



# **2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This plan will address the specific accessibility requirements in relation to the 2022 Municipal Election in the Town of Wasaga Beach.

The Town of Wasaga Beach has made great efforts in promoting a barrier free community. In an effort to ensure that the 2022 Municipal Election is consistent with the core principles of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, 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.

## **2. OBJECTIVES**

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

- That persons with disabilities are able to independently cast their vote and verify their selection.
- 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 the newspaper, media launches, the Town's website and social media.
- That all voting locations are accessible.

### **3. 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 below, 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 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan, the following steps shall be implemented:

- Review and analysis of documents, policies and other supporting materials from AMCTO, neighboring municipalities, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, technology suppliers and other various stakeholder groups.
- Establish staff training standards and practices directly related to the Election to ensure that people with disabilities are able to vote in a positive customer service environment, and ensure that all Election Officials recognize that a voter’s needs shall be accommodated.

### **4. VOTING METHODS**

The 20 Wasaga Beach Municipal Election will be working with Dominion Voting to provide eVoting services and in person paper ballot voting to eligible voters. This includes the convenience and independence of voting from anywhere via, internet or in-person at a voting station during the October 3 – 24, 2022 voting period.

Everyday tools like computers 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 Dominion Voting System 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. Additionally,

persons who have assistive devices set up in their homes can now use them to assist with casting a ballot privately and independently.

By allowing persons with disabilities to vote from any location and with 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 assistance in the voting process, trained Election Officials will be present at in-person Polling Locations throughout the voting period.

#### **4.1 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 Dominion Voting 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.

#### **4.3 In-Person Voting**

The Town will be using a composite paper ballot where on which electors choose their preferred candidate(s) by placing a mark, with a pen or pencil in the circle next to the name of the chosen candidate(s).

An elector with a disability may choose to have a person assist them behind the voting privacy screen. If an elector does not have a support person, trained Election Officials will be present at the voting locations across the Town of Wasaga Beach to provide assistance. Magnifying sheets will be provided behind each privacy voting screen for use by electors in reading the ballot.

The voting areas at each location will be set up taking into consideration the table heights and to ensure proper spacing between each area, allowing for wider aisle widths for use of a wheelchair or any other mobility device. Having accessible voting areas will allow electors, if they wish, to vote independently without the assistance of a support person.

#### **4.4 Special Voting Provisions**

Election staff will offer to visit the Waterside Retirement Lodge to set-up on-site internet voting, or bedside voting opportunities for residents.

### **5. VOTING LOCATION(S)**

An accessibility assessment of each physical polling location was conducted. The following considerations were taken into account when determining which location(s) will be used:

#### **5.1 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.

#### **5.2 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. Routine checks of entrance and exit routes will be made throughout the hours of operation.

#### **5.3 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.

## **6. VOTING ASSISTANCE**

### **6.1 Support Person/Friend of the Voter**

Pursuant to the Town of Wasaga Beach Accessible Standards for Customer Service Policy, people with disabilities shall be permitted to be accompanied by a support person at any voting location. 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.

### **6.2 Service Animals**

Pursuant to the Town of Wasaga Beach Accessible Standards for Customer Service Policy, individuals requiring service animals are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at all voting locations.

### **6.3 Election Officials**

At in-person voting locations, upon request, Election Officials are available to assist any voter who requires assistance in casting their online or paper ballot vote. All individuals working in the capacity of an Election Official are formally appointed as such and administered an oath of secrecy prior to voting days.

## **7. DRIVE-THRU HELP CENTRE**

A Drive-Thru Internet Voting Help Centre will be in place only on Voting Day (October 24, 2022). Eligible voters must have acceptable identification and their Voter Letter in order to use the Drive-thru Help Centre. Those without acceptable ID or a Voter Letter will be directed to revisions, and may return to the Drive-thru once all requirements are met. Voters must be in the Drive-Thru line before 8 p.m. to access the Internet Voting Help Centre.

## **8. CURB-SIDE VOTING**

Curbside Voters' List revisions and Voting will be held only on Voting Day (October 24, 2022) at the RecPlex located at 1724 Mosley Street during our Drive-thru Internet Voting Help Centre hours, up to 8:00 p.m. The vehicle must

be in the accessible spots at the front of the Oakview Room by 8:00 p.m. We encourage arriving at the location well before close of voting to ensure voters are able to receive this service and vote.

Curbside Voting is often offered as an accessibility option for voters who are otherwise unable to leave their vehicles. All voters in the vehicle will need to present acceptable ID and their Voter Information Letter. Should the eligible elector require a revision or to be added to the Voters' List, Election Officials will assist with this process and provide a Voter Letter if the eligibility requirements are met.

The Election Official will assist the voter to vote by Internet in their vehicle using a tablet. More than one voter per vehicle is permitted.

## **9. COMMUNICATION**

The 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan will be made available at Town Hall (30 Lewis Street, Wasaga Beach) and by way of the Town's web site [www.wasagabeach.com/election](http://www.wasagabeach.com/election). Alternative formats will be made available upon request.

Information regarding the accessibility measures provided for the 2022 Municipal Election shall be included in general election advertising as well as in the 2022 Municipal Election Nomination Package.

### **7.1 Election Materials**

The Town 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.

#### **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 Town 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 Town or is supplied by a third party, the Town 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 Town will be provided in a Arial 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 Town 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.

**Video** – Promotional and educational videos (if created) for the 2022 municipal election shall incorporate audio and captioning.

## **7.2 Service Disruptions**

From time to time and/or for unforeseen circumstances beyond the Town’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 Town 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 Town 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 places, 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 places during the advance vote or on Election Day, notices of disruption will be posted in real time on the Town's website and election website.

## **10. CANDIDATES**

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

Candidates are provided with the Association of Municipal Clerk's and Treasurer's Candidate's Guide to Accessible Elections.

## **11. REPORTING**

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