



ONTARIO, CA

COCHRANE

WONDERFULLY UNEXPECTED

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

2026 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Approved by:

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Clerk/Returning Officer**

Town of Cochrane

April 17, 2026

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

1. INTRODUCTION

- a) The Clerk of the Town of Cochrane is responsible for the proper legislative and administrative conduct of the 2026 Municipal Election. In fulfilling this responsibility, the Clerk is required, pursuant to section 12.1 of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, to have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities and to prepare a plan for the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers that affect their participation in the election.
- b) This Election Accessibility Plan outlines the measures that will be implemented to ensure that the 2026 Municipal Election is conducted in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities, promotes integration and equal opportunity, and enables electors to vote independently and privately wherever reasonably possible.
- c) This Plan reflects the principles of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and operates in conjunction with the Town's Accessibility Plan and Accessible Customer Service Policy.
- d) Accessibility is integrated into all stages of the election process, including voting methods, communication, staffing, and service delivery.
- e) Within ninety (90) days following Voting Day, the Clerk shall prepare a report to Council outlining the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers encountered during the election.

2. OBJECTIVES

- a) The objectives of this Plan are to:
 - i. Ensure that persons with disabilities are able to independently cast their vote and verify their selection;
 - ii. Provide equal access to information on where and how to vote, and on eligible candidates;
 - iii. Enable full participation in the election as an elector, candidate, or election official;
 - iv. Ensure that accessibility measures are clearly communicated and widely available;
 - v. Identify, remove, and prevent barriers to participation wherever reasonably possible.

3. DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN

- a) This Plan is a living document and will be refined as best practices and opportunities for improvement are identified.
- b) In developing this Plan, the Clerk has considered:
 - i. Legislative requirements under the Municipal Elections Act, 1996;
 - ii. Guidance from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing;

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- iii. Resources and best practices from AMCTO and other municipalities;
 - iv. The Town's accessibility policies and service delivery standards;
 - v. The capabilities and accessibility features of the Alternative Voting Method (AVM) system.
- c) Election Officials shall receive training to ensure that accessibility needs are recognized and accommodated in a respectful, consistent, and legally compliant manner.

4. APPLICATION OF CLERK'S PROCEDURES

- a) This Accessibility Plan shall be read in conjunction with the *Clerk's 2026 Municipal Election Procedures (ME-2026 Series)*.
- b) Where operational direction is required, the applicable procedure shall prevail, including but not limited to:
 - i. ME-2026-14 – Alternative Voting Method
 - ii. ME-2026-15 – Emergency Procedure
 - iii. ME-2026-07 – Voter Assistance Services
 - iv. ME-2026-08 – Voters' List Administration
- c) All forms referenced in this Plan are contained in Appendix A of the Clerk's Guide of Municipal Election Procedures

5. VOTING METHODS AND ACCESSIBILITY

- a) The 2026 Municipal Election will be conducted using an Alternative Voting Method (AVM), supplemented by in-person assistance at Voter Help Centres and through the Town's Voter Assistance Services (On-Call).

5.1 Internet Voting

- a) Electors may vote using a computer, tablet, or smartphone, including assistive technologies such as screen readers, magnification software, adaptive keyboards, or voice-recognition tools.
- b) The voting system shall comply with recognized accessibility standards, including WCAG Level AA, to ensure usability for individuals with a wide range of abilities.

5.2 Telephone Voting

- a) Electors may vote using a touch-tone telephone. The system shall:
 - i. Use clear and plain language prompts;
 - ii. Provide confirmation of voter selections;
 - iii. Support accessibility for individuals with visual impairments or limited internet access.

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN**5.3 Voter Help Centres (VHCs)**

- a) Accessible Voter Help Centres shall be established during the Voting Period to provide in-person assistance to electors.
- b) Each location shall be assessed to ensure:
 - i. Accessible entrances and routes;
 - ii. Adequate interior space for mobility devices;
 - iii. Clear signage and appropriate lighting;
 - iv. Seating availability;
 - v. Barrier-free access to voting stations.
- c) Voter Help Centres are provided for accessibility purposes and do not constitute traditional polling places.

