



2026 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan

Introduction

The City Clerk is responsible for the proper legislative and administrative conduct of municipal and school board elections in the City of Barrie. In accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act*, 1996, the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, 2005 (AODA), and the Human Rights Code, 1990, the City Clerk is authorized to establish procedures and provide appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities have the opportunity to participate fully in the 2026 Municipal and School Board Elections.

The City of Barrie is committed to providing an accessible, inclusive, and equitable voting experience. The 2026 Municipal and School Board Elections will ensure that:

1. Candidates and electors with disabilities have full and equal access to all election information and services;
2. Voter Assistance Centres are fully accessible;
3. Persons with disabilities can independently and privately cast their vote and have access to internet and telephone methods for voting assistance if required.

This plan sets out the principles and actions to accommodate candidates and electors with disabilities and will guide the City of Barrie in delivering an accessible election.

Purpose

This Accessibility Plan outlines the measures the City of Barrie will take to make the 2026 Municipal and School Board Elections accessible to all candidates and eligible voters. It reflects the City's commitment to removing barriers and ensuring equitable access to election information, services, and voting opportunities.

Accessibility considerations are integrated into every stage of the election process, including:

- Facilities and Voter Assistance Centres: ensuring barrier-free access at all voting places, and special voting arrangements.
- Voting Methods and Accommodations: offering assistive technologies and alternative voting options to enable independent and private voting.
- Communication and Information: delivering election materials in accessible formats and plain language, both online and in print.
- Candidates and Candidate Information: ensuring candidate services and information are fully accessible.



- Accessible Customer Service: integrating accessibility principles into all interactions with electors and candidates.

This plan also includes practical tools, such as accessibility checklists, to guide election staff in providing accommodations, assistive devices, and communication supports as required. By embedding accessibility into every stage of the election process, the City of Barrie affirms its commitment to respect, dignity, and equal opportunity for all.

Legislative Framework

The City Clerk is responsible for conducting Municipal Elections in accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

Under the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, as amended, the following provisions apply:

Section 12.1 of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, states that:

“A Clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities.”

Section 12.2 of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, states that:

“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”

Section 12.1 (3) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, states that:

“Within 90 days after voting day in a regular election, 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.”

Section 41(3) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, states that:

“The clerk shall make such changes to some or all of the ballots as he or she considers necessary or desirable to allow electors with visual impairments to vote without the assistance referred to in paragraph 4 of subsection 52(1).”

Section 45 (2) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, states that:

“In establishing the locations of voting places, the clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities.”

Section 52 (1)(4) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, states that:

“The deputy returning officer may permit an elector who needs assistance in voting to have such assistance as the deputy returning officer considers necessary.”



Accessibility Plan – 2026 Municipal Election

The following is the proposed Accessibility Plan for the 2026 Municipal Election:

1. Accessibility Plan

Disabilities affect individuals in different ways, and each person's experience is unique. Therefore, this plan is designed to remove barriers and provide accommodations that respect dignity, independence, and equal opportunity for all electors throughout the election process.

In developing this plan, the following principles were considered:

- Policies and procedures must align with the *Municipal Elections Act*, 1996 and uphold the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
- Access to electoral services must be integrated and equitable.
- Initiatives should address and accommodate a wide range of abilities.
- The City of Barrie's accessibility policy for providing services to people with disabilities must be followed throughout the election process.

Actions
Consult with the Accessibility Coordinator throughout election planning and delivery to review the 2026 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan.
Use an accessibility checklist reviewed by the Accessibility Coordinator to confirm continued compliance with AODA requirements.
The City will assess voting equipment to ensure it meets the needs of the electorate.
Review past election practices to identify accessibility risks for candidates and electors, assess their potential impact, and develop measures to reduce those risks.

2. Communications and Information

Election-related communication will be clear, accessible, and available in formats that meet the needs of electors and candidates. This section outlines the approach to providing inclusive and barrier-free information throughout the election process.



