



2026 Municipal Election

Accessibility Plan

2026 MUNICIPAL ELECTION

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION2

PURPOSE2

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS2

ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE3

OBJECTIVES3

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN.....3

BALLOT RETURN STATIONS.....4

COMMUNICATIONS6

FEEDBACK7

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.....8

INTRODUCTION

This plan will address the specific accessibility requirements in relation to the 2026 Municipal Election in the Township of Guelph/Eramosa.

The Township of Guelph/Eramosa is committed to providing services and facilities that are accessible to all. This plan has been developed as a guide to help identify measures to be taken to ensure that election-related services are provided in an accessible manner.

Vote by Mail

The Township of Guelph/Eramosa is using the Vote by Mail voting method for the 2026 Municipal Election. Voter kits are mailed to voters whose names are listed on the Voters' List and voters can complete their kit at their convenience before mailing kits back to the Township.

Instead of Voting Locations or Polls, Ballot Return Stations will be established for voters to drop off their completed voter kit. If eligible voters have not received a voter kit in the mail, they can obtain a voter kit from Election Officials at a Voter Kit Return Station. Voters can complete their voter kit on-site at a Voter Kit Return Station and submit it to an Election Official at a Voter Kit Return Station.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Accessibility Plan for the 2026 Municipal Election is to:

- Ensure voter services are accessible to all voters and candidates
- Identify and remove barriers for persons with disabilities
- Create a positive, inclusive, and modern voting experience
- Incorporate updated accessibility standards, including WCAG 2.2 and enhanced digital tools

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

All legislative references remain applicable, including the Municipal Elections Act, 1996.

For 2026, the Township will also align with:

- **AODA Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) updates**
- **WCAG 2.2 Level AA** for all digital election content
- **Ontario Human Rights Commission guidance on accessible public services**

In addition to the Township's Accessibility Policy (COR-0107), the following excerpts from the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, S.O. 1996, c. 32, Sched., set out the requirements for conducting an election with regard for persons with disabilities:

Number and Location of Voting Places

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 voters 1996, c. 32, Sched., s. 45 (1).

Accessibility

45 (2) In establishing the locations of voting places, the clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to voters with disabilities. 2009, c. 33, Sched. 21, s. 8 (23).

Plan Regarding Barriers

12 (2) The clerk shall prepare a plan regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect voters and candidates with disabilities and shall make the plan available to the public before voting day in a regular election. 2016, c. 15, s. 11.

Report

12 (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 voters and candidates with disabilities and shall make the report available to the public. 2016, c. 15, s. 11.

Variations for Voters with Visual Impairments

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 voters with visual impairments to vote without the assistance referred to in paragraph 4 of subsection 52 (1). 1996, c. 32, Sched., s. 41 (3); 2001, c. 32, s. 30 (1).

ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE

The Township is committed to providing services that are accessible to all persons in accordance with the Township's Accessibility Policy (COR-0107), and in compliance with the customer service standards of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005. In conducting municipal elections, the Clerk will provide services that respect the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities, this includes:

- Training on invisible disabilities
- Trauma-informed customer service
- Neurodiversity-inclusive communication practices
- Training on accessible digital tools and assistive technologies

OBJECTIVES

This plan is intended to identify measures that the Township will be implementing to ensure equal opportunity for all voters and candidates. These objectives include:

1. That all Voter Kit Return Stations are accessible;
2. That persons with disabilities are given the opportunity to independently cast their vote;
3. That persons with disabilities have full and equal access to all information on where and when to vote and on eligible candidates;
4. That persons with disabilities can fully participate in the Municipal Election as a voter, candidate or Election Official;
5. That efforts are made to ensure that voters with disabilities are aware of the accessibility measures available via channels such as the newspaper, media launches, the Township's website and social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram);
6. Ensure all digital election materials meet WCAG 2.2 Level AA
7. Improve real-time communication during service disruptions
8. Provide more accessible feedback channels, including online forms and QR-code access.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN

This Plan is an active document, which will be improved and updated as best practices are identified and new opportunities for improvement arise.

During the development process of the 2026 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan, the following steps were implemented:

1. Staff training standards and practices directly related to the 2026 Municipal Election were established to ensure that people with disabilities are able to vote in a positive customer service environment, and ensure that all Election Officials recognize that in all ways possible a voter's needs are to be accommodated;
2. Consultation with Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee;
3. Review of updated accessibility standards;
4. Expanded staff training modules;
5. Integration of digital accessibility tools;
6. Review of 2022 post-election feedback; and
7. Following the 2026 Municipal Election, a report will be prepared on the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect voters and candidates with disabilities.

BALLOT RETURN STATIONS

For the purpose of this plan, Voter Kit Return Station includes the exterior parking and walkways associated with the location. In order to ensure that each Voter Kit Return Station is accessible to voters with disabilities, a Voter Kit Return Station Accessibility Audit Checklist will be completed prior to confirming the site as a Voter Kit Return Station.

