



2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan

This document is available in an accessible alternate format by request.

**Reviewed by the Accessibility Advisory Committee
Monday, April 11, 2022**

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1 Overview

The Elections Accessibility Plan (the “Plan”) supports and strengthens the Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury’s (the “Town”) commitment and efforts to respond to the needs of persons with disabilities. The Municipal Clerk is responsible for the appropriate legislative requirements under the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* (the “MEA”) and administrative conduct of the municipal election in the Town.

Some of the legislative requirements under the *MEA* include:

- Section 12.1 (1) places responsibility on the Clerk to have regard to the needs of the electors and candidates with disabilities. Accessible Customer Service Standards must be followed when conducting a municipal election;
- Section 12.1 (2) requires that the Clerk prepare a plan regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities and make the plan available to the public before voting day in a regular election;
- Section 12.1 (3) requires that 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;
- Section 41 (3) states that 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 assistance; and
- Section 45 (2) states that in establishing the locations of voting places, the Clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities.

The Town is committed to ensuring the 2022 Municipal Election is accessible to all electors, including those with disabilities, and providing services that respects the dignity and independence of electors with disabilities.

The mission is to conduct the municipal election in a manner to ensure that candidates and electors with disabilities have full and equal access to all election information and services, including at the Voter Help Centres.

The Plan was developed in consultation with the Town’s Accessibility Advisory Committee, and provides an overview of the following items:

- developing and providing accessibility training to all Election Officials;
- providing information to the public in an accessible method;
- providing accessible opportunities;
- ensuring all voting locations are accessible to electors with disabilities;
- assisting candidates and electors with disabilities; and

- continuing the consultation with individuals and groups knowledgeable in providing services to person with disabilities to better understand their needs.

The focus of this document is to ensure that electoral services are accessible to all electors and candidates, to identify and eliminate barriers for persons with disabilities and to create a positive voting experience. The Town will continue to learn, develop and adjust our approaches in order to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. The review of accessibility issues and initiatives and addressing barrier prevention or removal is an ongoing practice.

2 Staff Training

All staff carrying out election duties, also known as Election Officials, will complete Accessible Customer Service Training, as outlined in Appendix A of this Plan and specific election training to comply with the municipal Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. The training will ensure Election Officials recognize and ensure that persons with disabilities are served in a way that accommodates their individual needs.

Accessibility training will include:

- communicating with persons with various types of disabilities;
- interacting with persons with disabilities who use assistive devices, a support person or a service animal;
- explaining internet and telephone voting;
- creating a barrier free voting location;
- assisting a person having difficulty accessing election information or services; and
- providing voter assistance, if requested.

3 Provision of Election Information

Election information will be provided to electors and candidates with disabilities in an alternative format, agreed upon between the requester and the Clerk, upon request.

The Clerk shall provide public notice on the municipal website and in the local media if there is a temporary disruption in the delivery of election information or services. The notice shall include the reason for the disruption, the expected duration and an explanation of alternative methods of delivering the information or service. Every effort shall be made to provide the information or service to persons with disabilities via an alternate method. A copy of the Notice of Temporary Service Disruption is attached as Appendix B.

4 Accessible Opportunities

The 2022 Municipal Election internet and telephone voting systems, known as Simply Voting, has been designed to meet the needs of the electors to ensure independence, dignity, integration and equal opportunity. Votes can be cast from a telephone equipped with an assistive device or any computer with internet connection.

The Town will, in accordance with the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR), provide candidates and electors with disabilities with information in a format that takes into account their disability, upon request. Once a request has been made, the requester and the Clerk and/or their designate will agree upon a format that meets the needs of the individual.

Printed material generated by the Town will be provided in Arial text font, size 12 points, and will take into consideration the CNIB clear print guidelines. Promotional initiatives will aim at creating awareness of accessible features and ensuring voters have the necessary information to participate in the election.

Information provided through the Town's website will comply with the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, and will be updated continuously as developments and information become available.

