

MUNICIPALITY OF SOUTHWEST MIDDLESEX



2018 Municipal Election

Accessibility Plan

Updated April 10, 2018

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Introduction

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

The Municipality of Southwest Middlesex has chosen the alternative election method of telephone and internet voting. The alternative election method allows eligible voters to vote from the location of their choosing. For voters with disabilities, this voting method allows you to vote in a location that best suits your needs.

Voting Methods

The 2018 Municipality of Southwest Middlesex Municipal Election will be working 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 Voter Help Centre (or Middlesex County Library locations during regular open hours) during the Voting Period of October 15 to 22, 2018.

Everyday tools like computers and telephones 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 provides voters with the capability to vote from the comfort of their own home. Voting from home facilitates 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 can now 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/devices, there is an increase in the capability of 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 will be present at in-person Voter Help Centres offered by the Municipality of Southwest Middlesex throughout the voting period.

Municipal Elections Act, 1996, as amended – Legislative Requirements

The Clerk is responsible for conducting municipal elections and establishing policies and procedures to ensure that all electors have the opportunity to fully participate in the 2018 Municipality of Southwest Middlesex election.

The *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, as amended 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.

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. 2016, c.15, s. 11

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. 2016, c.15, s.11

Objectives

This plan is intended to highlight measures that the Municipality of Southwest Middlesex will be implementing to ensure equal opportunity for all electors and candidates. These objectives include:

- That persons with disabilities are able to independently cast their vote and verify their selection
- That persons with disabilities have full and equal access to all information on where and when to vote and on eligible candidates
- That persons with disabilities can fully participate in the Municipal Election as an elector, candidate or election official
- That efforts are made to ensure that electors with disabilities are aware of the accessibility measures available via channels such as the newspaper, media launches, the Municipality's website and social media.
- That the Voter Help Centre at 153 McKellar Street, Glencoe be accessible to electors who choose to cast their vote in that particular location.

Development of the Plan

This plan is a 'living document' - the Clerk's Office will continue to learn, develop and adjust our approaches in order to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. The review of accessibility issues and initiatives and addressing barrier prevention or removal is an ongoing practice. This plan will be improved and updated as new opportunities are identified or become available.

The following steps shall be implemented as a continuation of the development of the 2018 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan:

- Review and analysis of documents, policies and other supporting materials from AMCTO, neighbouring municipalities, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and other various stakeholder groups
- Establish staff training standards and practices directly related to the Election to ensure that people with disabilities are able to vote in a positive customer service environment and ensure that all Election Officials recognize that a voter's needs shall be accommodated to the best of our ability.
- Consultation and meetings with the 2018 Election Team and Accessibility Advisory Committee to substantiate that the Plan meets the needs of persons with disabilities
- Presentation of a draft plan and a demonstration of accessible voting equipment to the Middlesex County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee (April/May 2018)
- Presentation of a draft plan to the Municipality of Southwest Middlesex Council for information (May, 2018)

Municipality of Southwest Middlesex Customer Service Policy

The Clerk's Office is committed to making our services accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities. We comply with the customer service standards of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

In fulfilling our mission, the Clerk's Office will at all times provide its services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. We give people with disabilities the same opportunity to access our services in the same place and in a similar way as others. The full customer service policy is attached as Appendix A.

Definition of Disability

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* defines “disability” as follows:

- a. Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;
- b. A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- c. A learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- d. A mental disorder, or;
- e. An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

Disabilities can take many forms, both visible and invisible. The following criteria were considered in the development of this Plan:

- Policies and procedures must be consistent with the principles of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* and must respect the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities;
- Access to electoral services must be integrated and equitable;
- Initiatives should address and accommodate a wide range of abilities; and
- The Clerk’ Office AODA-compliant customer service policy for providing services to people with disabilities must be followed throughout the election process. This policy is attached and is also available at <http://www.southwestmiddlesex.ca/Public/Accessibility>

Voting Location

As noted earlier, the alternative voting allows for people to vote from anywhere they have access to telephone or internet. There will also be a Voter Help Centre at the Southwest Middlesex municipal building at 153 McKellar Street, Glencoe, Ontario.

A comprehensive accessibility audit of the Voter Help Centre will be conducted and a site audit summary information sheet relative to the Voter Help Centre selected for use. The following considerations are taken into account when determining the Voter Help Centre's accessibility:

Accessible Route

Proximity of the voting location to accessible public transit routes, such as Four Counties Transportation Services, shall be considered. The name and/or address of the Voter Help Centre shall be clearly visible. An easily navigable route will be marked for entry into the voting area within the location. The voting area shall be identified with clear and understandable signage.

