

# Accessible Customer Service: Procedures

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER  
ELECTIONS ONTARIO

August 2011

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

Explanatory Note.....	3
Purpose.....	4
Procedures for the Use of Assistive Devices.....	4
Procedures for Special Ballots and Home Visits .....	5
Procedures for the Use of Service Animals .....	8
Procedures for the Use of Support Persons .....	9
Procedures for Providing Notice of Temporary Disruption.....	10
Procedures for Processing Feedback .....	12
Accessible Customer Service Feedback Form .....	15
Notice of Service Disruption.....	16

## Section 1: Explanatory Note

---

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* ("AODA") is a provincial Act with the purpose of developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for persons with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises.

Under the AODA, Ontario Regulation 429/07 entitled "Accessibility Standards for Customer Service" came into force on January 1, 2008. This Regulation establishes accessibility standards specific to customer service for public sector organizations and other persons or organizations that provide goods and services to members of the public. Designated public sector organizations, including Elections Ontario, must comply with this standard as of January 1, 2010.

The procedures outlined in this document support the Accessible Customer Service Policy for Elections Ontario as required by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service.

### Section 2: Purpose

---

The procedures outlined in this document support the Accessible Customer Service Policy with detailed processes and accommodations. The supporting procedures include the following:

- Procedures for the Use of Assistive Devices
- Procedures for the Use of Service Animals
- Procedures for the Use of Support Persons
- Procedures for Providing Notice of Temporary Disruptions
- Procedures for Receiving Feedback

### Section 3: Procedures for the Use of Assistive Devices

---

#### *Introduction*

Customers with disabilities may require certain accommodations to help them access the goods and services provided by or on behalf of Elections Ontario. These accommodations may involve various forms of assistance, assistive devices or services and may include a customer's assistive device or one provided by Elections Ontario. Examples include: providing templates, providing magnifiers to help with reading, or sign language interpretation service for customers who are deaf.

#### *General*

A customer with a disability may use their own assistive device, at their own pace, for the purpose of obtaining, using and benefiting from Elections Ontario's goods and services. There may be situations where the use of an assistive device is not possible. In these situations, Elections Ontario may offer a customer with a disability other measures to assist him or her in obtaining, using and benefiting from Elections Ontario's goods and services. Other measures may include offering a service in another location, as permitted under the *Election Act*, or in another way that takes into consideration the abilities of the customer.

At times a customer with a disability may be unable, due to the nature of his or her disability, to identify or communicate accommodation needs. In situations where it is evident that the customer has a disability and there is a potential need for accommodation, staff or anyone working on behalf of Elections Ontario may ask the customer if they require assistance accessing goods and services. Staff will approach persons with disabilities and discuss their accommodation needs with an understanding of the need to respect their privacy regarding their disability and accommodation requests.

#### *General Procedures for Polling Places*

Election Ontario provides assistive devices at polling places to assist electors in completing the voting process with independence and in secrecy. The devices routinely made available include

## Accessible Customer Service: Procedures

magnifying sheets, Ballot Template (for people with vision impairments), pad and paper (for communicating with a person with hearing loss).

In the event the poll is not accessible for a person with a disability, the ballot box may be brought to the elector at the voting location. The voter's privacy in marking their ballot should continue to be protected.

### *Assistive Voting Technology*

During a general election or by-election, all electors who come in to vote at the Advance Polls in the Returning Office and Satellite Office are asked if they would like to mark the ballot using an assistive device. Those electors who want to use the assistive device will be issued a blank ballot and told to proceed over to the Tabulator Deputy Returning Officer (TDRO).

The TDRO will explain to the elector the different voting options available to the elector. The elector can use the Audio Tactile Interface which allows the elector to mark their ballot using the device while listening to instructions through the head phones. They may also use paddles or a sip and puff device that works through the Audio Tactile Interface to mark their ballot. The ballot marked during this process is indistinguishable from ballots marked with a pencil, ensuring the confidentiality of the voter. These assistive technologies provide increased independence in voting, while maintaining the secrecy of the process. Specific instructions on how to use the devices are provided by the TDRO at the time of voting.