5.4 Voter Assistance Services (On-Call)

- a) The Town of Cochrane shall provide Voter Assistance Services (On-Call) in accordance with *ME-2026-07 (Voter Assistance Services Procedure)*.
- b) This service is intended to assist electors who, due to disability, illness, or other barriers, are unable to independently access the Alternative Voting Method or attend a Voter Help Centre.
- c) Voter Assistance Services (On-Call) shall be provided upon request to the Clerk and shall be delivered by appointed Election Officials.
- d) Where assistance is provided at a private residence, the elector must expressly confirm that they consent to an Election Official attending for the purpose of facilitating access to the voting process.
- e) Assistance shall be limited to enabling access to the voting process and shall not interfere with the secrecy, independence, or integrity of the elector's vote.

6. VOTING ASSISTANCE**6.1 Support Persons**

- a) Electors requiring assistance may be accompanied by a support person at a Voter Help Centre or when receiving Voter Assistance Services (On-Call), in accordance with *ME-2026-07*.
- b) Prior to providing assistance, the support person shall take an oath of secrecy using the prescribed form (*Oral Oath of Secrecy – Form EL12B*).

6.2 Service Animals

- a) Service animals are permitted at all Voter Help Centres and during Voter Assistance Services (On-Call).

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6.3 Election Officials

- a) Election Officials are available to assist electors upon request in accordance with *ME-2026-07*.
- b) All Election Officials shall be formally appointed and shall take the prescribed oath prior to performing their duties (*Appointment and Oath of Election Official – Form EL11*).
- c) Assistance shall be provided in consultation with the elector and in a manner that preserves dignity, independence, and confidentiality.

7. COMMUNICATION AND ELECTION MATERIALS

- a) The Town is committed to providing accessible election information.

7.1 Accessible Formats

- a) Election materials shall be made available in accessible formats upon request, including:
 - i. Large print;
 - ii. Electronic formats compatible with assistive technology.
- b) Accessible election information is also provided through:
 - i. *The Candidate Information Guide*
 - ii. *The Voter Information Guide and FAQ*
 - iii. *The Third Party Advertisers Guide*

7.2 Website and Digital Content

- a) Election information published online shall comply with accessibility standards and support assistive technologies.
- b) Where feasible, digital content shall include captioning and accessible formatting.

7.3 Public Communication

- a) Information regarding accessible voting options shall be communicated through:
 - i. The municipal website;
 - ii. Public notices and advertising;
 - iii. *The Voter Information Guide and the election FAQ resource.*

8. SERVICE DISRUPTIONS

- a) In the event of a planned or unplanned disruption to accessible election services, the Clerk shall respond in accordance with the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 and applicable procedures, including *ME-2026-15 (Emergency Procedure)*, where required.
- b) Notice shall include:
 - i. The reason for the disruption;
 - ii. Its anticipated duration;

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- iii. Alternative service arrangements where feasible.
- c) Notices shall be posted at affected locations and on the municipal website.

9. ACCESSIBILITY OF VOTING LOCATIONS

- a) Where in-person services are provided, locations shall be selected and maintained to ensure accessibility, including:
 - i. Accessible routes and entrances;
 - ii. Adequate interior space and lighting;
 - iii. Clear signage;
 - iv. Accessible parking near entrances;
 - v. Ongoing monitoring to ensure accessibility features remain unobstructed.

10. ASSISTANCE TO CANDIDATES

- a) Candidates may request accessible formats of nomination forms, guides, and election materials.
- b) Accessible materials are provided through the *Candidate Information Guide and Appendix A (Forms) in the Clerk's Guide of Municipal Election Procedures*.
- c) Candidates are encouraged to consider accessibility in campaign materials and operations.
- d) Disability-related expenses that would not have been incurred but for the election are excluded from a candidate's spending limit in accordance with the Municipal Elections Act, 1996.

11. FEEDBACK AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- a) The Clerk welcomes feedback from electors and candidates regarding accessibility.
- b) Feedback may be submitted in writing, electronically, by telephone, or in person, and will be considered as part of the post-election accessibility review.

12. POST-ELECTION REPORTING

- a) Within ninety (90) days following Voting Day, the Clerk shall submit a report to Council outlining:
 - i. Barriers identified;
 - ii. Measures taken to remove or mitigate barriers;
 - iii. Recommendations for future improvements.