



ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

2022 Municipal Elections

Municipality of Val Rita-Harty
Schedule "A" to by-law 1119-22

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1. Introduction

The municipality of Val Rita-Harty is committed to providing all of our services in an accessible manner.

This plan has been developed in accordance with the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, S.O. 1996, c.32, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA) and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA).

The procedures included in this plan provide appropriate measures to ensure that the elections services for the Municipality of Val Rita-Harty are conducted in a way that persons with disabilities do not encounter any obstacles and barriers which would prevent them from voting independently and privately with access to assistance if needed.

This is an active document which shall be subject to ongoing reviews by the Clerk to ensure it is up to date and is efficient in removing any barriers and obstacles so that accessibility is not and will not become an issue in the Municipal elections.

2. Purpose and scope

This plan applies to all facilities utilized by the Municipality of Val Rita-Harty in the Municipal Elections. This plan includes the respect and dignity of all electors and candidates and is intended to highlight the measures that the Municipality is implementing to ensure equal opportunity for all electors and candidates.

2.1 Legislative requirements

The Municipal Clerk is responsible to conduct the Municipal Elections and establishing policies and procedures to ensure that all electors have the ability to fully participate in the 2022 Municipal Elections.

The Municipal Elections Act, 1996, S.O. 1996, c.32, states that :

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 preventions of barriers that affects electors and candidates with disabilities and shall make the plan available to the public before voting day in a regular election.

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.

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).

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

3. Plan development and review

This plan will be reviewed every four (4) years prior to the Municipal Elections or whenever it is deemed necessary to update as new barriers or improvements are identified or if there is a change in legislation.

This plan as been development by the Municipal Clerk in review of the various acts associated with accessibility including the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001, and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

4. Definitions and barrier types

4.1 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 co-ordination, 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 Insurance Act, 1997.

4.2 Attitudinal barrier : Barriers that result when people think, and act based on false assumptions. Example : receptionist talks to an individual’s support person because they assume the individual with a disability will not understand.

4.3 Information and communication barrier : Barriers created when information is offered in a form that suits some, but not all, of the population. Example : print that is too small for some people to read.

4.4 Technology barrier : Barriers that occur when technology, or the way it is used, cannot be accessed by people with disabilities. Example : websites that are not accessible to people who are blind and require the use of screen reader software.

4.5 Physical and architectural barrier : Physical barriers or obstacles that make it difficult for some people to easily access a place. Example : a doorknob that cannot be turned by a person with limited mobility or strength.

4.6 Organizational barrier : Occur when policies, practices or procedures result in some people receiving unequal access or being excluded. Example : A hiring process that is not open to people with disabilities.

5. Training for staff and volunteers

All staff and volunteers participating in election duties will be trained to recognize and ensure that persons with disabilities are served in a way that accommodates their needs and that they are fully able to participate in the 2022 elections without having to face any barriers.

The training will include :

- How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities;
- How to interact with persons with disabilities who use assistive devices or require the assistance of a service animal or support person;
- How to use assistive devices to deliver elections services;
- How to provide accessible customer service and what to do if a person is having difficulty accessing election information or services. Election officials shall be well informed of the voting process as well as all the available tools and assistive devices and how they may be used for each elector's needs. Election officials shall be sensitive to each elector's needs and shall be trained to provide customer service to people with different disabilities. Support and accommodations needs are considered for new hires and existing employees with disabilities working on the election process and/or voting day. Accommodations are available upon request.

6. Notice of temporary service disruption

The Clerk or Deputy Returning Officer shall provide notice for each planned and unplanned service disruption that could affect the public, such as the unavailability of an assistive device, service or feature that is regularly available to enable or enhance access to the services. The Clerk or Deputy Returning Officer shall ensure that the notice of such disruption is communicated as quickly as possible to the public to effectively reach anyone who might be affected by this disruption. The notice shall include :

- Description of the service disruption
- Reason for the disruption
- Anticipated duration of the disruption
- Alternates routes
- Facilities and services, if any, that are available
- Contact information

The Clerk shall determine the best way of communicating such notice to the public in a way that is deemed most efficient which could include a notice by mail, a post on the Municipality's Facebook page, a notice posted in a visible place on the premises and by any other method that is reasonable under the circumstances.

7. Emergency information and procedures

Election staff will be trained on the emergency evacuation procedures and plans at their designated voting locations. They will be trained on how to assist individuals with various accessibility needs, including both voters and candidates, to carry out the emergency evacuation procedures effectively and safely.

8. Assistance to candidates and electors

Candidates will be provided with information on how to make their campaign accessible to the public and information provided to the candidates will be made available in various accessible and alternative formats. Election staff will ensure that candidates with disabilities can access services consistent with the requirements of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) Customer Service Standard.

