



2026 ACCESSIBLE ELECTION PLAN

THE MUNICIPALITY OF CENTRAL ELGIN

450 Sunset Drive
St. Thomas, ON
N5R 5V1

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LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Under the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996 (MEA)*, the clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities.

The MEA also requires that in establishing the locations of voting places, the clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities.

As per Section 12.1 of the MEA:

- 1) The clerk shall prepare a plan regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities and shall make the plan available to the public before voting day in a regular election.
- 2) Within 90 days after voting day in a regular election, the clerk shall prepare a report for council regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers and make the report available to the public.

DEFINITIONS

- 1.1 **'Assistive Device'** includes but is not limited to, wheelchairs, walkers, white canes, walking canes, note taking devices, portable magnifiers, recording devices, assistive listening devices, personal oxygen tanks, and devices for grasping.
- 1.2 **'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 and Insurance Act, 1997*.
- 1.3 **'Service Animal'** For the purposes of this policy, an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability if:
- a) The animal can be readily identified as one that is being used by the person for reasons relating to the person's disability, as a result of visual indicators such as the vest or harness worn by the animal; or
 - b) The person provides documentation from one of the following regulated health professionals confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability:

- A member of the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario.
- A member of the College of Chiropractors of Ontario.
- A member of the College of Nurses of Ontario.
- A member of the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario.
- A member of the College of Optometrists of Ontario.
- A member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.
- A member of the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario.
- A member of the College of Psychologists of Ontario.
- A member of the College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario

1.4 **'Support Person'** means, in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies him, her or them in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods, services or facilities.

2026 MUNICIPAL ELECTION ACCESSIBILITY PLAN ACTIONS

03

The 2026 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan is a living document and the Municipality will continue to learn and adapt methods of anticipating and removing barriers for voters and candidates in Central Elgin municipal elections.

The main objective of the Plan is to identify and eliminate barriers for persons with disabilities to ensure that elections are accessible to all voters and candidates. The Plan outlines how the Municipality aims to meet this objective.

Key considerations include:

- Policies and procedures must be consistent with the principles of the *Municipal Elections Act*, and must respect the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
- Access to voting services must be integrated and equitable.
- Initiatives should address and take into account a wide range of abilities.

Communication & Information

- 3.1 Provide an informative and accessible election website by ensuring election information is available online in clear and simple language to voters and candidates.
- 3.2 Election information such as voting options & accommodations, ID requirements, eligibility requirements, the voters' list, and how to vote, will be available online in plain language.
- 3.3 All Municipality of Central Elgin websites meet the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA, in accordance with the schedule set out in the AODA Integrated Accessibility Standards.
- 3.4 All communication and information as well as any election materials are available in alternate format and/or with communication support upon request.

Assistance to Candidates

- 3.5 Provide candidates with resources such as the 'Accessible Campaign Information and Communication' produced by the Province of Ontario and the 'Candidates' Guide to Accessible Elections' produced by AMCTO.
- 3.6 Information about voting options and accommodations were included in the 2026 Municipal Election Clerk's Procedures.
- 3.7 All documents provided to candidates are accessible and alternate formats are available upon request.

Accessible Voting Places

- 3.8 Conducting site visits of each voting place to ensure each voting place has:
 - a) Barrier free path of travel from the parking lot/sidewalk
 - b) Barrier free parking, where parking was provided
 - c) Door operators or accessible doors
 - d) Adequate lighting
- 3.9 Conduct a final voting place accessibility check during the advance vote period and on Election Day to verify the accessibility of the voting place.

- 3.10 Greeters hired for each voting place to mitigate voting place accessibility issues by doing the following roles when needed:
- a) Helping open doors
 - b) Operating elevators

Voting Options & Accommodations

- 3.11 Accessible voting equipment and voting options available by:
- Welcoming the use of support persons and service animals in voting places, and the use of personal assistive devices.
- 3.12 Permitting voting by proxy:
- In cases where a voter is unable to attend a voting place, the voter can appoint another person to act on their behalf.
- 3.13 Providing voting opportunities in institutions and retirement homes in order to allow eligible residents of the facility the opportunity to vote:
- Any institution where 20 or more beds are occupied by persons who are disabled, chronically ill or infirmed
 - A retirement home where 50 or more beds are occupied
- 3.14 Making supplies available at voting locations that can assist voters with disabilities such as:
- Magnifying sheets available at all voting places to assist voters with low vision.
 - Note pads and pens available at all voting places to assist communication with voters who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.
 - Identification and how to mark your ballot posters will be clearly visible in a large font.
 - All Advance Poll locations equipped with an accessibility tabulator allowing electors with sight, hearing and mobility disabilities to vote.
- 3.15 A ballot marking device which allows electors to create their ballot using an audio and visual interface and an Audio Tactile Interface (ATI). The ATI was identified as the main tool for electors with partial or no vision, or limited dexterity and; the Sip and Puff and Paddle Button Input Interface options were also available.

Accessible Stakeholder Service & Training

- 3.16 Providing all election officials with accessible customer service training.
- Holding mandatory training sessions for election staff on accessibility requirements, serving people with disabilities and on the accommodations and special services available to assist voters.

The Municipality of Central Elgin is committed to ensuring that accessibility is facilitated throughout all municipal facilities and municipal business operations.

Please contact the Municipality should you have any questions.

ACCESSIBILITY FEEDBACK

The Municipality of Central Elgin welcomes feedback to identify areas where changes need to be considered in order to improve the delivery of an accessible Election.

The accessible feedback form can be found at:
<https://webforms.centralelgin.org/Accessibility-Feedback-Form>

TEMPORARY SERVICE DISRUPTIONS

On occasion, there may be unforeseen circumstances beyond the Municipality's control, resulting in a temporary service disruption. Election Officials will commit to making reasonable efforts to ensure services are reinstated as quickly as possible and/or alternative services are provided where feasible.

In these instances, the Municipality will provide reasonable notice regarding planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services. Notice of the disruption will be provided and include the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities or services, if any are available.

Notice will be given by posting the information in a conspicuous place as well as by posting the information on the Municipal website.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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