A comprehensive accessibility audit of each Voter Kit Return Station has been conducted to ensure that each Voter Kit Return Station is accessible to voters with disabilities. The site location accessibility audit checklist is included as Appendix "B" to this document.

Accessible Route

An easily navigable route will be marked for entry into the Voter Kit Return Station and within each Voter Kit Return Station. The area where voters can complete their voter kit will be identified with clear and understandable signage.

Parking

Designated parking for voters with disabilities is to be provided in close proximity to the entrance of the Voter Kit Return Station. Accessible parking spaces will be clearly marked and will be on firm and level ground. Routine checks will be made to ensure all entrances remain barrier free throughout the course of the day.

Entrance/Exit to the Ballot Return Station

All entrances to the Voter Kit Return Station will be easy to access and barrier-free. The Township will ensure that the door into the interior of the Voter Kit Return Station is wide enough for a wheelchair, scooter, other assistive device or a person with a service animal to pass through safely and easily. Should doors in the interior of the Voter Kit Return Station not be equipped with power operators, the doors shall remain propped open for the duration of the Voter Kit Station hours. Routine checks of the entrance and exit routes will be made throughout the day. Access to the interior Voter Kit Return Station will be level and easily traversed. Any doormats or carpeting will be level with the floor to prevent potential tripping hazards. All voting areas within Voter Kit Return Stations are to be well lit and seating will be made available.

Support Persons

Voters with disabilities may be accompanied by a support person within the Voter Kit Return Station, including any voting areas provided within. In addition, an Election Official in each Voter Kit Return Station Place can assist the voter in casting their vote.

Prior to entering the voting booth, the Election Official shall consult with the voter to determine the extent to which he or she needs assistance and the best way in which this assistance can be provided. This may include marking the ballot as directed by the person with the disability.

Assistive Personal Equipment

Voters 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.

Service Animals

Service Animals will be permitted in Voter Kit Return Stations. An animal is a Service Animal if it is readily apparent that the animal is used by a person with a disability for reasons relating to his or her disability, such as a guide dog wearing a harness.

Vision Loss

Each Voter Kit Return Station will be equipped with magnifying sheets to assist an individual with low vision.

Hearing Impacted, Deafness and Hearing Loss

Each Voter Kit Return Station will be equipped with a pad of paper and pen to communicate with the hearing impacted if required.

Ballot Return Station Institutions

The Municipal Elections Act requires that on voting day, a Voter Kit Return Station shall be provided on the premises of the following:

Voting places in institutions, retirement homes 45 (7)

On voting day, a voting place shall be provided on the premises of the following:

1. An institution for the reception, treatment or vocational training of members or former members of the Canadian Forces;
2. An institution in which, on September 1, 20 or more beds are occupied by persons who are disabled, chronically ill or infirm;
3. A retirement home in which, on September 1, 50 or more beds are occupied. 1996, c. 32, Sched., s. 45 (7); 2016, c. 15, s. 34 (2, 3)

Attendance on resident

The deputy returning officer for a voting place described in subsection (7) may attend on a voter who is a resident of the institution or retirement home, to allow him or her to vote. 1996, c. 32, Sched., s. 45 (8)

Attendance on voters with disabilities

45 (9) To allow a voter with a disability to vote, a deputy returning officer shall attend on the voter anywhere within the area designated as the voting place. 2001, c. 32, s. 30 (3).

For the 2026 Municipal Election, the following institution locations have been identified:

Facility	Location	Time
Eden House Care Facility	5016 Wellington Road 29, Guelph, ON N1H 6H8	9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Service Animals

Candidates and scrutineers are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at all Voter Kit Return Stations and other designated election locations.

Campaign Expenses

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

COMMUNICATIONS

The Township is required, as per O. Reg. 429/07: Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, to provide a copy of a document to a person with a disability, or the information contained in the document, in a format that takes into account the person’s disability.

Alternate Formats

Alternate formats are other ways of publishing information besides regular print. Some of these formats can be used by everyone while others are designed to address the specific needs of a user. The Township and the person with a disability may agree upon the format to be used for the document or information. In the event the information is not generated by the Township or is supplied by a third party, the Township will make every effort to obtain the information from the third party in an alternate format and/or will attempt to assist the voter by providing assistive equipment.

General Election Material

Large Print – printed material generated by the Township will be provided in a sans serif font, minimum 11 point, and can be made available in a font (print) size that is 16 to 20 points or larger.

Website

Information generated by the Township on the website regarding the election will be compliant with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level A, and allow for assistive software to be utilized.

Service Disruptions

From time to time and/or for unforeseen circumstances beyond the Township’s control, temporary service disruptions may be experienced. In the event of a temporary accessible service disruption, Election Officials will make reasonable efforts to ensure that services are reinstated as quickly as possible and that alternative services are

provided where feasible. In these instances of service disruptions, the Township will provide reasonable notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by persons with disabilities.