Upon completing the voting process a ballot is printed and inserted into a secrecy folder. The ballot is then taken to the TDRO who feeds it into the tabulator and the ballot is counted.

This process is also available to electors who are voting by Special Ballot in the Returning Office and Satellite Offices in the five days immediately preceding election day.

## **Section 4: Procedures for Special Ballots and Home Visits**

---

### *Special Ballots*

What is a Special ballot?

A Special ballot is a method of voting that allows eligible electors to cast a ballot in person or by mail during the 28-day election period. This means that even if electors are unable to go to the polls on election day or visit one of the advance polls in their area, they can still cast a ballot for the candidate of their choice.

There are two ways to vote by Special Ballot: In person or by mail.

### The Application Form

## Accessible Customer Service: Procedures

An elector choosing to vote by Special ballot must obtain and complete a Special Ballot Application form which can be obtained by:

- picking it up in-person
- requesting by mail, telephone, email or fax
- downloading it from the Elections Ontario website.

The elector has the option of completing the application form and voting immediately, or returning it once completed.

### Voting in the Returning or Satellite Office

The elector completes a Special Ballot Application form and provides it to the Special Ballot Officer (SBO) along with proof of name and residence on one document. Once the Special Ballot Officer approves the application form, the elector is provided with a ballot and votes. When the elector places the ballot into the ballot box, the voting process is complete.

### Voting by Mail

The elector sends his or her completed Special Ballot Application form by mail, fax, courier or other delivery method to the local returning/satellite office or to Elections Ontario. Once the elector's application form has been reviewed and approved by the Special Ballot Officer, a Special Ballot Kit is assembled and mailed to the elector.

NOTE: The Special Ballot Kit will only be mailed directly to the elector and cannot be picked up by a friend or relative.

The Special Ballot Kit includes a pamphlet with voting instructions, a write-in Special ballot and a series of envelopes to secure the write-in Special ballot for its return. A List of Nominated Candidates will also be included after the close of nominations.

NOTE: Prior to the close of nominations, it is the elector's responsibility to determine the name of their candidate of choice.

Once the write-in special ballot is returned to the returning/satellite office or to Elections Ontario in its secure envelope, the Special Ballot Officer reviews, verifies and approves the receipt of the ballot. When the Special Ballot Officer places the secure envelope into the ballot box, the voting process is complete.

### *Home Visits*

Voters who have difficulty going to their local returning office may request a home visit.

You may apply to vote by special ballot in your home if you:

- Are eligible to vote in a general provincial election or by-election, and

## Accessible Customer Service: Procedures

- Find it impossible or unreasonably difficult to personally go to the returning office in your electoral district, and
- Need assistance with making an application to vote by special ballot, because of a disability or because an inability to read or write

From August 8 — August 30, 2011 you may request a home visit for the 2011 general election through Elections Ontario by telephone, e-mail or fax during the following dates and times:

August 8 — 19, 2011

Monday to Friday 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM ET or 7:30 AM to 4:00 PM CT.

August 22 — 30, 2011

Monday — Saturday 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM ET or 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM CT.

Sunday 12:00 PM to 5:00 PM ET or 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM CT.

After September 7, 2011 you may request a home visit by telephone, e-mail, or fax through your local returning office or satellite office.

### *Electors in Hospital*

In some instances, if an elector is temporarily hospitalized and unable to vote at an advance poll, on election day, or at their local returning office or satellite office, the elector may be able to vote by Special ballot in the hospital.

Special Ballot Officers will be visiting designated hospitals on September 26, 27 and 28, 2011, from 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM local time.

The hospitalized elector can still vote even if the hospital in which they are staying is outside his or her electoral district. If the elector does not know the name of his or her electoral district, a Special Ballot Officer will be able to assist. If the elector does not know the names of the candidates in their electoral district, a Special Ballot Officer will have access to a list of all the candidates in that electoral district.

The elector may use his or her hospital bracelet as a form of identification or an identification document with both his or her name and residential address

## Section 5: Procedures for the Use of Service Animals

---

### *Introduction*

Customers with disabilities may require the assistance of service animals to help them obtain, use and access goods and services provided by or on behalf of Elections Ontario. Customers with disabilities are permitted to enter Elections Ontario premises with their service animal and to keep the animal with them while on the premises, unless excluded by law.