Accessibility Commitments:

- Ensure election information is clear, easy to understand, and available upon request in multiple accessible formats so all electors and candidates can stay informed.
- Promote timely and consistent communication across all channels to reduce barriers to participation.
- Provide inclusive outreach strategies that reach diverse communities and individuals with varying accessibility needs.

Actions
Candidates and electors may request election information in an alternate format by contacting the Legislative Services Branch at (705) 728-VOTE (8683), Be.Counted@barrie.ca or by attending in-person at City Hall.
The City's website will meet WCAG 2.0 Level AA Standards.
Post all information to the municipality's website including links to the Candidates' Guide to Accessible Elections, produced jointly by the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks, and Treasurers of Ontario as well as other related material.
Provide candidates and staff with information and training relating to accessible customer service.
Provide information to candidates regarding campaign expenses and particular rules affecting disabled candidates.
Communication will be available to facilitate notice of service disruption.
Alternate/accessible formats (for example: braille, larger font) will be available upon request for the Voting Information Letters which contain instructions and credentials to vote.
Conduct outreach to social service providers and arrange to attend locations to assist voters and provide information.

3. Voter Assistance Centres

The City of Barrie is committed to ensuring that all Voter Assistance Centres are fully accessible and barrier-free, in compliance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, 2005, the Human Rights Code, and Section 45(2) of the *Municipal Elections Act*, 1996. This section outlines the City's approach to achieving accessibility in voting facilities.



Accessibility Commitments:

- Strive for barrier-free access to all voting locations, including entrances, interior spaces, and amenities.
- Ensure that accessibility features are integrated into site selection and setup, not treated as add-ons.
- Provide a safe and dignified voting experience for electors with disabilities.

Actions
Conduct site visits to all 2026 Voter Assistance Centres to verify accessibility in accordance with the established checklist requirements.
All Voter Assistance Centres will: • Meet the accessibility standards for entrances, pathways, parking and washrooms; • Be equipped with automatic doors or staffed door support where needed; • Ensure appropriate spacing between voting devices, safe placement of power cords, adequate lighting, and clear internal signage; • Any identified barriers will be addressed prior to opening; • All elements will be incorporated into the room layout wherever feasible; and • Additional seating will be provided at each Voter Assistance Centre, as feasible.
Election Supervisors will be provided with a corporate issued cell phone so they can contact the Deputy City Clerk and Coordinator of Elections with any questions to ensure expedient customer service and minimize disruptions to voters.
Provide appropriate signage at Voter Assistance Centres. Mobile signs will be rented to identify Voter Assistance Centres as well as voting dates and times. The signs are to be highly visible and very effective.
Permit service animals and support people in all Voter Assistance Centres. Election staff will be trained to ensure that service animals will be permitted.
Ensure designated or reserved parking spaces for persons with disabilities at each Voter Assistance Centre. This will be confirmed during site inspections of each location.
Free Barrie Transit (conventional service, Transit ON Demand and Specialized Transit), will be available on all advance voting days for all electors as an accessible option for travelling to and from Voter Assistance Centres.



The Voter Assistance Centres for the 2026 Municipal Election will be located at the following City facilities:

- City Hall - 70 Collier Street
- Parkview Centre - 189 Blake Street
- East Bayfield Community Centre - 80 Livingstone Street East
- Allandale Recreation Centre - 190 Bayview Drive
- Peggy Hill Team Community Centre - 171 Mapleton Avenue

Barrie Public Library staff will be appointed as Election Officials to enable residents to attend the library should they require assistance voting at any time during the advance voting and on Election Day.

Residents may vote at any Voter Assistance Centre, regardless of where they live.

4. Understanding the Voting Process

The 2026 Municipal and School Board Elections will be conducted using the internet and telephone voting methods. These voting methods enable electors with the convenience and independence of voting from anywhere and at any time of day during the October 16 to 26, 2026 voting period. Everyday tools like computers, telephones and other aids can present accessible opportunities for persons with disabilities to vote, while being consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equal opportunity. Persons who have assistive devices set up in their homes can now use them to assist with casting a ballot privately and independently.

