



Accessible Election Plan 2022 Municipal Election

The Township of Uxbridge is committed to making the 2022 Municipal Election accessible by working to accommodate the needs of its electors through effective procedures and processes.

Introduction

The Clerk is responsible for the proper legislative and administrative conduct of municipal elections in the Township of Uxbridge. 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 that persons with disabilities have the opportunity to participate fully in the 2022 Municipal Election. As such, the 2022 Municipal Election will be conducted in such a manner to ensure that:

- Regard is taken for the needs of electors, candidates and election officials with disabilities;
- Ensure that the Ballot Return Station is accessible to persons with disabilities;
- Prepare accessibility plans to identify, remove and prevent barriers that could affect electors and candidates with disabilities, and make a plan available to the public prior to voting day;
- Publish a report about the identification, removal and prevention of election barriers that affect persons with disabilities within 90 days after Voting Day.

Objectives

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

- That the Ballot Return Station is accessible;
- That persons with disabilities are able to independently cast their vote and verify their selection, and that assistance is available if desired;
- That persons with disabilities have full access to all information on where and when to vote on certified candidates;
- That persons with disabilities can fully participate in the Municipal Election as an elector, candidate or Registered Third Party;
- That efforts made to ensure that electors with disabilities are aware of the accessibility measures available via channels such as the newspaper, election communications, the Township's website, and social media.

Alternative Voting Method

Vote-by-Mail is an alternative voting method that allows a person to vote from the convenience of their own home – when they want and where they want. The traditional method of voting has one or more features that may pose challenges for voters with disabilities (i.e. polling location with barriers, lack of accessible parking, configuration of voting station). The Vote-by-Mail method is convenient for those voters with disabilities as it allows voters to complete their ballot from their own home with the aid of their own assistive devices.

Assistance to Candidates

- **Campaign Expenses** – Expenses that are incurred by a candidate with a disability that are directly related to the disability, and would not have been incurred but for the election to which the expenses relate are excluded from the permitted spending limit for the candidate.

- **Guide to Accessible Elections** – All candidates have access to a copy of the Candidate’s Guide to Accessible Elections produced by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing in partnership with the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO) available through the Candidate Portal.

Assistive Devices and Service Animals

Election Staff will make available assistive devices that will aid those with disabilities in marking their ballot. The following aids will be made available upon request, to electors at Town Hall:

- Magnifiers for people with low vision
- Pads of paper and pens for people with impaired hearing

Service Animals

Electors requiring service animals are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at the Ballot Return Station. They will be permitted to accompany the elector in all areas where public access is allowed.

Ballot Return Station

The Township of Uxbridge Town Hall is the location from which all election services will be provided, including the Ballot Return Station. The Municipal Office is a barrier-free facility with accessible entrances for persons with mobility impairments. There are two, clearly marked, barrier-free parking spaces in the parking lot in front of Town Hall with adequate curb cuts allowing access to the main floor entrance and one clearly marked barrier-free parking space in the rear parking lot of Town Hall. Both entrances to the building are equipped with marked automatic door openers and the doors are wide enough to accommodate wheelchair or scooter access. The Ballot Return Station is located on the main floor with level access from the front entrance, and an elevator is available for those entering from the rear entrance on the lower level. The corridors are kept clear and floors are even and hard surfaced and any doormats or carpeting shall be level with the floor. A designated barrier-free private area with adequate lighting and

seating with a suitably low writing surface will be made available should a person choose to mark their ballot at Town Hall.

Assistance to Electors with Disabilities

Through the use of a mail-in voting system, the Township of Uxbridge is able to facilitate the opportunity for electors to cast their ballot by various means and for extended periods of time during the voting period. Should an elector choose to mark their ballot at Town Hall or simply to personally return their completed Voting Kit, rather than through regular mail, the Township will endeavor to ensure that the process is accessible to those persons with a disability.

Voting Assistance

Persons with disabilities who require assistance completing their ballot may either attend the Ballot Return Station at Town Hall or request a home visit through the Clerk's Office. Election Staff will consult with the elector to determine whether the elector would prefer a home visit.

Home Visit

If a home visit is requested, two election Staff will attend at the elector's home. Confirmation will be made that the elector is on the Voters' List and in the event that the elector's name is not on the list, the appropriate form will be completed on-site by election staff on behalf of the elector.

If a Vote-by-Mail kit was received, election staff can assist with its completion if requested. If a Kit was not received in the mail, a Kit will be provided, and staff can assist with its completion if requested. In both instances, the elector will be offered the opportunity to complete and mail the ballot on their own, or to receive assistance from election staff with the marking and return of their ballot to the Ballot Return Station at Town Hall.

