2026 Municipal Elections Accessibility Plan

Reviewed by the Township Clerk

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1. Introduction

This plan will address the specific accessibility requirements in relation to the 2026 Municipal Elections in The Township of Champlain.

The Township of Champlain has made great efforts in promoting a barrier free community. In an effort to ensure that the 2026 Municipal Election is consistent with the core principles of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005,* this planning document was developed in advance of the election in order to identify measures to be taken and reported to Council following the election.

Note: The Township of Champlain values diversity and effective communication and believes that bias, stigma, and discrimination towards people with disabilities can be reduced through the use of respectful language. Therefore, the municipal staff is committed to use person-first language, which puts the person before the disability and to inquire with individuals with disabilities and representative groups how they wish to identify.

2. Objectives

This plan is intended to highlight measures that The Township of Champlain will be implementing to ensure equal opportunity for all electors and candidates. These objectives include:

- That all electors are able to independently cast their vote and verify their selection.
- That all electors have full and equal access to all information on where and when to vote and on eligible candidates.
- That everyone can fully participate in the Municipal Elections as an elector, candidate, or election official.
- That efforts are made to ensure that all electors are aware of the accessibility measures available via channels such as the newspaper, media launches, and The Township of Champlain website (in accordance with the AODA web accessibility standards (WCAG 2.0 AA)) and social media.

- That all Voter Help Centre locations are accessible and barrier-free.

3. 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 in order to ensure that the statutory requirements were met and a feasible implementation plan was in place. During the development of the 2026 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan, the following steps shall be implemented:

- Review and analysis of documents, policies and other supporting materials from AMCTO, neighboring 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 all electors 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.
- Consult with the Champlain Accessibility Working Group for feedback and comments on the Municipal Elections Accessibility Plan.

4. Voting Methods

The Township of Champlain's 2026 Municipal Election will be working with Voatz Canada Inc. to provide voting services to eligible voters. This includes the convenience and independence of voting from anywhere via telephone, internet or in-person at a Voter Help Centre during the October 21 – 26, 2026 voting period. Please note that the in-person voting at the Voter Help Centre entails internet voting opportunities via a laptop or touch screen tablet with the help of an Election Official.

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.

The Voatz Canada Voting System provides voters with the capability to vote from the comfort of their own home. Voting from home facilitates the voting process for persons 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 electors 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 all electors with the same independence and privacy in participating in the election as other voters. If someone requires assistance in the voting process, trained Election Officials will be present at Voter Help Centres offered across The Township of Champlain, throughout the voting period.

4.1. Telephone Voting

Eligible voters may vote using a touch-tone telephone, and the toll-free telephone number, date of birth, and the PIN number contained 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.

The Voatz 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 provision of confirmation of the voter's selections.
- Standard volume is used to allow for adjustment dependent of the telephone or device being utilized.
- An option to slow down the speed of the instructions.

4.2. Internet Voting

Eligible voters may vote online by accessing the internet address provided in their Voter Information Letter, using a smart phone, tablet device, gaming device or computer and any

accompanying assistive devices or software, and entering their date of birth and PIN and qualifying information.

The Voatz System has been created to meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG-2 Level AA), so that everyone 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.

4.3. In-person Voting at Voter Help Centre locations

For those individuals without means to access voting via telephone or internet, or who require the assistance of a trained Election Official, Voter Help Centre locations will be open during the voting period, including on Election Day, to provide in-person internet voting opportunities via a laptop or touch screen tablet.

Access to the Voter Help Centre 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 each Voter Help Centre location. These areas 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 Voter Help Centre location established at Town Hall (located at 948 Pleasant Corner Road East, Vankleek Hill) throughout the voting period as follows:

VOTER HELP CENTRE OPENING HOURS

Dates	Times
Wednesday, October 21st, 2026	9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Thursday, October 22nd, 2026	9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Friday, October 23rd, 2026	9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Saturday, October 24th, 2026	10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Sunday, October 25th, 2026	10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Monday, October 26th, 2026	9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

4.4. Special Voting Provisions

Election staff shall visit sites including long-term care facilities and retirement homes, to set-up on-site voting kiosks, or bedside voting opportunities for residents.

5. Voter Help Centre Location(s)

An accessibility assessment of the Voter Help Centre location(s) will be conducted in collaboration with the Champlain Accessibility Working Group. The following considerations are taken into account when determining which location(s) will be used:

5.1. Accessible Route

The name and/or address of the Voter Help Centre location shall be clearly visible. An easily navigable route will be marked for entry into the Voter Help Centre location and into the voting area within the location. The voting area shall be identified with clear and understandable signage. Seating areas shall be provided throughout the Voter Help Centre location for individuals needing a rest.

5.2. Entrance and Exit

The route to the entrance of the Voter Help Centre 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. Doors into the Voter Help Centre location and voting area shall be accessible and easy to open or shall remain propped open for the duration of the Voter Help Centre location hours. Routine checks of entrance and exit routes will be made throughout the hours of operation.

5.3. Parking

Accessible parking shall be available at all Voter Help Centre locations. The designated parking space(s) shall be clearly marked with the international Symbol of Accessibility and will be on firm and level ground, close to the entrance of the Voter Help Centre location. By-law officers will monitor and enforce parking at Voter Help Centre locations throughout the day.

6. Voting Assistance

6.1. Support Person/Friend of the Voter

Pursuant to the Telephone/Internet voting election policies and procedures for the 2026 Ontario municipal elections, any elector s shall be permitted to be accompanied by a support person at any Voter Help Centre 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.

6.2. Service Animals

Individuals requiring service animals are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at all Voter Help Centre locations.

6.3. Election Officials

At in-person Voter Help Centre locations, upon request, Election Officials are available to assist any voter who requires assistance in casting their online or telephone 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.

7. Communication

The 2026 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan will be made available at Town Hall (948 Pleasant Corner Road East, Vankleek Hill) and by way of The Township of Champlain website, www.champlain.ca. 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 Nomination Package.

7.1. Election Materials

The Township of Champlain is required, as per the Accessible Customer Service Standard, to provide a copy of a document or the information contained in the document, to anyone who requests an accessible format.

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 Champlain and the elector may agree upon the format to be used for the document or information.

In the event the information is not generated by The Township of Champlain or is supplied by a third party, The Township of Champlain will make every effort to obtain the information in an alternate format and/or will attempt to assist the Elector by providing assistive equipment.

General Election Materials

Font – Printed material generated by The Township of Champlain will be provided in a font sans serif like Arial, minimum 11 point, and can be made available in a font (print) size that is 16 to 20 points or larger.

Website – Information generated by The Township of Champlain 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.

Video – Promotional and educational videos created for the 2026 Municipal Elections may incorporate audio and captioning.

7.2. Service Disruptions

From time to time and/or for unforeseen circumstances beyond The Township of Champlain'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 Champlain shall provide reasonable notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services.

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 Champlain 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 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 Champlain website.

8. Candidates

Candidates must also have regard to the specific needs of all electors. Campaign offices, election materials and canvassing should all be reviewed in order to ensure that they are fully accessible. The Province of Ontario encourages candidates to review their page on Accessibility (elections.on.ca) for resources and further information.

9. Reporting

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