

2026 Municipal Election

Accessibility Plan



Table of Contents

Purpose Statement.....	3
Scope.....	3
Definitions.....	3
Procedures:	4
1. Staff Training	4
2. Vote-By-Mail Process Accessibility.....	4
3. Ballot Return Stations	5
4. Service Animals and Support Persons	6
5. Notice of Temporary Service Disruption.....	6
6. Accessible Election Information.....	7
7. Feedback Process.....	7
8. Additional Information	7
Schedule “A” - Accessibility Audit of Ballot Return Stations	9

Purpose Statement

The plan describes all the accessibility requirements outlined under the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

The Township of Puslinch will conduct the municipal election using a Vote-By-Mail model. The Clerk will ensure reasonable efforts are made to identify, remove and prevent barriers that may affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

Election information and services shall be provided in a manner that respects the independence and dignity of persons with disabilities. Equal opportunity shall be given to all persons to use and benefit from election information and services.

The delivery of election information and services to persons with disabilities shall be:

- Integrated into the standard election process
- Emphasized through mandatory election staff training
- Provided through accessible communications and service delivery

Scope

This procedure applies to all applicable Election Staff performing work on behalf of the Clerk.

Definitions

Barrier is defined by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, and means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, information or communication barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, policy or a practice.

Disability is defined by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, and means:

- 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 coordination, 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 and Insurance Act, 1997*.

Service Animal as outlined in Ontario Regulation 429/07 is a service animal for a person with a disability if it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability; or if the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

Support Person as outlined in Ontario Regulation 429/07 means a support person in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies him or her in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services.

Procedures:

1. Staff Training

All election staff shall receive training on election accessibility requirements, ensuring that persons with disabilities are served in a manner that accommodates their needs.

Training will include:

- How to interact and communicate with persons with various disabilities
- How to interact with persons who use assistive devices, service animals or support persons
- What to do if a person is having difficulty accessing election information or services
- How to assist electors completing Vote-By-Mail ballots
- Procedures for accessible Ballot Return Stations

All staff will be trained to ensure that electors with disabilities are able to vote independently and privately where possible.

2. Vote-By-Mail Process Accessibility

Voter kits are mailed to voters whose names are listed on the Voters' List and voters can complete their kit at their convenience before mailing the voter kits back to the Township. A voter kit will include:

- Clear printed instructions
- A voter declaration form
- A ballot
- A secrecy sleeve
- A return envelope

Instructions will be written in plain language and formatted for readability.

Instead of Voting Locations or Polls, Ballot Return Stations will be established for voters to drop off their completed voter kit. If eligible voters have not received a voter kit in the mail, they can obtain a voter kit from Election Officials at the Municipal Office. Voters can complete their voter kit on-site at a Ballot Return Station by dropping off completed return envelopes directly to the Clerk or election staff or place the return envelope in the ballot box at the return station.

Should an individual require assistance with marking or completing their ballot, electors may be assisted by a support person of their choosing.

Assistive Personal Equipment

Voters with disabilities may use assistive personal devices including, but 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.

Vision Loss

The Ballot Return Station will be equipped with magnifying sheets to assist an individual with low vision.

Hearing Impacted, Deafness or Hearing Loss

The Ballot Return Station will be equipped with a pad or paper and pen to communicate with the hearing impacted if required.

3. Ballot Return Stations

For the purpose of this plan, a Ballot Return Station includes the exterior parking and walkways associated with the location. In order to ensure that each Ballot Return Station is accessible to voters with disabilities, a Ballot Return Station Accessibility Audit Checklist will be completed prior to confirming the site as a Ballot Return Station.

A comprehensive accessibility audit of each Ballot Return Station has been conducted to ensure that each Ballot Return Station is accessible to voters with disabilities. The site location accessibility audit checklist is included as Schedule "A" to this document.

Parking

Accessible parking spaces will be clearly marked and in full compliance with the Township's Parking By-law 6000-23. Accessible parking spaces will be clearly marked and will be on firm and level ground. Routine checks will be made to ensure all entrances remain barrier free through the course of the day.

Entrance and Exit to Ballot Return Station Location

The entrance and exit to the Ballot Return Station location will be easy to access and barrier free. Entrances into the Ballot Return Station location shall be wide enough for a wheelchair, scooter, other assistive device or person with a service animal to pass through safely and easily. The door hardware is to be accessible and operated by a person using a closed fist. If the doors are heavy, awkward to open or have handles that are in close reach, where possible they will be propped open in a safe manner, an alternative entrance will be provided, or election staff will be available to assist.

Interior Ballot Return Station Room

Access to the Ballot Return Stations shall be level and easily transversed. Any doormats or carpeting shall be level with the floor to prevent potential tripping hazards. Should doors into the interior of the Ballot Return Station room not be accessible via a power operator, the doors shall remain propped open for the duration of the ballot return room hours. The ballot drop-off area will be well lit, and seating will be made available.

4. Service Animals and Support Persons

Electors requiring service animals are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at the Ballot Return Station Location. Persons with disabilities may be accompanied by a support person when attending Ballot Return Stations.

Where assistance is requested, the Election Official shall consult with the elector to determine the extent of assistance required and the most appropriate method of providing that assistance. This may include marking the ballot as directed by the elector. All Election Officials are sworn to an oath of secrecy.

