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## Introduction

This plan will address the specific accessibility requirements in relation to the 2024 Ward 2 (Rural) Municipal By-Election in the Municipality of Port Hope (“the Municipality”). This by-election is for eligible electors in Ward 2 (rural area) only.

The Municipality of Port Hope has made great efforts in working towards being a barrier free community. To ensure that the 2024 Municipal By-Election, Ward 2 is consistent with the core principles of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, (“AODA”), this planning document was developed in advance of the election to identify measures to be taken and reported to Council following the election.

## Objectives

This plan is intended to highlight measures that the Municipality will be implementing to ensure equal opportunity for all electors and candidates. These objectives include:

- That persons with disabilities have full and equal access to all information on where and when to vote and on eligible candidates.
- That persons with disabilities can fully participate in the Ward 2 By-election as an elector, candidate, or Election Official.
- That efforts are made to ensure that electors with disabilities are aware of the accessibility measures available via channels such as print media, radio, the Municipal website and social media.
- That persons with disabilities can independently cast their vote from the comfort of their own home or attend accessible Voter Assistance Centres (“VACs”) if they require further assistance from election officials.

## Development of the Plan

This Plan is a “living” document which will be improved and updated as best practices are identified and new opportunities for improvement arise. In order to develop the plan, several steps were taken to ensure that the statutory requirements were met and a feasible implementation plan was in place. During the development of the 2024 Ward 2 (Rural) By-Election Accessibility Plan, the following steps shall be implemented:

- Review and analysis of documents, policies and other supporting materials from the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario, neighboring municipalities, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, technology suppliers and other various stakeholder groups.

- Establish staff training standards and practices directly related to the By-Election to ensure that people with disabilities can vote in a positive environment and ensure that all Election Officials recognize that a voter's needs shall be accommodated.

## Voting Methods

For the 2024 Ward 2 (Rural) By-Election, the Municipality will be working with Intelivote Systems Inc. to provide online and telephone voting services to eligible voters, similar to the 2022 Municipal Election. This includes the convenience and independence of voting from anywhere via telephone or internet or in-person at a VAC during the voting period.

Everyday tools like computers, tablets, telephones and other aids can present accessible opportunities for persons with disabilities to accomplish more, while being consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equal opportunity.

The online voting platform provides voters with the capability to vote from the comfort of their own home. Voting from home facilitates the voting process for persons with disabilities who may have mobility restrictions, visual impairment, and/or have a difficult time with transportation.

Persons who have assistive devices set up in their homes can now use them to assist with casting a ballot privately and independently. Additionally, online and telephone voting is a safer option for those persons who may be immunocompromised and/or do not wish to congregate with people outside of their social circles.

By allowing persons with disabilities to vote from any location and from a selection of methods, there is an increase in the capability for the voter to vote without any assistance. This provides persons with disabilities the same independence and privacy in participating in the election as other voters. If persons with disabilities do require further assistance in the voting process, trained Election Officials will be present at in-person VACs offered at select locations in the Municipality, throughout the voting period.

## Telephone Voting

Eligible voters may vote using a touch-tone telephone, and the toll-free telephone number, date of birth, and PIN number contained in their Voter Instruction Letter ("VIL") 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 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.

## Online Voting

Electors 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 VIL.

The online voting platform meets Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG-2 Level AA), so that persons with disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate and interact with the online voting platform.

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.

## In-Person Voting at Voter Assistance Centres

For those individuals who require the assistance in casting their vote, several voting locations will be open during the voting period, to provide in-person online voting opportunities using a computer, laptop or tablet device.

Access to the VAC interior and voting area shall be level and slip-resistant. Any doormats or carpeting shall be level with the floor to prevent potential tripping hazards. The voting area shall be well-lit, and seating shall be available. Entrance corridors shall be clear of obstructions and tripping hazards and will allow sufficient space for use of a wheelchair or scooter. Elevator service and doors with push buttons will also be available where applicable.

An accessible voting area will be available at each VAC. These areas shall be low in height and have a wide area to allow for individuals who use a wheelchair or scooter to vote independently and secretively.

