



2022
OTE

Amherstburg

Municipal Election Accessibility Plan



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accessibility@amherstburg.ca or (519) 736-0012 ext. 2272

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Introduction and Statement of Commitment

The Clerk is responsible for the proper legislative and administrative conduct of municipal and school board elections in the Town of Amherstburg. In accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*, and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, the Clerk is authorized to establish procedures and provide appropriate measures to ensure the persons with disabilities have the opportunity to participate fully in the 2022 Municipal Elections. Accordingly the Town of Amherstburg will ensure that:

1. Candidates and Electors with disabilities have full and equal access to all election information and services;
2. Persons with disabilities have full access to Voting Places;
3. Persons with disabilities are able to independently and privately mark their ballot and have access to alternative methods of voting assistance.

The Town of Amherstburg is committed to providing quality goods, services and facilities that are accessible to all persons we serve. We will continue to work with the community and allocate appropriate resources towards the elimination of accessibility barriers in customer service, information and communication, employment, transportation and the design of public spaces. The Town is committed to meeting the accessibility needs of persons with disabilities in a respectful, equitable and timely manner and this commitment extends to residents, visitors and employees with visible and non-visible disabilities.

Definitions and Barrier Types

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act defines a barrier as anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communication barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice.

Barrier Type	Example
Physical	A door knob cannot be operated by without the application of upper-body mobility and strength or manual dexterity.
Architectural	A hallway, door or passage that is too narrow for a mobility assistive device to pass through.
Informational	Information printed in font too small to be read easily.
Communicational	A person who talks too loudly when addressing a person with a hearing impairment.
Attitudinal	A receptionist who ignores a customer in a wheelchair.
Technological	A sound system which amplifies background noise.
Policy/Practice	A practice of announcing important messages over an intercom that cannot be heard clearly.

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Purpose

The focus of the Accessible Election Plan 2022 is to:

- (a) Ensure that electoral services are accessible to all voters and candidates;
- (b) Identify and eliminate barriers for persons with disabilities; and,
- (c) Create a positive and inclusive voting experience.

Plan Consultation and Review

The Town of Amherstburg's Accessible Election Plan 2022 was developed by members of the Town's Elections Team, in consultation with the Accessibility Advisory Committee and in consultation with the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals. The plan is also provided to organizations, groups and communities that are made up of, or service persons with disabilities in the Town of Amherstburg. As well, the plan is posting online for public review and input. The plan is a living document, and under the provisions of the *Municipal Elections Act*, the Clerk is provided the power to provide for any matter or procedure that:

- (a) Is not otherwise provided for in the Act or regulation; and,
- (b) In the Clerk's opinion, is necessary or desirable for conducting the election.

Communications and Information

Election Materials

Election materials are provided in a variety of media formats to ensure redundancies which prevent a barrier in a single format from impacting the chance that the messaging can be received by the intended audience. Election materials and communications are reviewed to ensure standard elements of accessible design are incorporated. Election information is made available in clear and simple language.

Platforms and Media Types for External Communications

General election information and details on the availability of accommodations, assistive technologies, transportation services and accessible voting locations are shared via a variety of platforms and services to maximize the potential exposure such communications have. Some examples that may be utilized are:

1. Traditional Print Media (River Town Times, Tax Mailer etc.)
2. Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)
3. Broadcast Media (Radio/TV)
4. Public Promulgation (Visual Media advertising at Town Hall, Libro Centre, Community Hub, etc.)
5. Networking Communications (Messaging sent directly to vulnerable occupancies, communities of care, etc.)

All Election webpages and web content will be made WCAG 2.0 Level AA Compliant.

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Notice of Temporary Service Disruptions

Where a temporary service disruption is identified, the Town of Amherstburg will give notice of the disruption to the public, including the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of the alternative services available, if any. Where a temporary service disruption affects any Voting Location, notice shall be provided conspicuously at that place, in addition to at Town Hall, and via electronic communications such as social media and the Town website.

Feedback Process

The Town has a process in place for receiving and responding to feedback and will ensure that those processes are provided in an accessible format and with communications support, upon request. The Town will notify the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports.

Election Staffing and Recruitment

The Town of Amherstburg will promote employment opportunities to persons with disabilities and organizations serving people with disabilities. All recruitment processes and communications will ensure that the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation procedures are employed in the recruitment and staffing of employees, including things like making known the availability of accommodations and information supports, and through individual accommodation plans, where requested and required.

Accessible Customer Service Standards

Every person working in any capacity for the 2022 election on Voting Day or any Advance Voting Day, shall receive training on the Town's Accessible Customer Service Standards and on the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation requirements.

Assistance to Candidates

The Town is ensuring accessibility for candidates with disabilities by:

- Making the candidate's guide and/or other relevant publications available in accessible formats
- Making the Voters' List available in an electronic, accessible format, free of charge to all candidates.
- Holding candidate information sessions in accessible locations or virtually, with the availability of supports noted.

The Town of Amherstburg will provide Candidates with the Candidates' Guide to Accessible Elections produced by the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO). The Town will also incorporate accessibility information and messaging into Candidate Information Packages and Candidate Information Sessions.

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Assistance to Electors

Availability of Accommodations

Accessible voting machines are available, as noted, to assist in the marking of paper ballots and allow voters who are people with disabilities and/or have other special needs to select the option of their choice privately and independently. The features include an audio component, braille keypad, sip/puff tub device, rocker paddle/foot switch and zoom features to adjust font sizes and colour contrast.

