



TOWN OF SAUGEEN SHORES

Election Accessibility Plan

2026 Municipal Election

This Plan is for use in the 2026 Municipal Election in conjunction with the Town of Saugeen Shores Policies and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) standards.

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Introduction

The Election's Accessibility Plan supports and strengthens the Town's commitment and efforts to respond to the needs of persons with disabilities.

The focus of this Plan is to ensure that electoral services are accessible to all electors and candidates, to identify and eliminate barriers for persons with disabilities, and to create a positive voting experience.

The Clerk's Office will continue to learn, develop, and adjust its approaches in order to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. The review of accessibility issues and initiatives and addressing barrier prevention or removal is an ongoing practice. This plan will be improved and updated as new opportunities are identified or become available.

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 2026 Town of Saugeen Shores' Municipal 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. 2016, c. 15, s. 11.
- 12.1 (3) Within 90 days after voting day in a regular election, the Clerk shall prepare a report for the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities and shall make the report available to the public. 2016, c. 15, s. 11.
- 41 (3) 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). 1996, c. 32, Sched., s. 41 (3); 2001, c. 32, s. 30(1).
- 45 (2) In establishing the locations of voting places, the Clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities.

Definition of a Disability (AODA)

"Disability" means:

- (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 co-ordination, 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*; (“handicap”)

Disabilities can take many forms, both visible and invisible. The following criteria was considered in the development of the Election Accessibility 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
- The Town of Saugeen Shores Customer Service Policy must be followed throughout the election process.

Customer Service Policy

The Town of Saugeen Shores is committed to making its services accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities. The Town complies with the Customer Service Standards of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

In fulfilling its mission, the Town of Saugeen Shores will always provide its services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. People with disabilities will be given the same opportunity to access services in the same place and in a similar way as others. The Town’s Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy can be reviewed at <https://www.saugeenshores.ca/health-safety-and-community-support/accessibility/>

Integrated Accessibility Standard Policy

This Policy establishes the Integrated Accessibility Standards in the areas of Employment, Information and Communication and Transportation for the Town of Saugeen Shores in accordance with Ontario Regulation 191/11. The Town’s Policy can be reviewed at: <https://www.saugeenshores.ca/health-safety-and-community-support/accessibility/>

Staff Training

All staff carrying out election duties will complete Accessible Customer Services Training and Integrated Accessible Standards Regulations (I A S R) Training as well as specific Election Training. They will comply with the Town’s Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy and Policy Integrated Accessibility Standards. They will be able to recognize and ensure that persons with disabilities are served in a way that accommodates their needs.

Training will include:

- How to interact/communicate with people with various types of disabilities;
- How to interact with persons with disabilities who use assistive devices and require the assistance of a support person or a service animal;
- How to clearly explain internet and telephone voting;
- What to do if a person is having difficulty accessing election information or services;
- How to provide voter assistance if requested;

Assistance to Electors

General

The 2026 Municipal Election will be conducted with Internet and Telephone Voting methods. Detailed information about each voting method is set out in the 2026 Election Procedures Manual, available on the municipal website or from the Clerk's Department and can be provided in an alternative format upon request.

Please contact us at 519-832-2008 Ext. 104 or 105 or elections@saugeenshores.ca if you require your Voter Information Package in an accessible format.

Provision of Election Information

Election information will be provided to electors and candidates with disabilities in an alternative format, agreed upon between the requester and the Clerk.

Accessible Voting Area

Section 45(2) of the M E A requires that the Clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities.

An accessible voting area, located at the Municipal Office, 600 Tomlinson Drive, Port Elgin, will be available to voters throughout the voting period during regular office hours (including Saturday and Sunday) and on Voting Day until 8:00 p.m.

Parking

The Municipal Office parking lot has 6 designated parking spaces, including 3 van-accessible parking spaces for individuals with disabilities that are clearly posted and located close to the entrance to the voting area.

Entrance

The entrance to the Municipal Office voting area is level, leading to the entrance door. Doors to the Municipal Office have barrier free door opening devices and are wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair or other mobility devices.

Interior

Access to the interior voting area is level. Carpeting and doormats are level with the floor to prevent potential tripping hazards. The voting area is well lit, and seating shall be made available. The Municipal Office also has accessible washrooms.

Accessible Voting Booth

The voting booth will be low in height and have a wide area to allow individuals using mobility aids to vote independently and secretively.

