

Policy

Department/Section Coverage All		Policy Number ACC-002
Subject 2026 Accessible Elections Policy		Category Accessibility
		By-Law 2026-25
		Review Period 4 Years
Date Amended NEW	Amending Motion # Not Applicable	Section(s) Amended Not Applicable

1. Purpose:

The Municipality of Centre Hastings is committed to ensuring that the 2026 Municipal Election is conducted in a manner that is accessible, inclusive, and consistent with the principles of dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity.

This Accessibility Plan has been developed in accordance with:

The Municipal Elections Act, 1996

- The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)
- Ontario Regulation 429/07 – Accessibility Standards for Customer Service
- Ontario Regulation 191/11 – Integrated Accessibility Standards

This Plan outlines the measures the Municipality will implement to identify, remove, and prevent barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

2. Objectives:

The objectives of this Plan are:

- To ensure persons with disabilities are able to independently cast their vote and verify their selections.
- To ensure persons with disabilities have full and equal access to election information.
- To ensure persons with disabilities can fully participate in the election as electors, candidates, scrutineers, or election officials.
- To provide accessible voting methods and assistance.
- To communicate available accessibility measures clearly to the public.

3. Development of the Plan:

This Plan is a “living” document and will continue to be reviewed and updated as best practices are identified and new opportunities for improvement arise. In developing the 2026 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan, the Municipality of Centre Hastings has taken steps to ensure compliance with the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA), and related regulations, while establishing a practical and effective implementation framework.

During the development of the 2026 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan, the following measures were undertaken:

- Review and analysis of relevant legislation, policies, and guidance materials from AMCTO, neighbouring municipalities, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Elections Ontario (where applicable), accessibility standards resources, the

- Municipality's internet voting service provider, and other stakeholder groups;
- Evaluation of the accessibility features of the voting system to ensure compliance with applicable Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, WCAG 2.1 Level AA (or higher, if applicable under IASR requirements at time of election)
- Establishment of staff training standards and procedures directly related to the Election to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to vote in a positive and respectful customer service environment;
- Confirmation that all Election Officials understand their responsibility to accommodate voters' needs in a manner that respects dignity, independence, integration, and confidentiality.

4. Key Election Dates

- Nomination Period Opens: Friday, May 1, 2026
- Nomination Day: Friday, August 21, 2026 (9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.)
- Voting Period: October 13, 2026 at 8:30 a.m. to October 26, 2026 at 8:00 p.m.
- Voting Day: Monday, October 26, 2026

5. Voting Methods

The 2026 Municipal Election will be conducted using Internet and Telephone Voting through the Municipality's authorized service provider. Remote electronic voting provides eligible electors with the opportunity to vote privately and independently from any location during the Voting Period. The use of commonly available technology such as computers, smartphones, tablets, and touch-tone telephones supports the principles of dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity for persons with disabilities.

Voting from home or another chosen location facilitates participation for individuals who may experience barriers related to mobility, transportation, visual impairment, or other accessibility considerations. Electors who utilize assistive devices or adaptive technologies may use those tools to cast their ballot securely and independently.

If an elector requires assistance, trained Election Officials will be available at the Municipal Voter Help Centre during posted hours throughout the Voting Period.

5.1 Telephone Voting

Eligible electors may vote using a touch-tone telephone and the toll-free number provided in their Voter Information Letter, together with their date of birth and assigned PIN, to access an audio ballot.

The telephone voting system:

- Operates on standard touch-tone landline and wireless telephones;
- Uses clear, plain language prompts;
- Provides structured and easy-to-follow menu options;
- Confirms voter selections prior to ballot submission; and
- Allows volume adjustment through the elector's telephone device.

The system is designed to reduce communication barriers that may arise due to unclear instructions, complex navigation, or low audio volume.

5.2 Internet Voting

Eligible electors may vote online using a computer, tablet, smartphone, or other internet-enabled device, including devices equipped with assistive software or adaptive technology. The online voting system complies with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines WCAG 2.1 Level AA (or higher, if applicable under IASR requirements at time of election) to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with

the voting interface.

The system:

- Supports assistive technologies such as screen readers;
- Uses structured and readable page design;
- Provides clear instructions and confirmation screens; and
- Allows electors to review selections prior to final submission.

5.3 In-Person Assistance at the Voter Help Centre

While voting is conducted electronically, electors who do not have access to internet or telephone voting, or who require assistance, may attend the Municipal Voter Help Centre during posted hours.

At the Help Centre:

- Accessible internet-enabled devices will be available;
- Telephone voting access will be available;
- The facility will be barrier-free;
- Seating will be provided;
- Support persons and service animals are permitted; and
- Election Officials will provide assistance upon request in a manner that protects ballot secrecy.

The Voter Help Centre does not constitute traditional paper-ballot voting; rather, it provides supervised access to the same secure electronic voting system available remotely.

Where assistance is provided to an elector by an Election Official or support person, the appropriate oath or declaration as prescribed under the Municipal Elections Act shall be administered to protect ballot secrecy.

5.4 Voting Arrangements for Long-Term Care and Institutional Facilities

The Clerk shall make reasonable efforts to ensure that eligible electors residing in long-term care homes, retirement homes, nursing homes, hospitals, or similar institutions within the Municipality are provided with accessible voting opportunities.

Where appropriate, the Clerk may:

- Liaise with facility administrators to coordinate access to internet or telephone voting;
- Arrange for supervised access to secure electronic voting devices;
- Provide information to residents and facility staff regarding the voting process;
- Ensure that assistance is provided in accordance with the Municipal Elections Act while maintaining ballot secrecy;
- Establish scheduled access times during the Voting Period to support participation.

