

2026 Clarington Municipal Elections – Accessibility Plan

Introduction

The Municipality of Clarington is committed to making the 2026 Municipal Election accessible by understanding the needs of electors with disabilities and through the removal of barriers to vote. The 2026 Elections Accessibility Plan outlines how the Municipality will ensure the election is accessible to all electors and candidates.

This plan will be monitored and improved, or updated, as best practices are identified and new opportunities for improvement arise to respond to feedback from the public.

Legislative Requirements

The *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, states that:

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

12.1(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.

12.1(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.

41(3) 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 the assistance referred to in paragraph 4 of subsection 52 (1).

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

45(9) To allow an elector with a disability to vote, a deputy returning officer shall attend on the elector anywhere within the area designated as the voting place.

Plan Feedback

On January 28, 2026, this Plan was forwarded to the Clarington Accessibility Advisory Committee for their review and comment. The Committee provided general comments

and asked questions which were responded to by the Records and Elections Coordinator. Subsequently, the Committee passed the following resolution:

That the Accessibility Advisory Committee endorses the Municipal Elections Accessibility Plan.

The Accessibility Coordinator has also reviewed the Plan and concurs with the actions contained in the Plan.

Definitions

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005, 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 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*;

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 a practice;

According to the Ontario Human Rights Commission, “disability” covers a broad range and degree of conditions, some visible and some not visible. A disability may have been present at birth, caused by an accident, or developed over time.

The following criteria were considered in the development of this Plan:

- Policies and procedures must be consistent with the principles of the *Municipal Elections Act* (MEA) and must respect the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
- Access to electoral services must be integrated and equitable.
- Initiatives should address and accommodate a wide range of abilities.
- Must be consistent with the [Municipality of Clarington's Accessibility Customer Service Policy as contained in Report CLD-001-17](#) and [Clarington's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2024-2028](#).

Identification of Barriers

Review comments from electors and election officials that were collected following the 2022 election.

Accessibility Advisory Committee will review and provide input on our election accessibility initiatives.

Assess voting processes and procedures to ensure they meet the needs of the electorate.

Communicate with staff from various municipalities throughout Ontario and other parts of Ontario to seek input on barriers they have identified.

Seek input from Clarington's Accessibility Coordinator.

Consider guidelines provided by the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) and other organizations, where applicable, on how to decrease barriers to accessibility.

Removal and Prevention of Barriers

Communications and Information

Provide election information that is informative, clear, and easy to understand.

Ensure that all information provided to election officials, candidates, third party advertisers, or voters meets, or exceeds, the Municipality of Clarington's Branding Guidelines, [Accessible Word Document Guidelines](#).

All presentations (e.g. PowerPoint presentations) meet, or exceed, the Municipality of [Clarington's Presentation Guidelines](#).

Follow the CNIB's [clear print guidelines](#) and [signage guidelines](#) for signs and other print materials. This includes posting signs and materials at eye level and without obstructions (e.g., tables) to allow the person to get closer or use a magnifier.

Voters with disabilities may request information and election documents in a format that considers their accessibility needs due to a disability. The Municipal Clerk, or designate, shall consult with the requester and shall provide or arrange for the provision of a suitable format. Notice of this provision is located on the Municipality of Clarington's Election Website at: Clarington.net/votes and is included in accordance with our Notice Policy.

A Voter Information Letter will be sent to each eligible elector. In addition to other election-related information, such as the date and time of the election, and Personal Information Numbers (PINs), the letter will inform electors that all the EACs will be accessible.

In the event of disruptions to service or unforeseen circumstances during the Voting Period, notices of disruption, including information regarding the nature of service, the reason, the expected length of disruption, and alternatives, will be posted in real-time:

- On the Municipality's website and social media accounts
- At the site of the disruption
- At the Municipal Administration Centre located at 40 Temperance Street, Bowmanville

Every effort shall be made to provide the information or service via alternative methods to persons with disabilities. Notices and updates shall be made regularly throughout the service interruption.

To facilitate this, Election Officials will be provided with some default "Notice of Disruption" signs. Where applicable, a media advisory will be issued.

Website

Working with the Communications Division, the Clerk's Division will post all election information to the Municipality's website, www.Clarington.net/votes. We strive to ensure that all web content, including PDFs and videos, meets or exceeds level AA compliance with the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.2](#).

A section of the Municipality's election website will be dedicated to accessibility.

Clarington has recently launched a new website, which includes an accessibility widget that provides real-time accommodations for users with visual, hearing, and motor impairments, dyslexia, ADHD, and more. The website accessibility also incorporates tools and design elements to ensure accessibility such as:

- a) Text alternatives for any non-text content will be provided so that the content can be changed into other forms that people may need.

b) A quick link to the accessibility section of the election website.

Accessible elections information, to be posted on the website in plain language, including, but not limited to, the following information:

- Internet and telephone voting information and training
- EACs, including transit information, parking, entrances, and interior voting areas
- Special Voting Locations
- Personal Assistance
- Distribution of election information
- Accessible debates
- Disruption of services
- Feedback
- Contact Information
- Other election resources

The Municipality's election website will receive continuous updates throughout the election year.

