



2024 Municipal By-Election Accessibility Plan

Contents

Introduction	3
Objectives	3
Development of the Plan.....	3
Voting Methods	3
Internet Voting	4
Telephone Voting	4
In-Person Voting with Paper Ballots	4
Voting Locations	5
Parking	6
Accessible Route to Entrance and Exit	6
Interior Voting Area	6
Voting Assistance	6
Support Person	6
Service Animals.....	6
Personal Assistive Devices	6
Vision Loss	6
Hearing Impaired, Deafness and Hearing Loss.....	6
Election Officials.....	7
Candidates and Registered Third Party Assistance.....	7
Election Official Training	7
Communications	7
Election Materials	7
Alternate Formats.....	7
General Election Materials	8
Service Disruptions	8
Candidates.....	8
Reporting	9

Introduction

This Plan will address the specific accessibility requirements in relation to the 2024 Municipal Ward 4 By-Election in the Township of Ramara.

The Township of Ramara has made great efforts in promoting a barrier free community and in an effort to ensure that the 2024 Municipal By-Election is consistent with the core principles of the Accessibility of Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, this plan 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 Township of Ramara will implement 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 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 the electors with disabilities are aware of the accessibility measures available via channels such as the newspaper, media launches, Township of Ramara website and social media;
- That all voting and voting assistance locations are accessible.

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 to ensure that the statutory requirements were met and a feasible implementation plan was in place. During the development of the 2024 Municipal By-Election Accessibility Plan, the following steps shall be implemented:

- Review and analysis of documents, policies and other supporting materials from AMCTO, neighbouring municipalities, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 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.

Voting Methods

For the 2024 Municipal By-Election, the Township of Ramara will be working with Intelivote Systems Inc. to provide eVoting services to eligible voters. This includes the convenience and independence of voting from anywhere via telephone and/or internet or at a voting assistance station during the May 6-May 13, 2024 voting period.

The Township will also be working with Election Systems & Software Canada Inc. (ES&S) to provide in-person voting using traditional paper ballots and count tabulators. This includes the convenience and independence of voting at the Ramara Centre on any of the following advance voting dates and times:

- May 8, 2024 from 4:00p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

This hybrid approach to voting methods provides the convenience of voting from anywhere at anytime during the voting period as well as the option to vote in-person at an accessible location.

Everyday tools like computers, 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.

Internet Voting

Intelivote Voting Systems provides voters with the capability to vote from the comfort of their owner 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 from 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. Trained Election Officials will be available at the advance voting locations as well as via telephone for eligible voters who require assistance.

Eligible voters may vote online using a smart phone, tablet, 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 Intelivote 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.

Telephone Voting

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

Communication 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.

Intelivote Systems 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 provisions of confirmation of the voter's selections.
- Standard volume is used to allow for adjustment dependent of the telephone or device being utilized.

In-Person Voting with Paper Ballots

Electors in Ramara will also have the option to attend an advance voting location on one of three specific dates to cast their vote using a composite paper ballot and choosing their preferred

candidate(s) by placing a mark, with a black inked pen 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 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.

In-Person Voting Locations

eVoting Assistance Location

For individuals without means to access voting via telephone or internet, or who require the assistance of a trained Election Official, the voting assistance location will be open to provide in-person internet voting opportunities via a laptop or tablet touch screen monitor.

Access to the evoting assistance location, 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.

An accessible voting area will be available at the evoting assistance location. This area 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 the voting assistance location throughout the voting period. The Township will be operating the following evoting assistance location during the Advance Voting Period:

May 6 to 13 – 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Township of Ramara Administration Centre, Council Chambers (2297 Highway 12, Brechin)

Internet and Telephone voting only

In-Person Paper Voting Location

For individuals who wish to vote in-person using a traditional paper ballot will be able to attend an accessible location to cast their ballot.

Access to the in-person paper voting location, 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.

An accessible voting area will be available at the in-person paper voting location. This area 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 the in-person paper voting location during the following dates/times throughout the voting period:

May 8 – 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

In-person paper ballot voting only

Parking

Accessible parking shall be available at all voting locations. The designated parking space(s) shall be clearly marked with the International Accessibility Symbol and will be on firm and level ground, close to the entrance of the voting location. Routine inspections by Bylaw Enforcement Officers will be conducted at all voting locations throughout the voting period.

