

TOWNSHIP of / CANTON de

NORTH STORMONT NORD



2026 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan

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Purpose

The Township of North Stormont is committed to ensuring that persons with disabilities have an opportunity to fully participate in the Municipal Elections with dignity and in a consistent manner with all North Stormont electors. This procedure shall set forth the process for ensuring this commitment is successfully achieved.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Municipal Clerk is responsible for the proper legislative and administrative conduct of municipal elections in the Township of North Stormont. In accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, the Municipal Clerk is required to establish procedures and provide appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities have the opportunity to participate fully in the 2026 Municipal Elections.

Specifically, the principles of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* include:

- a) the secrecy and confidentiality of the individual votes is paramount;
- b) the election should be fair and non-biased;
- c) the election should be accessible to the voters;
- d) the integrity of the process should be maintained throughout the election;
- e) there be certainty that the results of the election reflect the votes cast; and
- f) voters and candidates should be treated fairly and consistently within a municipality.
- g) a proper majority vote decides the election by ensuring, so far as reasonably possible, that valid votes be counted and invalid votes be rejected.

Accordingly, the 2026 Municipal Elections will be conducted in such a manner to ensure that:

- a) Candidates and electors with disabilities have full and equal access to all election information and services.
- b) Persons with disabilities have full access to Voting Places and Help Centres.
- c) Alternative methods and voting assistive devices are made available to all electors to ensure persons with disabilities can independently and privately mark their ballot.

In accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996, as amended*, following the election, the Municipal Clerk will submit a report to Council concerning the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

Staff Training

All staff carrying out election duties will be trained to recognize and ensure that persons with disabilities are served in a way that accommodates their accessibility needs due to a disability. Training will include:

- a) Review of the purposes of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and the Customer Service Standard's requirements of Ontario Regulation 191/11 for the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation.

- b) How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities.
- c) How to interact with persons with disabilities who use assistive devices or require the assistance of a service animal or support person.
- d) How to use voting equipment and assistive devices to deliver election services.
- e) What to do if a person is having difficulty accessing election information or services.

2. VOTING METHODS

The 2026 Township of North Stormont Municipal Election will be working with Voatz Canada Ltd. (Voatz) to provide eVoting services to eligible voters. This includes the convenience and independence of voting from anywhere via telephone, internet or in-person at a polling/voting station during the October 19– 26, 2026 voting period.

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 Voatz 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, 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 in-person Polling Location offered in the Township of North Stormont, throughout the voting period.

Telephone Voting

Eligible voters may vote using a touch-tone telephone, and the toll-free telephone number, date of birth, and the PIN number contained in their Voter Information Letter to access an audio ballot. Communications 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 VOATZ 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.

Internet Voting

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

The VOATZ 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 Polling/Voting Station(s)

For those individuals without means to access voting via telephone or Internet, or who require the assistance of a trained Election Official, an advance polling/voting station and Election Day polling/voting station will be open to provide in-person internet voting opportunities via a laptop, tablet or touch screen monitor.

Access to the polling/voting station 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 available at the polling/voting location. These areas shall 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 polling/voting station located at the Township of North Stormont Office at 57A Cockburn Street, Berwick, ON throughout the voting period.

The Township will be operating the voting place location during the following Advance Voting Period:

October 19 – 23, 2026	9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
October 24, 2026	10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
October 25, 2026	10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

The following polling/voting location will be open on Election Day, October 26, 2026 from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. - Town Hall, 57A Cockburn Street, Berwick, ON (Internet only)

Special Voting Provisions

Election staff shall visit sites including long-term care facilities and retirement homes, to set-up on-site voting kiosks, or bedside voting opportunities for residents.

Sites, location and times shall be as follows: TBA

3. VOTING LOCATION(S)

An accessibility assessment of each physical polling location will be conducted. The following considerations are considered when determining which location(s) will be used:

Buildings

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 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 location hours. Routine checks of entrance and exit routes will be made throughout the hours of operation.

Parking

Accessible parking shall be available at all voting locations. 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.

4. VOTING ASSISTANCE

Support Person/Friend of the Voter

Pursuant to the Township of North Stormont Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy #2009-01, people with disabilities shall be permitted to be accompanied by a support person at any voting location. A designated support person and/or 'Friend of the Voter' will be administered an oath of secrecy/confidentiality by an Election Official prior to providing any such assistance.

Persons with disabilities may be accompanied by a support person within the Voting Place. In addition, the Election Officials in each Voting Place may assist the voter in casting their ballot. Prior to entering the voting booth, the Deputy Returning Officer shall, in conjunction with the person with the disability, determine the extent to which they need assistance and the best way in which this assistance can be provided. This may include actually marking the ballot as directed by the elector. Where a Voting Place is located in an institution or retirement home, the Deputy Returning Officer can attend on voters in their specific living areas or at their bedside to assist them to vote. All Election Officials are sworn to an Oath of Secrecy.

Service Animals

Pursuant to the Township of North Stormont Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy #2009-01, individuals requiring service animals are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at all voting locations.

Election Officials

At in-person polling/voting locations, 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.

5. COMMUNICATION

The 2026 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan will be made available at the Township of North Stormont Town Hall at 57A Cockburn, Berwick, ON and by way of the Township of North Stormont web site www.northstormont.ca.

Alternative formats will be made available upon request.

Information regarding the accessibility measures provided for the 2026 Municipal Election shall be included in general election advertising as well as in the 2026 Municipal Election Nomination Package.

Election Materials

The Township of North Stormont is required, as per the Accessible Customer Service Standard, 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 Township of North Stormont 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 Township of North Stormont or is supplied by a third party, the Township of North Stormont 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 Township of North Stormont will be provided in an 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 Township of North Stormont on the website in relation to the election will be compliant with WCAG 2.0 Level AA and allow for assistive software to be utilized. In addition, website font can be adjusted within the browser's functionality to aid the user in reading the information.

Video – Promotional and educational videos created for the 2026 municipal election shall incorporate audio and captioning.

Service Disruptions

From time to time and/or for unforeseen circumstances beyond the Township of North Stormont 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 Township of North Stormont 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 Township of North Stormont 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 voting places during the advance vote or on Election Day, notices of disruption will be posted in real time on the Township of North Stormont website and election website.

6. CANDIDATES

Candidates must also have regard to the needs of electors with disabilities. Campaign offices, election materials and canvassing should all be reviewed 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](#)

7. NOTICE OF TEMPORARY SERVICE DISRUPTION

If there is a temporary disruption in the delivery of election information or services, the Municipal Clerk's Department shall provide public notice on the Municipality's election website, and social media, 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, who is responding, and a description of alternative methods of delivering the information or service. Every effort shall be made to provide alternative methods of providing information or service to persons with disabilities. Notice and updates shall be made regularly throughout the service interruption.

8. REPORTING

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