Service animals are not permitted to enter kitchens as stipulated in the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*, and the *Food and Safety and Quality Act, 2001*, O. Reg. 31/05, s.44.

If a service animal is excluded by law, Elections Ontario will use reasonable efforts to ensure that alternate means are available to enable the customer with a disability to use Elections Ontario's goods and services.

### *General*

Elections Ontario permits people with disabilities to keep any assistive animals with them while on the premises and while accessing goods and services.

There are many types of service animals, including, but not limited to, guide dogs, seizure alert animals, hearing alert animals, and emotional support animals. Staff understand that service animals are working animals and therefore should not be distracted, spoken to or offered food.

### *Readily Apparent Service Animals*

Staff will notice if the animal is a service animal by observing:

- a) if the customer's need for a service animal is obvious;
- b) if the service animal is wearing a service animal vest or harness; or
- c) if the service animal is observed assisting the customer.

### *Documents Identifying Service Animals*

If staff is uncertain whether the animal is a service animal, Elections Ontario may ask the customer for a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the customer requires the animal for reasons relating to a disability; or alternatively, a valid identification card or training certificate from a recognized guide dog or service animal training school. (i.e. a dog trained as a guide for a blind person and having qualifications prescribed by the regulations under the *Blind Persons Rights' Act*, a Hearing Ear Dog or Special Skills Dog as qualified by the Lions Foundation of Canada.)

## Accessible Customer Service: Procedures

### *Procedures for Polling Places*

Where otherwise permitted by law, service animals are allowed into polling places.

## **Section 6: Procedures for the Use of Support Persons**

---

### *Introduction*

Customers with disabilities may require the assistance of a support person to help them obtain, use and/or participate in the goods and services provided by or on behalf of Elections Ontario.

Support persons provide assistance to a person with a disability and may be a family member, friend, a personal support worker, an intervener or sign language interpreter. Support persons do not necessarily require specialized training or certification and the type of support they provide will depend on the customer's unique needs.

### *General*

Customers with disabilities are permitted to enter premises Elections Ontario owns or operates with their support person and to have access to that person while on Elections Ontario premises.

Elections Ontario will ensure that staff, agents and others providing services on behalf of the organization will:

- a) permit customers with disabilities to enter Elections Ontario premises with their support person;
- b) permit customer with disabilities to have access to their support person while on Elections Ontario premises;
- c) understand that the focus of customer service and communication is the customer and not their support person;
- d) post notice in advance if any fee is to be charged to support persons in relation to their presence on Elections Ontario premises; and
- e) administer the appropriate oath/affirmation of secrecy to the support person, if support is provided in a polling place.

### *Procedures for Polling Places*

In compliance with requirements under the *Election Act* under Section 42(1), on who can be present in a polling place and the requirements under Section 55 and 56 with respect to restrictions on the use of "a friend" or the attendance of an interpreter or caregiver, the following must be taken into consideration:

Under Section 42(1) of the *Election Act* the only people permitted to stay in a polling place when it is open or during the ballot count are the deputy returning officer, the poll clerk, the candidates and not more than 1 scrutineer for each candidate.

## Accessible Customer Service: Procedures

Exceptions to this secrecy are made in Sections 4 (Chief Electoral Officer or Deputy Chief Electoral Officer), 7 (Returning Officer), 15 (Electors), 44 (Advance Polls – same secrecy rules as for general polling day modified as required for advance polling), and 55 (Electors with Disabilities).

- Under s. 55 and 56, the elector, after making an application and taking an oath/affirmation with respect to his/her inability to vote without assistance due to reading or other disability, can request “a friend” to accompany the elector to the voting screen and mark the elector’s ballot for him/her.
- The friend must first take an oath/affirmation that he/she will keep secret the name of the candidate for whom the ballot was marked.
- The friend can only support one elector at any polling place. A friend can support more than one elector under section 14 in prescribed polling places including a hospital, psychiatric facility, home for the aged, nursing home or other institution of 20 beds or more in which chronically ill or infirm persons reside, a retirement home of 50 beds or more, or an institution for the “reception, treatment or vocational training of persons who have served or are serving in the Canadian Forces or are disabled)

An elector, who takes an oath or affirmation that he or she is unable to vote without assistance because he or she is unable to read or has a disability, may have the assistance of a friend who takes an Oral Oath or Affirmation of Secrecy.

