

# Municipality of Callander 2022 Municipal Election

## Accessibility Plan

### A) LEGISLATION REGARDING ACCESSIBLE ELECTIONS

The Municipal Elections Act (MEA) has the following requirements:

**Section 12.1 (1) Electors and candidates with disabilities:** A clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities.

**Section 12.1 (2) Plan re barriers:** 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.

**Section 12.1 (3) Report:** 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.

**Section 45 (2) Accessibility:** In establishing the locations of voting places, the clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities.

### B) CALLANDER PLAN

The Municipality of Callander is primarily using Vote by Mail for the 2022 Election, with one Voting Place available on Voting Day for those who have not already voted by mail. The use of Vote by Mail was intended to make it easier to electors to vote, and to prevent or remove some of the barriers encountered in a traditional voting method where attendance at a physical voting place is required. The Municipality of Callander's plan to address barriers includes separate sections for Before Voting Day for Candidates and Electors, Vote by Mail and Voting Place on Voting Day.

### C) BEFORE VOTING DAY FOR CANDIDATES AND ELECTORS

Communications barriers will be addressed by providing as much information as possible in a variety of ways both to candidates and electors. Candidates were given the option of receiving copies of the voters' List in electronic format instead of the traditional printed paper version. Information disseminated to the public has been and will be provided to the public in variety of ways, including but not limited to mailouts, handouts, and posting on the

municipal website and social media. Where feasible these include graphic representations as well as printed text to aid in understanding. Colour contrast and text size is taken into consideration when designing information releases.

## D) VOTE BY MAIL

The use of Vote by Mail was identified as a way to address several different barriers. For more information on how Vote by Mail works, please see the *Clerk's Procedures for Vote by Mail* (the Procedures) available from the municipal website or in paper format from the Municipal Office.

1. **Physical Barriers:** The use of Vote by Mail helps to reduce physical barriers for persons with mobility issues, or who are unable to leave their residence for any reason. With Vote by Mail, electors can cast their ballots without leaving their own residences. Ballots are received by mail and the elector completes and returns the ballot kit by mail; therefore, they can vote using their usual method of receiving and sending regular mail. Additionally, they do not need to attend the office in person even to be added to the Voters' List if they are not already on it. The Procedures and associated *Notice of Revisions to Voters' List* (See Appendix 2) contain provisions for applying to be added to the list electronically or by an Agent.

If electors with mobility issues require the assistance of a support person, they can have that assistance in the comfort and convenience of their own residence. It was identified that some electors may have difficulty, for example with folding the ballot and inserting it the secrecy envelope, so it is specifically stated in the Procedures "An Elector who needs assistance in voting by mail may have such assistance as the Elector considers necessary." Additionally, "If an Elector is physically unable to sign the *[declaration]* form, he/she may instead make their mark (i.e. an "X") on the signature line of the Voter Declaration Form and have a witness sign and verify that it is the Elector's mark, in which case the Form shall be deemed to be signed by the Elector.

2. **Information and Communication Barriers:** Persons with vision impairment would be able to vote by mail at home with their own magnification or other assistive devices and in a lighted environment most suited to them. It was identified that electors with no vision would need to have assistance to vote on a paper ballot, but they could do so in the privacy of their own residence at a time most convenient for them. Additionally, documentation that has been made available to the public was also posted on our website so that electors and potential candidates could use screen reading technology to access more information if needed.

For information and communication barriers encountered by persons with learning/cognitive disabilities it was identified that they may have difficulty following the vote by mail instructions. The instructions were provided in plain language in step by step format; however, the Municipality was unable to add something more graphic to the standard kit issued by the Vote by Mail provider. The Municipality has produced mailouts,

handouts, and posters with some graphic assistance (for example see Appendix 3) as well as posting on our website and social media. We produced a Youtube video demonstrating how to complete the Vote by Mail kit and provided links on our social media and website. (Note: the video included closed captioning for those who have hearing impairment.) We will continue to provide enhanced written information both up to and following election day.

- 3. Social Barriers:** The Municipality recognized in advance of deciding to use Vote by Mail that electors may have a reluctance to attend public places with many other people, such as in a traditional voting place. This would be particularly true due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, for electors with invisible disabilities, such as persons who experience anxiety or who have medical conditions. VBM allows all electors to vote without attending a voting place in person.

## **E) VOTING PLACE ON VOTING DAY - Callander Community Centre**

**Physical Barriers:** This location was selected as the Voting Place for Voting Day because physical barriers have previously been identified and addressed at this location. It has available accessible parking, a solid, level route of travel from the accessible parking to the inside of the building. It is spacious and allows plenty of room for use of mobility devices. It has accessible washroom facilities. Design of routes of travel within the building to polling stations and areas to mark ballots will have regard to the needs of persons using mobility devices. Seating will be provided in areas that electors may need to wait or fill out forms or ballots. Election staff will be available to provide assistance if required. The building will be checked prior to election day to ensure that all accessible features are in working order and that no new barriers have arisen.

**Information or Communications Barriers:** Information or communications barriers shall be addressed at the Voting Place in several ways to assist those who have visual, auditory, or learning/cognitive disabilities. Large print, clear signage will be posted to assist electors. Pictures / icons shall be included in signage where feasible. Enlarged copies of ballots will be posted inside the privacy shields for electors to mark their ballots. High colour contrast is used on the ballots (black print on white paper) and on the posted enlargements. Magnifying sheets will be provided at the locations designated for marking ballots. Where feasible, pre-printed text will be available for instructions provided verbally, for those who are hearing impaired. Pens and paper will also be readily available to election workers for additional written communication if needed.

**Other Barriers:** All personnel involved in administering the election or providing information to the electorate and candidates will have been trained in accessible customer service. Assistance will be provided, as needed, in completing required forms. If needed, Election Officials may assist an elector outside the Community Centre Building, if it is within the parking lot for the building. At the Voting Place, notices concerning Accessible Customer Service procedures will be posted and Feedback Forms will be available on site.