

**RICHMOND HILL**  
**VOTES**

**2026 Municipal Elections**  
**Draft Accessibility Plan**

**Presentation to the Accessibility Advisory Committee**

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# Background

Section 12.1 of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* (the “Act” or “MEA”) requires the Clerk responsible for conducting an election:

- To have regard to the needs of voters and candidates with disabilities
- To prepare a plan regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect voters and candidates with disabilities
- To make the plan available to the public before voting day in a regular election
- Within 90 days after Voting Day in a regular election, prepare a report about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect voters and candidates with disabilities, and make the report available to the public

# Purpose

- The purpose of today's meeting is to obtain the Accessibility Advisory Committee's (AAC) comments on the draft 2026 Municipal Elections Accessibility Plan
- While not a requirement of the MEA, it is a good opportunity to obtain the AAC's advice on removing barriers to participation in the upcoming municipal elections
- Any comments provided by the AAC will be carefully considered by the Election Team before finalizing the plan

# Accessibility Plan - Overview

- As required by the MEA, the plan carefully considers the potential barriers to participation in municipal elections by persons with disabilities (voters and candidates)
- In developing the draft plan, the Elections Team has considered:
  - People
  - Places
  - Processes
- Feedback from the 2022 Municipal Elections would have been considered and/or included in the plan but none was received

# Accessibility Plan – Overview (Continued)

- The draft plan has five core objectives:
  1. Ongoing identification and Removal of Barriers
  2. Accessible Information and Communications
  3. Accessible Vote Centres (in-person voting locations)
  4. Accessible Voting Processes
  5. Accessible Training and Promotion, and Accessible Campaigns
- Each objective has corresponding actions to identify and remove barriers
- The objective and actions do not significantly deviate from the 2022 Municipal Elections

# Accessibility Plan – Overview (Continued)

- Today we are primarily seeking AAC's feedback on the Accessible Voting Processes because:
  1. The City already has robust information and communications protocols to ensure accessibility
  2. All Vote Centres will be in City Facilities which are routinely checked for accessibility, and will undergo an audit prior to voting, and follow-up right before voting opens
  3. The legislation does not provide any authority to the City Clerk to control candidate campaigns

# Accessibility Plan – Voting Process

- In the 2026 Municipal Elections, eligible voters will be able to cast their ballot by either:
  - Online Voting System (e.g. Internet Voting)
  - In-person paper ballots counted by optical scan vote tabulator
- The Online Voting System is a fully accessible web based system that is WCAG 2.2 (Level AA) compliant
  - Online Voting is generally seen as the most accessible form of voting, permitting persons with disabilities to, in many cases, vote independently
- In 2022, about 90% of all ballots cast were voted using the Online Voting System
  - We fully expect this trend to continue

# Accessibility Plan – Voting Process (Continued)

- In-person voting (Paper Ballots) will be available at seven (7) Vote Centres across the City on:
  - Saturday October 24
  - Sunday October 25
  - Voting Day, Monday October 26
- Persons requiring assistance to vote at a Vote Centres will be provided assistance
- Options for assistance include:
  - Election Officials (who all receive or have completed accessibility training)
  - Bring a Friend
  - Curbside Voting

# Accessibility Plan – Voting Process (Continued)

- The only in-person change from 2022 will be the elimination of accessible paper ballot marking machines
- Accessible paper ballot marking machines are designed to allow persons with disabilities to mark a ballot without help using a variety of tools (audio, sip & puff, large buttons)
- These units require a significant number of hours of testing for each unit before the election
- In the 2018 and 2022 elections, accessible paper ballot marking machines were never used

# Recommendation

- That all comments of the Accessibility Advisory Committee regarding the draft 2026 Municipal Elections Accessibility Plan be referred to the City Clerk for consideration when finalizing the Plan