



Municipal Election Procedure	
Procedure Name:	Emergencies During the Voting Period
Procedure Number:	CLK MEP-01
Creation Date:	February 24, 2026
Approved by Fire Chief:	March 03, 2026

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Procedure is to establish a clear and consistent framework for responding to emergencies that may arise during a Municipal Election in the Town of Pelham, in order to:

- a. Preserve the integrity of the election process;
- b. Protect the safety of electors, candidates, scrutineers, and election officials; and
- c. Ensure the election is conducted in accordance with the principles of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* (the Act).

2. Responsibilities

The Town Clerk is responsible for overseeing the conduct of the election or by-election, protecting the integrity and secrecy of the vote, and taking reasonable steps to ensure the safety of all participants.

The Poll Supervisor is responsible for carrying out this Procedure at their assigned voting location and ensuring that all election processes are followed.

3. General Principles

Emergencies are unpredictable in nature and scope. This Procedure provides guidance for specific emergency scenarios; however, it is not exhaustive.

Where an emergency arises that is not specifically addressed herein, the Poll Supervisor shall immediately contact the Clerk for direction.

At all times:

- the safety of individuals takes precedence;
- the secrecy and integrity of the ballot must be preserved; and
- election materials and equipment must remain secure.

4. Declaration of an Emergency

4.1. Legislative Authority

Under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, 1990*, an emergency is defined as:



“A situation or an impending situation that constitutes a danger of major proportions that could result in serious harm to persons or substantial damage to property and that is caused by the forces of nature, a disease or other health risk, an accident or an act, whether intentional or otherwise.”

Section 53 of the Act provides that:

“The clerk may declare an emergency if he or she is of the opinion that circumstances have arisen that are likely to prevent the election being conducted in accordance with this Act.”

Upon declaring an emergency, the Clerk may make such arrangements as are considered advisable for the conduct of the election.

Such arrangements, if consistent with the principles of the Act, prevail over the Act and its regulations.

The emergency remains in effect until the Clerk declares it ended.

If made in good faith, the Clerk's declaration and arrangements shall not be reviewed or set aside on the basis of unreasonableness.

The Clerk may:

- extend voting hours;
- relocate voting locations;
- delay the release of results; and
- modify procedures as necessary to preserve election integrity.

5. Maintaining Peace and Order

Pursuant to subsection 11(2)(c) of the Act, the Clerk is responsible for maintaining peace and order during the election.

The Clerk may:

- obtain assistance from law enforcement or designated persons;
- delegate this authority to Poll Supervisors and Deputy Returning Officers; and
- remove any person causing a disturbance.

Where a person disrupts the orderly conduct of voting or fails to comply with the directions of election officials, the Poll Supervisor or Deputy Returning Officer may require that person to leave the voting place.

This authority applies to voters, scrutineers, candidates, members of the media, and any other person present in the voting place.

Discretion may be applied throughout the voting process.



6. Specific Emergency Procedures

6.1. Temporary Service Disruption

If election services are temporarily disrupted during advance voting, advance online voting, and/or Voting Day, the Clerk shall provide public notice as soon as reasonably possible through the Town's website, social media channels (where applicable), signage at affected locations, and local media where feasible.

Where the disruption relates to the online voting system, the Clerk shall:

1. Assess the scope and impact of the interruption with the election services provider;
2. Determine the anticipated duration and whether voting access has been compromised; and
3. Consider extending the online voting period, where appropriate and in accordance with the Act.

Public notice shall outline the reason for the disruption (if known), the anticipated duration, and any alternative arrangements or extensions implemented to ensure electors have a reasonable opportunity to vote.

The Clerk may declare an emergency under Section 53 of the Act if the disruption significantly affects the ability of electors to cast their ballot.

6.2. Power Outage

In the event of a power outage:

1. The Poll Supervisor shall immediately contact the Clerk;
2. The Clerk shall assess the estimated duration of the outage, the affected location(s), and the number of impacted voting locations;
3. Where two voting locations operate within the same Ward, and only one is affected, electors who have not yet received a ballot may either wait until power is restored or attend the alternate voting location;
4. Where all voting locations within a Ward are affected, Deputy Returning Officers may continue processing electors using laptop battery power and a pre-prepared electronic voters' list (Excel format). All information recorded manually shall be entered into the system once connectivity is restored;
5. The Vote Tabulator Operator shall continue operating the vote tabulator using the battery backup;
6. If the battery power fails:
 - a. ballots shall be inserted into the auxiliary compartment of the ballot box;



- b. ballots shall be processed through the tabulator once power is restored; and
- c. processing shall occur in the presence of the Poll Supervisor, any election officials willing and able to witness, and, where possible, scrutineers or candidates;

7. Flashlights contained in supply kits shall be used as necessary.

Pelham Fire Hall Two is equipped with a backup generator that provides emergency power coverage. While this voting location may experience a brief interruption, it is expected to remain largely operational. If generator power is unavailable, the contingency procedures outlined above, including use of the electronic voters' list, shall apply. As fire halls Two and Three service the same Ward, electors assigned to Pelham Fire Hall Three may be redirected to Pelham Fire Hall Two in the event of a power outage.

