



2026 Municipal and School Board Election

Accessibility Plan

This plan was designed for use in the 2026 Municipal and School Board Election in alignment with provincial AMCTO standards.

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Scope

This report documents the consideration of the needs of all electors and candidates with disabilities throughout the planning process prior to the 2026 Municipal Election. This plan outlines the actions taken to identify, remove, and prevent barriers that affect voters and candidates with disabilities to ensure an equitable voting experience.

Context

The Municipality of Chatham-Kent is an organization that reflects the communities it serves. This includes respect for the dignity and rights of persons with disabilities and an ongoing commitment to promote a barrier-free and inclusive community.

The Municipality of Chatham-Kent will continue to learn, develop, and adjust our approaches in order to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities.

During the 2022 Municipal and School Board Election there were no accessibility issues reported. The 2026 Municipal and School Board Election is organized in alignment with both governing legislation as well as successful past practice.

Governing Legislative and Policy Framework

Under the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996, (The Act)* the Municipal Clerk is legislatively responsible for conducting Municipal and School Board Elections and establishing policies and procedures to ensure that all electors have the opportunity to participate fully in the election. The *Act* requires the Clerk to have regard for the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities and to ensure that all voting places are accessible to electors with disabilities. The Clerk is also required, within 90 days after a regular election, to prepare a report on the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities and make the report available to the public.

In addition to the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, the Clerk must also comply with the requirements of the following legislation:

- The *Ontario Human Rights Code, 1990* provides that all persons have the right to equal treatment without discrimination, including on the basis of disability, and that persons with disabilities be provided with accommodation short of undue hardship.
- The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)* was enacted in 2005 and sets out clear goals and timeframes for making Ontario accessible by 2025. Under the *AODA*, private and public sector organizations across Ontario are required to comply with Regulations established by the Province. These Regulations include the Customer Service Standard and the Integrated Accessibility Standards.

- o The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations (IASR) brings together accessible standards for Information and Communications, Employment, Transportation, and Design of Public Spaces under one regulation and harmonizes the requirements common to each standard. Each of the standards articulates specific requirements and compliance deadlines, which were phased in across Ontario between 2011 and 2025.

Election Preparation

To ensure compliance with the relevant legislation, staff reviewed the legislation and implemented a number of initiatives in preparation for the 2026 Municipal and School Board Election. As required under the *Act*, the Clerk prepared this plan for the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

The Municipal Clerk continues to monitor the relevant legislation, standards, and deadlines as well as at relevant court decisions to ensure any changes are incorporated into the implementation of the 2026 Municipal and School Board Election.

Strategies and Actions for the Identification, Removal, and Prevention of Barriers

Method of Vote and Voting System

On September 8, 2025, Municipal Council approved the method of voting for the 2026 Municipal and School Board Election. The approved methods are internet voting and paper ballot with tabulator.

Online Voting

It was determined that online voting will be utilized for advance voting only. This decision allows electors to cast their ballot from home, providing greater privacy for individuals with disabilities who may have difficulty voting at traditional paper-based locations without assistance. As many as 7,366 voters cast their ballot online during the 2022 election.

Voters can vote online anytime from Thursday October 8, 2026 at 10:00 am to Friday, October 16, 2026 at 4:00 pm. The Chatham-Kent Library has computers available for public use during online voting dates.

Municipal Clerk's staff have been working closely with Voatz to evaluate the voting system, ensure that it is fully accessible, and secure for persons with disabilities. As

part of the accessibility features built into the system, Electors with disabilities will have the option to enlarge the font size, adjust the color contrast, and have the security text read aloud. Additionally, they will be able to use their personal assistive technologies to interact with the voting system anywhere.

Paper Ballot with Tabulator

Paper ballot with tabulator will be available at advance voting locations and on Election Day. Municipal Clerk’s staff have been working closely with ES&S to ensure the paper ballot with tabulator remains accessible for electors with disabilities.

Additionally, an Accessible Voting Ballot Marker Device with add-on components, which include a headset, a hand-held controller, a paddle device, and a sip-and-puff device, will be available for electors who prefer to use paper ballots during the three days of advance voting as well as on Election Day at the John D Bradley Convention Centre in Chatham.

Voting Method	Accessible Tool
Paper ballot with braille ballots available	Accessible tabulator BMD
Paper ballot with large text ballots available	Accessible tabulator BMD
Paper ballot with magnifying sheet available	At all voting locations
Assistive devices	Accessible tabulator BMD
Internet Voting	Voatz
Proxy Voting	Forms available for proxy
Accessible Website	www.ckelection.com

Staff Training

Election Officials are required to attend a training session conducted by the Clerk's office. During the training sessions, there will be ongoing discussion of best practices on how to assist voters in voting locations, including those with disabilities.

This formal accessibility training outlines the customer service standard and how to serve persons with disabilities. It is also important to note that information pertaining to the customer service standard and serving persons with disabilities is included in the 2026 Election Worker Manual and training session presentation. The Election Worker Manual specifically contains accessibility guidelines and tips for interacting with persons with a variety of disabilities.

Voting Locations

In preparation for the 2026 Municipal and School Board Election, staff conducted site visits at each voting location before confirming their use in the election in accordance with an accessibility checklist. The purpose of this was to ensure that each facility had a barrier-free path of travel from the parking lot and the sidewalk, a barrier-free path of travel inside the voting location, barrier-free parking, a door operator or accessible door, adequate lighting, and adequate slopes and surfaces. See Appendix B for the checklist.

On Election Day, Monday, October 26, 2026, Election Officials will set-up Voting Locations at hospitals, retirement homes, and long-term care homes to provide voting opportunities specifically for residents.

