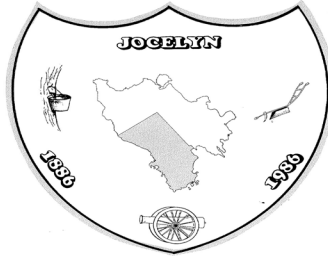# Election Accessibility Plan

This plan is for use in the 2022 Municipal Election in conjunction with the Municipality's current Accessible Policy, Multi-Year Plan and IASR Standards.

Township of Jocelyn abides by the following principles when conducting the Municipal Elections:

- Integrity of process maintained throughout election;
- Secrecy and confidentiality of the individual vote;
- Election is fair and non-biased;
- Election is accessible to the voters;
- Certainty that results reflect votes cast;
- Voters and candidates treated fairly and consistently.

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Accessible Election Mandate

The Township of Jocelyn is committed to being responsive to the needs of all its residents. To do this, we must recognize the diverse needs of all of our residents and respond by striving to provide services and facilities that are accessible to all. As an employer, and a provider of services, the Township of Jocelyn is committed to ensuring its services are provided in an accessible manner.

The Township of Jocelyn will promote accessibility through the development of policies, procedures and practices. We will ensure our policies, procedures and practices address integration, independence, dignity and equal opportunity.

With respect to Accessibility, the mandate for the Township of Jocelyn 2022 Election is as follows:

> "It is the goal of the Township of Jocelyn to ensure that Electors within the Municipality who require accessibility services are provided with the best opportunity to vote as independently as possible in the 2022 Municipal Elections."

Municipal Elections Act Requirements

In addition our current Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy, the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 S.O. 1996, CHAPTER 32, section 12 states:

"**12.1** (1) A clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities. 2009, c. 33, Sched. 21, s. 8 (8).

Report
(2) 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. 2009, c. 33, Sched. 21, s.8 (8)

41. (3) The clerk shall make such changes to some or all of the ballots as he or she considers necessary or desirable to allow electors with visual impairments to vote without the assistance referred to in paragraph 4 of subsection 52 (1). 1996, c. 32, Sched., s.41 (3); 2001, c. 32, s. 30 (1).

45. (2) In establishing the locations of voting places, the clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities. 2009, c. 33, Sched. 21, s. 8(23)."

Development of the Election Accessibility Plan

This Accessibility Plan will address the specific requirements pertaining to accessibility in relation to the 2018 Municipal Election within the Township of Jocelyn. This plan is a living document which will be improved and updated as best practices are identified and new opportunities or improvements arise.

During the development process of the initial Election Accessibility Plan, the following steps will be implemented:

- Review proposed Accessibility Plan to substantiate that needs are being met;

- Establish staff training standards and practices directly related to the Election to ensure that people with disabilities are able to vote in a positive environment, and ensure that all Election Officials recognize, that in every way possible, a voter's needs are to be accommodated whenever possible; and

- Following the Election, submit a report to Council about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

Regard for the needs of Electors with Disabilities

The procedures within this plan must respect the dignity and independence of the Electors. 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.

Accessibility is a term used to describe the degree to which a product, device, service, or environment is available to be used by all intended audiences. There are five identified barriers to accessibility for persons with disabilities. These barriers are attitudinal, organizational or systemic, architectural or physical, information or communications, and technology.

Barriers to accessibility are obstacles that make it difficult and sometimes impossible for people with disabilities to do the things most of us take for granted, things like going shopping, working, or driving.

Some examples of barriers to people with disabilities:

Barriers to Accessibility

Type of Barriers	Examples
Attitudinal barriers are those that discriminate against people with disabilities.	• Thinking that people with disabilities are inferior; and • Assuming that a person who has a speech impairment can't understand you.
Information or **communications** barriers happen when a person can't easily understand information.	• Print is too small to read • Websites that can't be accessed by people who are not able to use a mouse • Signs that are not clear or easily understood.
Technology barriers occur when a technology can't be modified to support various assistive devices.	• A website doesn't support screen-reading software.
Organizational barriers are an organization's policies, practices or procedures that discriminate against people with disabilities.	• A hiring process that is not open to people with disabilities.
Architectural and **physical** barriers are features of buildings or spaces that cause problems for people with disabilities.	• Hallways and doorways that are too narrow for a person using a wheelchair, electric scooter or walker; • Counters that are too high for a person of short stature; • Poor lighting for people with low vision; • Doorknobs that are difficult for people with arthritis to grasp; • Parking spaces that are too narrow for a driver who uses a wheelchair; and • Telephones that are not equipped with telecommunications devices for people who are Deaf, deafened or hard of hearing

Types of Disabilities

Disabilities can take many forms and can range from temporary to permanent. Often disabilities are non-visible and no one should ever make assumptions. Disabilities include developmental, cognitive and physical challenges/conditions of persons of any age.