Seating areas shall be provided throughout the voting location for individuals needing a rest.

Entrance and Egress

The route to the entrance of the Voter Help Centre at 153 McKellar Street, Glencoe, shall be unobstructed and accessible. The route shall be wide enough to allow for an individual using a wheelchair, scooter, other assistive device, or service animal to travel safely. Doors into the voting location and voting area shall be accessible and easy to open or shall remain propped open for the duration of the voting hours. Routine checks of entrances and egress routes will be made throughout the voting period.

Parking

Accessible parking shall be available at all voting locations. The designated parking space(s) shall be clearly marked with the international Symbol of Accessibility and will be on firm and level ground, close to the entrance of the voting location. By-law officers will monitor and enforce parking at voting locations throughout the voting period.

Voting Method Details

Telephone Voting

Eligible voters may vote using a touch-tone telephone, and the telephone number and PIN number contained in their Voter Information Letter to access an audio ballot. Communication barriers can make it difficult for people to receive or convey information. Barriers may be identified as low volume, use of language that is not clear or plain, and confusing or unorganized menu options.

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

Voters may also use the TTY (Teletypewriter) service to access eVoting services. TTY users should have full confidence when using the TTY service integrated with the Intelivote Systems voting application by phone. TTY operators received training and are required by law to maintain confidentiality of the information disclosed. No record-keeping of conversations is stored.

Internet Voting

Eligible voters may vote online, using a smart phone, tablet 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 has 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 principals, which include organization, functionality and readability of information provided, as well as alternative ways of representing information, such as with audio.

In-person at Voter Help Centres

For those individuals without means to access voting via telephone or internet, or who require assistance of a trained Election Official, the Municipality of Southwest Middlesex municipal office will be open to provide in-person internet voting opportunities via a laptop or touch screen monitor.

Access to the Voter Help Centre interior and voting area shall be level and slip-resistant. Any doormats or carpeting shall be level with the floor to prevent potential tripping hazards. The voting area shall be well lit and seating shall be available, entrance corridors shall be clear of obstructions and tripping hazards and will allow sufficient space for use of a wheelchair or scooter.

A Voter Help Centre sample floor plan is attached as **Appendix C**.

An accessible voting area shall be low in height and have a wide area to allow for individuals who use a wheelchair or scooter to vote independently and secretively.

Voters may attend the Voter Help Centre or Middlesex County Library during open hours throughout the voting period, regardless of their residence within the Municipality of Southwest Middlesex.

The Municipality of Southwest Middlesex will be operating the following Voter Help Centre, known as the Municipality of Southwest Middlesex office, located at 153 McKellar Street, Glencoe, during the Advance Voting Period:

- October 15, 2018 – 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- October 16 – 19, 2018 – 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- October 20, 2018 – 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
- October 22, 2018 – 8:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

A map showing the location of the Municipality of Southwest Middlesex Voter Help Centre is attached as **Appendix B**.

[Special Voting Provisions](#)

Election staff shall visit the following sites, including long-term care facilities and retirement homes to set up on-site voting kiosks or bedside voting opportunities for residents.

- Babcock Community Care Centre, 196 Wellington Street, Wardsville, ON

Voting Assistance

Support Person/Friend of the Voter

Pursuant to the section entitled “Support Persons” on page 3 of the Municipality of Southwest Middlesex Customer Service Policy people with disabilities shall be permitted to be accompanied by a support person at any voting location. A designated support person and/or ‘Friend of the Voter’ will be administered an oath of secrecy/confidentiality by an Election Official prior to providing any such assistance.

Service Animals

Pursuant to the section entitled “Service Animals” on page 3 of the Municipality of Southwest Middlesex Accessible Customer Service Policy individuals requiring service animals are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at all voting locations.

Election Officials

At in-person Voter Help Centre, upon request, Election Officials are available to assist any voter who requires assistance in casting their online ballot. All individuals working in the capacity of an Election Official are formally appointed as such and administered an oath of secrecy prior to voting day.

Communications

The 2018 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan will be made available at the municipal office and by way of the Municipality of Southwest Middlesex web site

<http://www.southwestmiddlesex.ca/Public/Election-Information>

Information regarding the accessibility measures provided for the 2018 Municipal Election shall be included in general election advertising as well as in the 2018 Municipal Election Nomination Package.

Election Materials

The Municipality of Southwest Middlesex 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.

