



# **2018 Municipal Election**

## **Accessibility Plan**

**June 11, 2018**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This plan will address the specific accessibility requirements in relation to the 2018 Municipal Election in the Municipality of Thames Centre.

The Municipality of Thames Centre has chosen the telephone and internet alternative voting method for the 2018 Municipal Election. This voting method offers more convenience and accessibility as it gives the voter access to the voting system from home or from virtually anywhere in the world, through the use of a personal computer, mobile phone or tablet.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

This plan is intended to highlight measures that the Municipality of Thames Centre will be implementing to ensure equal opportunity for all electors and candidates. These objectives include:

- That persons with disabilities are able to independently cast their vote and verify their selection.
- That persons with disabilities have full and equal access to all information on where and when to vote and on eligible candidates.
- That persons with disabilities can fully participate in the Municipal Election as an elector, candidate, or election official.
- That efforts are made to ensure that electors with disabilities are aware of the accessibility measures available via channels such as the newspaper, media launches, the Municipality's website and social media.
- That the Voter Help Centre at 4305 Hamilton Road, Dorchester be accessible to electors who choose to cast their vote at that particular location.

## 3. MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS ACT, 1996, AS AMENDED – LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

The Clerk is responsible for conducting municipal elections and establishing policies and procedures to ensure that all electors have the opportunity to fully participate in the 2018 Municipality of Thames Centre Election.

The *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, as amended states the following:

- 12.1(1) A clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities.
- 12.1(2) 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.

- 12.1(3) 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.

#### **4. DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN**

This Plan is a “living” document which will be improved and updated as new opportunities are identified or become available. The following steps shall be implemented as a continuation of the development of the 2018 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan:

- Review and analysis of documents, policies and other supporting materials from AMCTO, neighboring municipalities, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and other various stakeholder groups.
- Establish staff training standards and practices directly related to the Election to ensure that people with disabilities 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.
- Consultation with 2018 Election Team to substantiate that the Plan meets the needs of person with disabilities.
- Provide a copy of the Plan to the Middlesex County Joint Accessibility Coordinator for information.
- Presentation of Plan to the Council of the Municipality of Thames Centre for information.

#### **5. DEFINITION OF DISABILITY**

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* defines “disability” as follows:

- a. Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;
- b. A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- c. A learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- d. A mental disorder, or;

- e. An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

Disabilities can take many forms, both visible and invisible. The following criteria were considered in the development of this Plan:

- Policies and procedures must be consistent with the principles of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* and must respect 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; and
- Compliance with the Municipality's Accessibility Policy must be followed throughout the election process.

## **6. ACCESSIBILITY POLICY**

Municipalities are required to comply with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005. The Council of the Municipality of Thames Centre adopted a revised Corporate Accessibility Policy on January 9, 2017.

The Municipality of Thames Centre is committed to making services accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities.

In fulfilling the Municipality's commitment, the Clerk's Office will provide its election services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. We will give people with disabilities the same opportunity to access our services in the same place and in a similar way as others. Election Officials will adhere to the Accessibility Policy throughout the election process.

The Accessibility Policy is attached as Appendix A and is available on the Municipality's website.

## **7. VOTING METHODS**

The Municipality of Thames Centre will be working with Intelivote Systems Inc. in the 2018 Municipal Election to provide eVoting services to eligible voters. This includes the convenience and independence of voting from anywhere via telephone, internet or in-person at the Voter Help Centre during the voting period of October 15 - 22, 2018.

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 Intelivote 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 with disabilities 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 persons with disabilities to vote from any location and from a selection of methods/devices, there is an increase in the capability for the voter to vote without any assistance. 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 the Voter Help Centre throughout the voting period.

### Telephone Voting

Eligible voters may vote using a touch-tone telephone, and the telephone number, and 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 Intelivote 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.

Voters may also use the TTY (Teletypewriter) service to access eVoting services. TTY users should have full confidence when using the TTY service integrated with the Intelivote Systems voting application by phone. TTY operators received training and are required by law to maintain confidentiality of the information disclosed. No record-keeping of conversations is stored.

### Internet Voting

Eligible voters may vote online, using a smart phone, tablet device, or computer and any accompanying assistive devices or software, along with their PIN and qualifying information, to access the internet address provided in their Voter Instruction Letter.

The Intelivote System has been created to meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG-2 Level AA), so that persons with disabilities 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.

### In-person Voting at Voter Help Centre

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

Access to the Voter Help Centre interior 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 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 during the following hours for the voting period:

- between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. on October 15, 2018;
- between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. on October 16, 2018 to October 19, 2018;
- between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. on October 20, 2018; and
- between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. on October 22, 2018.