5. Notice of Temporary Service Disruption

If there is a temporary disruption in the delivery of election information or services, a public notice shall be provided on the Township's election webpage, at the Ballot Return Station and through alternative communication methods such as local media when possible. The notice shall include the following information:

- Reason for the disruption
- Anticipated duration of the disruption
- If available, an alternative means of obtaining the service

Every effort shall be made to provide alternative methods of providing the information or service to persons with disabilities.

6. Accessible Election Information

Election information shall be provided in accessible or alternative formats upon request. Candidates and electors with disabilities will be able to receive information and copies of election documents in a format that takes into account their disability. The format will be agreed upon between the requestor and the Clerk, taking into account the requestor's accessibility needs. Notice of this provision is located on the Township's Accessibility Webpage at www.puslinch.ca and is included in election notices placed in the local media.

7. Feedback Process

Feedback regarding the manner in which the election services are provided to persons with disabilities may be submitted to Township Staff by the following methods:

- Telephone: 519-763-1226 ext. 5
- In Person: Municipal Office, 7404 Wellington Road 34, Puslinch ON, N0B 2J0
- Email: elections@puslinch.ca
- Mail: Municipal Offices, 7404 Wellington Road 34, Puslinch ON, N0B 2J0
- Website: www.puslinch.ca/forms

In addition, the Township does offer an Accessible Customer Service Feedback Form located on the Township's website at www.puslinch.ca/forms.

Once completed this form will be forwarded to Township Staff for consideration. In addition, staff working in the Township offices can complete the feedback form and submit feedback on behalf of the persons with a disability. Alternatively, the form may be printed and provided to the person for manual completion. Completed forms are date stamped and forwarded to Township staff who will respond to the candidate or elector directly within three (3) business days providing an anticipated action and timeframe for a full response, where appropriate.

The feedback process provides election staff with an opportunity to take corrective measures to prevent similar recurrences, address training needs, enhance service delivery and provide alternative methods of providing election information and services.

8. Additional Information

The Corporate Services Department is located at the Municipal Office, 7404 Wellington Road 34, Puslinch, ON, N0B2J0. Corporate Services staff can answer any questions you may have about running for office, the election in general or specific provisions for those persons with disabilities.

The Township of Puslinch's Website is continuously updated to reflect the most recent developments and information. Visit the site for an up-to-date list of candidates and other important messages or events through the election year at www.puslinch.ca.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing website contains information about municipal elections, the Province of Ontario 2026 Municipal Election Candidates and Voters Guide and the Ministry's commitment to promote greater accessibility for voters and candidates with disabilities at www.ontario.ca/files/2026-03/mmah-2026-candidates-guide-en-2026-03-31.pdf.

Service Ontario e-Laws website contains all current statutes including the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, the Ontario with Disabilities Act, 2001, and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 at www.ontario.ca/laws

Schedule "A" - Accessibility Audit of Ballot Return Stations

Facility Name:		
Facility Address:		
Audit Date:		
Audit Conducted by:		
Criteria	Y/N	Comments
ENTRANCE		
Is the main public entrance a barrier free accessible one? (external and internal)		
If not, is there an alternative entrance that is accessible?		
Is the entrance well lit?		
Is the entrance easy to see from the parking area?		
PARKING LOT		
Is there accessible parking available?		
Are the accessible parking spots clearly marked with signs and painted on the pavement?		
RAMPS		
Are ramps provided as an alternative to stairs?		
Is the slope of the ramp 1:20?		
Are handrails provided on both sides of the ramp?		
DOORS		
Do the doors have a minimum clear width of 860 mm (34 inches) as measured between the door stop and the edge of the door in the 90-degree open position?		
Are automatic doors provided?		
If there is NO automatic door: Are lever handles or D Shaped pulls provided?		
Are the handles at an appropriate height (mounted between 900mm (35in.)		
Is there a manoeuvring space of 600mm (24in.) on both sides of the door?		

Criteria	Y/N	Comments
FLOOR SPACE		
Are the widths of corridors, hallways and paths wide enough (minimum 1.2m/4 feet)?		
Is the path of travel free of furniture or equipment?		
Is adequate headroom height of minimum 2.03 m (6 feet 8 inches) provided? (protruding objects)		
Is there space for wheelchair seating in the auditorium/seating area(s)? (e.g., arena spectator, pool viewing area)		
STAIRS		
Are the stair risers closed in?		
Is there colour or texture contrasted tread nosing?		
Handrails are provided on both sides of the stairs?		
ELEVATORS		
Do the doors open wide enough to accommodate a person in a wheelchair (minimum 915 mm or 36 inches)?		
Do the doors stay open for at least 7 seconds?		
Are the internal dimensions a minimum of 1.725 m x 1.5 m (5 feet 8 inches x 5 feet)?		
Are the buttons at an appropriate height (highest button no higher than 1.2 m/4 feet, lowest button at least 920 mm/36 inches from the floor)?		
Are the controls or floor buttons raised and done in Braille?		
WASHROOMS		
Are accessible stall(s) located within the current washroom facilities?		
If not, is there an accessible washroom(s) available to both males and females?		
Please indicate the style of entrance into the washrooms with the accessible stalls: Airport style, Automatic, Push door.		
Is there a clear turning space of 1.83m (6ft.) in diameter outside the accessible stall?		

Criteria	Y/N	Comments
WASHROOMS Continued...		
Is the accessible stall or facility 1.83 m x 1.83 m (6 feet x 6 feet)?		
Are grab bars mounted on the wall behind the urinal and on the side wall?		
Is the toilet flush control automatic or located on the side where the individual would transfer from?		
Are faucets, fixtures, dispensers and light switches at an appropriate height?		
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS		