

2026 Municipal Election

# Accessibility Plan

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## **2026 Municipal Election – Accessibility Plan**

The Municipality of Trent Lakes is committed to ensuring equal access and participation for people with disabilities. This Plan is intended to support and strengthen the Municipality's commitment to the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that may affect electors and candidates with disabilities throughout the 2026 Municipal and School Board Election.

As per Section 12.1(1) and (2) of the Municipal Elections Act, a clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard for the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities. 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. This Plan was developed to align with the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA).

This plan may be amended from time to time as best practices are identified and opportunities for improvement arise.

### **Objectives**

The key objectives of the Plan are to ensure that:

- persons with disabilities are able to independently cast their vote.
- persons with disabilities have full and equal access to all election information that is made publicly available by the Municipality.
- persons with disabilities have full and equal access to municipal facilities made available to the public for the purpose of conducting the election.

### **Election Assistance**

Election Officials will work to ensure that all electors have the support they need to participate in the election process and that the election is accessible to all electors. Election Officials will be available throughout the election process to assist electors with confirming their information on the voters' list, facilitating the addition of an elector on the voters' list and assist with accessing election information.

Where possible, Election Officials will attend community events and outreach opportunities to provide assistance to electors, answer questions about the voting process and help electors ensure they are ready to vote.

Election Officials will ensure that support is provided in a respectful, inclusive and accessible manner to help remove barriers and support participation in the municipal election.

## Voting Methods

For the 2026 Municipal and School Board Election, the Municipality will be working with Voatz Canada Ltd. to offer both internet and telephone voting options and will also offer in-person voting using traditional paper ballots from October 23 to October 26 (Voting Day), with votes cast by paper ballot being tabulated via a Vote Tabulator provided by Election Systems & Software Canada. This hybrid approach to voting methods includes the convenience and independence of voting from anywhere via internet or telephone throughout the voting period and the option to vote in-person at an accessible Voting Place (The Trent Lakes Municipal Office) from October 23 to October 26 (Voting Day).

### Internet and Telephone Voting

The ability to vote from any location and by a selection of methods increases the ability for an elector to vote without any assistance. Internet and telephone voting presents opportunities for those who have assistive devices set up in their homes to use them to access election information and cast a ballot privately and independently. For electors without a means to access internet/telephone voting from their own home, or who require the assistance of a trained Election Official, the Help Centre will be equipped with areas for in-person internet voting opportunities via a laptop or tablet or telephone voting.

The Internet/Telephone Voting System is compliant with the AODA and WCAG 2.2 Level AA Standards to ensure full access for voters with disabilities. Features of the voting system include screen-reader compatibility, keyboard navigation, scalable text, high-contrast modes, and voice guidance options. The Voting System is designed with third-party accessibility audits and usability testing with assistive technologies to meet the needs of all voters.

Internet voting allows any elector with access to a web-enabled smartphone, tablet, or computer to independently cast a ballot at any time and in any place that is convenient to them throughout the voting period. Instructions are available on screen, allowing eligible electors to move through applicable positions, and electors make their selections when prompted using a laptop or tablet. Website font can be adjusted within the browser to aid the user in reading the information. To ensure fairness throughout the voting process, the Voting System is equipped with visual prompts and accessibility compliant alerts to ensure voters understand they have reached the end of a contest's options before continuing. The Voting System also provides an audio or text prompt to confirm a

voters selected option to ensure voters can easily recognize their current selections before submission which aims to reduce errors and reinforce voter confidence.

Telephone voting allows any elector with access to a telephone or smartphone (excludes rotary phones) to independently cast a ballot at any time and in any place that is convenient to them throughout the voting period. Telephone voting provides eligible electors with an audio voting option. Instructions, such as listing candidate names in alphabetical order, are heard through a handset and electors make their selections when prompted using the keypad. The elector hears the audio ballot and uses the telephone keypad to select the candidates they wish to vote for.

### [In-Person Voting with Paper Ballots](#)

In-person voting by traditional paper ballot will be available from October 23 to October 26 (Voting Day) and electors can attend the Voting Place to cast their ballot. The Municipality will be using a composite paper ballot on which electors choose their preferred candidate(s) by placing a mark, with the designated marking pen, in the designated area next to the name of the chosen candidate(s). Votes cast by paper ballot shall be tabulated using a Vote Tabulator.

