



Election Accessibility Plan 2026

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Section 1 - Overview

Introduction

The Election Accessibility Plan (the “Plan”) supports and strengthens the City of Orillia’s (the “City”) commitment and efforts to respond to the needs of persons with differing abilities. 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 City.

Legislative Requirements

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 shall make the plan available to the public before voting day in a regular election.
- Section 12.1 (3) requires that within ninety (90) days after voting day 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.
- 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.

Mandate

The City is committed to ensuring the 2026 Municipal Election is accessible to all electors and providing services that respects the dignity and independence of electors with differing abilities. In addition, the City is committed to conducting the election in a manner that ensures that persons with differing abilities are able to vote independently and privately with access to voting assistance if required.

Election Accessibility Plan (the “Plan”)

The Plan was developed in consultation with the City’s Accessibility Advisory Committee. The Plan will provide an overview of the following items:

- developing and providing accessibility training to all election officials;
- providing information to the voters and candidates in an accessible method;
- ensuring all voting locations are accessible to electors with differing abilities;

- assisting candidates and electors with differing abilities; and
- continuing to consult with individuals and groups knowledgeable in providing services to persons with differing abilities to better understand their needs.

The City will continue to learn, develop and adjust our approaches in order to meet the needs of persons with differing abilities. The review of accessibility issues and initiatives and addressing barrier prevention or removal is an ongoing practice.

Section 2 - Staff Training

Election Staff Training

All staff carrying out election duties, referred to as Deputy Returning Officers, will complete Accessible Customer Service Training and specific Election Training to comply with the City's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and to ensure that persons with differing abilities are served in a way that accommodates their individual needs.

Accessibility training will include the following:

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

Section 3 - Provision of Election Information and Communications

Election Information

The City will, in accordance with the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation*, provide candidates and electors with differing abilities with information in a format that takes into account their ability. Information and forms will notify candidates and electors that the information is available in an alternative format 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 City will be provided in a 12-point Arial font taking into consideration the CNIB Clear Print Guidelines. Promotional initiatives will aim to create awareness of accessible features and ensure voters have the necessary information to participate on Election Day.

Information provided through the City's website will comply with the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation*.

Information on the 2026 Municipal Election will be available at: www.orillia.ca/elections.

Notice of Temporary Service Disruption

The Clerk shall provide public notice on the municipal website and in the local media should a temporary disruption in the delivery of election information or services occur. 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 alternative methods of providing the information or service to persons with differing abilities.

Section 4 - Accessible Voting Locations

In order to ensure that each voting location is accessible to electors with differing abilities, an Accessible Voting Location Inspection/Checklist has been prepared in order to evaluate each voting location.

The Accessibility Checklist includes the assessment of the following:

- Parking Areas
- Exteriors
- Entrances and hallways
- Elevators (if applicable)
- Fire and Life Safety
- General Layout and Services
- Interiors
- Public Washrooms
- Facility Signage and Information Systems

Upon completion of the inspection/checklist, a list of any barriers which have been identified will be reviewed to determine if they can be modified to accommodate electors with differing abilities or if an alternative location is required.

Directional signage and floor markings will also be used to assist with navigating through voting locations and staff will be available for anyone who requests assistance.

Transportation - Election Express Bus

The City of Orillia will be providing free hourly bus service from the Downtown Transit Terminal to each of the voting locations. The Election Express bus will start at 10:00 AM on Election Day, Monday, October 26, 2026 and depart hourly from the terminal to each of the voting locations as follows:

- Ward 1 - Gill Street Community Complex, 433 Gill Street
- Ward 2 - Orillia Recreation Centre, 255 West Street South
- Ward 3 - West Orillia Sports Complex, 100 University Avenue
- Ward 4 - Simcoe County Community Hub, 250 West Street North

The final departure from the Downtown Orillia Transit Terminal is 8:00 PM. Voters using the Orillia Wheelchair Limousine Service (OWLS) bus during Advanced Vote dates and on Election Day are encouraged to book early to avoid availability issues. OWLS reservations may be made by calling 705-327-0411 between Monday and Friday from 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM.

