



# **Township of Muskoka Lakes 2026 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan**

**Version: A**

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**Pursuant to section 12.1 (2) of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996.**

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## **Introduction**

The Corporation of the Township of Muskoka Lakes will continue to make reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures are consistent in providing quality goods and services that are accessible to all persons. We will continue to promote an inclusive community that is dedicated to pursuing healthy and balanced lifestyles for everyone.

These procedures may be revised as deemed necessary by the Clerk up to and including Voting Day.

## **Objectives**

The 2026 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan will ensure that:

- Individuals with disabilities, without exception, are able to independently and privately cast their vote;
- Individuals with disabilities will have full and equal access to all information concerning the 2026 Municipal Election;
- Individuals with disabilities can fully participate in the Municipal Election as volunteers, electors and/or candidates; and
- The Township of Muskoka Lakes will make the plan available to the public before voting day in a regular election.
- This plan will be improved and updated as new opportunities are identified or become available.

The Township of Muskoka Lakes' 2026 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan will be made available through the Township's website. The plan will also be made available in an alternate format, upon request.

## **Barriers to Accessibility**

Disabilities can take many forms and can range from temporary to permanent. Disabilities are predominantly non-visible and no one should ever make assumptions. There are

many types of disabilities and their effects can limit an individual's ability to perform everyday tasks.

A "barrier" is anything that stops a person with a disability from fully taking part in society because of that disability. Some barriers, and examples illustrating those barriers, follow:

#### Attitudinal Barriers

- Inaccurate beliefs or perceptions about a person's ability;
- Someone who is abrupt, insensitive, impatient and uncomfortable with people slowed by a physical, language or developmental disability;
- Receiving WSIB is to be considered a disability

#### Built Environment Barriers

- Includes building design, shape and dimensions of rooms, width of doorways, stairways, inaccessible bathrooms.

#### Physical Barriers

- Additions to an interior or exterior environment such as doors, windows, furniture, planters, hardware, recreational or playground equipment, lighting, signage, use of colour, materials, etc.

#### Communication Barriers

- Difficulties providing or receiving information in person or by telephone;
- Someone who speaks too quickly or unclearly;
- Use of language that is not understandable such as the use of complex words or jargon.

#### Information Barriers

- Information is not available in an accessible format – large print, audio/video, plain language, closed captioned video, or computer diskette/data stick;

- Inadequate or incomprehensible signage – font, size, colour, location, or faded.

#### Systemic Barriers (policies, procedures and practices)

- When practices or policies restrict participation, often done unintentionally;
- Needing to fill out a (complex) form to get a service and not being able to because of a disability.

#### Technological Barriers

- When a technology cannot be modified to support various assistive devices;
- Lack of visual alarms;
- Website is not accessible – no colour contrast or large print options, screen reader, cluttered appearance, difficult to navigate.

## **Internet and Telephone Voting**

The Township of Muskoka Lakes has selected an Internet and Telephone voting method for the 2026 Municipal Election. Votes can be cast commencing Wednesday, October 14, 2026 at 10:00 a.m. up to Monday, October 26, 2026 at 8:00 p.m. These voting methods will enable electors to cast their votes from anywhere in the world with telephone or internet service. This ensures that all voters have an extensive opportunity to cast their vote using an accessible and convenient method.

The flexibility of Internet and Telephone voting can present opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate in the election while being consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.

Should an elector choose to do so, they will have the option of voting at the Election Help Centre, located at 1 Bailey Street, Port Carling with the assistance of an Election Official or a support person of their choosing. At the Election Help Centre, the voting method will still be via internet or telephone.

Simply Voting Internet Voting solution, the vendor selected to operate the election, supports a minimum of WCAG 2.0 Level AA accessibility standards, and is also compatible with screen reading technology. Simply Voting also conducts a third-party Accessibility Compliance audit of their systems, prior to the start of voting, that they will disclose with the Township.

Voters will be able to vote on a computer or mobile device of their choosing at any time within the voting period. This will be particularly beneficial for voters with mobility disabilities that may encounter difficulty travelling to the Election Help Centre. Voters will also be able to use any devices/software that they already own and are familiar with on their computer or mobile device in order to cast their vote. The Simply Voting system is also compatible with all modern browsers and web-enabled cell phones.

## **Telephone Voting**

Telephone voting allows voters to cast their votes using any point-to-point telephone connection. Electors will receive a Voter Information Letter containing instructions on how to dial in to access the system as well as how to navigate the audio ballot.

## **Voter Information Letter**

Voter information letters will be mailed out to every eligible elector recorded on the voters' list with complete information prior to the start of the voting period. The letter will contain information how to vote as well as a unique PIN allowing the voter to cast their vote online or via telephone. This letter shall meet accessibility requirements by including the following features:

- Use of black text on white paper to achieve optimum colour contrast;
- Minimal use of italics or underlining;
- Minimum printed using 11 or 12 point in Arial.

## **Voter Information Letter in Alternate Formats**

A voter may request their voter information letter be produced in an alternate format. The Clerk or designate will consult with the person making the request to determine the suitability of an accessible format or communication support. Final determination as to which accessible format or communication support used resides with the Clerk.

If an alternate format is requested, please note that the time it will take to receive the letter will vary depending on the format agreed upon.