All arrangements will respect the dignity, independence, and confidentiality of electors.

6. Voter Help Centre

Regular Hours (October 13–26, 2026):

- Monday to Thursday: 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
- Friday: 8:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Thanksgiving Closure:

The Municipal Office will be closed on Monday, October 12, 2026, in observance of Thanksgiving. On this day, voting will not be available via internet or telephone, and the Voter Help Centre will be closed. Voting access and assistance will resume on Tuesday, October 13, 2026, during regular municipal office hours.

Voting Day – October 26, 2026:

- 8:30 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.

At 8:00 p.m., the doors will be locked. Electors who are inside the Voter Help Centre at that time will be permitted to complete the voting process.

7. Voting Location – Centre Hastings Municipal Office

As identified above the Municipality of Centre Hastings will operate one Voter Help Centre for the 2026 Municipal Election, located at:

Municipal Office
7 Furnace Street, Madoc, Ontario

An accessibility review of the Municipal Office has been conducted to ensure the facility is suitable for use as the Voter Help Centre.

7.1 Accessible Route

- The name and address of the Municipal Office are clearly visible from the roadway.
- Signage will direct electors to the Voter Help Centre area within the building.
- The route to the Help Centre will be clearly marked and unobstructed.
- Seating will be available for electors requiring rest while waiting.

7.2 Entrance and Exit

- The entrance to the Municipal Office is barrier-free and accessible.
- Entryways and corridors will remain clear of obstructions and tripping hazards.
- Doorways and interior pathways will accommodate wheelchairs, scooters, assistive devices, and service animals.
- Routine checks of entrance and exit routes will be conducted during operating hours.

7.3 Parking

- Accessible parking spaces are available at the Municipal Office.
- Designated accessible parking spaces are clearly marked with the International Symbol of Accessibility.
- Accessible parking is located on firm and level ground near the building entrance.

8. Communication and Accessible Materials

The 2026 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan will be made available at the Municipal Office and on the Municipality of Centre Hastings website at www.centrehastings.com. Alternative formats will be provided upon request.

Information regarding accessibility measures for the 2026 Municipal Election will be included in:

- General election advertising;
- The 2026 Municipal Election Nomination Package;
- The municipal website; and
- Other public communications related to the election.

The Municipality will:

- Publish election information on its website in an accessible format;
- Provide alternate formats upon request;
- Use clear and plain language in election materials;

- Include accessibility information in election communications.

8.1 Election Materials and Alternate Formats

In accordance with the Accessible Customer Service Standard under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, the Municipality of Centre Hastings shall provide documents, or the information contained in those documents, in a format that takes into account the person's disability.

Alternate formats may include, but are not limited to:

- Large print;
- Electronic formats compatible with assistive software;
- Readable PDF formats;
- Verbal explanation upon request.

The Municipality and the individual requesting accommodation may agree upon the most appropriate format.

Where materials originate from third parties, the Municipality will make reasonable efforts to obtain or provide accessible alternatives or assist the elector in accessing the information.

8.2 General Elections Materials

Large Print

Printed material generated by the Municipality of Centre Hastings will be available in an accessible font and may be provided in larger print upon request.

Website

Election-related information posted on the municipal website will comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines Election-related information posted on the municipal website will comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA (or higher, if applicable under IASR requirements at time of election and will support assistive technologies such as screen readers. Website font size may be adjusted using standard browser functionality.

Video and Multimedia

Any election-related promotional or informational videos produced by the Municipality will incorporate audio and captioning, where feasible.

9. Service Disruptions

From time to time and/or due to circumstances beyond the Municipality's control, temporary service disruptions may occur.

In the event of a temporary disruption affecting accessible services related to the 2026 Municipal Election, the Municipality will:

- Provide notice at the affected location;
- Post notice on the municipal website;
- Include information regarding:
 - The reason for the disruption;
 - The anticipated duration;
 - Alternative arrangements or services, where available.

Accessible services under this Plan include:

- The Voter Help Centre;
- Accessible election materials;
- Accessible voting provisions;
- Online and telephone voting access.

In the event of disruptions affecting voting accessibility during the Voting Period, notices will be posted as soon as reasonably possible on the municipal website.

In the event of electronic voting system disruption, the Clerk will consult with the service provider and take appropriate action consistent with the Municipal Elections Act, including potential extension of voting where authorized.

The Municipality will make reasonable efforts to restore services as quickly as possible and to provide alternative arrangements where feasible.

10. Candidates

Candidates are encouraged to consider accessibility and the needs of electors with disabilities when:

- Establishing campaign offices;
- Preparing and distributing campaign materials;
- Organizing public meetings or events; and
- Conducting canvassing activities.

Campaign offices, materials, and events should be reviewed to ensure they are as accessible as reasonably possible.

Nomination packages and election-related information provided by the Municipality will be made available in accessible formats upon request.

The Municipality will provide candidates with reference materials and guidance respecting accessible elections, including resources issued by the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario and the Candidates' Guide for Municipal Elections.

While responsibility for campaign accessibility rests with individual candidates, the Municipality encourages all candidates to support inclusive and barrier-free participation in the electoral process.

11. Post Election Reporting

Within 90 days after Voting Day, the Clerk shall submit a report to Council regarding the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers that affected electors and candidates with disabilities during the 2026 Municipal Election. The report will be made available to the public.

12. Continuous Improvement

This Accessibility Plan is a living document. The Municipality will review accessibility practices following the election and incorporate best practices and improvements into future election planning.

Revision Control

Year-Month-Day	Sections Amended	Comments
2026-03-04	NEW	New Policy by By-law 2026-25