Parking

Designated or reserved parking for people with differing abilities will be provided close to the entrance of all voting locations. Accessible parking spaces will be clearly posted and easy to see from the road and marked with the international symbol of accessibility. An increase in the usual parking limits for people with differing abilities will be accommodated if requested where possible. Curb cuts will be identified so users of mobility aids can access the road and sidewalk. Routine checks of the access routes to the entrance of the voting location will be made throughout the day.

Entrance

The main entrance at all voting locations will have a level entrance and/or a ramp with handrails to assist people using mobility aids or who have mobility impairments. All entrances and accessible paths of travel will be clearly sign-posted using the international symbol of accessibility.

Interior

Access to the interior voting area and voting booth shall be level and easily traversed. Any doormats or carpeting shall be level with the floor to prevent potential tripping hazards. All voting areas shall be well lit and seating will be made available at various stages of the voting process.

Every effort shall be made to ensure that the door into the voting location is wide enough for a wheelchair or scooter to pass through easily. The door hardware shall be accessible and operated by a person using a closed fist. If the doors are heavy, awkward to open, or have handles that are out of reach, they will be propped open in a safe manner and an Election Official will be available to assist in opening and closing the door. Routine inspections of the entrances will be conducted to ensure the area is free from barriers and safe.

Accessible Voting Booths

Accessible voting booths will be available at each voting location. Voting booths will be low in height and have a wide area to allow for individuals who use mobility or assistive devices to vote independently and privately. A large print "Notice of Ballot" poster shall be displayed in close proximity to the voting booth. Magnifying sheets will be made available to assist any individual with visual impairments.

Voting Assistance

Persons with differing abilities may be accompanied by a support person within the voting location. In addition, a Deputy Returning Officer in each voting location can assist the voter in casting their vote. Prior to entering the voting booth, the Deputy Returning Officer shall consult with the person with the varying ability to determine the extent to which they need assistance and the best way in which this assistance can be provided. Wherever possible, the Deputy Returning Officer will explain the accessible technologies available and confirm the elector's preferred method to vote. This may include marking the ballot as directed by the person with the varying ability.

Mobile Voting

Election Officials will establish mobile voting locations at various designated times on Voting Day 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 infirm, or
- a retirement home in which 50 or more beds are occupied.

If the voter is unable to physically attend the voting location, the Deputy Returning Officer may attend to voters in their specific living areas or at their bedside to assist them to vote. All Deputy Returning Officers will take an "Oath of Secrecy" for this purpose.

Proxy Voting

A person 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 Clerk's Office.

The person being appointed as a proxy will be required to take a statutory declaration before a Commissioner of Oaths. Clerk's staff can administer this oath at 50 Andrew Street South, Orillia. Once completed, the voting proxy may be exercised at any advance voting location or on Voting Day. On Voting Day, the proxy must be exercised at the voting location of the person for whom the proxy is voting. The appointment of a proxy may only be made after 2:00 PM on Nomination Day, August 21, 2026 until the close of voting on Voting Day, after which the proxy appointment expires.

Section 5 - Assistance to Electors and Candidates

General

Candidates or electors with differing abilities may require assistance to help them access election information and services. Serving our customers with differing abilities is about providing service in a manner that reflects the City's guiding principles of accessible customer service.

The guiding principles:

- Respect for the dignity and independence of persons with differing abilities;
- The provision of goods and services to persons with differing abilities and others must be integrated unless an alternative means is necessary to enable the person with the varying ability to obtain, use or benefit from the goods and services; and
- Persons with differing abilities must be given an opportunity equal to that given to others to obtain, use and benefit from City goods and services.

Accommodation may involve various forms of assistance, such as the use of the individual's own mobility aids and assistive devices (i.e. wheelchair, cane, scooter, crutches, sip and puff, etc.) On Voting Day, in addition to all Advance Vote Days, all voting locations will have a wheelchair available for an elector's temporary use.