5 Accessible Voting Locations

The Simply Voting System permits votes to be cast from a telephone or any computer with internet connection. This allows individuals who use assistive devices to use their own equipment in a space of their choosing. There is no need to go to a central location, line up or take time off to vote. This addresses accessibility issues for persons with disabilities, those suffering from illness, those serving in the military or living abroad, those away on personal travel, or others who may find it difficult to visit a traditional polling station.

Internet and telephone voting methods provide accessible features built into the technology. Internet voting menu options will be clear and easy to follow, font size can be changed, and a screen reader can be used. Telephone voting features include the ability to use a TTY (teletypewriter), clear language and prompts, and volume adjustments.

The Simply Voting System has been created to meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG-2), so that persons with disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate and interact with the online voting system. It is compliant with the guidelines of the World Wide Web Consortium website principals, which include organization, functionality and readability of information provided, as well as alternative ways of representing information, such as with screen-reading technology.

If additional assistance is required, voters can visit a Voter Help Centre located at the Clerk's Office, located at Unit 7 and 8, 100 Dissette Street or in the Zima Room at the BWG Library and Cultural Centre, located at 425 Holland Street West between the dates of October 14th and October 24th.

The municipal office and the BWG Library and Cultural Centre parking lot have designated accessible parking spaces that are clearly posted and located close to the entrance to the Voter Help Centre.

The entrance to each Voter Help Centre is level leading to the entrance door. Doors to the municipal office have automatic door opening devices or will be propped open in a safe manner. They are wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair or other mobility devices.

Access to the interior Voter Help Centre is level. Carpeting and doormats are level with the floor to prevent potential tripping hazards, and seating shall be made available.

The voting kiosk will be low in height and have a wide area to allow individuals using mobility aids to vote independently and privately.

Persons with disabilities may be accompanied by a support person within the voting kiosk area or staff can assist the voter in casting their vote. Election Officials shall, in conjunction with the person with the disability, determine the extent to which they need assistance and the best way to provide the assistance.

As the 2022 Municipal Election will be conducted through telephone and internet methods, proxy voting provisions are not in accordance with By-law 2017-38. Votes can be cast from any telephone or computer with internet connection equipped with assistive devices.

In order to ensure all voting places are accessible to electors, including those with disabilities, Election Officials will complete the Voting Place Site Evaluation Form and continue to monitor election sites for barrier-free paths of travel, extra seating, adequate lighting, adequate signage and operating accessible doors.

As part of the elections procedures, Election Officials will establish Mobile Voter Help Centres at the following facilities in order to allow eligible residents of the facility the opportunity to vote:

- any institution in which 20 or more beds are occupied by persons who are disabled, chronically ill or infirmed, or
- a retirement home in which 50 or more beds are occupied.

6 Assistance to Electors, Candidates and Registered Third Party Assistance

The 2022 Municipal Election will be conducted with internet and telephone voting methods. Detailed information about each voting method is set out in the BWG 2022 Municipal Election Procedures, available on the municipal website or from the Clerk's Office and can be provided in an alternative format upon request.

Please contact us at 905-775-5366 if you require any documents, including the 2022 Municipal Election Procedures, in an accessible format.

Voting kiosks available at Voter Help Centres will have a touch screen computer for internet voting that will assist voters with disabilities in casting their votes with independence and privacy. Votes can also be cast online from any personal device (computer, laptop, tablet, smartphone) that has internet access and may be compatible with various assistive devices that the voter requires. Voters can adjust font size or language and where voters may require additional assistance, staff will be available to assist at the kiosk, upon request. Support persons and service animals will be accommodated.

Internet voting allows voters to vote through secured internet services. This method provides for easy voting for persons with a variety of disabilities to cast their vote with independence and privacy as voters have the option of using the assistive tools they have on their own computer.

This method of voting is designed to encourage voter participation as voters do not have to attend a physical location to cast their ballot and accessibility and privacy for persons with disabilities is maximized.