Candidates and Third Party Advertisers

Provide information to candidates and third party advertisers regarding campaign expenses and, in particular, rules affecting candidates and third party advertisers with disabilities.

Provide candidates with information on how to make their campaigns accessible, including a "[Candidates Guide to Accessible Elections](#)", produced jointly by the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario and the Province of Ontario.

Candidate and third party advertiser information sessions (i.e., financial sessions and sign sessions) will be held in accessible locations.

If candidates or third party advertisers with a disability require information in an alternate format, the Municipality will work with them to accommodate their needs in accordance with the AODA.

Internet and Telephone Voting

The Clarington Municipal Elections will involve working with our vendor, Simply Voting, to provide internet and telephone voting to eligible voters. This method of voting allows all voters to cast their ballot from anywhere with an internet connection or telephone, whether the voter is coping with an illness, working days or nights, has a disability, or has trouble travelling.

Voters may use any device that has access to an internet browser, such as a smartphone, tablet, or computer. Access to the platform will be granted through a PIN provided in a Voter Information Letter. Letters will follow the Municipality's accessible document guidelines.

Simply Voting is committed to supporting voters with disabilities and making sure the ballot works with assistive technologies. The interface of the voting website is regularly audited against Section 508 and WCAG-2 accessibility requirements by **AccessiBe** and is found to be in compliance with **WCAG 2.2 Levels A and AA** criteria allowing for the use of screen readers. It provides a comprehensive compliance and remediation report on features such as the availability of text alternatives for non-text content, captions for multimedia, compatibility with assistive technologies such as JAWS, and ease of navigation. While the voting website does not include an audio ballot directly, telephone voting provides for an audio option.

The voting website allows electors to use translation software if they are more comfortable reading in a different language. It also provides an accessible "Human Interface Challenge" for security purposes (for example, providing an audio CAPTCHA). Additionally, a voter can change the brightness or contrast on a screen.

The telephone voting method allows electors to vote on all types of touchtone phone and wireless devices, uses clean, plain language, has menu options that are easy to follow advising them to select options/provisions of confirmation of the voters' selection, and offers a standard volume that can be adjusted depending on the telephone or device being utilized.

Prior to the Voting Period, Simply Voting will conduct several third-party audits of the election software, which will include a review of accessibility features.

Simply Voting will provide voting demonstration videos, which will include SRT (SubRip Subtitle) caption files. Included in the SRT files are the captions themselves, and the timecodes for when they should appear onscreen. This file can be imported to YouTube, then each viewer will be able to turn captioning on and off as they watch. SRT files also work with some other video-sharing platforms and some other standalone video players. These videos will be made available on our Elections website.

Internet and telephone voting means travel to polls is not necessary, but assistance will be available through in-person EACs, Clarington Libraries, and over the phone via the Election helpline.

As part of our public outreach, the public, including the Accessibility Advisory Committee Members, will have an opportunity to explore the online voting system within the test environment.

Election Assistance Centres (EACs)

Determining EAC Locations

EACs will be physically inspected, using a prescribed checklist, when deciding on locations. The inspection considers the Canadian Standards Association Barrier-Free Guidelines.

When selecting EACs, staff will strive to have a seamless process for voters, with a particular emphasis on the process for voters with a visual or mobility impairment. This includes an assessment of the walkability of the EAC and minimal distance between the parking lot and the entrance.

Enough EACS shall be provided throughout the Municipality on Voting Day and during the Advance Voting period to limit travel distances.

Public Transportation Access

Where possible, EACs will be selected to provide easy access to public transit stops, however they may not be located on the same street as the transit stop. Identification of the EAC shall be clearly visible from the street level.

Parking

EACs shall have adequate signage for easy navigation.

There will be a minimum of one designated parking spot for each of the EACs for persons with disabilities. These will be located as close to the entrance of the EAC as possible. Accessible parking spaces will be clearly posted, easy to see from the road, and marked with the International Symbol of Accessibility. An increase in the usual parking limits for people with disabilities will be provided, where possible. Curb cuts will be identified; for voters who use a mobility aid (such as a wheelchair, scooter, cane, or crutches) they will be able to access the road and sidewalk.

Voting Area

The main entrance to the EAC will be the accessible entrance. In locations where the entrance doors do not have auto-openers, the doors will be propped open in a safe manner. Where it is not possible to prop the door open, an Election Official will be assigned to operate the door for all voters entering and exiting the voting location.

The interior voting area will be large enough to maneuver a mobility device and seating will be made available for people who are waiting in line.

A minimum of one voting booth per EAC shall be wheelchair or scooter accessible. Table lifts (i.e., wooden blocks) will be used at this booth to accommodate the needs of any voter in a scooter or a higher wheelchair.

Doormats or carpeting shall be level with the floor to prevent potential tripping hazards.

