Municipality of North Perth
2026 Municipal Election
Accessibility Plan

Introduction

This plan is for use in the 2026 Municipal Election in conjunction with the Municipality's Corporate Accessibility Policy and Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

The Municipality of North Perth abides by the following principles when conducting the municipal election:

- Integrity of process maintained through election.
- Secrecy and confidentiality of the individual vote.
- Election is fair and non-biased.
- Election is accessible to the voters.
- Certainty that results reflect votes cast.
- Voters and candidates treated fairly and consistently.

Municipal Elections Act Requirements

In accordance with the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 (MEA), all municipalities are required to adhere to the following provisions:

Electors and candidates with disabilities

12.1 (1) A clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities.

(2) 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.

Report

(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 electors and candidates with disabilities and shall make the report available to the public.

Accessibility

45. (2) In establishing the locations of voting places, the clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities.

Development of plan

This plan will address the specific requirements related to accessibility for the 2026 Municipal Election in the Municipality of North Perth. When developing this plan, steps were taken to make sure that all legislated requirements are met and that a suitable implementation plan is in place. This plan is a living document, which can be improved and updated as best practices are identified and new opportunities of improvement arise.

During the development of the plan, the following steps were taken:

- Reviewing the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, the Ontario Human Rights Code and applicable accessibility standards;
- Reviewing the Municipality's Corporate Accessibility Policy and applicable Multi-Year Accessibility Plan;
- Reviewing election accessibility guidance and municipal best practices;
- Examining the accessibility of proposed voting locations;
- Incorporating accessibility requirements into voting location layouts and election procedures;
- Preparing accessibility training for election officials;
- Identifying the accessibility equipment and materials required at voting locations;
- Incorporating accessibility considerations into election supplies, communications and contingency planning; and
- Establishing a process for receiving and responding to accessibility feedback.

Definitions

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) defines "disability" as,

(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 speak 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.

The AODA defines "barrier" as anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or practice.

Regard for the Needs of Electors with Disabilities

The procedures within this plan must respect the dignity and independence of electors. The election process should ensure that the policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.

Disabilities can take many forms and can range from temporary to permanent. Disabilities can be non-visible and no one should ever make assumptions. Disabilities include developmental, cognitive and physical challenges/conditions of a person of any age.

Some examples of barriers to people with disabilities include:

Barrier Type	Example
Physical	A doorknob that cannot be operated by an elderly person with limited upper-body mobility and strength.
Architectural	A hallway or door that is too narrow for a wheelchair or scooter.
Informational	Typefaces that are too small to be read by a person with low vision.
Communicational	A speaker at a meeting who talks loudly when addressing a deaf participant.
Attitudinal	A campaign event that discourages persons with developmental disabilities from participating.
Technological	Information on a website that cannot be accessed by a person who is blind or visually impaired and who has reading software on a computer.
Policy/Practice	A practice of announcing important messages over an intercom that people with hearing impairments cannot hear clearly.

Types of Disabilities

Listed below is a brief description of types of disabilities. Understanding people's needs and challenges may help with better communication.

Physical disabilities – there are many types and degrees of physical disabilities, and while people who use mobility aids like wheelchairs, scooters, crutches, or canes are most recognizable, it is important to consider that not all people with physical disabilities require a mobility device.

Vision loss – there are varying degrees of vision loss and a distinction between blindness and low vision. In some cases, it may be difficult to tell if a person has a vision loss.

Hearing impaired, deafness and hearing loss – hearing loss ranges from mild to profound. The distinction between the terms "deaf", "deafened", "hearing impaired" and "hard of hearing" are based principally on the individual's preferred language (spoken or signed) rather than on the actual degree of hearing loss.

Deaf-blindness – a person who is deaf-blind has some degree of both vision and hearing loss. This results in greater difficulties in accessing information and managing daily activities. Most people who are deaf-blind will be accompanied by someone who helps communicating.

Speech impairments – people with speech disabilities may have problems communicating. For many reasons, people may have difficulty speaking clearly – for example, because of a stroke or cerebral palsy – which may result in difficulties with verbal communication. Some people may use communication boards or other assistive devices to help communicate. A speech disability often has no impact on a person's ability to understand. Ask them to repeat the information if you don't understand. Ask questions that can be answered "yes" or "no" if possible.