Telephone voting allows voters to vote through secured telephone services which provides for easy voting for persons with a variety of disabilities to cast their vote with independence and privacy. As land lines or cell phones can be used to vote, the method is compatible with assistive devices.

In the event of disruptions to service or unforeseen circumstances that affect the accessibility of Voter Help Centres during the Voting Period or on Voting Day, a copy of the Notice of Temporary Service Disruption (attached as Appendix B) will be posted in real time on the Town's website, social media pages, and at the site of the disruption. However, voting may still continue through the use of personal devices or personal internet connections.

Candidates are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal and/or support person at all designated election locations.

The Clerk will work with Candidates and/or registered third parties who require mandatory election documents, forms and materials in an alternate format. As well. Candidates will be provided with this Elections Accessibility Plan to draw attention to the measures for considering to ensure equal opportunity for all electors to access information.

Expenses that are incurred by a candidate 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.

7 Continued Improvements

As indicated above, the Plan was developed in consultation with the Town's Accessibility Advisory Committee who are individuals knowledgeable in providing services to persons with disabilities.

The Clerk's Department staff are available throughout the election to assist with any issues that may arise with respect to providing an accessible election. Please contact us at 905-775-5366 if you require additional information and to provide feedback.

In an effort to continue the dialogue in ensuring an accessible election, the Town will have feedback forms available. A copy of the form is attached as Appendix C – Accessible Elections Feedback Form.

The Clerk's post-election report will be posted on the Town's website in a format accessible to persons with disabilities and distributed to disability groups and other stakeholders as requested.

Your feedback provides election staff with an opportunity to take corrective measures to prevent similar recurrences, address training needs, enhance service delivery and provide alternative methods of providing election services.

Please complete the Accessible Customer Service Feedback Form, and submit it to the Clerk. Your feedback will be summarized in the Post-Election Accessibility Report and will be used to improve accessibility measures in future municipal elections.

The 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 through the following methods:

By telephone: 905-775-5366

By email: rmurphy@townofbwg.com

In person: Clerk's Office

100 Dissette Street, Unit 7 and 8

Bradford, Ontario

Mail: Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury

PO Box 100, Bradford, Ontario

L3Z 2A7

8 Additional Resources – website links below

[Please visit our website for more information on the 2022 Municipal Election](#)

[Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and Annual Accessibility Status Report](#)

Appendix A – Accessible Customer Service Training

Assisting a Person with a Disability

- Greet the voter by identifying yourself and ask, “How may I help you?”
- Let the person guide you as to what kind of assistance they need. Advise electors that assistance is available (in varying forms) if required by periodically addressing any line ups that may occur.
- Speak directly to the person with the disability, not to the person who may accompany them.
- Do not assume that a person with a disability has a developmental disability.
- Focus on abilities not disabilities.
- Regularly monitor the electors and their concerns to ensure that their needs are met. For example, if an individual with a walker is in a long line, staff should observe and if the elector is having difficulties offer a chair and ensure their place is saved in the voting line up.
- Conduct routine checks of the Voter Help Centre to ensure accessible features are maintained (i.e. check access doors, make sure mats haven’t shifted).
- Offer assistance and watch for electors unable to easily enter the building.
- Observe electors during discussions with them, and if it appears that the voter is having difficulty understanding, ensure that the voter is able to clearly see the speaker.
- Allow individuals to participate at their own pace.
- Be patient, do not try to rush individuals.
- Listen carefully, if you do not fully understand what is required, respectfully ask for directions to be repeated.
- Do not raise your voice unless requested to do so.
- Be familiar with your location and know the most accessible routes. Remember, one small step can be a huge barrier to someone who has a physical disability or is using mobility aids.
- A person with a disability will have the same needs as everyone else. Respect the individual as a human being. Be yourself. It is okay not to know how to assist

someone. Consider interaction with a person with a disability as an opportunity to learn about living with a disability.