EACs will have adequate internal and external lighting, and staff will ensure the voting area is well lit.

EAC supervisors will be provided with a list of location-specific instructions to improve the accessibility of the location.

Election Officials will routinely monitor the EAC for accessibility issues, such as doormats that have flipped up, etc. Access doors/entrances will be checked frequently to offer assistance and, where the entrance to the EAC is not within the immediate vicinity of the voting area, have additional Election Officials assigned to them to provide assistance.

Assistance to Voters

Support persons or service animals may accompany a voter with a disability into any EAC, including the voting compartment areas.

A voter who is physically unable to vote without assistance and who does not wish to use, or cannot use, any of the technologies available may be permitted to have a Friend or Election Official assist them to cast their ballot at an EAC. The Election Official or Friend of the voter may assist the voter in marking the ballot. The Election Official will already have taken an oath of secrecy, however the Friend shall be required to take the appropriate oath from an Election Official prior to providing assistance.

Prior to entering the voting booth, the Election Official shall, in conjunction with the person with the disability, determine the extent to which they need assistance and the best way in which this assistance can be provided. This may include making selections on the laptop as directed by the voter.

Note pads and pens will be available at all EACs to assist in communicating with electors who are deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing.

Short-Term EACs

Due to the limited availability of public facilities representing each geographic area in Clarington, some EACs may not fully comply with current standards, but every effort will be made to accommodate voters with disabilities.

Libraries

The Clarington Public Library will serve as a resource for electors who may not have access to a computer. Municipal staff shall collaborate with the Library to ensure that Library Staff are trained in elections procedures.

Special Voting Locations

In accordance with the MEA, the Municipality shall provide voting opportunities on the premises of:

- a) an institution in which 20 or more beds are occupied by persons who are disabled, chronically ill, or infirmed;
- b) a retirement home in which 50 or more beds are occupied.

A list of Special Voting Locations (SVLs) can be found in the 2026 Clarington Elections Clerk's Procedure.

For voters at SVLs, the Election Official can attend on voters in their specific living areas or at their bedside to assist them to vote. All Election Officials are sworn to an Oath of Secrecy.

Staff Training and Assistance

All staff carrying out election duties will be trained to recognize and ensure that persons with disabilities are served in a way that accommodates their needs. The Municipality plans to use Municipality of Clarington employees and Clarington Public Library Museums and Archives employees to work at the EACs, and all staff have completed Accessibility training.

Certain staff members will be trained on how to use Clarington's Language Line to provide election assistance to voters who may speak another language or require American Sign Language (ASL) translation services. This system provides translations in more than 240 languages. Election staff can access this service using a toll-free number and a video-on-demand app, which supports ASL translation for in-person customer service. Staff will also be able to use a conferencing feature during phone inquiries to get a translator on the line to help facilitate the conversation.

Election Officials will be provided with accessible customer service training, including the proper use of accessibility tools- both analog and digital- available to assist with the voting process. They will also be trained on the correct pronunciation of each candidate's name when assisting voters as incorrect pronunciation can affect oral understanding for a person with a vision loss.

Staff will be directed to avoid using pronouns and gender identifiers, and instead, refer to individuals by their first name or other neutral greetings.

The Municipality of Clarington recognizes that everyone learns differently. In order to provide training via different methods, training videos will be provided for Election Officials who learn visually, in addition to written reference material and group sessions (where the material is presented by instructors as well as hands-on training).

Election officials will be provided accommodations upon request to ensure training is accessible to all election officials. The Election Manager tool of our voting software, Simply Voting, is not WCAG-2 compliant. However, the majority of election staff will not be required to use the tool to perform their regular duties. Nearly all activities such as voter list revisions, PIN replacement, and reviewing vote status can all be performed in our other elections management platform, VoterView, which is accessible.

Feedback

If someone feels that they have identified a barrier, have a recommendation to improve accessibility for the upcoming election or any other election feedback on accessibility initiatives, they may fill out a “Customer Service Feedback Form,” which contains a section on accessibility. This form will be available on our elections website and at each of the EACs. Election Officials can complete and submit the form on behalf of the person with a disability. In addition, voters will be invited to participate in a survey following their online voting session.

Publicize the following communication channels so that a voter with election accessibility concerns can readily contact the Municipal Clerk’s Division Staff:

Phone: 905-697-4747
Email: votes@clarington.net
Mail: Municipality of Clarington
Municipal Clerk
Municipal Administration Centre
40 Temperance Street
Bowmanville, ON L1C 3A6

Following the election, Election Officials are also asked to fill out a feedback form, where they may comment on the accessibility of the election. Completed forms are reviewed by Municipal staff who will respond according to the Customer Service Standards, Service Requests and Complaint Handling Management Directive.. Feedback will be used to prevent accessibility issues in future elections, address training needs, enhance service delivery, and to help provide alternative methods of delivering election services.

Post-Election Report

After the election, the Municipality will release a post-election report assessing initiatives to address accessibility barriers and identifying improvements for future elections.