Alternate Formats

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 of Southwest Middlesex 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 of Southwest Middlesex 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 of Southwest Middlesex will be provided in a sans serif font, minimum 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 of Southwest Middlesex 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.

Video

Promotional and educational videos created for the 2018 municipal election shall incorporate audio and captioning.

Service Disruptions

From time to time and/or for unforeseen circumstances beyond the Municipality'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 services are reinstated as quickly as possible and that alternative services are provided where feasible.

In the instance 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 Municipal 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 alternative voting which allows eligible electors to vote when/where it best suits the individual, Voter Help Centres, election materials and/or voting provisions for Electors with disabilities at the Voter Help Centre.

In the event of disruptions to service or unforeseen circumstances that affect the accessibility of Voter Help Centres during the voting period including Voting Day, notices of disruption will be posted in real time:

- On the Municipality of Southwest Middlesex website
- On facebook
- At the site of the disruption
- Where applicable, a media advisory will be issued.

Application

All election officials shall receive internal training to exercise their duties, including content relative to *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* accessibility standards, the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and health and safety practices.

Candidates must also have regard to the needs of electors with disabilities. Campaign offices, election materials and canvassing should all be reviewed in order to ensure that they are fully accessible.

The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario has 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](#)

Election Feedback

The Clerk welcomes feedback to identify areas where changes need to be considered and ways in which the Municipality of Southwest Middlesex can improve the delivery of an accessible Election. As noted earlier, this Plan is a living document and will continue to undergo changes. Please provide us with your feedback so we know how to best provide an accessible election. Feedback on this Plan can be submitted through the following channels:

- Email: election@southwestmiddlesex.ca
- Phone: 519-287-2015 x109
- Fax: 519-287-2359
- By Mail: Municipality of Southwest Middlesex
 - 153 McKellar Street
 - Glencoe ON N0L 1M0
- Or by using the Municipality of Southwest Middlesex Customer Feedback Form which is available to all staff, at all service counters and on the municipal website.

All feedback pertaining to election services will be forwarded to the Election Deputy Returning Officer for response. If you require assistance with completing the feedback form for submission, municipal staff are able to assist you on request. Our goal is to respond to 2018 Municipal Election questions/feedback within two business days.

Post Election Report

Section 12.1(2) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* as amended states the following:

“Within 90 days after voting day in a regular election, the clerk shall submit a report to council about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.”

The Clerk’s post-election report will be posted on the municipal website in a format accessible to persons with disabilities and distributed to disability groups and other stakeholders as requested.

APPENDIX A

Customer Service Policy Statement – Providing Services to People with Disabilities



SUBJECT: ACCESSIBILITY	SCOPE: ALL EMPLOYEES, COUNCILLORS & VOLUNTEERS
ISSUE DATE: September 23, 2009	REVISED: December 11, 2013 July 26, 2017

PURPOSE:

This policy will act as the main accessibility policy for the Municipality of Southwest Middlesex and meet the requirements of Ontario Regulations 429/07 – Accessibility Standards for Customer Service and Ontario Regulation 191/11 – Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation.

SCOPE:

Southwest Middlesex is committed to being responsive to the needs of all its residents and employees. In order to meet the needs of people with disabilities, the Municipality will:

- Ensure policies, practices and procedures address dignity, independence, integration and provide for equal opportunity for people with disabilities.
- Allow people with disabilities to use their own personal assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from the services offered by the Municipality.
- Strive to meet the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner, at a cost no greater than that for people without disabilities.
- Accommodate the accessibility needs of people with disabilities to ensure they can obtain, use or benefit from the Municipality's goods, services, programs and facilities.

The Municipality will promote accessibility by ensuring that compliance is met for all regulations made under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. Timelines for compliance vary. In order to ensure that timelines are met, the Municipality will establish, implement and maintain a multi-year accessibility plan. The plan will outline the Municipality's strategy to prevent and remove barriers to people with disabilities.

Definitions

- Disability: as defined in the Ontario Human Rights Code
- Service Animal: A “guide dog”, as defined in section 1 of the Blind Persons Rights’ Act; or
 - An animal used by a person with a disability if:
 - it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability; or
 - the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse practitioner confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

Accessibility Planning

The Municipality will establish, implement, maintain and document a multi-year accessibility plan. The multi-year accessibility plan will outline how the Municipality will prevent and remove barriers to accessibility as outlined in the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. The multi-year accessibility plan will be developed with the assistance of Middlesex County and other participating lower tier municipalities within the County.