## **Election Help Centre**

In order to ensure that the Election Help Centre is accessible to all electors, a site audit (Appendix A) will be completed prior to completing the set up and orientation layout. Every effort will be made to ensure that the identified election help centre is as accessible as possible. The site audit will assess the following:

- Exterior Paths of Travel
- Parking
- Entrances
- Fire Safety
- Emergency Preparedness
- Signage
- Accessible Washrooms
- Noise
- Lighting

## **Candidate Assistance**

As a courtesy for candidates, the Township of Muskoka Lakes will provide links to provincial resources on our Election webpage such as the Candidates' Guide to Accessible Elections and accessible campaign information and communication.

## **Duties of Election Officials**

Appointed Election Officials will be available to assist any voter who is unable to cast their vote or may have difficulty with reading or writing after the completion of the Oral Oath Form at Election Help Centre. All Election Officials will review this plan and undertake required training with respect to providing accessible customer service to individuals with disabilities.

At the discretion of the Returning Officer, special requests from an elector will be offered on specific pre-set dates, not including election day (October 26, 2026), for an election official to travel to a location with a mobile voting kiosk (i.e. laptop, table) to assist electors who require accommodations. This service is subject to Ontario Public Health regulations and may be suspended if the health and safety of staff is deemed at risk.

## **Application**

All Election Officials will review this plan and undertake required training with respect to providing accessible customer services to individuals with disabilities

## **Support Persons and Service Animals**

If Electors do not wish to seek assistance from Election Officials, electors are also permitted to be accompanied by a support person. A designated support person and/or a friend of the elector will be administered an oral oath of secrecy/confidentiality by an Election Official prior to providing any such assistance.

Electors requiring the assistance of a service animal are permitted to bring the service animal into all areas of the election help centre.

## **Election Communication Strategy**

The Township of Muskoka Lakes' 2026 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan will be made available through the Township's website. The plan will also be made available in an alternate format, upon request.

## **Unexpected Service Interruptions**

Pursuant to section 6 and Appendix A of the Township of Muskoka Lakes Accessible Customer Service Policy (Policy C-GG-21), in the event of an unexpected service interruption, notice will be provided (where applicable) as quickly as possible.

## **Election Feedback**

As outlined in the Accessible Customer Service Policy, should a member of the public wish to provide feedback regarding Election accessibility they can do so:

- In person to the Clerk, or designate;
- By telephone: 705-765-3156, extension 211;
- By Fax: 705-765-6755;
- By E-mail: [clerks@muskokalakes.ca](mailto:clerks@muskokalakes.ca);
- By completing the Township of Muskoka Lakes' Accessibility Customer Feedback Form;
- In writing to the attention of: Crystal Best-Sararas, Clerk, 1 Bailey Street, Port Carling, Ontario, ON, P0B 1J0

## **Reporting**

In accordance with section 12.1(3) of the Municipal Elections Act, 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.

## **Additional Information**

Further information relating to accessibility can be found on the Township of Muskoka Lakes website at: [www.muskokalakes.ca](http://www.muskokalakes.ca).

## **Legislation**

In accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, all municipalities are required to adhere to the following provisions:

### Electors and candidates with disabilities

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

### Reports

12 (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 (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.

### Accessibility

45. (2) In establishing the locations of voting places, the clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities.

## Appendix “A”: Election Help Centre Site Audit

Section 1: Facility Contact Information		
Facility Name	Room Name	Date of Audit
Facility Address		
Facility Booking Contact	Telephone Number	Email
Alternate Contact	Telephone Number	Email
Facility Maintenance Contact	Telephone Number	Email

Section 2: Facility Exterior		
Parking		
Number of Parking Lot Spaces	Number of On Street Parking Spaces	Total Number of Accessible Parking Spaces
External Lighting (Y/N)		Is lighting on a timer? (Y/N)

Accessibility Checklist	Y/N	Additional Comments
Is the name of the facility clearly visible at all entry points?		
Are there accessible pathways leading to all entrances of the facility?		
Are the entrance(s) to the facility free of potential barriers? (Such as garbage cans, signs etc.)		
Are the routes to the facility entrance(s) clear, continuous and has a smooth hard surface?		

<b>Accessibility Checklist</b>	<b>Y/N</b>	<b>Additional Comments</b>
Are the routes wide enough for individuals using a wheelchair, walker, scooter, or service animal to travel safely?		
Is the facility accessible by public transit?		
Are the accessible parking spaces clearly marked with signage displaying the international symbol of accessibility?		
Do adjacent sidewalks have curb cuts?		
Are there ramps to access the building?		
Is there enough space to accommodate an individual who uses a vehicle with a wheelchair lift?		
Is there an automatic door opener at every entrance to the facility?		
Are the automatic doors in good working order?		
Are the doorways wide enough for an individual in a wheelchair or scooter to pass through? Minimum is 36 inches.		
Are the elevators (if any) large enough to accommodate at least one individual in a wheelchair?		
Are there accessible public washrooms?		
Is there clear directional signage to guide individuals to Election Help Centre?		

**Election Help Centre Site Audit conducted by the following:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **Appendix “B” Election Help Centre Diagram**

**TO BE DETERMINED UPON COMPLETION OF SITE AUDIT**