Voters may attend any VAC throughout the voting period. The Municipality of Port Hope will be operating the following voting place location(s) during the Advance Voting Period:

June 1 and June 5

Port Hope Community Hub, 5325 County Road 10, Port Hope  
Online voting

June 1 and June 3

Port Hope Fire Station 3, 35858 Ganaraska Road, Campbellcroft

Online voting

The following VAC's will be open on Voting Day, Thursday, June 6, 2024

Port Hope Community Hub, 5325 County Road 10, Port Hope  
Online voting

Port Hope Fire Station 3, 35858 Ganaraska Road, Campbellcroft  
Online voting

## Voting Locations

An accessibility assessment of each physical voting location will be conducted. The following considerations are considered when determining which location(s) will be used:

### 1. Accessible Route

Proximity of the voting location to accessible public transit routes shall be considered in the selection of voting location(s). The name and/or address of the voting location shall be clearly visible. An easily navigable route will be marked for entry into the voting location and into the voting area within the location. The voting area shall be identified with clear and understandable signage. Seating areas shall be provided throughout the voting location for individuals needing a rest.

### 2. Entrance and Exit

The route to the entrance of the voting location shall be unobstructed and accessible. The route shall be wide enough to allow for an individual using a wheelchair, scooter, other assistive device, or service animal to travel safely. Doors into the voting location and voting area shall be accessible and easy to open or shall remain propped open for the duration of the voting location hours. Where required, elevators will be available. Routine checks of entrance and exit routes will be made throughout the hours of operation.

### 3. Parking

Accessible parking shall be available at all voting locations. The designated parking space(s) shall be clearly marked with the international Symbol of Accessibility and will be on firm and level ground, close to the entrance of the voting location. By-law officers will monitor and enforce parking at voting locations throughout the day.

## Assistance in Casting a Vote in the Municipal Election Support Person/Friend of the Voter

Pursuant to the Municipality of Port Hope Accessible Customer Service Policy, people with disabilities shall be permitted to be accompanied by a support person at any VAC.

A designated support person and/or 'Friend of the Voter' will be administered an oath of secrecy/confidentiality by an Election Official prior to providing any such assistance.

## Service Animals

Pursuant to the Municipality of Port Hope Accessible Customer Service Policy individuals requiring service animals are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at all VACs.

## Election Officials

At the VACs, upon request, Election Officials are available to assist any voter who requires assistance in casting their vote online. All individuals working in the capacity of an Election Official are formally appointed as such and administered an oath prior to the voting period.

## Communication

The 2024 Ward 2 (Rural) By-Election Accessibility Plan will be made available at the Corporate Services Department, Town Hall, 56 Queen Street, Port Hope and by way of the Municipality's website [www.porthope.ca/by-election](http://www.porthope.ca/by-election)

Alternative formats will be made available upon request.

Information regarding the accessibility measures provided for the 2024 Ward 2 (Rural) By-Election shall be included in general election advertising as well as in the 2024 Municipal By-Election Nomination Package.

## Election Materials

The Municipality of Port Hope is required, as per the Accessible Customer Service Standard, to provide a copy of a document to an Elector requesting an alternate format, or the information contained in the document, in a format that considers the person's disability.

## 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 Municipality and the Elector requesting alternate formats may agree upon the format to be used for the document or information.

In the event the information 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 of Port Hope will be provided in Arial or Calibri font, minimum 12 point, and can be made available in a font (print) size that is 16 to 20 points or larger.

**Website** – Information generated by the Municipality of Port Hope on the website in relation to the election will be compliant with WCAG 2.0 Level A, and allow for assistive software to be utilized. In addition, website font can be adjusted within the browser's functionality to aid the user in reading the information.

## 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 of Port Hope 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 location(s) and information shall also be posted on the Municipal website. This notice shall include information about the reason for the 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.

In the event of disruptions to service or unforeseen circumstances that affect the accessibility of voting locations during the voting period, notices of disruption will be posted in real time on the [www.porthope.ca](http://www.porthope.ca) and/or [www.porthope.ca/by-election](http://www.porthope.ca/by-election)

## Candidates

Candidates must also have regard to the needs of electors with disabilities. Campaign offices, election materials and canvassing should all be reviewed by the Candidate to ensure that they are fully accessible. The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario has released several quick reference documents to assist candidates with accessible elections considerations:

- [Count Us In: Removing Barriers to Political Participation - Quick Reference Guide to Accessible Campaign Information and Communication](#)
- [Count Us In: Removing Barriers to Political Participation – Quick Reference Guide to Accessible Constituency, Riding Association, Central Party and Campaign Offices](#)
- [Count Us In: Removing Barriers to Political Participation – Quick Reference Guide to Accessible All Candidates Meetings](#)

## Reporting

Pursuant to Section 12.1 of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, within 90 days after voting day, the Municipal Clerk shall submit a report to Council about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.