8.1 Campaign expenses

Expenses that are incurred by a candidate with a disability or a registered third party who is an individual with a disability that are directly related to the disability and would not have been incurred but for the election to which the expenses relate, are excluded from the permitted spending limit for the candidate.

8.2 Support persons

Electors with disabilities may be accompanied by a support person within a voting location. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to his or her support person while on our premises. In addition, the Clerk or a Deputy Returning Officer in each voting location may assist the voter in casting their vote. Prior to entering the voting booth, the Clerk or Deputy Returning Officer shall, in conjunction with the elector with the disability, determine the extent to which he/she needs assistance and the best way in which this assistance can be provided. This could include marking the ballot as directed by the person with the disability.

If an elector with a disability attends the voting location and is unable to enter the actual voting place, he/she can request that the ballot be brought out to their vehicle or to another location within the voting place. In such instances, the Clerk or Deputy Returning Officer may bring out one ballot and allow the elector to mark their ballot from their vehicle, returning the ballot to the appropriate ballot box immediately after the elector has completed marking the ballot.

During an election or by-election, a support person assisting a voter will be required to take an oath, stating their commitment to confidentiality and that they will mark the ballot as directed by the voter, if the voter request this type of assistance. All Deputy Returning Officer are sworn to an oath of secrecy.

8.3 Service animals

Candidates, electors, and scrutineers are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at all voting places and other designated election locations.

8.4 Assistive personal equipment

Electors with disabilities may use assistive personal devices including wheelchairs, walkers, white canes, walking canes, note taking devices, portable magnifiers, recording machines, assistive listening devices, personal oxygen tanks and devices for grasping.

Each voting place will be equipped with a magnifying glass to assist an individual with low vision.

Each voting places will be equipped with a pad of paper and pen to communicate with the hearing impaired if required.

8.5 Attendance on electors with disabilities

As per the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, section 45 (9), the Clerk or a Deputy Returning Officer shall attend on an elector with a disability anywhere within the area designated as the voting place.

9. Voting location

Voting locations are established as to ensure that electors and candidates are faced with as little barriers as possible in an accessible location. A checklist has been provided in this plan to review voting locations to ensure that barriers, when recognized, are removed as much as possible.

A site map of all advance voting locations and voting day locations will be available to the public on our social media page, through regular mail, or any other communication methods deemed necessary. The site map shall indicate where electors with disabilities can park their vehicles and safely enter the voting location. The entrance of the voting location shall be clearly identified at each location with the appropriate signage. The exterior parking space as well as the walkways associated with the location will be included in the site map.

As per the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, section 45 (1), the Clerk shall establish the number and location of voting places for an election as he or she considers most convenient for the electors. For the 2022 Municipal Elections, the following locations have been chosen for the advance voting and the voting day :

Advance voting location :

1. Val Rita-Harty Community Center, 106 Government Road, Val Rita

Voting day location :

1. Val Rita-Harty Community Center, 106 Government Road, Val Rita
2. Harty Fire hall, 2 Couture Avenue, Harty

9.1 Parking space

Designated parking for persons with disabilities will be available close to the entrance of voting places, if possible. The accessible parking spaces will be clearly marked and will be on firm and level ground. The election staff will be conducting routine checks to ensure that the parking spaces and entrances remain barrier free throughout the day.

9.2 Entrance

The main entrance for the voting locations shall be made accessible and shall be wide enough for a wheelchair, a scooter, or any other assistive devices to pass through easily. If the doors to the entrance are heavy, awkward to open or have handles that are out of reach, an election staff will be present at the entrance to assist any electors with accessing the voting location. If the main entrance is inaccessible, another entry point that is accessible shall be used.

Doors inside the voting location that do not have an automatic opener shall be propped open for the duration of the elections to ensure that every area is completely accessible to any electors. Routine checks shall be made to ensure that the entrances and exits remain free of barriers.

9.3 Interior

Access to the interior of the voting location will be level and easily traversed. Any doormats or carpeting will be level with the floor to prevent potential tripping hazards. All voting locations will be well lit, and seating will be made available.

9.4 Voting booths

Voting booths which are easily accessible will be available at each voting location and shall be as close as possible to the entrance/exit. Voting booths will be low in height and have a wide area to allow for individuals who use a wheelchair or scooter to vote independently and secretively. Magnifiers will be made available to assist any individual with low vision as well as a note pad and a paper for individuals with a hearing impediment.

9.5 Floor plan

Floor plans of voting location are available in Appendix "A" and shall be posted on the Municipality social media page (Facebook).

9.6 Health and safety procedures

Every voting location shall have hand sanitizer and masks available for the electors. The voting booths shall be placed in a manner that encourages social distancing of at least 6 feet and shall be routinely cleaned and disinfected by an election staff.