A friend or support person can also provide this support to an elector during a home visit following the procedures as outlined above in terms of oaths or affirmations.

If no friend or support person is present, the Deputy Returning Officer may assist these electors in marking their ballots. Interpreters for sign language or Bliss symbolics, interveners that assist people who are deaf-blind and sighted guides may also be permitted.

## Section 7: Procedures for Providing Notice of Temporary Disruption

### *Introduction*

Elections Ontario recognizes that customers with disabilities often anticipate the use of particular services to access goods and services. Should a temporary disruption in these services occur, in whole or in part, Elections Ontario will make reasonable efforts to provide notice of these disruptions. Temporary disruptions may occur in elevators, automatic door openers, ramps or to services.

### *Providing Notice of Temporary Disruptions in Services and Facilities*

Disruptions in certain services and facilities may interfere with the ability of customers and other third parties to access Elections Ontario goods and services. Temporary disruptions in facilities

## Accessible Customer Service: Procedures

include, but are not limited to, unscheduled or scheduled maintenance, repairs, and construction. Temporary disruptions in services may include the unexpected cancellation of services.

When a temporary disruption occurs in the services or facilities used by persons with disabilities to access Elections Ontario goods and services, whether planned or unplanned, Elections Ontario will provide notice of these disruptions to the public.

### *Content of Notices*

Notices will provide the following information:

- a) the nature of the service that is not available,
- b) the reason for the temporary disruption, such as repairs, maintenance, construction, inclement weather, unexpected circumstances, etc.;
- c) the expected length of the temporary disruption; and
- d) alternate means of accessing the goods or services, if available. For example, an alternative accessible route or entrance or the option of using fax or email if a TTY is not operating.

### *Format and Placement of Notices*

Notices will be posted in a manner that is reasonable under the circumstances with consideration given to the disability(s) of customers who access the disrupted service or facility.

- a) Notices may be provided in print by signage, or in mailing; or electronically by website postings; or by telephone recordings; or in certain situations notice may be provided directly to specified customers, or by other reasonable methods;
- b) Visual notices will be provided in large clear print, using contrasting colours between text and background;
- c) Notices may be placed at entrances where the temporary disruption occurs;
- d) Notices may be posted at the site of the temporary service or facility disruption;
- e) Notices will be posted in obvious places. Reasonable efforts will be taken to ensure an unobstructed view of the notice;
- f) Staff should be cognizant of placing notices where they are visible to persons who may be using assistive devices, such as wheelchairs; and
- g) Staff should be mindful of maintaining the secure placement and visibility of notices. For example, inclement weather may affect the visibility of notices.

## Accessible Customer Service: Procedures

### *Responsibilities for Temporary Disruptions*

Upon becoming aware of a disruption in a service or facility regularly used by persons with disabilities, staff will notify the department responsible for the service or facility so that they may follow the notification procedures. Department managers and/or supervisory staff will:

- a) Determine the expected length of the temporary disruption and provide this information to the public;
- b) Determine the most appropriate and reasonable format(s) of providing notice, giving consideration to the potential disabilities of customers who use the facility or service, and the length of the disruption;
- c) Determine the most appropriate location(s) for the notice;
- d) Review alternative means of accessing the affected Elections Ontario goods and services; and
- e) Provide information about the reason for the disruption and reasonable alternatives for customers with disabilities.

### *Procedures for Polling Places*

In the event of a temporary service disruption at a polling place, the RO will be responsible for posting the appropriate notice in accordance with this procedure. A notice template is provided. Information about the service disruption will be provided to the Chief Electoral Officer so that additional notification methods can be considered, i.e radio announcement, message on outgoing information line, web site.

## Section 8: Procedures for Processing Feedback

---

### *Introduction*

Elections Ontario is committed to providing quality goods and services that are accessible to all persons that Elections Ontario serves. Feedback about Elections Ontario goods and services and the manner in which they are provided to customers with disabilities are welcomed as they may identify areas that require change and encourage continuous service improvements.