Accessible Route to Entrance and Exit

The name and/or address of the voting locations are clearly visible. Easy navigation routes will be marked for entry into the voting location(s) and into the voting area within the voting location. Cueing lines will be established to ensure proper order is maintained throughout the voting location. Seating areas shall be provided throughout the voting location for individuals needing a rest.

The route to the entrance and throughout 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. All doors to the voting locations shall be accessible and easy to open or shall remain propped open for the duration of the voting location hours. Routine checks shall be conducted throughout the hours of operation of the voting locations.

Interior Voting Area

Access to the interior voting areas are level and easily traversed. Any doormats or carpeting will be level with the floor to prevent potential tripping hazards. All voting areas will be well lit with seating available throughout.

Voting Assistance

Support Person

Pursuant to the Township of Ramara Accessible 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.

Service Animals

Pursuant to the Township of Ramara Accessible Customer Service Policy, individuals requiring service animals are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at all voting locations.

Personal Assistive Devices

Electors with disabilities may use personal assistive devices including wheelchairs, walkers, white canes, walking canes, note taking devices, portable magnifiers, recording machines, assistive listening devices, personal oxygen tanks and devices for grasping at the voting location.

Vision Loss

Each Voting Place will be equipped with magnifying sheets to assist an individual with low vision.

Hearing Impaired, Deafness and Hearing Loss

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

Election Officials

Election Officials will be available at all voting locations and upon request will assist any voter who requires assistance in casting their traditional paper ballot, online ballot or audio ballot. All individuals working in the capacity of an Election Official are formally appointed as such and administered an oath of secrecy prior to voting day. Prior to entering the voting booth, the Election Official shall, in conjunction with the elector, determine the extent to which he/she needs assistance and the best way in which this assistance can be provided. This may actually be marking the ballot as directed by the person with the disability

Candidates and Registered Third Party Assistance

Candidates and scrutineers are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at all voting locations and other designated election locations.

The Township will also work with candidates and/or registered third parties who require mandatory election documents, forms and materials in an alternate format.

In accordance with section 88.20 (8) of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, expenses directly related to an individual's disability which would not have been incurred if not for the election, are not subject to the spending limit if they are incurred by a candidate or a registered third party who is an individual with a disability.

Election Official Training

The Township of Ramara will make every effort to utilize Township resources, including staff, to be Election Officials. As a requirement under the AODA, all staff members have taken accessibility training, including accessible customer service.

For any additional Election staff that need to be recruited, part of the onboarding process will be the completion of accessibility training including customer service, the Human Rights Code and the AODA, and an overview of the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulations.

Communications

The 2024 Municipal By-Election Accessibility Plan will be made available at Township of Ramara Administration Centre, 2297 Highway 12, Brechin and by way of the Township of Ramara website www.ramara.ca. Alternate formats will be made available upon request. The Plan will also be provided to all registered Candidates to assist with communicating supports to electors.

Information regarding the accessibility measures provided for the 2024 Municipal By-Election shall be included in general election advertising as well as in the 2024 Municipal By-Election Nomination Package.

Election Materials

In accordance with the Township of Ramara Accessible Customer Service Standard, upon request, documentation will be provided 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 Township of Ramara and the person with a disability may agree upon the format to be used for the document or information.

General Election Materials

Large Print: Printed material generated by the Township of Ramara can be made available in a font (print) size that is 16 to 20 points or larger.

Website: Information generated by the Township of Ramara on the website in relation to the election will be compliant with WCAG 2.0 Level AA 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 Township of Ramara'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 Township of Ramara 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 Township of Ramara 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 Township of Ramara's website.

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. The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario has released several quick reference documents to assist candidates with accessible elections considerations:

- <https://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/documents/en/mcass/publications/accessibility/Quickreferenceguidetoaccessiblecampaigninformation.pdf>
- <https://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/documents/en/mcass/publications/accessibility/ACCESSIBLEOFFICIALCES.pdf>
- <https://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/documents/en/mcass/publications/accessibility/Quickreferenceguidetoaccessibleallcandidatesmeetin.pdf>

Reporting

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