Voting from home also facilitates the voting process for persons with disabilities who may have mobility restrictions, visual impairment, and/or have a difficult time with transportation. This provides persons with disabilities the same independence and privacy in participating in the election as other voters. If persons with disabilities do require assistance in the voting process, trained Election Officials will be present at an in-person Voter Assistance Centre offered by the City of Barrie.

Actions

iPads and telephones will be available for voting at all Voter Assistance Centres. The voting devices will include accessibility features such as adjustable text size, high-contrast display, audio instructions (headphones available) touchscreen navigation and assistive device compatibility to support voters who require enhanced readability.



Clear and simple signs will be posted on each voting device to assist voters. A video demonstration will be available on the City's website to guide voters through the process. Information on all voting opportunities will also be included in an insert distributed with the City's water bills.
Magnifying sheets will be available if an elector required one for viewing paper forms. Magnifying sheets provide enhanced capability for those who are visually impaired to read and complete paperwork and vote more independently.
Alternative formats and American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreters are available upon request for Voter Assistance Centres to ensure availability for electors requiring assistance.

5. Long-term Care Facilities and Retirement Homes

Section 45(7) of the *Municipal Elections Act*, 1996 requires voting places on Election Day at institutions, including long-term care homes, with 20 or more occupied beds and at retirement homes with 50 or more occupied beds by September 1 in an election year. The City of Barrie is committed to meeting or exceeding these requirements for retirement and long-term care homes within the City.

Mobile polls will be established for residents of retirement homes and long-term care facilities, following public health guidelines. Election Officials will visit each location with the necessary equipment to enable voters at these locations to vote.

Actions
Provide two voting opportunities at each long-term care facility where 20 or more beds are occupied by persons who are disabled, chronically ill, or infirm. Opportunities to vote will also be provided at retirement homes.
Provide advance notice to electors in retirement homes and long-term care facilities about alternate voting options and Voting Day opportunities.
The City will provide iPads for use in retirement homes and long-term care facilities to support accessible voting, reduce barriers, increase resident participation, enable mobile voting, and promote voter privacy and independence.
American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters will be available upon request for retirement homes and long-term care facilities to support electors who require assistance.



6. Staff Training

All staff and volunteers participating in election duties will receive comprehensive training to ensure that persons with disabilities are served in a manner that accommodates their needs, independence, and respect.

Training will cover:

- How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities, including physical, sensory, cognitive, and mental health conditions.
- How to assist individuals who use assistive devices or require the support of a service animal or support person, while respecting independence and privacy.
- How to operate voting equipment to deliver election services effectively and confidently.
- How to provide accessible customer service and respond when a person experiences difficulty accessing election information or services, ensuring timely and appropriate solutions.

Actions
Staff training will include accessible customer service requirements, with a dedicated section in the Election Worker Manual. All election staff must review the Accessible Customer Service Handbook and sign an acknowledgement confirming their understanding.
Election workers will be trained to assist voters with disabilities respectfully and effectively, supporting each elector's ability to vote with dignity, independence, and equal access.
Election staff will be encouraged to be attentive to each elector's needs and offer assistance when appropriate. For example, if an elector using a walker is waiting in a long line, staff may offer a chair and hold their place in line, without assuming assistance is required.
Election staff will be trained to identify service animals and follow the Municipality's Accessible Customer Service Policy, as outlined in the Accessible Customer Service Handbook provided to staff. Training will also confirm that service animals are permitted in Voter Assistance Centres.
Election staff will be instructed to access doors frequently to offer assistance and watch for electors unable to easily enter the building.



Election staff will be available to open doors at locations without push button automatic door openers for every elector.

7. Continuous Improvement and Feedback

The City of Barrie is dedicated to continuous improvement in delivering accessible elections. Following each election, feedback from electors, candidates, election staff, and community stakeholders will be actively gathered and analyzed to identify barriers and opportunities for enhancement. This input will inform the Election Accessibility Report, as required under Section 12.1(3) of the *Municipal Elections Act*, 1996, which will be published within 90 days of Election Day. The report will detail measures implemented, challenges encountered, and recommendations for future improvements. To ensure accessibility remains a priority, we will continue to update procedures, adopt innovative technologies, and expand training for election staff.