Any person with a disability accompanied by a support person or service animal may enter any voting place with their support person or service animal.

When requested, an election official in the voting place will assist a voter in casting their ballot.

In cases where a voter is unable to attend a voting place, the voter can appoint another person to act on their behalf in accordance with Proxy Voting requirements of the *Municipal Elections Act*.

Attendance on Electors with Disabilities for In-Home Voting

Electors with disabilities may also contact the Town of Amherstburg to have Election Officials attend their place of residence to vote.

Vulnerable Occupancy Limited Poll Locations

Limited poll locations will be established for residents in vulnerable occupancies at the following locations on Election Day:

1. Richmond Terrace
2. Seasons Amherstburg Retirement Community Apartments
3. Blue Haven Apartments
4. Heritage Court of Amherstburg

Any elector located within these locations can also opt to contact the Town of Amherstburg to have Election Officials attend on a person in an institution or retirement home directly, to allow him or her to vote.

Assistive Technologies

The Libro Credit Union Centre will be equipped with an Automark Ballot Marking System on all Voting Days, which permit the independent casting of Ballots by individuals with accessibility needs and those who cannot mark a paper Ballot with a Ballot Marking Pen. The system consists of the following components:

1. A Visual Display with touchscreen interface;
2. An Accessible Voting Rocker Paddle controller;
3. A set of headphones;
4. An external printer for printing the Ballot once the Voter has made his or her selections; and,

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5. Alternative input interfaces such as the Sip and Puff Input Interface or Rocker Paddle Button Input Interface accommodate additional individual needs.

The Voter receives instruction and information in either audio, visual or both audio and visual formats to assist in the ballot marking process. For inputs, the Voter can use the touch screen interface as well as the other available assistive devices such as sip and puff or rocker paddles if they are unable to use their hands to press the selection buttons on the handheld controller.

When a Voter wishes to use the accessible voting feature, the TDRO will assist the Voter, as required, into position behind a privacy screen.

The Voter will receive instruction on the ballot and system options through the inputs and use the controls or other assistive devices to adjust volume, speed of the audio presentation, move between contests, and select votes. The presentation will confirm votes selected for Voter verification. When the Voter has made and confirmed all their vote selections, they use the appropriate available input to direct the Ballot Marking Device to print their actual paper Ballot. The Ballot Marking Device will automatically process a blank sheet of paper, printing the full Ballot on the sheet complete with the vote markings selected by the Voter.

The printed Ballot is indistinguishable from a Ballot marked by hand. The Ballot Marking Device contains a library of random hand-made marking images that it uses to print the Ballot so the printed markings look just like marks made by hand with a Ballot Marking Pen.

This feature ensures that if the paper Ballots are reviewed by Election Officials, they will not be able to determine which Ballots were made by the Ballot Marker Device, thereby maintaining Voter privacy.

The printed paper Ballot emerges from the Ballot Marking Device into a Secrecy Folder. The Automark System is configured to perform a second independent review of the Ballot when re-inserted, by interpreting the vote markings and playing them back over the headphones for Voter confirmation. This allows the Voter to ensure the paper Ballot generated by the printer is correctly marked with the votes they selected. The Voter can use the available inputs to either cast the Ballot or spoil the Ballot and request another.

Once satisfied, the TDRO can then process the Ballot through the Vote Tabulator nearby. While an accessible voting session is underway, the independent Vote Tabulator machine can continue processing paper Ballots delivered to the TDRO by other Voters, allowing the Vote Tabulator to handle both voting channels and maintain the flow of Voters through the Voting Place.

Transportation Supports

Amherstburg Community Services (ACS) has volunteered the use of their CareLink Health Transit service for any elector wishing to be provided door-to-door pick-up and drop-off service during the 2022 Municipal Election.

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Accessible Voting Locations

The Municipal Elections Act provides for the Clerk to establish the number and location of voting places for an election that he or she considers most convenient for the electors. In establishing voting locations, the Clerk has ensured that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities.

The following three locations will host polls during the 2022 Municipal Election in the Town of Amherstburg:

1. The Libro Credit Union Centre
2. The Community Hub
3. McGregor Columbian Club

Each location will be compared against an accessibility checklist for election staff to use when conducting site visits of each voting place to ensure that each facility has:

- Barrier-free path of travel from the parking lot and sidewalk
- Barrier-free parking, where parking is provided
- Door operators or accessible doors
- Adequate lighting

Voting places will be inspected to ensure that all locations are accessible taking such actions as necessary to:

- Where possible, make modifications to existing voting places to make them accessible, for example, by installing temporary ramps
- Places that cannot be made accessible will be relocated or merged with other voting places in the vicinity
- Conduct an additional accessibility check closer to the election date to ensure there have been no changes to the locations
- Have election staff perform final accessibility checks during the advance vote period and on election day to verify the accessibility of the voting place.

Where required, the Clerk may authorize:

- Hiring Access Officers to mitigate voting place accessibility issues by performing various roles such as: helping open doors without automated power door openers, operating elevators or lifts, directing voters to the accessible entrance if it is different from the main entrance.

The Election Team will communicate to all voting place owners and managers accessibility requirements of proposed voting places in accordance with legislative responsibilities to prevent last minute changes to voting rooms.

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The Accessibility Plan for the 2022 Municipal Election will be available for public feedback on the list of proposed voting places by posting on the Town election webpage and making it available to the public.

Post-Election Reporting

Within 90 days after voting day, 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.

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