Accessible services in relation to this plan include Voter Kit Return Stations, election materials and/or voting provisions for voters with disabilities at the Voter Kit Return Station. In the event of disruptions to service or unforeseen circumstances that affect the accessibility of Voter Kit Return Stations, Notices of Disruption will be posted in real time:

1. on the Township's website and election website;
2. on Facebook;
3. posted at the site of disruption; and
4. where applicable, a media advisory will be issued.

POST-ELECTION REPORT

Following the election, the Township Clerk will review the outcomes with staff to identify potential areas of improvement and any additional barriers experienced during the election that can be addressed in future plans. The Township Clerk will report to Municipal Council within 90 days following the election on the outcomes and performance of the Accessible Election Plan 2026.

The Township Clerk's post-election report will be posted on the Township's website in a format accessible to persons with disabilities and distributed to disability groups and other stakeholders, upon request

FEEDBACK

The Township of Guelph/Eramosa welcomes customer feedback to identify areas where changes need to be considered and ways in which the Township can improve the delivery of an accessible election.

In addition, staff working in Township facilities can assist voters with submitting feedback on behalf of a person with a disability.

Feedback may be submitted via email to Legislative Services by any other one of the following methods:

- Telephone: 519-856-9596 ext. 125
- In Person or Mail: Township Clerk
8348 Wellington Road 124, P.O. Box 700, Rockwood ON, N0B 2K0
- Fax: 519-856-2240
- E-mail: clerks@get.on.ca

The Clerk will receive feedback for follow-up and action. The Clerk will respond to the candidate or voter directly within 3 business days providing an anticipated action and timeframe for a full response, where appropriate.

The feedback process 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 information and services.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Clerk and elections staff can assist with any questions about running for office, the election in general, or specific provisions for persons with disabilities.

The Township of Guelph/Eramosa's election website at www.getvoting.ca is continuously updated to reflect the most recent developments and information. Visit the site for an up-to-date list of candidates and other important messages or events throughout the election year.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs website contains information about municipal elections and a copy of the Province of Ontario 2026 Municipal Elections Candidates and Voters Guide. Service Ontario e-Laws is a website that contains all current statutes including the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 and the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001.

2026 Municipal Election Accessibility Audit of Ballot Return Stations

Facility Name:		
Facility Address:		
Audit Date:		
Audit Conducted by:		
Criteria	Y/N	Comments
ENTRANCE		
Is the main public entrance a barrier free accessible one? (external and internal)		
If not, is there an alternative entrance that is accessible?		
Is the entrance well lit?		
Is the entrance easy to see from the parking area?		
PARKING LOT		
Is there accessible parking available?		
Are the accessible parking spots clearly marked with signs and parked on the pavement?		
RAMPS		
Are ramps provided as an alternative to stairs?		
Is the slope of the ramp 1:20?		
Are handrails provided on both sides of the ramp?		
DOORS		
Do the doors have a minimum clear width of 860 mm (34 inches) as measured between the door stop and the edge of the door in the 90-degree open position?		
Are automatic doors provided?		
If there is NO automatic door: Are lever handles or D Shaped pulls provided?		
Are the handles at an appropriate height (mounted between 900mm (35in.))		
Is there a maneuvering space of 600mm (24in.) on both sides of the door?		

Criteria	Y/N	Comments
FLOOR SPACE		
Are the widths of corridors, hallways and paths wide enough (minimum 1.2m/4 feet)?		
Is the path of travel free of furniture or equipment?		
Is adequate headroom height of minimum 2.03 m (6 feet 8 inches) provided? (protruding objects)		
Is there space for wheelchair seating in the auditorium/seating area(s)? (e.g., arena spectator, pool viewing area)		
STAIRS		
Are the stair risers closed in?		
Is there colour or texture contrasted tread nosing?		
Handrails are provided on both sides of the stairs?		
ELEVATORS		
Do the doors open wide enough to accommodate a person in a wheelchair (minimum 915 mm or 36 inches)?		
Do the doors stay open for at least 7 seconds?		
Are the internal dimensions a minimum of 1.725 m x 1.5 m (5 feet 8 inches x 5 feet)?		
Are the buttons at an appropriate height (highest button no higher than 1.2 m/4 feet, lowest button at least 920 mm/36 inches from the floor)?		
Are the controls or floor buttons raised and done in Braille?		
WASHROOMS		
Are accessible stall(s) located within the current washroom facilities?		
If not, is there an accessible washroom(s) available to both males and females?		
Please indicate the style of entrance into the washrooms with the accessible stalls: Airport style, Automatic, Push door.		
Is there a clear turning space of 1.83m (6ft.) in diameter outside the accessible stall?		

Criteria	Y/N	Comments
WASHROOMS Continued...		
Is the accessible stall or facility 1.83 m x 1.83 m (6 feet x 6 feet)?		
Are grab bars mounted on the wall behind the urinal and on the side wall?		
Is the toilet flush control automatic or located on the side where the individual would transfer from?		
Are faucets, fixtures, dispensers and light switches at an appropriate height?		
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS		