



The Corporation of the Township of Black River-Matheson Municipal Plan

MUNICIPAL ELECTION ACCESSIBILITY PLAN	
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Municipal Election Accessibility Plan

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1.0 STATEMENT

The Township of Black River-Matheson is committed to conducting municipal elections in a manner that ensures all electors and candidates have equitable access to the electoral process.

This Accessibility Plan outlines the measures the Township will implement to identify, remove, and prevent barriers for persons with disabilities in accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. The Township will provide an accessible voting process through the use of internet and telephone voting, supported by in-person voter help centres and accessible election services.

This Plan is intended to be a “living” document and will be reviewed and updated as best practices are identified and new opportunities for improvement arise.

In developing this Plan, the Township has undertaken a review of relevant documents, policies, and best practices, including materials from AMCTO, neighbouring municipalities, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, technology providers, and other stakeholder groups.

The Township will also establish staff training standards and practices related to the election to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to vote in a positive and accessible environment, and that all election officials understand their responsibility to accommodate the needs of voters.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The Township of Black River-Matheson is committed to ensuring that the 2026 Municipal Election is accessible to all electors, candidates, and election workers. The Township will:

1. Ensure persons with disabilities are able to independently and privately cast their vote and verify their selection;
2. Provide full and equal access to election information, including where and when to vote and information on eligible candidates, in accessible formats;
3. Support and enable the participation of persons with disabilities as electors, candidates, and election officials;
4. Promote awareness of available accessibility measures through multiple communication channels, including the Township website, social media, and other public notices;
5. Provide at least one (1) accessible voting assistance location;
6. Continuously identify, prevent, and remove barriers to accessibility throughout the election process;

3.0 DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this Policy:

Accessibility

The design of products, devices, services, environments, and processes to be usable by persons with disabilities, consistent with the principles of dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*.

Accessible Format

An alternative format that allows information to be accessed by persons with disabilities, including but not limited to large print, audio format, electronic format, or other formats as agreed upon with the individual.

Assistive Device

Any device used by a person with a disability to assist with daily living or to access services, including but not limited to mobility aids, communication devices, screen readers, or other adaptive technologies.

Barrier

Anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in the electoral process, including physical, architectural, informational, communicational, technological, or attitudinal barriers.

Clerk / Returning Officer

The individual appointed by the Township responsible for conducting the municipal election in accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, including the preparation and implementation of this Accessibility Plan.

Disability

As defined under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, including any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement, sensory impairment, mental health disability, developmental disability, learning disability, or injury for which benefits were claimed under insurance.

Election Official

Any individual appointed by the Township to administer or support the election process, including staff assigned to Voter Help Centres, and who has taken the required Oath of Secrecy.

Elector

A person eligible to vote in a municipal election in accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*.

Support Person

An individual who accompanies a person with a disability in order to assist with communication, mobility, personal care, or access to voting services.

Service Animal

An animal that is readily identifiable as being used by a person for reasons relating to their disability,

or where the person provides documentation from a regulated health professional confirming the need for the animal.

Voter Help Centre

A municipal location established by the Township where electors may receive assistance and access voting services, including internet and telephone voting, using municipal equipment in an accessible environment.

Alternative Voting Methods

Voting methods authorized by the Township, including internet and telephone voting, that provide electors with the ability to cast a ballot without attending a traditional polling station.

4.0 SCOPE

This Policy applies to all municipal election processes conducted by the Township of Black River-Matheson and ensures accessibility is considered throughout the election cycle.

This Policy applies to:

- All municipal elections, including general elections and by-elections conducted under the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*
- All stages of the election process, including planning, voting, and post-election reporting
- All voting methods, including internet, telephone, and in-person services at Voter Help Centre
- All election-related communications and materials
- All individuals involved in the election process, including electors, candidates, and Election Officials
- All municipal staff, contractors, and service providers supporting the election

5.0 LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

This Plan is prepared in accordance with the following legislation and guidelines:

- *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* (including Sections 12.1 and 45)
- *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*
- Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (O. Reg. 191/11)
- AMCTO best practice guidelines

Under the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, the Clerk is responsible for:

- Preparing and publishing an Accessibility Plan prior to voting day
- Ensuring that voting methods and procedures are accessible to all electors
- Identifying, removing, and preventing barriers to participation for persons with disabilities
- Submitting a post-election accessibility report to Council within 90 days following voting day

6.0 PROCEDURE

6.1 Voting Methods (Internet, Telephone, and Help Centres)

The Township of Black River-Matheson will utilize internet and telephone voting as the primary voting methods for the 2026 Municipal Election. The Township will engage Intelivote Systems Inc. to provide secure electronic voting services to eligible electors.

This approach enhances accessibility by allowing electors to vote:

- From any location
- Using personal assistive technologies and devices
- Without the need to travel to a physical polling station

The use of everyday tools such as computers, tablets, and telephones supports accessible participation and aligns with the principles of independence, dignity, integration, and equal opportunity.