Assistive Transportation to the Ballot Return Station

If an elector faces a mobility disability and cannot attend the Ballot Return Station without assistance, election staff will facilitate transportation arrangements to the Ballot Return Station. In consultation with the elector,

election staff will assist the elector in arranging for an accessible taxicab or Durham Region Transit (DRT) Specialized Services if the elector has prequalified for the DRT service.

Assistance from Election Staff

Election Staff at the Ballot Return Station or attending a home visit may assist an elector by marking the ballot or reading the ballot aloud. Election Staff shall work with the person with the disability to determine the extent to which assistance is needed and the best way in which this assistance can be provided.

Note: All Election Officials appointed by the Clerk are required to take an oath, stating their commitment to confidentiality and that they will mark the ballot as directed by the elector (if the elector requests this type of assistance).

Support Persons

Persons with disabilities may be accompanied by a support person inside the Ballot Return Station who may mark the ballot for said person, or read the ballot aloud. There are no prescribed oaths to be taken by support persons. In addition, the Clerk or designated Election Official can also assist a voter in completing their ballot. In this instance, prior to entering the designated area, the person with the disability and the Clerk or designated Election Official will determine the extent to which assistance is needed and the best way it may be provided. This may include marking the ballot as directed by the elector, if requested. All Election Officials are required to swear an oath of secrecy.

Retirement and Nursing Homes

Following MPAC's enumeration period, election staff will contact the administrators of retirement and nursing homes to ensure the accuracy of the Voters' List at these institutions. If inaccuracies are identified, election staff will work with the administrator to make the corrections.

In consultation with retirement and nursing home administrators, election staff will determine a day and time to attend the residence to provide voting assistance to residents. Notices of the date and time will be posted in the residence, and will be provided with sufficient notice to be added to calendars that may be maintained by the home for residents. If deemed necessary, election officials may provide voting assistance to residents in their specific living areas or at their bedside.

Information to Electors – Alternative Formats

Election information will be made available through a range of channels and in diverse formats, including:

- Information available in large print (upon request) and also available on the Township's website in downloadable format.
- Material in plain/clear language for electors, service providers, and others who may be providing assistance.
- Notices will be posted on community bulletin boards in municipal and private facilities.

Note: Election information does not include the Voting Kit or contents.

Election Staff Training

Election Staff have been trained in accordance with the Township of Uxbridge Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy. All Staff carrying out election duties have been trained to recognize and ensure that persons with disabilities are served in a way that accommodates their needs. Training included:

1. How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities.
2. How to interact with persons with disabilities who use assistive devices or require the assistance of a service animal or support person.

3. How to use voting equipment and supplies in an accessible manner to deliver election services.
4. What to do if a person is having difficulty accessing election information or services.

Notice of Temporary Service Disruption

If there is a temporary disruption in the delivery of election information or services, the Clerk's Office shall provide public notice on the Township's election website, at the physical site of the disruption and when possible, in the local media. The notice shall include the reason for the disruption, anticipated duration and a description of alternative methods of delivering the information or service. Every effort shall be made to provide alternative methods of providing the information or service to persons with disabilities.

Feedback

Public feedback about the manner in which election services are provided to persons with disabilities may be submitted to the Clerk's Office through a variety of methods.

Telephone: 905-852-9181 ext. 209

In Person: Town Hall, 51 Toronto Street South, Uxbridge

Fax: 905-852-9674

E-mail: election@uxbridge.ca

Mail: Clerk's Office, 51 Toronto Street South, P.O. Box 190 Uxbridge, Ontario, L9P 1T1

One method of submitting feedback is to complete the Customer Service Complaint and Feedback Form located on the Township's website. This form can be completed and forwarded to the Clerk's Office for action. In addition, staff working in Township facilities can complete the form and submit the feedback on behalf of the person with a disability. Each completed form is reviewed by Township Staff who will respond directly to

the candidate or elector within two business days, providing an anticipated action and timeframe for a full response where appropriate.

The feedback process provides election staff with an opportunity to take corrective measures to prevent similar recurrences, address training needs, enhance service delivery, and provide alternative methods of providing election services.

Uxbridge Accessibility Advisory Committee

The Uxbridge Accessibility Advisory Committee has been consulted on the Accessible Election Plan at their October 3, 2022, meeting and passed the following recommendation:

“That the Committee endorse the 2022 Accessible Election Plan.”

Reporting

In accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, the Clerk will submit a report to Council about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that will affect electors and candidates with disabilities within 90 days after the election.

Additional Information

The Township of Uxbridge’s website is continuously updated to reflect the most recent election developments and information. Visit the site for an up-to-date list of candidates and other important messages or events throughout the election year at www.uxbridge.ca/election.

Please note that the Clerk, at any time, has the right to amend this plan to facilitate the vote, count and tabulation of the votes, and security of the vote.

The Clerk’s ruling on any interpretation of this document is final.