The multi-year accessibility plan will be reviewed at least once every five years. An annual status report will be prepared. In conjunction with Middlesex County, the Municipality will consult with people with disabilities and the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Purchasing

The Municipality will ensure accessibility criteria and features are considered when purchasing goods, service and facilities. When it is not practicable to incorporate accessibility criteria, the Municipality will provide an explanation upon request.

Accessible Formats

The Municipality will provide alternate formats of information and communication that is produced or in direct control of the Municipality. This will be done upon request, in a timely manner and at a cost that is no more than the cost charged for the original format.

When it is not practicable to provide an alternate format, the Municipality will provide an explanation and a summary of the document in an accessible format.

Communication Supports

The Municipality will provide communication supports to members of the public upon request. If the Municipality is unable to obtain the requested communication support, the Municipality will work with the individual to determine an appropriate

alternative method of communication.

Obtaining Public Feedback

The Municipality will accept feedback from members of the public relating to the provision of accessible services provided. When seeking feedback from the public, the Municipality will provide accessible formats and/or communication supports to members of the public upon request.

Service Disruptions

If a temporary service disruption is planned, the Municipality will give notice of the disruption. Notice will be given by posting the information in a conspicuous place as well as by posting the information on the Municipality's website.

Support Persons

The Municipality will allow people with disabilities to be accompanied by a support person in all Municipal-owned and operated public facilities. The Municipality reserves the right to request a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person, in the event that it is considered necessary to protect the health and safety of the person with a disability or others on the premises.

Admission fees will be waived for support persons who accompany a person with a disability.

Service Animals

The Municipality welcomes service animals into all Municipally-owned or operated facilities where the public is allowed. Service animals will be allowed to accompany a person with a disability to allow them access to facilities and services.

If an animal is excluded by law from the premises, the Municipality will ensure that other measures are available to allow a person with a disability to obtain or benefit from the good(s) or service(s).

Use of Assistive Devices

The Municipality will allow people with disabilities to use their own personal assistive devices to obtain services offered by the Municipality.

If a person with a disability is unable to access a service through the use of their own personal assistive device, the Municipality will work with the individual to determine an alternate means for accessing services.

Training

Training will be provided to all staff, Council members and volunteers in accordance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. The Municipality will

retain training records.

Built Environment

The Municipality will ensure that interior and exterior spaces conform to appropriate legislation, including, but not limited to the Ontario Building Code and the Design of Public Spaces – Ontario Regulation 191/11

Legislative Authority

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005

Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07

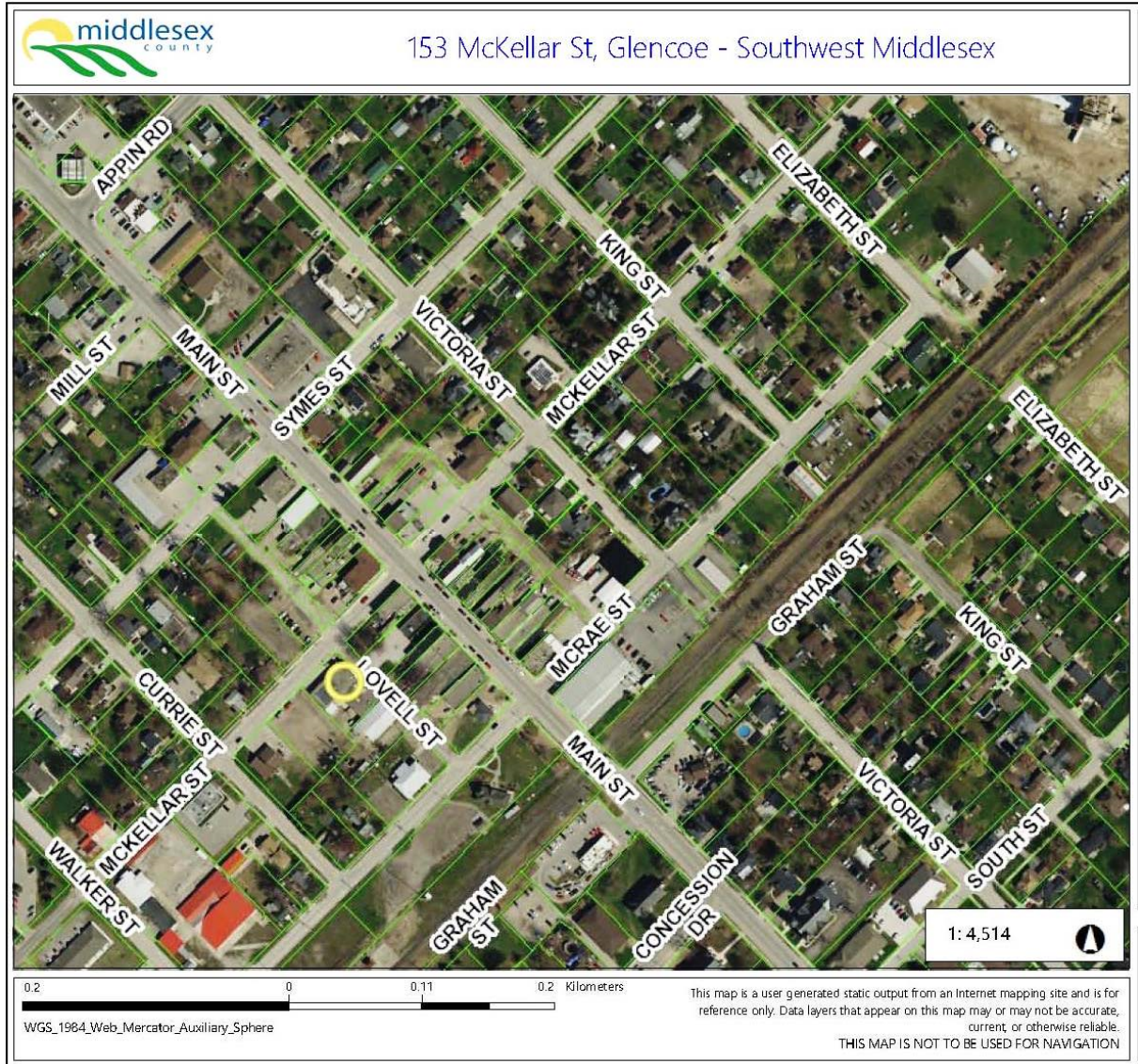
Integrated Accessibility Standards, Ontario Regulation 191/11

