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Introduction

This plan will address the specific accessibility requirements in relation to the 2026 Municipal Election in the Municipality of Port Hope (“the Municipality”).

The Municipality of Port Hope has made great efforts in working towards being a barrier free community. To ensure that the 2026 Municipal Election 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 in order 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 Municipal 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 in order to ensure that the statutory requirements were met and a feasible implementation plan was in place. During the development of the 2026 Municipal 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.
- Engagement with the Accessibility Advisory Committee on the Municipality’s Election accessibility initiatives.

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

Voting Methods

For the 2026 Election, the Municipality will be working with Simply Voting Inc. to provide online and telephone voting services to eligible voters. 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, cellphones, 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 allows voters to cast their vote from the comfort of their own home, making the process easier for individuals with disabilities who may have mobility restrictions, visual impairment, or transportation difficulties. Those with assistive devices at home can now use them to vote privately and independently. The option to vote remotely is also beneficial for electors who are immunocompromised or otherwise medically vulnerable and may prefer not to attend a physical location, allowing them to participate safely at home.

Enabling persons with disabilities to vote from any place and using various methods makes it easier for them to vote on their own. 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, PIN and qualifying information, to access the internet address provided in their VIL.

Simply Voting Inc. is committed to supporting electors with disabilities and making sure the ballot works with assistive technologies. The interface of the online voting platform is regularly audited against Section 508 and WCAG 2.2 accessibility requirements by AccessiBe, which provides a Voluntary Produce Accessibility Template (VPAT) and Accessibility Conformance Report. This ensures voting websites are compatible with screen-reading technologies.

In-Person Voting at Voter Assistance Centres

For those individuals who require assistance in casting their vote, several Voter Assistance Centres (VAC) 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 operate the following VACs during the 2026 Municipal and School Board Election:

Town Hall, 56 Queen Street

- October 16, 2026 – 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (Advanced)
- October 19-24, 2026 – 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (Advanced)
 - The VAC will be open until 7:00 p.m. on October 21, 2026
- October 26, 2026 – 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. (Voting Day)

Port Hope Community Hub, 5325 County Road 10

- October 21, 2026 – 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. (Advanced)
- October 22-24, 2026 – 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (Advanced)
- October 26, 2026 – 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. (Voting Day)

Please note: Voters have the option to vote online or by telephone at any time during the voting period, from 10:00 a.m. on October 16, 2026, until 8:00 p.m. on October 26, 2026. Attendance at a

VAC is not required to cast a vote; however, VACs are available for individuals' needing assistance or for those who wish to vote in person.

Special Voting Provisions

Understanding that some seniors may need help accessing online voting platforms, or may require assistance, the Municipality plans to set up 3-5 hour VACs for residents of retirement homes and long-term care facilities, following public health guidelines. The Municipality is committed to meeting or surpassing all legislated requirements for retirement and long-term care homes within Port Hope.

Assessments of Voter Assistance Centres

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

1. Accessible Route

Proximity of the VAC to accessible public transit routes shall be considered in the selection of VAC(s). The name and/or address of the VAC shall be clearly visible. An easily navigable route will be marked for entry into the VAC 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 VAC for individuals needing a rest.

2. Entrance and Exit

The route to the entrance of the VAC 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 VAC and voting area shall be accessible and easy to open or shall remain propped open for the duration of the VAC 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 VAC. 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 VAC. Municipal Law Enforcement Officers will monitor and enforce parking at VACs 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 Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR), 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.

ASL Interpreter – If an elector requires an ASL Interpreter, the elector is responsible for arranging the interpreter in advance through the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) and/or the Canadian Deafblind Association. Electors must notify the Municipal Clerk/Returning Officer in advance if they intend to attend a VAC with an ASL Interpreter. The Municipal Clerk/Returning Officer will work with the elector to determine requirements and eligible interpreter-related expenses for reimbursement, as appropriate.

Service Animals

Pursuant to the Municipality of Port Hope Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation 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 2026 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan will be made available at the Legislative Services Department, Town Hall, 56 Queen Street, Port Hope, and by way of the Municipality's website www.porthopevotes.ca

Alternative formats will be made available upon request.

Information regarding the accessibility measures provided for the 2026 Municipal Election shall be included in general election advertising as well as in the 2026 Municipal Election Nomination Package.

Election Materials

The Municipality 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 will be provided in Arial or Calibri font, minimum 12 point, and can be made available in a font (print) size that is 16 points or larger.

Website – Information generated by the Municipality 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 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 VACs, election materials and/or voting provisions for electors with disabilities at the VACs.

In the event of disruptions to service or unforeseen circumstances that affect the accessibility of VACs during the voting period, notices of disruption will be posted in real time on the www.porthope.ca and/or www.porthopevotes.ca.

Candidates and Third Party Advertisers

Candidates and Third Party Advertisers must also have regard to the needs of electors with disabilities. Campaign offices, election materials and canvassing should all be reviewed by the Candidate in order to ensure that they are fully accessible.

Candidates and Third Party Advertisers are encouraged to review information available through the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario Information: aoda.ca

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.