Election Officials will be available at the Voting Place on Voting Day to assist an elector who requests assistance in casting their vote by paper ballot. Electors requiring voting assistance may also be accompanied by a support person/friend or service animal.

## **Help Centre/Voting Place**

The Help Centre and Voting Place will be set up having regard for accessibility needs.

For the 2026 Municipal and School Board Election, both the Help Centre and Voting Place are located at the Trent Lakes Municipal Office, located at 760 Peterborough County Road 36, Trent Lakes ON K0M 1A0.

### [Entrance and Exit](#)

Every effort shall be made to ensure that the path of entry and exit to the Help Centre/Voting Place is unobstructed and accessible. The path shall be wide enough to allow for an individual using a wheelchair, mobile equipment, other assistive device or service animal to pass through safely. An easily navigable route will be marked for entry into the Help Centre/Voting Place.

Doors into the Help Centre/Voting Place shall be accessible and easy to open or shall remain propped open during Help Centre/Voting Place hours. Routine checks of entrance and exit routes will be made throughout the hours of operation.

## Interior

Access to the interior voting area and voting tools shall be level and easily traversed, wherever possible. Any doormats or carpeting shall be level with the floor to prevent potential tripping hazards. Interior paths of travel shall be wide enough to allow for an individual using a wheelchair, mobile equipment, other assistive device or service animal to move safely from area to area. All areas will be well lit, and seating shall be made available.

At least one voting area, where an elector may mark their ballot, will be between 660mm and 865 mm to accommodate wheelchairs.

## Signage

Signage in the Help Centre/Voting Place shall be clear and understandable and have regard for accessibility, with consideration given to matters such as font, font size and contrasting colours.

## Parking

Designated or reserved parking for individuals with disabilities will be provided close to the entrance of the Help Centre/Voting Place. Accessible parking spaces will be clearly posted and marked with the International Symbol of Access.

# Voting Assistance

## Support Person/Friend of the Elector

An elector requiring assistance to vote may be accompanied by a support person to the Help Centre/Voting Place. Both the elector and the person assisting the elector will need to make an oral oath with an Election Official prior to providing any such assistance.

## Service Animals

Electors are entitled to be accompanied by a service animal. Service animal identification should be clearly visible to staff and other electors to avoid confusion.

## Election Officials

Election Officials are available to assist an elector who requests assistance in casting their vote either online, by phone or in person at the Help Centre during the voting period or by paper ballot at the Voting Place on Voting Day. Election Officials are formally appointed and administered an oath of secrecy in advance of the voting period.

The Election Official assisting the elector will also make an oral oath prior to providing assistance.

Prior to entering the voting area, where the ballot is to be marked, the Election Official shall, in conjunction with the elector, determine the extent to which they need assistance and the best way in which this assistance can be provided. This may include the actual marking of the ballot as directed by the person with the disability. In order to maintain the secrecy of the vote, the Election Official will not proceed with providing assistance until the Election Official and the Elector making the request are the only persons in the Help Centre/Voting Place.

### Assistive Personal Equipment

For the purpose of casting their ballot, electors with disabilities may use assistive personal devices including, but not limited to, wheelchairs, walkers, canes, note taking devices, portable magnifiers, recording machines, assistive listening devices, personal oxygen tanks and devices for grasping at the Help Centre/Voting Place.

### Vision Loss

The Help Centre/Voting Place will be equipped with magnifying sheets to assist an individual with low vision.

### Hearing Impairment, Deafness and Hearing Loss

The Help Centre/Voting Place will be equipped with a pad of paper and pen to communicate with electors with hearing impairments, if required.

## Candidates and Third Party Advertisers

Certified Candidates and Registered Third Party Advertisers should have regard for the needs of electors with disabilities. Consideration should be given to accessibility in regard to campaign offices, campaign materials, and canvassing to ensure that they are accessible to all electors, including those with disabilities.