Service Animals/Assistive Devices

Electors with disabilities are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at the election location.

Electors with disabilities may use assistive devices as needed for their disability.

Voting Assistance

Persons with disabilities may be accompanied by a support person within the voting area or staff can assist the voter in casting their vote. Voting area staff shall, in conjunction with the person with the disability, determine the extent to which they need assistance and the best way to provide assistance. The Election Official shall require the voter making the request to take an Oral Oath to vote with assistance. In lieu of the Election Official providing assistance, the voter may request that a friend accompany and assist them at the Help Centre. Any friend assisting shall be required to take the Oral Oath of Friend of Elector to assist and/or vote as directed by the voter.

Accessible Voting Technologies

Voting areas will have a computer (or iPad) for internet voting that will assist voters with disabilities in casting their votes with independence and privacy. Staff will be available to assist voters at the kiosk upon request.

Telephones may be available at the Municipal Office to provide those without internet or telephone connection access to vote. Assistance will be provided as outlined in these guidelines.

Bruce County Libraries also provide internet access during regular library hours. This provides voters another option of location to access the internet if they do not have their own access to the internet.

Notice of Temporary Service Disruption

The Clerk shall provide public notice on the municipal website and in the local media if there is a temporary disruption in the delivery of election information or services. The notice shall include the reason for the disruption, the expected duration and an explanation 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.

Staff Assistance

Staff are available throughout the election to assist with any issues that may arise with respect to providing a barrier-free election.

Contact Information for Assistance:

Telephone: 519-832-2008 Ext. 104 or 105

Email: elections@saugeenshores.ca

In Person: Municipal Office
Clerk's Department
600 Tomlinson Drive
Port Elgin, ON
N0H 2C0

Internet Voting

Internet voting allows voters to vote through secured internet services in the location of their choice. This method provides for easy voting for persons with a variety of disabilities to cast their vote with independence and privacy as voters have the option of using the assistive tools they have on their own computer.

This method of voting is designed to encourage voter participation as voters don't have to attend a physical location to cast their ballot and accessibility and privacy for persons with disabilities is maximized.

Telephone Voting

Telephone voting allows voters to vote through secured telephone services which provides for easy voting for persons with a variety of disabilities to cast their vote with independence and privacy. Land lines or cell phones can be used to vote, the method is compatible with assistive devices.

Voters can register their vote selection with the telephone keypad or voice commands, greatly increasing accessibility, privacy and independence for voters who do not have internet access.

Assistance to Candidates and Registered Third Party Advertisers

General

The 2026 election will be conducted with Internet and Telephone Voting methods. Detailed information about each voting method is set out in the 2026 Election Procedures Manual, available on the Town's website or from the Clerk's Department and can be made available in an alternative format upon request.

Please contact us at 519-832-2008 ext. 104 or 105 or election@saugeenshores.ca if you require your Candidate Package in an accessible format.

The Clerk's Department staff is available throughout the election to assist with any issues that may arise with respect to providing a barrier-free election.

Service Animals/Support Persons

Candidates and registered third party advertisers are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal and/or support person at all designated election locations.

Campaign Expenses

Campaign expenses include those that are incurred by a candidate with a disability or a registered third party advertiser with a disability, are directly related to the disability, and would not have been incurred but for the election to which the expenses relate. (Section 88.19(3.9) of M E A)

Feedback

The Clerk welcomes feedback to identify areas where changes need to be considered and ways in which the Town can improve the delivery of an accessible Election.

This Plan is a living document and will continue to undergo changes and updates.

Please provide us with your feedback so that we know how to best provide an accessible election. Feedback on this Plan can be submitted through:

Email: elections@saugeenshores.ca

Phone: Clerk 519-832-2008 Ext. 104

Fax: 519-832-2140

In Person: Town of Saugeen Shores
Clerk's Office
600 Tomlinson Drive
Port Elgin, ON
Located in the Saugeen Shores Complex (behind Shopper's Drug Mart Plaza)

By Mail: Town of Saugeen Shores
Clerk's Office
P.O. Box 820
Port Elgin, ON
N0H 2C0

Additional Information

Town of Saugeen Shores Election Website:
<https://www.saugeenshores.ca/elections>

Town of Saugeen Shores Accessibility Website
<https://www.saugeenshores.ca/health-safety-and-community-support/accessibility/>

e-laws Municipal Elections Act

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/96m32>