

Haldimand County 2026 Municipal and School Board Elections Accessibility Plan

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Introduction

Haldimand County is committed to making the municipal elections accessible for all – including voters, candidates, employees, and volunteers who participate in election administration. The Haldimand County Accessible Municipal Elections Plan 2026 supports and enhances Haldimand County’s policies, multi-year Accessibility Plan, and commitment to respond to the needs of persons with disabilities.

Purpose

The focus of the Haldimand County Accessible Municipal Election Plan 2026 will be to:

- a) Ensure that everyone can vote, run for office, or work in an election without barriers
- b) Identify and eliminate barriers for persons with disabilities; and
- c) Create a positive and inclusive voting experience.

Plan Development and Review

This plan was developed by Haldimand County staff, in consultation with the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Policies and procedures must be consistent with the principles of the [Municipal Elections Act, 1996](#), and the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005](#), and respect the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.

The Elections Team will continue to develop and adjust the Accessible Municipal Election Plan 2026 to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. This Plan will be reviewed and updated as new opportunities are identified or become available.

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

Legislative Requirements

Under the *Municipal Elections Act* (MEA), the Municipal Clerk is responsible for conducting municipal elections. One of the duties required of the clerk under the MEA is the establishment of policies and procedures for each municipal and school board election to ensure all voters and candidates have the opportunity to fully participate, with regard given to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities.

The MEA also requires that in establishing voting locations, the clerk shall ensure that each voting location is accessible to electors with disabilities. The clerk is further required to prepare a plan, available to the public, regarding the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

Key Areas of Focus in the Elections Process

Staff have identified the following four key areas of focus within the election process to prevent and remove barriers:

1. Election Information
2. Voting Locations
3. Voting Methods
4. Recruitment and Selection of Workers

Election Information

1. Provide an informative and accessible election website
 - Election information is available in clear, simple language
 - Continuously update election information to reflect the most recent information
 - Ensure that the election website is formatted to meet or exceed accessibility standards.
2. Provide election information in alternative formats upon request and through multiple channels
 - Ensure election information is available on the election website, in media releases, on social media, printed materials, and alternative formats upon request.
 - Publicize communication channels so that an elector with election accessibility concerns can readily contact the Municipal Clerk's Division Staff: Phone: 905-318-5932 or Email: election@haldimandcounty.on.ca

Voting Locations

1. Ensure voting locations are accessible to all voters
 - Review and update Voting location Accessibility checklist
 - Conduct accessibility site visits and assessments of all voting locations to identify and remove barriers.
 - Provide multiple voting locations throughout the County
 - Use vote anywhere giving electors the choice of which location they attend
 - Conduct routine checks of the facility throughout voting day to ensure ongoing accessibility
 - Any person with a disability may enter any voting location with their service animal.
 - Any person with a disability may be accompanied by a support person throughout the voting process, including within the voting screen area to provide assistance, where permitted and in accordance with applicable election procedures (e.g., taking the required oath)
 - In the event of disruption to service or unforeseen circumstances that affect the accessibility of voting places during the advance vote or on voting day notice of the disruption will be posted as soon as possible:
 - On the Haldimand County website
 - On Haldimand County social media
 - At the site of the disruption

- Establish website links to report accessibility issues, concerns or complaints on Advance Vote or Voting Day
- 2. Ensure all Voting location access routes and entrances are clearly identified
 - Ensure prominent signage is installed directing voters to the accessible voting entrance
 - Provide additional election staff assigned as door and elevator operators to provide assistance where needed
 - Use large print signs in accessible font at voting locations for election information

Voting Methods

1. Provide accessible voting opportunities and methods on Advance Vote and Voting Day
 - Provide vote anywhere on all Advance Voting Days and Election Day
 - Provide online voting options that are easy to use and accessible to voters with disabilities, allowing them to vote independently from a location that works for them.
 - Provide access to internet voting at County libraries during regular operating hours for voters who require access to a public computer or internet connection
 - Provide voters the option to vote by proxy
 - Voting by proxy allows an eligible elector to appoint another eligible elector to vote on their behalf if they are unable to vote in person
 - Ensure legibility of ballots through use of accessible font styles, sizes and colours
 - Provide large print candidate list and vote instructions at each polling station
 - Provide accessible ballot marking devices at all/select voting places
 - Provide magnifiers, pens and paper at all voting locations
2. Provide Assistance to voters, as requested
 - Election staff will be provided with training on how to interact and communicate with persons having various types of disabilities
 - Train election staff to assist voters with the voting process when requested
 - Upon request, provide voters with the opportunity to vote from anywhere at the voting location (including curbside) with assistance from a Deputy Returning Officer.
 - Upon request, assist voters with voting, including with reading the ballot and/or marking the ballot.
 - Enable voters to swear an oath if they are unable to provide the required identification and/or documentation with a signature.

Recruitment and Staffing

1. Provide accessibility training to all election staff who participate at a voting location during an advance poll or on voting day
 - Develop accessibility training and reference materials for all elections staff, including:
 - how to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities;
 - how to interact with persons who use assistive devices or require the assistance of a service animal or support person;

- how to use voting equipment and assistive devices to deliver election services;
 - what to do if a person is having difficulty accessing election information or services.
2. Ensure the recruitment process for staff is accessible
- Provide accommodations for the recruitment process, upon request.
 - Ensure training manual and/or other relevant materials are available in an accessible format, upon request.
 - Provide applicants an opportunity to request an accessibility-related workplace accommodation during the application process proactively.

Post-Election Report

Following the election, the Municipal Clerk will review the outcomes with the Accessibility Coordinator and the Accessibility Advisory Committee to identify potential areas of improvement and any unanticipated barriers experienced during the election that can be addressed in future plans. A post-election report shall be presented to Council concerning the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect voters, candidates and election workers with disabilities. This report will include feedback from Haldimand County's Accessibility Advisory Committee and will seek to identify areas of improvement and determine if the initiatives can be improved in subsequent elections.

Recommendations, suggestions or feedback, can be forwarded to the Election Team at election@haldimandcounty.on.ca, or by calling the Clerks division at 905-318-5932