Internet voting is designed to be compatible with assistive technologies and accessible web standards, while telephone voting provides an audio-based ballot system that supports voters with visual or mobility-related barriers.

By enabling multiple voting methods, electors with disabilities are able to vote privately and independently, including from their own homes where assistive devices may already be in place. To support electors who require assistance or do not have access to the necessary technology, the Township will provide Voter Help Centres during the voting period.

At these locations:

- Trained Election Officials will be available to assist electors as requested
- Accessible voting stations will be provided
- Equipment such as computers, tablets, and telephones will be available
- The environment will be barrier-free, well-lit, and accessible

The availability of both remote and in-person voting options ensures that all electors, regardless of ability, have equitable access to participate in the electoral process.

6.2 Telephone Voting

Eligible voters may vote using a touch-tone telephone, and the toll-free telephone number, date of birth, and the PIN number contained in their Voter Information Letter to access an audio ballot. Communications barriers can make it difficult for people to receive or convey information. Barriers may be identified as low volume, use of language that is not clear or plain, and confusing or unorganized menu options.

The Intelivote telephone voting application provides the following:

- Service on all types of touch tone phones and wireless devices.
- Clear, plain language.
- Menu options that are easy to follow, advising when to select options and provision of confirmation of the voter's selections.
- Standard volume is used to allow for adjustment dependent of the telephone or device being utilized.

6.3 Internet Voting

Eligible voters may vote online, using a smart phone, tablet device, gaming device or computer and any accompanying assistive devices or software, along with their date of birth and PIN and qualifying information, to access the internet address provided in their Voter Instruction Letter.

The Intelivote System has been created to meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG-2 Level AA), so that persons with disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate and interact with the online voting system. It is compliant with the guidelines of the World Wide Web Consortium website principles, which include organization, functionality and readability of information provided, as well as alternative ways of representing information, such as with audio.

6.4 Accessible Voter Help Centres

Voter Help Centres will be established at accessible municipal locations to support electors who do not have access to internet or telephone voting, or who require assistance from a trained Election Official. These locations will provide in-person access to internet and telephone voting using equipment such as laptops, tablets, touch screen monitors, and telephones.

The Township will ensure that all Voter Help Centres are designed to be safe, accessible, and barrier-free. This includes:

- Barrier-free access to entrances and voting areas
- Accessible parking and clear signage
- Adequate interior space to accommodate mobility devices such as wheelchairs and scooters
- Seating and rest areas for electors
- Safe, well-lit, and unobstructed routes throughout the facility

Access to the Voter Help Centre interior and voting areas will be level and slip-resistant. Any mats or carpeting will be secured and flush with the floor to prevent tripping hazards. Entrance corridors will remain clear of obstructions and provide sufficient space for mobility aids.

An accessible voting area will be available at each Voter Help Centre location. These stations will be designed to allow individuals using wheelchairs or scooters to vote independently and privately, including appropriate table height and clear floor space.

Where feasible, additional supports such as curbside assistance or outreach voting options may be provided.

Electors may attend any Voter Help Centre location during the voting period.

6.5 Voting Assistance and Special Voting Provisions

The Township will provide a range of supports to ensure that electors requiring assistance are able to participate fully in the voting process, in accordance with the Township's Accessible Customer Service Policy.

Election staff will attend sites such as long-term care facilities and retirement homes to facilitate access to voting, including the setup of on-site voting kiosks or the provision of bedside voting opportunities for residents.

Electors requiring assistance may:

- Receive assistance from trained Election Officials
- Be accompanied by a support person or friend of their choice
- Use their own assistive devices when voting

Support persons and/or friends of the voter will be required to take an Oath of Secrecy and Confidentiality, administered by an Election Official, prior to providing assistance.

At Voter Help Centre locations, Election Officials will be available upon request to assist electors in casting their ballot. All Election Officials are formally appointed and are required to take an Oath of Secrecy prior to performing their duties.

Voter Help Centres will operate during the voting period as established by the Clerk.

Service animals are permitted in all voting locations.

6.6 Training of Election Officials

Election staff will receive training that includes:

- AODA customer service standards
- Communication with persons with disabilities
- Use of assistive devices
- Supporting electors in an accessible and respectful manner

Training will incorporate AMCTO best practices.

7.0 VOTING LOCATION(S)

An accessibility assessment will be conducted for each Voter Help Centre location to ensure that all facilities used during the 2026 Municipal Election are accessible and meet the needs of persons with disabilities.

The following considerations will be taken into account when selecting and operating Voter Help Centre locations:

7.1 Accessible Route

The location of each Voter Help Centre will consider proximity to main travel routes within the community. The name and/or address of the location will be clearly visible.

Clear, consistent, and easy-to-understand signage will be provided to identify the voting area. Interior routes will be unobstructed and allow for safe movement throughout the facility, including for individuals using wheelchairs, scooters, or other mobility devices.