PROCEDURES:

Operating procedures will be developed for specific requirements based on each Department's needs.

APPENDIX B

Voter Help Centre Location Map

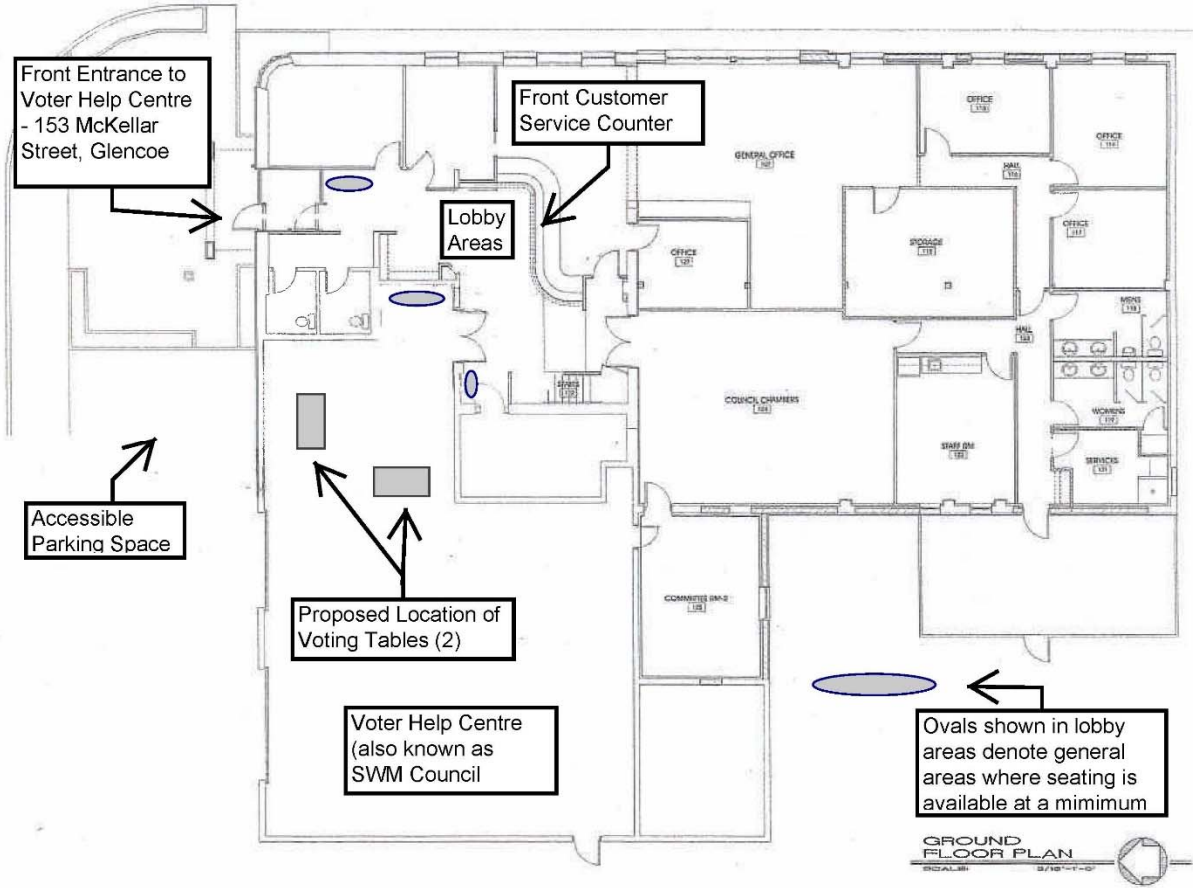


Location is marked with a yellow circle.

APPENDIX C

Voter Help Centre Sample Floor Plan

Appendix C - Voter Help Centre Sample Floor Plan



APPENDIX D

Site Audit Daily Accessibility Checklist

Form SWM67

Southwest Middlesex Voting Period Daily Accessibility Checklist

The purpose of this daily checklist is to allow you, the election staff, to quickly assess whether or not the Voter Help Centre has barriers for people with disabilities during the Voting Period. If you identify barriers, you should inform the municipal clerk and/or their designate so the barrier can be addressed as soon as possible. Many barriers can be easily addressed each day voting takes place.

Parking

Voter Help Centre location parking area:

- The accessible space is clearly marked with the standard accessible parking sign.
- The accessible space which is large enough to accommodate a van is located nearest to the accessible entrance.
- There is an accessible way to get from the parking lot to the door
- The parking area is paved

Accessible parking must be kept clear of snow, piles of leaves or other obstacles to persons with disabilities in order to be accessible.

Pathways to the Building

The path to the accessible entrance is clearly marked with large print signs if it is different from the primary route to the building.

This checklist does not identify all barriers that a person may face at the voting place. Answering positively to the checklist does not mean a voting place is in compliance with such laws as the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

- The path of travel is free of breaks and edges and is clear of debris such as snow, ice and leaves, and low-hanging objects such as tree branches.
- The path of travel has the necessary curb cuts and ramps so that a person using a mobility device could access the building with ease.
- All ramps have handrails (and edge protection), if necessary.
- The path of travel is well-lit when necessary.

Entrance to the Building

- The entrance to the building is free of steps or has a ramp.