Cognitive disabilities – cognitive disabilities may affect understanding, communication or behaviour and can be attributed to brain injuries, developmental or learning disabilities. It is not always easy to identify someone who has a cognitive disability.

Mental illness – mental illness is a disturbance in thoughts and emotions that may decrease a person's capacity to cope with the challenges of everyday life. Mental illness can take many forms, just as physical illness does.

Voting Locations

For the purpose of this plan, voting locations include the exterior parking and walkways associated with the location.

In order to ensure that each voting location is accessible to all electors, a site audit will be conducted using a site evaluation form. The evaluation form will include assessment of the following areas within the voting location:

- Entrance and egress
- Parking
- Interior voting area
- Accessible voting booth
- Public washrooms
- Facility signage

Election Materials

The Municipality is required, as per the Accessible Customer Service Standard, to provide a copy of a document, or the information contained in the document, in an alternate format upon request. 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 Municipality will consult with the person requesting the document to determine what a reasonable accessible alternate format of the document or information would be.

In the event the information or document is not generated by the Municipality or is supplied by a third party, the Municipality will make every effort to obtain the information from the third party in an alternate format and/or will attempt to assist the elector by providing assistive equipment.

General Election Materials

Large print – printed material generated by the Municipality will be provided in Arial font, 12 point and can be made available in a font size that is larger.

Website – the Municipality's website conforms to the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, at Level A and AA in accordance with the schedule set out in the AODA Integrated Accessibility Standards.

Voting Materials (Ballots)

Assistive devices – each voting location will be equipped with magnifiers as well as the assistance of election officials.

Voting Assistance

A voter may receive assistance in one of the following ways:

Support person – people with disabilities will be permitted to be accompanied by a support person at any voting location. A designated support person will be administered an oath of secrecy and confidentiality prior to providing assistance.

Service animals – electors and candidates are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at all voting locations.

Physical disabilities – voting locations including the parking area and entrances will be selected and/or set up in a manner that enables electors with physical disabilities to vote. Election officials will be available to assist with opening and closing doors.

Hearing impaired, deafness and hearing loss – voting locations will be equipped with a pad of paper and pen/pencil to communicate with the hearing impaired in writing, if required.

Election officials – election officials are available to assist any voter with a disability who is unable to mark a ballot or may have difficulty with reading or writing. All individuals working in the capacity of an election official are formally appointed and take an oath of secrecy.

Proxy Voting

An elector with a disability that is homebound or otherwise unable to go to a voting location may appoint another person to act as a voting proxy to cast a ballot on their behalf. The appointment must be made on the prescribed form available at the municipal office and online. The person being appointed as a proxy will be required to take a statutory declaration before a Commissioner of Oaths. Once completed, the voting proxy may be exercised at any advanced voting day or on election day. On election day, the proxy must be exercised at a voting location on behalf of the person who is unable to attend. The appointment of a proxy may only be made after 2:00 p.m. on Nomination Day and is null and void after election day.

Accessibility Training for Election Officials

All election officials will complete the Municipality's accessibility training, which includes:

- Purpose of the AODA.
- How to interact and communicate with individuals with disabilities.

- How to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or support person.
- Knowing when and how to report a disruption of service
- Knowing how to collect customer feedback

Accessible Service Disruptions

From time to time and/or for unforeseen circumstances beyond the Municipality's control, temporary service disruptions may be experienced. In the event of a temporary accessible service disruption, election officials will commit to making 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 Municipality shall provide reasonable notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by persons with disabilities. Notice of these temporary disruptions shall be provided in a conspicuous place and manner at the respective locations and information shall also be posted on the Municipal website.

This notice shall include information about the reason for disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

Accessible services in relation to this plan include voting locations, election materials and/or voting provisions for electors with disabilities at the voting place.

Customer Service Feedback

Feedback from the public gives the Municipality of North Perth opportunities to learn and improve. The Municipality welcomes customer feedback to identify areas where changes need to be considered and ways in which the Municipality can improve the delivery of an accessible election.

Customer service feedback forms are available at the municipal office and will be available at each voting location.

Feedback can also be provided in writing, in person, via email or telephone, addressed to:

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Listowel, ON N4W 1L3
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