Listed below is a brief description of different types of disabilities. Persons with disabilities may face challenges due to physical or mental limitations. Understanding all aspects of a disability is essential.

Physical Disabilities: There are many types and degrees of physical disabilities, and while people who use mobility aids like wheelchairs, scooters, crutches or canes are most recognizable, it is important to consider that not all people with physical disabilities require a mobility device. People who have arthritis, heart or lung conditions or amputations may also have difficulty with stamina, moving, standing, sitting or the ability to reach or grasp. It may be difficult to identify a person with a disability.

Vision Loss: There are varying degrees of vision loss and distinction between blindness and low vision. In some cases, it may be difficult to tell if a person has a vision loss. Vision disabilities can reduce one's ability to see clearly or can affect the range of their visual field. Some people can distinguish between light and dark, between contrasting colours, or read large print, but have difficulty with small print or low-light situations. Others may have a loss of peripheral or side vision, or a lack of central vision, which impacts a person's ability to distinguish details, like recognizing faces or reading.

Hearing Impaired, Deafness and Hearing Loss: Hearing loss ranges from mild to profound. The distinctions between the terms "deaf", "deafened", "hearing impaired" and "hard of hearing" are based principally on the individual's preferred language (spoken or signed) rather than on the actual degree of hearing loss.

Deaf-Blindness: A person who is deaf-blind has some degree of both vision and hearing loss. This results in greater difficulties in accessing information and managing daily activities. Most people who are deaf-blind will be accompanied by an intervener, a professional who helps with communicating.

Speech Impairments: People with speech disabilities may have difficulties communicating. For many reasons, people may have difficulty speaking clearly – for example, as a result of a stroke or cerebral palsy – which may result in difficulties with verbal communication. Some people may use communication boards or other assistive devices to communicate. A speech disability often has no impact on a person's ability to understand.

Cognitive Disabilities: Cognitive disabilities may affect understanding, communication, or behavior and can be attributed to brain injuries, developmental or learning disabilities. It is not always easy to identify someone who has a cognitive disability. People with a cognitive disability may have difficulties recognizing, understanding and remembering information.

Mental Illness: Mental illness is a disturbance in the thoughts and emotions that may decrease a person's capacity to cope with the challenges of everyday life. Mental illness can take many forms, just as physical illness does. Mental illnesses include schizophrenia, mood disorders; depression and bipolar disorder, anxiety disorders, personality disorders and eating disorders.

Voting Place

In order to ensure that each voting place is accessible to Electors with disabilities, a Site Evaluation Form (appendix A) will be completed prior to confirming the site as a voting place.

The Evaluation Form will include the assessment of the following areas within the voting place:

- Voting Place Location;
- Interior Layout of the Voting Place;
- Parking Areas;
- Entrances;
- Fire and Life Safety;
- General Layout and Services;
- Interiors;
- Public Washrooms; and
- Facility Signage and Information Systems

Upon completion of the Evaluation, a list of the barriers which have been identified will be reviewed to determine if they can be rectified in order to accommodate Electors with disabilities. This may include the implementation of site specific accommodations for that voting place on Election Day.

Mail-In Voting

The Township of Jocelyn offers the option of casting a ballot from the comfort of home, a convenient and familiar setting, complete with the tools and equipment and /or software which assists in the day to day activities of our Electors.

Alternate Formats

Alternate formats are other ways of publishing the 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 Township of Jocelyn, shall, upon request, and in consultation with the person making the request, if feasible/practicable, provide or make arrangements to present accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities.

Accessible formats and communication supports shall be provided in a timely manner, taking into account the person's accessibility needs and at a cost that is no more than the regular cost charged to other persons.

In the event the information is not generated by the Township of Jocelyn or is supplied by a third party, the Municipality 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 if applicable.

General Election Materials

Large Print: Printed material generated by the Municipality will be provided in either Arial or Verdana font, 12 point and can be made available in font (print) size that is 14 - 20 points or larger.

Assistive Devices: The Voting place will be equipped with magnifiers and assistance of Election Officials if required.

Other Items: Magnifying sheets available at the voting place to assist voters with lowvision. Note pads and pens available at all voting places to assist communication with voters who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.
Identification and how to mark your ballot posters will be clearly visible in a large font.

Voting Provisions for Electors with Disabilities at the Voting Place

The following voting provisions are in place to accommodate the voting needs of Electors with disabilities:

Support Persons: Is a person who accompanies a person with a disability in order to assist him or her with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or with access to goods and/or services.

The Deputy Returning Officer may permit, if considered it necessary, an Elector who needs assistance in voting to have such support. The Support Person, upon completion of the prescribed oath, may accompany the Elector behind the voting screen to assist in the voting process.