The *Election Act* requires Elections Ontario to conduct a post-event, province-wide survey to assess electors' and other participants' experiences in the election. These survey results will form a part of the feedback process as required by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

### *General*

#### Feedback Process

Feedback or complaints may be given by telephone, in writing, electronically, in person, or through other reasonable methods, to Elections Ontario staff or anyone working on behalf of the

## Accessible Customer Service: Procedures

organization. Feedback should be recorded by customers, with or without assistance from Elections Ontario staff, on the Accessible Customer Service Feedback Form.

Feedback or complaints may be provided by customers or from a friend, relative, legal guardian or support person of a customer with a disability.

Elections Ontario will communicate the principles of the feedback procedure/process by making information available:

- a) at all customer reception areas by maintaining a current copy of this procedural document;
- b) in-service information publications;
- c) through regular contact methods used by customers (i.e. exit surveys in polling places);
- d) on the Elections Ontario website; and
- e) in multiple accessible formats, upon request.

Elections Ontario will record details of the customer's feedback or complaints about the delivery of goods and services and will forward them to the appropriate department, division, or individual(s).

Any complaints that deal specifically with accessibility related issues will be logged centrally and will be brought to the attention of the Deputy Chief Electoral Officer.

Complaints should be brought to the attention of Elections Ontario staff as soon as possible. A delay in making a complaint may affect the ability of Elections Ontario to adequately investigate the complaint and to arrive at a satisfactory resolution.

### *Complaints Resolution Process*

Elections Ontario will attempt to address all complaints at the point of service delivery. Elections Ontario employees who interact with customers on a regular basis, based on the training they receive, are encouraged, to the best of their ability, to address and resolve customer complaints as they arise.

The following steps outline the process for addressing customer complaints:

The customer should first discuss the matter with Elections Ontario staff person involved in the situation. The staff person receiving the complaint will attempt to resolve the problem to the satisfaction of the customer and will inform the customer about their right to forward their complaint to the next level if they are not satisfied with the outcome.

If a complaint is not resolved by the staff person with whom the complaint was addressed, the customer may ask for a review of his or her complaint by the appropriate departmental

## Accessible Customer Service: Procedures

manager/supervisory staff. The manager/supervisor receiving the complaint will record the details of the complaint including:

- a) the customer's name and contact information and/or the name of the customer's support person, as necessary;
- b) a description of the events, situation or accommodation matter/discrepancy;
- c) dates and times of the situation, or of the complaint being made;
- d) where the situation occurred and the program or service involved;
- e) any attempts already made to resolve the situation; and,

The manager or designate will contact the customer to inform them of the progress of the complaint and will provide a response to the complaint following the completion of an investigation.

### *Accessible Formats*

Customers with disabilities who file a complaint shall receive information pertaining to the complaint process in a format that takes their disability into consideration.



# **Elections Ontario**

## **NOTICE**

### **SERVICE DISRUPTION**

The estimated length of the temporary disruption is from *[insert estimated date and/or time]* to *[insert estimated date and/or time]*.

The following services and/or facilities are currently unavailable:

- 1) *[insert service or facility name and location]* due to *[insert reason for disruption]*
- 2) *[insert service or facility name and location]* due to *[insert reason for disruption]*

The following alternative services and/or facilities are available:  
*[insert alternative service or facility name and location]*

Elections Ontario would like to thank you for  
your patience in this matter.

For questions or additional information please contact:

Name – *[insert department manager or supervisory staff person's name]*

Phone – *[insert department manager or supervisory staff person's phone number]*

Fax – *[insert department manager or supervisory staff person's fax number]*

Email – *[insert department manager or supervisory staff person's email]*

## Accessible Customer Service: Procedures

Accessible Customer Service Procedures	
Identification Name	Accessible Customer Service Procedures
Effective Date	January 1, 2010
Date Last Amended	August 31, 2011
Date of Next Review	
Contact Officer	Susan McMurray, Policy and Research Manager Chief Electoral Office Email: <a href="mailto:Susan.McMurray@elections.on.ca">Susan.McMurray@elections.on.ca</a> Tel: (416) 326-9246