



2026 Election Accessibility Plan

In accordance with section 12.1(2) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*,
Issued by the Election Office for the 2026 Municipal Election

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Overview

The 2026 Election Accessibility Plan provides an overview of initiatives for the upcoming election, aimed at improving accessibility for voters and candidates during an election. It is a living document that may be updated as additional considerations are reviewed.

The main objective of the plan is to identify and eliminate barriers for persons with disabilities to ensure that the election is accessible for all. The plan is organized into the following key areas: mandate and legislative requirement, understanding disability, consultation, voting locations, voting methods, communication and access to information, and recruitment and training.

Mandate and Legislative Requirement

The City of Burlington is committed to providing electors and candidates with disabilities equal access to all election information and services. A key strategic objective of the Burlington's Strategic Plan Horizon 2050 is to be an accessible city where municipal programs, buildings, services and public spaces are accessible, available and welcoming to people of all abilities.

The *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, (MEA) states in section 12.1(1) that a clerk shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities, and section 12.1(2) indicates that the clerk shall prepare a plan regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities. Section 12.1(3) provides that the clerk must provide a report 90 days after Voting Day regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors with disabilities. Furthermore, section 45(2) indicates that in establishing the locations of voting places, the clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities.

Understanding Disability

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) 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*.

Consultation

The Burlington Election Management Team will present the plan to the Burlington Accessibility Advisory Committee for input and feedback. Furthermore, the 2026 Election Accessibility Plan will be posted online for public review and input. This is a living document and will be updated accordingly. The Election team will also conduct consultations as needed to ensure accessible customer service throughout the election.

Voting Locations

The *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, states that each voting location place must be accessible to electors with disabilities. The City of Burlington will have a total of twenty-seven in-person voting locations. This number includes three advance poll locations and 24 Voting Day locations. The following will be implemented to ensure voting locations are accessible to all electors:

- a) Site inspections conducted for all proposed voting locations prior to finalizing the list of voting locations to ensure each one meets the accessibility requirements.
- b) For any locations with accessibility concerns, remediation plans will be put into place to address any issues prior to advance voting and Voting Day.
- c) For any locations where accessible parking is not sufficiently close to the location entrance, or there isn't a sufficient number of spaces, accessible parking spaces will be established with signs and marking tape.
- d) For any locations where the entrance does not have working automatic door openers, an election worker will be assigned to open the doors and direct voters to the voting place.
- e) Clear and visible signage will be placed on the exterior and interior of the voting location to direct electors to the voting place.
- f) Routine checks of voting locations will be made throughout the day to ensure exits, entrances and paths of travel remain barrier free.
- g) Voting location layouts will be provided to election workers to ensure the set-up of the voting place is accessible to electors.
- h) Chairs will be available for electors who are unable to stand while receiving or marking their ballot.
- i) Service animals and support persons will be welcome in all voting locations.
- j) Each voting location will be provided with supplies such as magnification screens and signature guides.
- k) Electors can vote at any voting location during advance vote or at any location in their ward on Voting Day.

Voting Methods

The City of Burlington will offer electors with a variety of voting options in the 2026 Municipal Election, including online voting, in-person advance voting, proxy-voting, in-person voting on Voting Day, and special voting opportunities in congregate living settings (institutions, as defined in the MEA) such as long-term care and retirement homes.

Online Voting

- a) Online voting will be offered over a ten-day period during which electors with disabilities can use accessibility features available on their own devices such as their smartphone, computer, or tablet, to cast a vote independently. Additionally, online voting will provide an option for electors unable to attend a voting location to vote independently.
- b) The City's online voting system is designed to meet WCAG 2.0 guidelines.
- c) Individuals who are unable to vote using the internet from home can visit a Burlington Public Library branch to access online voting via a computer.

In-person Voting with Paper Ballots

- d) In-person advance polls and voting day polls will have magnification screens, and trained staff will provide assistance to electors when requested. Electors may also bring a support person for assistance. Should an elector be unable to physically enter a location, election workers can provide curbside voting.
- e) Proxy voting will allow electors who are unable to attend a voting location to appoint another eligible elector to act on their behalf to vote.
- f) Providing voting locations in congregate living settings (institutions, as defined in the MEA) and retirement homes on Voting Day will allow electors to cast their ballot where they live. Voting locations in congregate living settings (institutions, as defined in the MEA) or retirement homes are available for residents of those locations only.

Communication and Access to Information

The City of Burlington Election Team will ensure the following to remove barriers surrounding communication and access to information:

- a) Election information will be available online in clear and simple language.
- b) Election information will be continuously updated to reflect the most recent developments.
- c) All election webpages will be W3C Consortium WCAG 2.0 Level AA compliant.
- d) Information about voting places will include accessibility information.
- e) Election information will be provided in alternate formats upon request.
- f) Instructions on how to vote will be provided in multiple languages.
- g) Notice of Disruption of services will be posted on the City's election website and will include information on the reason, the duration of the disruption and alternate locations to vote.
- h) Information about voting options will be clearly communicated to electors and candidates.

Recruitment and Training

The City of Burlington will provide accessible customer service and ensure all workers are well equipped to assist electors by:

- a) Providing training for election staff on accessibility requirements, serving people with disabilities, and on the accommodations and services available to assist voters.
- b) Requiring that all staff complete accessibility training.
- c) Requiring election workers to periodically check access doors and parking area to ensure electors can enter the location with ease.

Election workers will be provided the opportunity to indicate any accommodations they may require to work on advance polls or on Voting Day. The Election Team will strive to provide accommodations to staff and will actively promote employment opportunities to persons with disabilities and organizations serving people with disabilities.

Feedback and Updates

This plan is a living document that may be updated as required and necessary. The Election Team welcomes feedback on how to ensure the 2026 Election is accessible for all. Contact the team via email at elections@burlington.ca

In accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, section 12.1(3), the clerk will prepare a report within 90 days after Voting Day regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities, and will make the report available to the public. The report will examine the effectiveness of accessibility initiatives proposed in this plan.