Assistive Personal Equipment: Assistive personal devices include, but are not limited to, wheelchairs, walkers, white canes, walking canes, note taking devices, portable magnifiers, recording machines, assistive listening devices, personal oxygen tanks and devices for grasping. An assistive device shall mean a device used to assist persons with disabilities in carrying out activities or in accessing services of persons or organizations covered by the customer service standard.

Guide Dog: Shall mean a dog trained as a guide for a blind person and having qualifications prescribed by the regulation under the Blind Persons' Act.

Service Animals: For the purpose of this policy, a "service animal" is defined as either:

    (a)   A "guide dog" as defined in section 1 of the Blind Persons Rights' Act; or

    (b)   A "service animal" for a person with a disability. For the purpose of this policy, an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability;

        (i)   if it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for the reasons relating to his or her disability; or

        (ii)   if the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

    (c)   The Township of Jocelyn will allow the person and the animal onto all Township of Jocelyn owned and operated public facilities that are open to the public, and will ensure that the person is permitted to keep the animal with him or her unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law.

    (d)   If a service animal is excluded by law from the premises, the provider of goods or services shall attempt to ensure that other measures are available to enable the person with a disability to obtain, use, or benefit from the provider's goods or services.

    (e)   **Physical Disabilities:** The voting place including the parking area and entrances will be selected and/or setup in a manner that enables Electors with physical disabilities to vote.

    (f)   In the event that an Elector is unable to access the established voting area due to a physical disability, the Deputy Returning Officer may attend to the Elector at their vehicle or anywhere within the voting place (curb-side voting).

    (g)   **Vision Loss:** The Voting place will be equipped with magnifiers and assistance of Election Officials if required.

    (h)   **Hearing Impaired, Deafness and Hearing Loss:** The voting place will be equipped with a wipe board and/or a pad of paper and pen to communicate with hearing impaired electors in writing if required.

    (i)   **Speech Impairments, Cognitive Disabilities and Mental Illness:** Personal Assistance from an Election Official will be available.

Accessibility Training for Election Officials

All Election Officials are required to complete the Township of Jocelyn Accessible Customer Service training which includes:

- Review of the purposes of the Act and the requirements of the accessible

customer service regulation – Ontario Regulation 429\07;

- How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities;
- How to interact with persons who use an assistive device or service animal;
- How to use equipment or devices available to assist with the provision of services; and
- What to do if a person is having difficulty accessing the service.

Under s. 7 of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR), the Township of Jocelyn will ensure that training is provided on the requirements of the accessibility standards referred to in this Regulation and on the Human Rights Code as it pertains to persons with disabilities to;

- All employees and volunteers;
- All persons who participate in developing the organization's policies; and
- All other persons who provide goods, services or facilities on behalf of the organization.

These training requirements are in addition to the accessible customer service training required by s.6 of the Accessible Customer Service Standard. The key additional training requirements are as follows:

- Accessible Feedback Process – s.11;
- Emergency and public safety information – s.13;
- Recruitment – s.22 – 24;
- Employee Accommodation – s.25, 26, 28;
- Workplace emergency information – s.27; and
- Ontario Human Rights Code as it pertains to persons with disabilities.

The regulation states that training on the requirements of the accessibility standards and on the Human Rights Code shall be appropriate to the duties of the employees, volunteers and other persons.

The Township of Jocelyn will maintain a record of the training provided under this section, including the dates on which the training is provided and the number of individuals whom it is provided.

Reporting

As per the Municipal Elections Act:

"S.12.1 (2) 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. 2009, c.33, Sched. 21, s. 8 (8)."

In addition, the said report will be made available to the public via the Municipality's website as well as in hard copy at the Municipal Office.

Customer Service Feedback

The Township of Jocelyn is committed to providing high quality goods or services to all members of the public or third parties it serves. Feedback from the public or third parties is welcomed as it may identify areas that require change and encourage continuous service improvements in the delivery of an Accessible Election. Feedback on how the goods or services that the Township of Jocelyn provides will be responded to, documented and tracked. Feedback may be submitted in writing, by fax, email, telephone or in person to:

Township of Jocelyn
3670 5th Side Road
Hilton Beach, ON, P0R 1G0
Tel: 705-246-2025
Fax: 705-246-3282
admin@jocelyn.ca

Accessible Service Disruptions

Temporary disruptions in the goods and services that the Township of Jocelyn provide may occur due to reasons that may or may not be within our control or knowledge.

The Township of Jocelyn will make reasonable effort to provide notice of the disruption to the public or third parties including information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if any, that may be available. The Township of Jocelyn will make reasonable efforts to provide prior notice of the planned disruption if possible, recognizing that in some circumstances such as in the situation of unplanned temporary disruption(s), advance notice will not be possible. In such cases, the Township of Jocelyn will give notice as soon as possible.