- The accessible entrance to the building is unlocked.
- The accessible entrance to the building has an automatic door opener or there is someone stationed at the door to open it.

Travel within the Building

- The accessible route to the voting area is clearly marked with large print signs if it is different from the main route and/or if it is not immediately inside the accessible entrance.
- Interior doors of the designated room for voting are propped open or have automatic doors.

- Hallways are well-lit and free of low-hanging objects and items protruding from the wall or sitting on the floor.
- All rugs and mats along the accessible route have low pile and are securely fastened (or removed).

Voting Area

- Instructions for voting are printed in Large Print (18-point font or larger) and displayed in a convenient and obvious location.
- The path of travel in the voting area is wide enough for an individual using a mobility device to navigate and turn around with ease (minimum of 5X5 feet).
- There is a table, counter or voting booth that is extra wide at the bottom (at least 36 inches) and at a good height (between 28 and 34 inches) to allow someone who uses a mobility device to use it comfortably and reach all parts of the voting equipment.
- Election workers are trained in using and explaining the accessible voting equipment to voters.
- Electronic accessible voting equipment is turned on, tested and in proper working order for electors to use when the polls open on Election Day.
- There is a feasible plan in place to identify when a voter wants to vote curbside, and election workers are aware of the curbside voting policy.
- Election workers are aware of the special needs of voters with disabilities and are willing to provide reasonable accommodations when requested.
- The Voter Help Centre has the following:
 - Communication cards or pen/paper to communicate with someone who is deaf or hard of hearing.

- Magnifying glass to be used by someone with a sight impairment.
- Extra seating and a policy to allow voters who have trouble standing or walking to wait to vote and maintain their place in line.

The municipal clerk will have more detailed information about accessibility rules and laws.

Completed By (Print & Sign)

Date Completed