
Township of Whitewater Region 2026 Election Accessibility Plan



Introduction

The Election Accessibility Plan supports the Township's commitment and efforts to respond to the needs of persons with disabilities. The plan is to be read in conjunction with the Township's current Accessibility Plan and Policy.

It is the goal of the Township of Whitewater Region to ensure the electoral process is accessible to all electors and candidates by identifying and eliminating barriers for persons with disabilities.

Legislative Requirements

Municipal Elections Act

The clerk is responsible for conducting municipal elections and establishing procedures for the process. One of the principles underpinning the Municipal Elections Act is that the election should be accessible to all electors. The Act states:

- 12.1 (1) A clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities.
- 12 (2) 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.
- 12 (3) Within 90 days after voting day in a regular election, 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.
- 41 (3) The clerk shall make such changes to some or all of the ballots as he or she considers necessary or desirable to allow electors with visual impairments to vote without the assistance referred to in paragraph 4 of subsection 52 (1).
- 45 (2) In establishing the locations of voting places, the clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities.

Definition of Disability

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 defines "disability" as follows:

- (a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
- (b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- (c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- (d) a mental disorder, or
- (e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

Disabilities can take many forms, both visible and invisible. Access to electoral services must be integrated, equitable and must respect the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities. Initiatives should address and accommodate a wide range of abilities.

Accessible Customer Service

In keeping with its policy, the Township of Whitewater Region is committed to providing accessible customer service, including making documents available in alternate formats and/or with communication support upon request. Accommodation is also available. In providing services, the Township will at all times provide its services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.

Service Disruptions

From time to time and/or for unforeseen circumstances beyond the Township'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 the services are reinstated as quickly as possible and that alternative services are provided where feasible.

In these instances of service disruptions, the Township shall provide reasonable notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by persons with disabilities.

Feedback

The Township welcomes feedback to identify areas where changes need to be considered to address accessibility.

Email: election@whitewaterregion.ca

Phone: 613-646-2282

By Mail or in Person: 44 Main Street
Cobden, ON K0J 1K0

Services

Communication

The 2026 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan will be made available on the municipal website and upon request at the municipal office. Alternate formats and communication support will be made available upon request.

Internet and Telephone Voting

E-voting combined with everyday tools like computers, telephones and other aids can present opportunities for persons with disabilities, while being consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity. There is the potential to eliminate long line-ups at polling stations and better address accessibility issues for persons with disabilities, those suffering from illness, those serving in the military or living abroad, those away on personal travel and other groups of citizens such as single parents who may find it difficult to visit a traditional polling station.

Internet voting affords electors the opportunity of being able to vote at any time, a feature that further enables electors' ability to cast a ballot. Internet and telephone voting could allow greater secrecy for special populations of electors with disabilities (including visually or hearing impaired). By voting electronically and therefore unassisted, these electors are afforded a greater degree of anonymity when casting a ballot. Enabling secrecy for these groups enhances the equality of the vote. E-voting has the greatest potential to positively impact accessibility for voters.

For the 2026 municipal election, the Township is offering an opportunity to cast a ballot from the comfort and convenience of a familiar setting, complete with the tools, equipment and/or software that assist citizens with disabilities in the day-to-day activities is addressed with internet and telephone voting. Paper Ballot, Telephone and internet voting will be available from October 16 to October 26, 2026. During this time period, individuals will be able to cast their vote from anywhere in the world, 24 hours a day from a phone or computer (including cell phones, tablets etc.). In this system voters are able to vote from the comfort of their homes and provides for easy voting for voters with disabilities.

Specific features include:

Telephone: volume can be adjusted; a TTY (teletypewriter) can be used; clear language and prompts will assist you.

Internet: menu options are clear and easy to follow; font size can be enlarged; a screen reader can be used.

Paper Ballot and Advanced Voting

The paper ballot method allows the use of magnifying screen to read the text. Paper ballot method will also be available during Advanced Voting days have been scheduled between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. for the following dates and locations:

Saturday, October 17, 2026

Beachburg Public School
20 Cameron Street

Thursday, October 22, 2026

Westmeath Community Hall
119 Synton Street

Saturday, October 24, 2026

Whitewater Wesleyan Community Church
42 Cedar Haven Road

For the purpose of this plan, voting place includes the exterior parking and walkways associated with the location. In order to ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities, a site evaluation was completed. Barriers are to be identified and addressed in order to accommodate electors with disabilities.

The following voting provisions are in place to accommodate the voting needs of electors with disabilities:

The Returning Officer or designate may permit an elector who needs assistance in voting to have such assistance as the Returning Officer or designate considers necessary. A support person, upon the completion of the prescribed oath, may assist the elector in the voting process.

Assistive personal devices include, but are not limited to wheelchairs, walkers, white canes, walking canes, note taking devices, portable magnifiers, recording machines, assistive listening devices, personal oxygen tanks and devices for grasping.

Service Animals will be permitted in all voting places.

In the event an elector is unable to access the established voting area due to a physical disability, the Returning Officer or designate may attend to the elector anywhere within the voting place (including curb-side voting in the parking lot). Accessible voting booths will be available at each voting place.

Institution Voting

Advanced voting will be provided in person for the electors residing at Caressant Care in Cobden and Country Haven in Beachburg. Where necessary, the Returning Officer or designate will attend to the elector anywhere in the voting place to allow the elector to vote. The time at each voting place was arranged with each administrator.

Help Centre

Electors or candidates requiring assistance can contact the Election Help Centre located at the Municipal Office. Hours of operation are Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. and until 8 p.m. on Monday, October 26, 2026. During the Voting Period, paper ballots, an internet connection and telephone will be provided at the Help Centre.

Training

Election officials have received accessible customer service training.

Candidates will be provided with the Candidates' Guide to Accessible Elections by AMCTO.