Election Officials will conduct final accessibility checks prior to the opening of all voting locations to ensure that they are set up in a manner that is accessible. These checks will prioritize the identification of voting location access routes and entrances by providing appropriate internal and external signage, ensuring that voters with accessibility needs are directed to the accessible voting entrance through prominent signage, and making the accessible entrance the same as the main entrance where possible. The Election staff will also be available to attend the vehicle with a ballot should an elector not be able to leave their vehicle for any reason.

During the entire voting period, personal assistive devices will be permitted in all voting locations, such as wheelchairs and walkers. Voters with support persons or service animals will be welcomed and assisted at each stage of the voting process, including being greeted at the door, amending their information on the Voters' List, and casting their ballots. Election officials will be diligently trained to be sensitive to the needs of each voter and treat all voters with dignity and respect. While forms and oaths will be printed in large font, magnifying sheets will also be present to assist voters with low vision and Election Officials are able to read and sign oaths upon voters' requests.

Information and Communication

The Municipality of Chatham-Kent considers accessibility in all information and communication strategies for the 2026 Municipal and School Board Election. Upon requests from persons with disabilities, staff will provide copies of election documents, or the information contained in the document, in a format that takes into account the person's disability.

The Municipal election website was designed to be both informative and accessible. All information for voters, candidates, and third-parties was placed in distinct sections on the website, and users are directed to access all documents and forms

through the website in an effort to promote accessibility and transparency. The information available online uses clear and simple language and is continuously updated to reflect the most recent election developments and information. Candidates and Third-Party Advertisers are provided with resources in quick, reference guide format to remove barriers in political participation.

Additionally, the website was compliant with WCAG 2.0 Level A guidelines. It allowed for personal assistive technologies to be utilized with the website and for users to adjust the website font within the browser's functionality to aid them in reading the information. Notably, the election website contained an accessible voting section that outlined the various accessible voting locations and accessible features of the electronic voting system.

Election information is continuously communicated through various channels and alternate formats including regular candidate emails, social media, radio, billboard, newspaper, and advertisements. Additionally, a Tax Insert will be sent out to property owners. The Tax Insert will include all information necessary for electors to plan for the Election. Voter Information Cards will also be sent to each voter advising them of their voting options and locations.

Conclusion

It is the goal of the Municipality of Chatham-Kent to ensure that electors within the municipality who require accessible services are provided with the best opportunity to vote as independently as possible in the 2026 Municipal and School Board Election. Additionally, the Clerk's staff are committed to ensuring the nomination and registration process is as accessible as possible for candidates and third-parties.

Contact Information

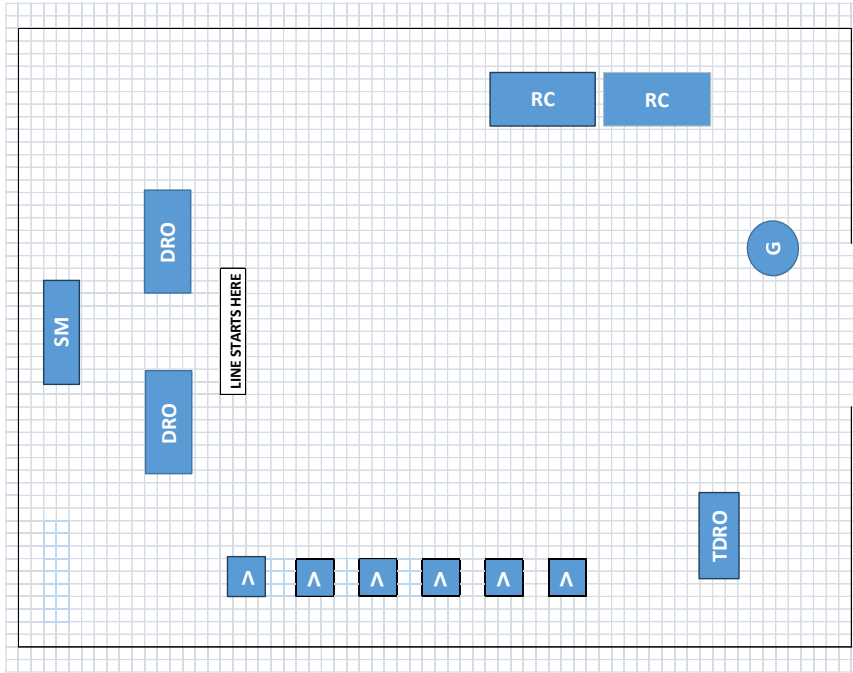
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Appendix A – Voting Location Sample Floor Plan



KEY	
SM	Site Manger
DRO	Deputy Returning Officer
V	Voter Screen
TDRO	Tabulator Deputy
G	Greeter
RC	Revision Clerk

Appendix B – Site Evaluation Chart

Exterior	Interior
Accessible by public transit	Hallways clear of obstructions and low overhead objects
Well marked y street/address/name	Fire alarms and extinguishers in working order
Parking lot well lit at night	Doorways to facility room accessible
Number of parking spaces sufficient # _____	Capacity for up to 1200 electors throughout the day
Wheelchair accessible parking # _____	Sufficient electrical outlets
Entrance(s) well marked	Elevator if polling locations or washrooms are on upper floor. Elevator clearly identified by signage
Walkway accessible, free of obstructions	Well lit or back up lighting present
Doors easy to access by wheelchair and elderly	Adequate heating
Accessible parking lot (paved not gravel)	Tables and chairs provided (height of table is accessible)
Accessible doors (automatically open or can be propped open)	Washrooms available, accessible, and in good shape. Washroom clearly identified by signage