Seating areas will be available within the Voter Help Centre for individuals who require rest.

7.2 Entrance and Exit

The route to the entrance of each Voter Help Centre will be barrier-free and unobstructed. Entrances, hallways, and doorways will provide sufficient width to accommodate mobility devices and service animals.

Doors will be accessible and easy to open, or where appropriate, will be propped open during voting hours. Routine checks will be conducted throughout the day to ensure entrances and exits remain safe, clear, and accessible.

7.3 Parking

Accessible parking will be available at all Voter Help Centre locations. Designated parking spaces will be clearly marked with the International Symbol of Accessibility and will be located on firm, level ground in close proximity to the entrance.

8.0 ELECTION INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

8.1 Communications

The Township of Black River-Matheson will ensure that all election information is accessible and available to the public through multiple communication channels.

Election information will be made available at the Municipal Office located at **421 Fifth Avenue, Matheson, ON**, and on the Township's website at www.twpbrm.ca. All online materials will be provided in accordance with accessible web standards.

The Township will:

- Publish election materials on its website in a format that is accessible and compliant with WCAG standards
- Provide information in large print and alternative formats upon request
- Ensure communications are written in clear, plain language

- Use multiple communication channels, including the website, public notices, and social media

Information regarding accessibility measures available for the Municipal Election will be included in general election advertising and public communications.
Alternative formats will be made available upon request.

The Township of Black River-Matheson is required, as per the Accessible Customer Service Standard, 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 upon request.

8.2 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 of Black River-Matheson 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 of Black River-Matheson or is supplied by a third party, the Township of Black River-Matheson 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.

8.3 General Election Materials

Large Print - Printed material generated by the Township of Black River-Matheson will be provided in an Arial 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 of Black River-Matheson on the website in relation to the election will be compliant with WCAG 2.0 Level AA, and allow for assistive software to be utilized. In addition, website font can be adjusted within

Video - Promotional and educational videos created for the 2026 Municipal Election shall incorporate audio and captioning.

9.0 CANDIDATES AND ACCESSIBILITY

The Township of Black River-Matheson encourages all candidates to consider accessibility throughout their campaign activities to ensure equitable participation for all members of the community.

Candidates are encouraged to incorporate accessibility considerations in:

- Campaign offices, including barrier-free access, clear signage, and accessible meeting spaces
- Campaign materials, by using clear, plain language and, where possible, providing alternative formats such as large print or digital versions
- Public meetings, events, and engagement activities, including selecting accessible venues and considering accommodations such as seating, lighting, and sound quality

Candidates are also encouraged to communicate with electors in a manner that is inclusive and responsive to a variety of accessibility needs.

In accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, expenses related to a candidate's disability, as well as costs incurred for accessibility-related services, are excluded from the prescribed spending limits.

The Township will make candidates aware of accessibility requirements and best practices and will provide election-related information in accessible formats upon request.

10.0 SERVICE DISRUPTIONS

While every effort will be made to ensure accessible services are available throughout the election period, disruptions may occur that are beyond the Township's control.

In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption affecting accessible services, the Township will make reasonable efforts to restore services as quickly as possible and provide alternative options where feasible.

Accessible services under this plan include Voter Help Centre locations, election materials, and voting provisions for electors with disabilities.

In the event of a disruption affecting accessible services:

- Notice will be provided on the Township website and at affected locations
- The notice will include the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and any alternative facilities or services available

Notices will be posted in a clear and conspicuous manner at the affected location(s) and online at the Township's website. Where disruptions occur during the voting period, updates will be provided in as close to real time as possible.

11.0 FEEDBACK AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The Township of Black River-Matheson encourages feedback from electors, candidates, and the public regarding the accessibility of the municipal election process.

Feedback may be submitted through the following methods:

- In person at the Municipal Office
- By telephone
- By email
- By mail

Feedback will be reviewed by the Township and used to:

- Identify and address barriers to accessibility
- Improve election processes and services
- Inform future accessibility planning and reporting

Where appropriate, the Township will respond to feedback and take reasonable steps to incorporate improvements into future elections.

12.0 POST-ELECTION ACCESSIBILITY REPORT

Within 90 days following Voting Day, the Clerk will prepare a report outlining:

- Accessibility measures implemented
- Barriers identified
- Improvements for future elections

The report will be made available to the public.

13.0 RESPONSIBILITIES AND AUTHORITY

Clerk:

- Administer the election and Accessibility Plan
- Ensure compliance with legislation
- Implement accessibility measures

Election Staff:

- Provide accessible service to electors
- Support implementation of this Plan

AUTHORITY

The Clerk is authorized to make administrative or procedural adjustments to this Plan as necessary, provided such changes do not alter the intent of the Plan.

14.0 SUMMARY INFORMATION

- Policy Name: Municipal Election Accessibility Plan
- Issue Date: March 24, 2026
- Approved by: Council
- Approval Date: TBD