Serving a Person with a Disability who is Utilizing an Mobility Aid or Assistive Device

- Permit voters using mobility aids and assistive devices (e.g. crutches, canes, wheelchairs, scooters) to keep them within their reach.
- Permit voters to sit down rather than having them stand for more than a few minutes.
- Ensure those who are providing service or answering enquiries are at eye level with the voter.
- Do not lean onto or touch a person's mobility aid or assistive device, including wheelchairs and do not move a person's wheelchair without the owner's prior permission/instruction.
- Remove obstacles to ensure clear passage.

Serving a Person with a Vision Disability

- When offering the voter a seat, place their hand on the back or arm of the seat, verbal cues may be helpful as well.
- Offer your arm (the elbow) to guide the person and walk slowly.
- Let the voter know if you move or need to end the conversation.
- Inform the voter that a magnifier sheet is available at each voting booth location.
- Inform the voter of the voting technologies that are available. If requested, the Deputy Returning Officer (DRO) may assist the elector with voting by reading out loud the list of candidates, and their affiliations. Persons with a vision disability can identify the candidate of their choice and the DRO may cast the vote appropriately.

Serving a Person with a Speech Disability

- Do not finish the person's sentences.
- If clarification is needed, reword what you think the person is saying then wait for them to confirm that you have understood them correctly.

- Do not assume that you must speak more loudly or more slowly to the person with a speech disability. Be patient and allow the person to express themselves.
- Never pretend to understand what the person has said. Ask them to repeat their question or answer as often as is required for you to understand.

Serving a Person who is Hard of Hearing or Deaf

- If a sign language interpreter is available, seat the interpreter beside staff, across from the person who is hard of hearing or deaf.
- Remember, the interpreter facilitates communication and should not be consulted as an active participant in the conversation.
- Maintain eye contact with the person who is hard of hearing or deaf when asking and responding to questions and when that person is asking and responding to questions.
- If the voter can lip read, then look directly at the person, speak clearly and at a normal pace. Do not exaggerate lip movement or shout. Only raise your voice if requested to do so. Place yourself facing the light source. Keep your hands, food or cups away from your mouth while speaking.
- Remember, if you need to get the attention of the voter touch them lightly on the shoulder or wave your hand discreetly.
- If the person uses a hearing aid, try to speak in an area with few competing sounds.
- If you are still having difficulty communicating, you may want to try written communication – have a pad and pen nearby. Note, however, that many of the Deaf consider American Sign Language (ASL) as their first language and English as their second language. Thus, they may not be fluent in spoken or written English.

Appendix B – Notice of Temporary Service Disruption

Notice of Temporary Service Disruption

Type of disruption:

Duration of disruption:

Reason for disruption:

The following alternative service/facility is located at:

Posted on:

For additional information please contact:

Rebecca Murphy, Clerk
100 Dissette Street, Unit 7 and 8
Bradford, ON L3Z 2A7
Telephone: 905-775-5366
Fax: 905-775-0153
Email: rmurphy@townofbwg.com

**We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused.
Thank you for your patience and cooperation in this matter!**

Appendix C – Accessible Elections Feedback Form



Accessible Elections Feedback Form

Personal Information

Name	
Address	
Phone Number	

Were you able to receive the information you wanted and cast your vote?

Yes No Why? _____

Was your voting experience made more accessible because of staff or equipment?

What would make voting more accessible for you in the future? Building accessibility, customer service, etc.

If you were unable to vote, what prevented you from casting your vote?

Any additional comments, concerns, or questions?

Personal Information collected is pursuant to the Municipal Act, and will be used for the purpose of processing your request. It will be used in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, c.M.56. Should you have any questions regarding the collection or use of the personal information, please contact the Municipal Clerk, Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury, 100 Dissette St. Unit 7 & 8, P.O. Box 100, Bradford, ON L3Z 2A7, Telephone: (905) 775-5366, Fax: (905) 775-0153