



Hastings Highlands
Municipal Election

VOTE
2026

OCTOBER 19-26



Accessibility Plan

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2026 Municipal Election – Accessibility Plan

The Municipality of Hastings Highlands 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 can fully participate in the Municipal Election as an elector or candidate.
- 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 Neuvote Systems Inc. to offer both internet and telephone voting options from October 19 to October 26 (Voting Day), This voting methods includes the convenience and independence of voting from anywhere via internet or telephone throughout the voting period and the option to vote using a tablet or laptop computer in-person at an accessible Voter Help Centre (The Hastings Highlands Municipal Office).

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 Voter Help Centre will be equipped with areas for in-person internet voting opportunities via a tablet or laptop computer.

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 races, and electors make their selections when prompted. 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 touch-tone telephone or smartphone 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 Internet Voting Tablet or Laptop Computer](#)

Election Officials will be available at the Voter Help Centre during the designated voting period to assist electors. This includes providing access to equipment for individuals who wish to cast their vote independently, as well as supporting those who do not have access to a telephone or the internet, or who request assistance with online voting.

Electors who require voting assistance may also be accompanied by a support person, friend, or service animal.

Voter Help Centre

The Voter Help Centre will be set up having regard for accessibility needs.

For the 2026 Municipal and School Board Election, the Voter Help Centre Help is located at the Hastings Highlands Municipal Office, located at 33011 Hwy 62N, Maynooth, ON K0L 2S0.

[Voter Help Centre House of Operation:](#)

Mon. Oct. 19	9:00AM to 4:00PM
Tues. Oct 20	9:00AM to 4:00PM
Wed. Oct 21	9:00AM to 4:00PM
Thurs. Oct 22	9:00AM to 4:00PM
Fri. Oct. 23	9:00AM to 7:00PM
Sat. Oct. 24	9:00AM to 1:00PM
Mon. Oct. 26	9:00AM to 8:00PM

[Entrance and Exit](#)

Every effort shall be made to ensure that the path of entry and exit to the Help Centre 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 Voter Help Centre.

Doors into the Voter Help Centre shall be accessible and easy to open or shall remain propped open during Voter Help Centre hours. Routine checks of entrance and exit

routes will be made throughout the hours of operation.

Interior

Access to the interior 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 Voter Help Centre 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 spaces for individuals with disabilities will be provided close to the entrance of the Voter Help Centre. Four Accessible parking spaces will be clearly posted and marked with the International Symbol of Access.

Voter Help Centre Pop-Up Locations

Voters may attend the Voter Help Centre(s) Pop-up locations being offered during the voting period. They provide for the option of a drive-through service if required. Ample space for parking on firm and level ground is provided for vehicles close to voting equipment.

Voter Help Centre Pop-Up Locations and Hours of Operation:

Monteagle Fire Station Parking Lot
3205 Musclow-Greenview Rd., Monteagle Valley
Tues. Oct 20
9:00AM to 12:00PM

Lake St. Peter Community Centre Parking Lot
5 Boulter Lake Rd., Lake St. Peter
Wed. Oct. 21
9:00AM to 12:00PM

Herschel Rink Parking Lot
168 S. Baptiste Lake Rd., Birds Creek
Thurs. Oct. 22
9:00AM to 12:00PM

Voting Assistance

Support Person/Friend of the Elector

An elector requiring assistance to vote may be accompanied by a support person to any Voter Help Centre location. Both the elector and the person assisting the elector will need to make an oral oath with an Election Official on “Oral Oaths At Voter Help Centre” [Form EL27](#) 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 by internet at the Voter Help Centre during the Voting Period. Election Officials are formally appointed and administered an oath of secrecy in advance of the voting period.

Prior to entering the voting area where the electronic voting system is accessed by entering a PIN and Date of Birth, 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.

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 Voter Help Centre.

Vision Loss

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

Hearing Impairment, Deafness and Hearing Loss

The Voter Help Centre 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.

Certified Candidates and scrutineers are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at the Voter Help Centre adhering to the procedures outlined in the Clerk's Procedures Manual.

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 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

This Accessibility Plan will be made available at the Municipal Office and by way of the Municipality of Hastings Highlands web site www.hastingshighlands.com. Alternative formats will be made available upon request. Information regarding the accessibility measures provided for the 2026 Municipal Election shall be included in general election advertising as well as in the 2026 Municipal Election Procedures Manual.

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 such disruptions occur, Election Officials shall make reasonable efforts to maintain services or provide alternative services until normal operations resume.

Where a disruption affects the accessibility of voting during the Voting Period or on Voting Day, notice of the disruption shall be posted in a conspicuous place at the affected site and updated in real time on the Municipality's website. The notice shall include the reason for the disruption, the services affected, the anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available. Where applicable, a media advisory shall be issued.

Where, in the opinion of the Clerk, any circumstance compromises the integrity or execution of the election, an emergency shall be declared. In such circumstances, the Clerk shall, to the best of their ability, communicate whether the election has been delayed or extended, as the case may be. The Clerk shall also make any arrangements 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@hastingshighlands.ca or 613-338-2811 ext. 277

Contact Information

Municipality of Hastings Highlands
Mailing Address (Municipal Office):
33011 Highway 62, Box 130
Maynooth, ON K0L 2S0

Website: www.hastingshighlands.ca
Phone: 613-338-2811
Toll Free in ON: 1-877-338-2818
Fax: 613-338-3292

Election Officials

Suzanne Huschilt
Municipal Clerk/ Returning Officer

Kim Helkaa
Deputy Clerk/ Deputy Returning Officer