Accessible Ballot Marking Device

An Accessible Ballot Marking Device will be available at each voting location on Election Day as well as at all Advance Vote Days at both the Orillia Recreation Centre and the West Orillia Sports Complex.

The Accessible Ballot Marking Device can be added to operate with the ImageCast Evolution Tabulator. It is designed to provide electors with a private and independent method to mark, review and cast their ballot.

At the voting location, every elector is provided with the same unmarked paper ballot. If an elector would like to mark their ballot using an assistive device, the Deputy Returning Officer will instruct the elector on the Ballot Marking Device voting process and options. The elector will use the Audio Tactile Interface (ATI) assistive vote selector device or optional additional assistive devices such as paddles or sip-and-puff. Electors are encouraged to bring their own personal sip-and-puff devices.

The ATI is a handheld controller that has 10 buttons. The buttons on the ATI are colour coded, have different shapes and the buttons are labelled in braille. The ATI is the quickest and easiest device to assist electors who can push buttons firmly.

The optional sip-and-puff device is an effective option for electors who do not have use of their hands or feet. Electors can navigate the ballot and make selections by "sipping" or "puffing" into the device as instructed in the audio instructions.

The optional paddle buttons are ideal for electors who may have difficulty pushing buttons on the ATI. Electors can navigate the ballot and make selections by pressing on the left (L) or right (R) paddles as instructed in the audio instructions.

Electors can also connect other personal auxiliary input devices into the 3.5mm auxiliary port on the ATI.

On Voting Day, Election Officials shall accommodate all electors requesting assistance. Alternatively, an elector may request that a person of their choosing assist them in marking their ballot. That individual will be required to take an “Oath of Secrecy” prior to being permitted to assist.

Service Animals

Anyone requiring the use of service animals is permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at all designated voting locations.

Support Persons

A support person may accompany a person with a differing ability in order to help with communications, mobility, personal care or medical needs. The support person, upon the completion of an “Oath of Secrecy”, may accompany the elector behind the voting screen to assist the elector in the voting process.

Candidates

Candidates will be informed of this Election Accessibility Plan in order to draw attention to the measures required to ensure equal opportunity for all electors to access information.

Expenses which are incurred by a candidate with a disability that are directly related to the disability, and which would not have been incurred except for the purpose of running for an office in the election to which the expenses relate, are excluded from the permitted spending limit for the candidate.

Section 6 - Continued Improvements

General

As previously indicated, this Plan was developed in consultation with the City’s Accessibility Advisory Committee which is comprised of a group of appointed individuals knowledgeable in providing services to persons with differing abilities.

Council Services staff members are available throughout the election to assist with any issues that may arise with respect to providing an accessible election.

Please contact us at 705-325-1311 or elections@orillia.ca if you require additional information and to provide feedback.

Post-Election Accessibility Report

The Clerk’s post-election report will be posted on the City’s website in accessible format and distributed to groups and other stakeholders upon request.

Feedback Process

Your feedback provides election staff with an opportunity to take corrective measures to 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 and your feedback will be summarized in the Post-Election Accessibility Report.

The Clerk welcomes feedback to identify areas where changes need to be considered and ways in which the City can improve the delivery of an accessible election. This Plan is a living document and will continue to undergo changes. Feedback on this Plan may be submitted through the following methods:

By telephone: 705-325-1311

By email: elections@orillia.ca

In Person/by mail: Clerk's Office
50 Andrew Street South, Suite 300
Orillia, ON L3V 7T5

Additional Resources

Please visit the City's website for more information on the 2026 Municipal Election - www.orillia.ca/elections

City of Orillia Multi-Year Accessibility Plan - <https://media-001-ca.cdn.govstack.com/orilliarecreation-004-ca/media/ketnp4kz/2023-2028-myap-v2025.pdf>