If there is a temporary disruption in the delivery of election information or services, the Municipal Clerk's Department shall provide public notice on the Municipality's election website, and social media, at the physical site of the disruption, and at the Township Office. The notice shall include the reason for the disruption, anticipated duration, who is responding, and a description 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. Notice and updates shall be made regularly throughout the service interruption.

2.5 Staff Assistance

Municipal Clerk's Department staff are available to assist with any issues that may arise with respect to providing a barrier-free election and can be reached by way of the contact information provided below:

1.	Telephone	613-628-3101
2.	In Person	Township of Bonnechere Valley Municipal Clerk's Department 49 Bonnechere Street E Eganville Ontario
3.	Email	annetteg@eganville.com
4.	Mail	Municipal Clerk's Department Township of Bonnechere Valley PO BOX 100 Eganville ON K0J 1T0

3 Assistance To Candidates

3.1 Service Animals

Candidates and scrutineers are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at all Voting Places and other designated election locations.

Guide dogs and service animals may be used in all Voting Places and other designated election locations, unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law.

If a service animal is excluded from the premises by law, staff will inform the individual of the reasons why and discuss alternative methods for the person to access Municipal goods, services and facilities.

A service animal should be easily identified through visual indicators, such as a harness or a vest, or when it helps a person perform certain tasks.

Note, it may not always be apparent whether an animal is in service. When Municipal staff cannot easily identify that an animal is a service animal, they may ask the person to provide documentation (template, letter or form) from a regulated health professional that confirms the person needs the service animal for reasons relating to their disability.

Staff must never interact with a Service Animal. Staff must not touch or distract a service animal. It is not a pet; it is a working animal.

3.2 Campaign Expenses

In accordance with Section 76(5) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996, as amended, e*xpenses that are incurred by a candidate with a disability that 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. Examples of these expenses are: sign language interpreters for door-to-door campaigning, accessible transportation to attend campaign events/Candidates meetings, and cost of specialized software.

4 Assistance To Electors

4.1 Electors Unable to Attend the Voting Places

4.1.1 Mail in Ballot

Mail-in Ballots are available to electors who are unable to vote at the voting station on Voting Day because of physical incapacity, absence from the Township of Bonnechere Valley, or being appointed as an Election Official by the Municipal Clerk and unable to vote at their designated Voting Place.

4.2 Parking

Designated or reserved parking for people with disabilities will be provided close to the entrance of the Voting Place where possible. Accessible parking spaces will be clearly posted, easy to see from the road. An increase in the usual parking limits for people with disabilities will be requested where possible.

Routine checks of routes to the entrance of the Voting Place will be made throughout Voting Day.

4.3 Service Animals

Electors requiring service animals are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at all voting places.

Guide dogs and service animals may be used in all Voting Places and other designated election locations, unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law.

If a service animal is excluded from the premises by law, staff will inform the individual of the reasons why and discuss alternative methods for the person to access Municipal goods, services and facilities.

A service animal should be easily identified through visual indicators, such as a harness or a vest, or when it helps a person perform certain tasks.

NOTE: It may not always be apparent whether an animal is in service. When Municipal staff cannot easily identify that an animal is a service animal, they may

ask the person to provide documentation (template, letter or form) from a regulated health professional that confirms the person needs the service animal for reasons relating to their disability.

Staff must never interact with a Service Animal. Staff must not touch or distract a service animal. It is not a pet; it is a working animal.

4.4 Entrance to the Voting Place

Where possible the door hardware is to be accessible and able to be operated by a person using a closed fist. If the doors are heavy, awkward to open or have handles that are out of reach, where possible they will be propped open in a safe manner. Where it is not possible to prop the door open, an election official will be assigned to operate the door for all electors entering and exiting the Voting Place.

4.5 Interior Voting Area

Access to the interior voting area and voting booth shall be level and easily traversed. Any doormats or carpeting shall be level with the floor to prevent potential tripping hazards. All voting areas are to be well lit and seating will be made available. All voting areas are to have sufficient space to maneuver a mobility device.

4.6 Voting Place Standards

Each potential Voting Place shall be physically attended and inspected by the Municipal Clerk or designate. A standard Voting Site Inspection form shall be completed for each facility. The inspector shall at the conclusion of the inspection, complete the Accessibility Report Card. The report card shall include a grading of 1-5 (1 – Not Accessible, 2 – Poor, 3 – Acceptable, 4 – Exceeds Expectations; 5 – Not Applicable) on the following eight areas:

- Parking
- Main Voting Entrance
- Building Identification
- Ramps
- Pathway to Voting Place
- Elevator/Lift
- Accessible Washrooms
- Lighting

Each site shall receive a pass or fail grading. The locations scoring the highest of those which passed will be selected as voting places for the Municipal elections. Locations receiving a failing grade will not be used.

4.7 Accessible Voting Booths

Accessible voting booths will be available at each Voting Place. Voting booths will be at varied heights and have a wide area to allow for individuals who use a mobility device to independently and easily approach and exit the voting area. Magnifying sheets will be made available to assist any individual with low vision.

4.8 Voting Assistance

Persons with disabilities may be accompanied by a support person within the Voting Place. In addition, the Election Officials in each Voting Place may assist the voter in casting their ballot. Prior to entering the voting booth, the Deputy Returning Officer shall, in conjunction with the person with the disability, determine the extent to which they need assistance and the best way in which this assistance can be provided. This may include actually marking the ballot as directed by the elector. Where a Voting Place is located in an institution or retirement home, the Deputy Returning Officer can attend on voters in their specific living areas or at their bedside to assist them to vote. All Election Officials are sworn to an Oath of Secrecy.

5 FEEDBACK PROCESS

Feedback about the manner in which election services are provided to persons with disabilities may be submitted to the Municipal Clerk through a variety of methods including:

1. Telephone — 613-628-3101
2. In Person — Township of Bonnechere Valley
Municipal Clerk's Department
49 Bonnechere Street E
3. Email — annetteg@eganville.com
4. Mail — Municipal Clerk's Department,
Township of Bonnechere Valley
PO Box 100
Eganville ON K0J 1T0

The feedback process provides election staff with an opportunity to take corrective measures to prevent similar recurrences, address training needs, enhance service delivery and provide alternative methods of providing election services.