10. Feedback

The Municipal Clerk welcomes feedback to identify areas where changes need to be considered and ways in which the Town can improve the delivery of an accessible Election. 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 by using the contact information provided at the end of this plan.

If you require this information in a different format, please let us know. Comments on our services regarding how well those expectations are being met are welcome and appreciated.

11. Post-election report

As per the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, section 12.1 (3), the clerk shall, within 90 days after voting day in a regular election, 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.

12. Contact information

Any questions or comments regarding this plan or the accessibility of the elections shall be directed to the Municipal Clerk :

Eric Bizier

Municipal Clerk

Tel : 705-335-6146

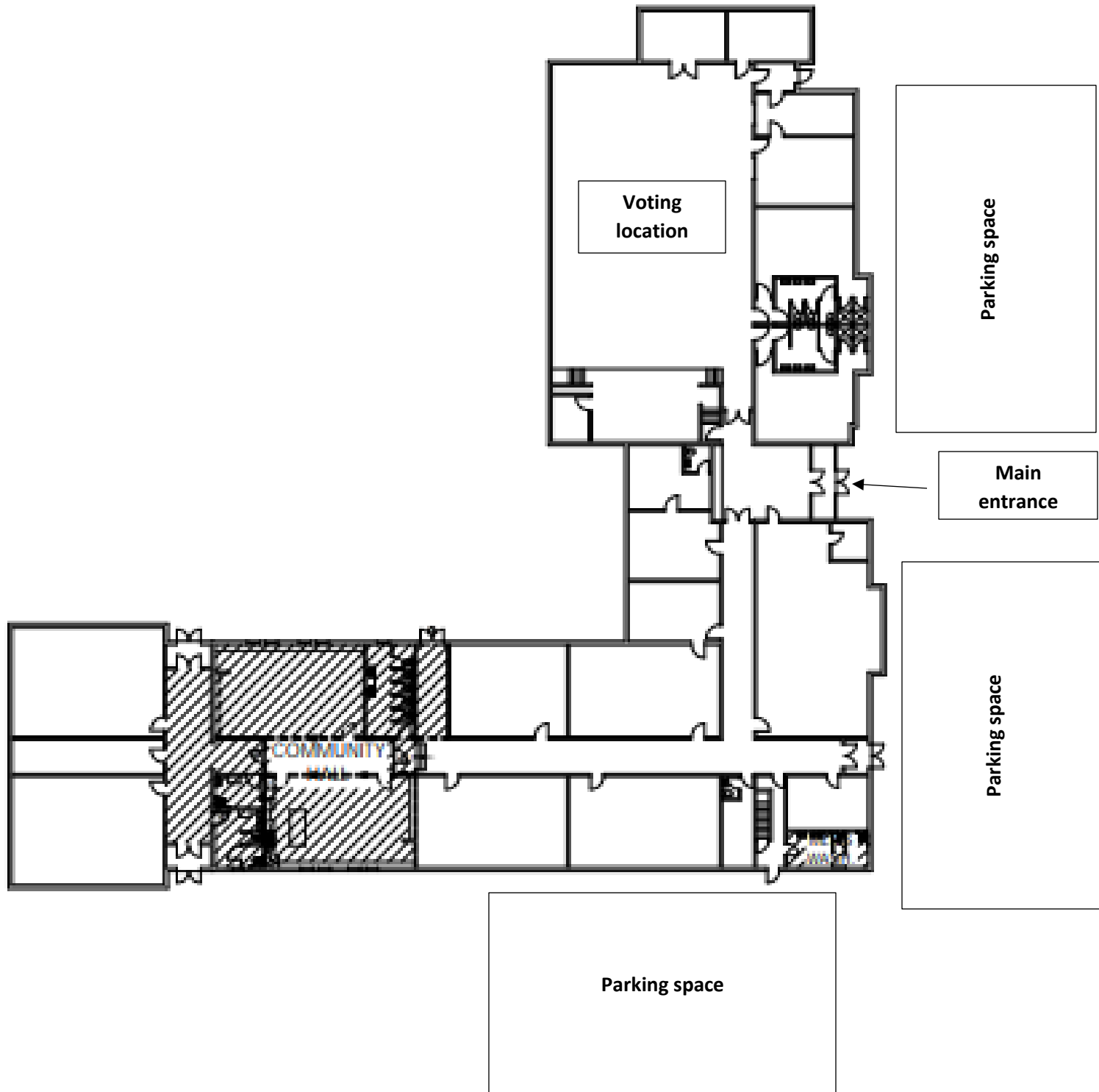
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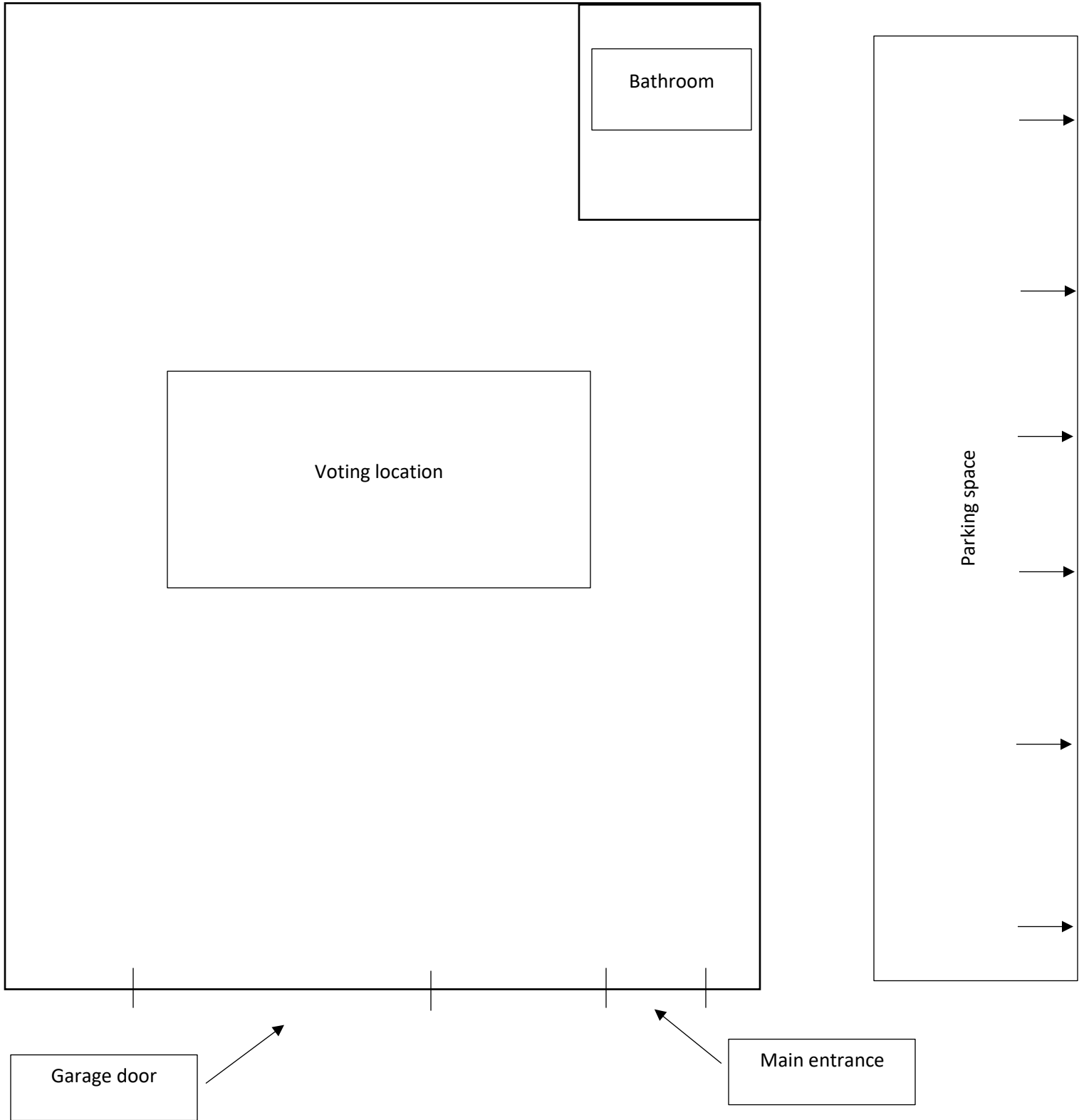
**Appendix A :
Voting Place Floor Plan**



Val Rita-Harty Community Center, 106 Government Road, Val Rita



Harty Fire Hall, 2 Couture Avenue, Harty



Appendix “B”
Accessible Elections Checklist



Accessible Elections Checklist

To ensure all voting locations are free of barriers and are accessible to all electors, a checklist has been developed for election staff to use when conducting site visits of each voting locations.

The voting location is :

- Barrier free on the path of travel from the parking lot/sidewalk
- Barrier free in the parking lot
- Barrier free in the inside of the voting location
- Equipped with door operators or accessible doors
- Well lit

The voting booth are :

- Equipped with papers and pens
- Equipped with magnifying glass
- Equipped with chairs should an individual require one
- Equipped with a notepad and a pencil for electors with hearing impediment

Voting location is clearly identified by :

- Ensuring there is designated or reserved parking for electors with disabilities at each voting location where parking is available
- Ensuring the parking spaces are clearly marked with accessibility symbols or signs
- Providing appropriate signage at voting places
- Ensuring electors with accessibility needs are directed to the accessible voting entrance by prominent signage