AMCTO has released a [Candidate's Guide to Accessible Elections](#) to assist candidates with accessible election considerations. The Guide has been included in the Municipality's 2026 Municipal Election Candidates' Guide.

Certified Candidates and scrutineers are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at the Help Centre/Voting Place.

The Municipality shall strive to provide clear, effective and accessible communications and will work with Certified Candidates and/or Registered Third Parties who require mandatory election documents, forms and materials in an alternate format.

In accordance with Section 88.19(3) of the Municipal Elections Act, expenses directly related to an individual's disability which would not have been incurred if not for the election, are considered campaign expenses if they are incurred by a candidate or a registered third party who is an individual with a disability.

## **Election Official Training**

Election Officials shall have regard for persons with disabilities and are committed to the identification, removal and preventions of barriers.

The Municipality will make every effort to utilize Municipal staff to be Election Officials. As a requirement under the AODA, all staff members have taken accessibility training, including accessible customer service. Staff appointed as Election Officials shall review accessibility training in advance of the Voting Period.

Should any additional Election staff be recruited, part of the onboarding process will be the completion of accessibility training, including customer service, the Human Rights Code and the AODA.

## **Communication**

The Municipality has developed a Communication Plan for the 2026 Municipal Election and shall strive to provide clear, effective and accessible communications.

### **Election Materials**

The Municipality will provide a copy of any election document, or the information contained in the document, in an alternate format that takes into account the person's disability, upon request.

### **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. Accessible formats and communication supports are available upon request. The Municipality and the person with a disability may agree upon the alternate format to be used for the document or information.

In the event the information was 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.

## Large Print

Printed material generated by the Municipality will be provided in Arial font, minimum 12 point, and is available in a larger font upon request.

## Web Content

Information published by the Municipality on the municipal website in relation to the election, or any digital information in relation to online voting, will be compliant with Web Content Accessibility Guideline (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA, and allow for assistive software to be utilized. In addition, website font can be adjusted within the browser to aid the user in reading the information.

## Videos

Promotional and educational videos created for the 2026 municipal election shall incorporate audio and captioning when available.

## Service Disruptions

Unforeseen circumstances beyond the Municipality's control may result in temporary service disruptions. Where service is disrupted, Election Officials will make reasonable efforts to maintain services or to provide alternative services until normal operations can resume.

In the event of disruptions to ordinary service or unforeseen circumstances that affect the accessibility of voting during the Voting Period or on Voting Day, notices of disruption will be posted in a conspicuous place at the site of the disruption and on the Municipality's website. This notice shall include information about the reason for the disruption, the services affected, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available. Where applicable, a media advisory will be issued.

In the event of disruptions to service or unforeseen circumstances that affect the accessibility of the Voting Place on Voting Day, notices of disruption will be posted in real time on the Municipality's website.

In the event of any circumstance that, in the opinion of the Clerk, compromises the integrity and/or execution of the election, an emergency shall be declared. In the event of an emergency, the Clerk shall to the best of their ability advertise that the election has been delayed or extended as the case may be. In the event of an emergency, the Clerk shall make such arrangements as they consider advisable for the conduct of the election.

## Reporting

Pursuant to Section 12.1(3) of the Municipal Elections Act, within 90 days after Voting Day 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.

## Feedback and Contact Information

This Plan is intended to support the Municipality in providing the best possible customer service throughout the election and you are encouraged to submit feedback about any aspect of your voting experience. This feedback will be gathered and presented in the Clerk's post-election report on the success of efforts made to improve accessibility.

All election related feedback and questions should be directed to [election@trentlakes.ca](mailto:election@trentlakes.ca) or 705-738-3800 ext. 245.

### Contact Information

Municipality of Trent Lakes

Website: [www.trentlakes.ca](http://www.trentlakes.ca)

Mailing Address (Municipal Office):  
760 Peterborough County Road 36  
Trent Lakes ON K0M 1A0

Phone: 705-738-3800  
Toll Free: 1-800-374-4009  
Fax: 705-738-3801

### Election Officials

Jessie Clark  
Clerk/Returning Officer

Bianca Dragicevic  
Deputy Clerk/Deputy  
Returning Officer