### Special Voting Provisions

Election staff are planning to attend the following institutions and retirement homes to set-up on-site voting kiosks, to allow its occupants to vote and provide assistance, if requested:

- a. Dorchester Terrace
- b. Nissouri Manor
- c. Seniors Buildings – 22 Carleton Court, 73 Carleton Court and 2061 Dorchester Road

## **8. VOTING LOCATION(S)**

The alternative voting method allows for people to vote from anywhere they have access to a telephone or internet. A Voter Help Centre will be located at the Municipal Office, 4305 Hamilton Road, Dorchester, Ontario.

An audit of the Voter Help Centre will be conducted with the following considerations taken into account when determining accessibility of the Voter Help Centre:

### Accessible Route

The name and/or address of the voting location shall be clearly visible. An easily navigable route will be marked for entry into the voting 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 voting location for individuals needing a rest.

### Entrance and Exit

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

### Parking

Accessible parking shall be available at the Voter Help Centre. 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 voting location. By-law officers will monitor and enforce parking at voting locations throughout the day.

## **9. VOTING ASSISTANCE**

### Support Person

Pursuant to the section entitled "Support Persons" on page 4 of the Municipality of Thames Centre's Accessibility Policy, people with disabilities shall be permitted to be accompanied by a support person at any voting location. A designated support person (friend) will be administered an oath of secrecy/confidentiality by an Election Official prior to providing any such assistance.



## Service Animals

Pursuant to the section entitled “Service Animals” on page 4 of the Municipality of Thames Centre’s Accessibility Policy, individuals requiring service animals are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at the Voter Help Centre.

## Election Officials

At the Voter Help Centre, upon request, Election Officials are available to assist any voter who requires assistance in casting their online 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.

## **10. COMMUNICATION**

The 2018 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan will be made available at the Municipal Office and on the Municipality of Thames Centre’s website [www.thamescentre.on.ca](http://www.thamescentre.on.ca). Alternative formats will be made available upon request.

Information regarding the accessibility measures provided for the 2018 Municipal Election shall be included in general election advertising as well as in the 2018 Municipal Election Nomination Package.

### Election Materials

The Municipality of Thames Centre is required, as per the Municipality’s Corporate Accessibility Policy, to provide a copy of a document to a person with a disability, or the information contained in the document, in a format that takes into account the person’s disability.

### 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 Municipality and the person with a disability may agree upon the format to be used for the document or information.

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

### General Election Materials

**Large Print** – Printed material generated by the Municipality of Thames Centre will be provided in a Arial font, 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 Municipality of Thames Centre will be created in an accessible format for posting on the website. See also alternate formats above.

### Service Disruptions

From time to time and/or for unforeseen circumstances beyond the Municipality'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 Municipality shall provide reasonable notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by persons with disabilities.

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 Municipality's 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 with disabilities at the voting place.

In the event of disruptions to service or unforeseen circumstances that affect the accessibility of the Voter Help Centre during the voting period or on Voting Day, notices of disruption will be posted in real time:

- On the Municipality of Thames Centre Website
- On Facebook
- At the Voter Help Centre
- Where applicable, a media advisory will be issued.

## **11. CANDIDATES**

Candidates must also have regard to the needs of electors with disabilities. Campaign offices, election materials and canvassing should all be reviewed in order to ensure that they are fully accessible. The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario has released several quick reference documents to assist candidates with accessible elections considerations:

- [Count Us In: Removing Barriers to Political Participation - Quick Reference Guide to Accessible Campaign Information and Communication](#)
- [Count Us In: Removing Barriers to Political Participation - Quick Reference Guide to Accessible Constituency, Riding Association, Central Party and Campaign Offices](#)

- [Count Us In: Removing Barriers to Political Participation - Quick Reference Guide to Accessible All Candidates Meetings](#)

## **12. ELECTION FEEBACK**

The Clerk welcomes your feedback to identify how we can improve accessibility for our voters and candidates with disabilities to deliver an accessible election.

Feedback can be shared by contacting the following:

Margaret Alexander, Clerk  
4305 Hamilton Road  
Dorchester, ON N0L 1G3  
Phone: 519-268-7334 ext. 222  
Email: [malexander@thamescentre.on.ca](mailto:malexander@thamescentre.on.ca)

or by using the Municipality of Thames Centre's Feedback Form which is available at the Municipal Office or Municipal Website.

All feedback pertaining to election services will be forwarded to the Election Assistant Returning Officer for response. If you require assistance with completing the feedback form for submission, municipal staff are able to assist you on request. Our goal is to respond to 2018 Municipal Election questions/feedback within two business days.

## **13. REPORTING**

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

The Clerk's post-election report will be posted on the Municipality's website for information.