The Meridian Community Centre (MCC) is equipped with an uninterruptible power supply (UPS), which will provide approximately 30 minutes of backup power in the event of an outage. This supply shall be used to maintain operations for as long as possible. Should power not be restored within that timeframe, the contingency procedures outlined above, including the use of the electronic voters' list, shall be implemented.

6.3. Fire

At opening, Poll Supervisors shall:

1. Identify all exits;
2. Establish a designated external meeting location; and
3. Communicate this location to all election officials.

If fire, smoke, gas, or alarm is detected, Poll Supervisors shall:

1. Call 911 immediately;
2. Direct evacuation using the nearest safe exit;
3. If safe to do so:
 - a. secure unused ballots and documentation;
 - b. remove the tabulator and active ballot box; and
 - c. attempt to remove sealed ballot boxes.
4. Assemble at the designated meeting location. Election officials are required to remain on-site;
5. Conduct a roll call of election officials;
6. Contact the Clerk; and



7. Authorize re-entry upon direction from the Clerk, in conjunction with the Fire Chief.

If relocation is necessary, the Clerk will advise the Poll Supervisor, and a public notice will be issued accordingly.

6.4. Medical Emergency

If a medical emergency occurs, the Poll Supervisor shall:

1. Make the individual as comfortable as possible;
2. Call 911 if required;
3. Contact the Clerk; and
4. Protect ballots and tabulators at all times.

If a medical emergency involves an election official, the Clerk shall make the necessary arrangements to replace the individual. The Poll Supervisor is not responsible for securing a replacement. In the interim, the Poll Supervisor or a Float Deputy Returning Officer may temporarily assume the duties of the position until a replacement is assigned.

6.5. Bomb Threat

In the unlikely event of a bomb threat, the Poll Supervisor shall:

1. Call 911 immediately;
2. Maintain peace and order at the voting place;
3. Secure ballots and tabulator(s) if safe to do so;
4. Evacuate to the designated meeting location;
5. Conduct a roll call;
6. Contact the Clerk; and
7. Authorize re-entry upon the direction of the Niagara Regional Police.

At no time shall the Poll Supervisor or any election official attempt to locate or investigate a suspected device.

Election officials present during the threat may be required to provide information to the Niagara Regional Police regarding the incident, during or following their scheduled shift.

6.6. Public Health Events

Where a public health event exists or escalates:

1. Procedures shall align with directives from:
 - a. Province of Ontario; and/or



- b. Niagara Region Public Health.
2. Additional sanitation, distancing, personal protective equipment, and communication measures may be implemented;
3. The Clerk may declare an emergency under Section 53 of the Act if public health risks prevent safe conduct of the election.

Provincial or Public Health regulations supersede this Procedure where applicable.

6.7. Weather Emergency

6.7.1. Isolated Voting Location Impact

If a single voting location is affected, the Clerk shall take all reasonable steps to ensure electors have the opportunity to exercise their right to vote.

Where two voting locations operate within the same Ward and one is impacted, electors may be redirected to the alternate voting location.

Where feasible, the Clerk may establish an alternative voting location. The designated alternate site is Old Pelham Town Hall, 491 Canboro Road, Ridgeville.

Voting hours may be extended as necessary, and public notice shall be provided through the Town's website, on-site signage, and local media where possible.

6.7.2. Municipality-Wide Impact

If severe weather impacts the municipality:

1. The Clerk shall consult with:
 - a. The Fire Chief;
 - b. The Chief Administrative Officer; and
 - c. Emergency Services.
2. The Clerk may declare an emergency under Section 53 of the Act.

Following the declaration of an emergency, the Clerk has the authority to implement alternative arrangements necessary to facilitate the voting process and ensure the integrity of the election.

Any such arrangements shall be communicated as soon as reasonably possible to election officials, candidates, and the public using all available communication channels.



7. Contingency Measures

7.1. Replacement of Election Workers

The Clerk may dismiss and replace an election official where:

- repeated procedural errors occur;
- integrity of the vote may be compromised; and/or
- conduct is inconsistent with training or standards.

Reserve election officials will remain on standby for this purpose.

The Poll Supervisor is encouraged to monitor the conduct and performance of election officials and advise the Clerk as necessary. However, the Poll Supervisor shall not unilaterally remove or excuse an election official without direction from the Clerk.

7.2. Delay or Withholding of Results

If voting is delayed or extended:

1. The Clerk may withhold results for affected offices until all voting is complete; and
2. Public notice shall be issued.

8. Interpretation and Prevailing Authority

The Procedure shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the principles of the Act.

Where conflict exists between this Procedure and Provincial legislation, Provincial legislation prevails.