Such notice may be provided by a variety of methods, depending on the circumstances, and may include postings in conspicuous/visible places at the affected premises and other Municipal facilities.

Appendix A   **Voting Place Site Evaluation Form**

Name of Voting Place: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Contact Name: _____

Checklist

Voting Place Location	Yes	No
Is the voting location located on route that is served by accessible public transportation?		
Are the name and address of the building clearly visible from the street and sidewalk?		
If needed, is there a pedestrian crosswalk close by? Where there is a change in level, for example, where the sidewalk meets the street, is there a curb cut?		
Interior Layout of the Voting Place	**Yes**	**No**
Is the voting room placed as close as possible to accessible entrances?		
Will the layout of the room provide sufficient space to allow for a five – foot turning radius between the tables and voting screens? This is required for ease of movement for those electors who use mobility devices such as walkers, scooters and wheelchairs.		

Does the layout provide room for extra seating for voters and scrutineers? Extra seating may be required for voters who require a chair while waiting in lines.		
Parking Areas	**Yes**	**No**
Is accessible parking available for electors? At least one accessible parking space should be provided on the shortest, safest accessible route to the accessible building entrance.		
Is the accessible parking space clearly marked with the International symbol of Accessibility?		
Is the parking space firm and level?		
Are curb cuts or other transitional infrastructure in place near parking and along route to primary entrance?		
Is the space large enough to meet the needs of an elector who uses a van equipped with a wheelchair lift?		
Are the parking spaces and route of travel properly maintained? Snow and ice should be removed and uneven surfaces repaired as soon as possible.		
Entrances	**Yes**	**No**
Is the entrance easy to see?		
Is the entrance well lit?		
Is the entrance accessible? If there are steps, there needs to be a ramp so people using mobility aids or who have mobility impairments can get in. Steps, even a small single step, can make a voting facility inaccessible to many people with disabilities and seniors.		
Is the ramp well designed and safe? Does it have handrails on both sides? Does it have a suitable slope?		
Is the door hardware accessible? Are there lever or pull handles? Be sure the door hardware passes the "Fist test". This means it can be operated by a person using a closed fist.		

	Yes	No
Is the doorway wide enough for a person using a wheelchair or scooter to pass through?		
Accessible door: • Opens automatically; • Has power assisted door operators; or • Can be easily opened with one hand.		

Fire and Life Safety	Yes	No
A fire policy and/or fire safety plan is available to Election Officials and includes provisions for the evacuation of people with disabilities		
Main exit routes and exit doors are easily accessed and used by people using mobility aids.		
Exit instructions are printed in large text, and mounted in an accessible, highly visible location.		
Fire alarms have both visual and audible signals.		
Fire hose cabinets and fire extinguishers are in a highly contrasting colour.		
A first aid station/kit is available to Election Officials.		

General Layout and Services	Yes	No
Queuing areas and serving aisles are wide enough for people using mobility aids including electric wheelchairs and scooters.		
Counters/tables are accessible to and useable by patrons using wheelchairs or scooters.		
Appropriate lighting is installed to ensure that people with vision disabilities may clearly identify colours, patterns and signage.		

Interiors	Yes	No
Floor finishes have non-slip surfaces under wet and dry conditions.		
Open – concept, accessible routes are marked by bright colour or textual changes at floor level, to provide directional cues for people with vision disabilities.		

There are no protruding objects or tripping hazards in accessible routes, and if so, they are clearly marked with a bright colour, a cane-detectable floor finish, or a guard.		
Where floors are carpeted, the carpet is of firm, dense construction and easy for a wheelchair user to roll over without difficulty.		
Thresholds are beveled to accommodate different floor materials.		
Walls in busy areas, corridors, ramps or staircases are finished in smooth, non-glossy, non-abrasive finishes.		
Colour of doors or door frames in hallways contrast with surrounding wall colours.		
Public Washrooms	**Yes**	**No**
An accessible stall is provided for each sex when integrated into regular washrooms or an accessible stand-alone unisex washroom is located nearby.		
The following washroom features are accessible to people with a wide range of disabilities: • Grab bars • Coat hooks • Flush controls • Wash basins • Toilet paper dispenser • Mounted automatic hand-dryers or paper towel holders • Lever-handled faucets or automatic faucet.		
Facility Signage and Information Systems	**Yes**	**No**
Show the International Symbol of Accessibility.		
Include appropriate pictograms, wherever possible (e.g. on washroom doors).		
Include large high contrast text, clear, light-coloured lettering or symbols on a dark background, or dark characters on a light background.		
Are mounted at a convenient height for both wheelchair users and people with vision disabilities.		

Person who Completed Evaluation:

_____

Areas of Concern:

_____

_____

_____

Site Selected: **Yes**_____   **No**_____

Special Accommodations for Site:

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