

Type of Decision									
Meeting Date	Friday, February 18, 2011				Report Date	Tuesday, February 15, 2011			
Decision Required	X	Yes		No	Priority	X	High		Low
Direction	X	Information Only			Type of Meeting	X	Open		Closed
REPORT TITLE									
Election Accessibility Report #18/02/11/1203									

Subject: Legislated Report to Council on Accessibility during Municipal Elections in 2010.

RECOMMENDATION: That Council approve the attached report.

WHEREAS the Council of the United Townships of Head, Clara & Maria wishes to comply with legislation specifically Section 12.1 of the *Municipal Elections Act* regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities;

AND WHEREAS the Clerk has presented the attached report detailing the activities completed by staff to comply with this legislation;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Council of the United Townships of Head, Clara & Maria does hereby approve and accept the Report #18/02/11/1203 as proof of compliance;

BACKGROUND/EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Attached for council's information is a report as required by Section 12.1 of the Municipal Elections Act regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities. Although this municipality did not require an election in 2010, steps were taken to update all policies including a section on holding Accessible Elections as follows:

"V. ACCESSIBLE ELECTIONS GUIDE

VOTING TRADITIONALLY – AT THE VOTING PLACE

Election staff (not the voters) will insert ballots for all electors.

GETTING TO THE VOTING LOCATION

- ***You will find two (2) accessible parking spaces one (1) each outside the main doors of the voting location at the Township Community Centre and the Municipal Offices. These are clearly marked with the International symbol of Accessibility.***

GETTING INTO THE VOTING LOCATION

- **An easily navigable route will be clearly marked with orange arrows for entry into the voting location and into the voting area within the location for both the advanced and regular voting day.**

INSIDE THE VOTING LOCATION

- **Seating areas are provided throughout the voting location for electors needing to rest.**
- **New lighting will assist with visibility issues.**
- **Voting booths shall be placed on tables. Election staff are available to assist if you require any assistance in reaching the voting booth however; the tables are low enough that someone in a wheelchair may easily access them.**
- **If you require ballots in accessible format (Braille, large print, magnifying sheet or template) please notify the election staff when you register to vote/ by September 15, 2010 so we can make sure we have the tools necessary to accommodate you.**
- **If you are bringing a support person to help you, please identify them to the election staff when you register. Your support person will be required to take an Oath in order to assist you to vote in a secure manner. Election staff are trained to assist you and your support person to ensure the integrity of the voting process.**
- **If you are bringing a service animal with you, please remember to bring documentation to confirm its service animal status, if this is not readily apparent.**

VOTING

Our municipality uses the paper ballot method of voting and is capable of providing your ballot in a number of formats. Please read the information below to see how this voting method works!

PAPER BALLOT

Election staff (not the voters) will insert and eject ballots for each voter.

Paper ballot voting employs paper ballots on which the names of all candidates and issues are printed. Voters record their choices by marking the boxes next to the candidate they select, folding the ballot and handing the folded ballot back to the DRO who will drop the completed ballot in a sealed ballot box. This method allows the use of various means (magnifying glass, large print, Braille or template) to read the text and allows improved accessibility for disabled voters.

When you come in to vote, you will be asked to provide your name and appropriate identification. Once your identity has been confirmed and the offices that you are entitled to vote for are determined, you will be provided with a ballot(s). Your ballot(s) identify the office(s) for which you are entitled to vote. If you require ballots in accessible format (magnifying glass, large print, Braille, or template) please notify the election staff when you register to vote.

Proceed to the voting booth and mark your ballot with the pen/pencil provided, as shown on the signage at the booth. Large print instructions will be available. Magnifying sheets are also available. In order to ensure your vote remains secret,

your ballot will have to be folded, as shown on the signage and on the reverse of the ballot, and return to the election staff desk before it is deposited into the ballot box. Should you have difficulties in folding your ballot, you may return it to the DRO, face down, and the DRO shall fold the ballot for you in such a manner as to not disclose your vote.

All election staff at each voting location shall be trained on any assistive voting devices and shall have taken an Oath of Secrecy. At any time during your voting experience, an election official will be available to assist you where necessary.”

Further, the Municipality’s newly adopted Customer Service Standards Policy (P&G 165 passed in October 2009) was implemented to be followed by all staff.

The following chart outlines some of the aspects of identifying and providing for accessibility issues further to what we have already completed, should there be a need for an election. As there was no need, this process was not completed in 2010. The response from repeated requests of our electorate and residents for information concerning their need for accessible devices and facilities has always been non-existent. As this is a small municipality, we are aware of most accessibility issues identified as visual, mobility and hearing. All election materials would have met the needs of our residents.

Identification, Removal and Prevention of Barriers

We took the following actions to remove and prevent barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities:

Communications and Information

1.	Ensured communication initiatives and information for candidates and electors were available in alternate formats
2.	Posted all information to municipality’s website
3.	Would provide all documentation and forms in large print to assist visually impaired if requested.
4.	Provided candidates and staff with information relating to accessible customer service

Voting Locations

1.	Conducted site visits of all potential voting locations to ensure full accessibility as against our standards which included: The Municipal Hall is fully accessible. Contacted the Ministry of Natural Resources to utilize their facility on the Brent Road to ensure a fully accessible location in Deux Rivieres our only other polling station.
2.	Provided appropriate signage at voting locations
3.	Permitted service animals and support persons in all voting locations
4.	Set up a process to facilitate notification of any last minute voting location changes, should an emergency occur
5.	Ensured designated or reserved parking for persons with disabilities at each voting location

Voting

1.	Added tools to assist with ensuring accessibility as identified
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Staff Training

1.	Staff training incorporated provisions to meet accessible customer service standards
2.	Provided reference materials
3.	Monitored elector’s concerns and ensured that their needs were met, i.e. if an individual with a walker was in a long line, staff observed, and if felt that the elector was having

	difficulties, offered a chair and ensured that their place was saved in the voting line-up
4.	Ensured that electors were aware that magnifiers were available, if required, throughout the day by routinely advising line-ups that may have occurred
6.	Encouraged election workers to approach an elector if it appeared that the elector required assistance to get around in the voting location. Offered assistance to help, did not assume an individual needed help
7.	Election staff was trained to identify a service animal and followed the Municipality's Accessible Customer Service Policy
8.	Maintained a friendly and approachable demeanour, regardless of how tired, upset or hassled a worker may have felt
9.	Checked the access doors frequently to offer assistance and watch for electors unable to easily enter the building

For each voting method we took the following measures to ensure accessibility:

<i>Voting Method</i>
Traditional Paper Ballot with large text ballots available
Traditional Paper Ballot with magnifying sheets available

Financial Considerations/Budget Impact: None

Policy Impact: None – complies with legislation.

Approved and Recommended by the Clerk	
Melinda Reith, Municipal Clerk	<i>Melinda Reith</i>