

ELECTION ACCESSIBILITY PLAN



2026 MUNICIPAL ELECTION

This Plan is for use in the 2026 Municipal Election in conjunction with the Town's current Accessibility Customer Service Policy, guidelines, training and customer service feedback standards.

Accessible Election Mandate

With respect to Accessibility, the mandate for the Town of Petawawa 2026 Municipal Election is as follows:

“It is the goal of the Town of Petawawa to ensure that electors in the Town of Petawawa who have a disability or an issue with accessibility are provided with the best opportunity to vote as independently as possible in the 2026 Municipal Election.”

Municipal Elections Act Requirements

In addition to our pre-existing accessibility requirements, the Town’s current Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy, the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 S.O. 1996, c. 32, states:

Section 12.1 (1) A clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities. 2009, c. 33, Sched. 21, s. 8 (8).

Section 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.

Section 12.1 (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. 2016, c. 15, s. 11.

Section 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).

Section 45 (2) In establishing locations of voting places, the clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities. 2009, c. 33, Sched. 21, s. 8 (23).

Development of the Election Accessibility Plan

This plan will address the specific requirements pertaining to accessibility in relation to the 2026 Municipal Election in the Town of Petawawa.

This plan is a “living” document which will be improved and updated as best practices are identified and new opportunities for improvement arise.

During the development process of the initial Election Accessibility Plan, the following steps will be implemented:

1. In consultation with the Petawawa Accessibility Advisory Committee, review proposed Accessibility Plan to substantiate needs are being met.
2. Establish staff training standards and practices directly related to the Election to ensure that people with disabilities are able to vote in a positive environment, and ensure that all Election Officials recognize that in every way possible a voter's needs are to be accommodated whenever possible.
3. Following the Election, submit a report to the Petawawa Accessibility Advisory Committee and Council about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

Communications

The 2026 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan will be made available at Town Hall and by way of the Town's website at petawawa.ca. Alternate formats will be made available upon request.

Regard for the Needs of Electors with Disabilities

The procedures within this plan must respect the dignity and independence of the Electors. The election process should ensure that the policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.

Disabilities can take many forms and can range from temporary to permanent. Often disabilities are non-visible and no one should ever make assumptions. Disabilities include developmental, cognitive and physical challenges/conditions of persons of any age.

Examples of barriers to people with disabilities:

Attitudinal barriers are those that discriminate against people with disabilities.

- Thinking people with disabilities are inferior
- Assuming a person who has a speech impairment can't understand you

Information or **communications** barriers occur when a person can't easily understand information.

- Print is too small to read
- Websites that can't be accessed by people who are not able to use a mouse
- Signs that are not clear or easily understood

Technology barriers occur when a technology can't be modified to support various assistive devices.

- A website that doesn't support screen-reading software

Organizational barriers are an organization's policies, practices or procedures that discriminate against people with disabilities.

- A hiring process that is not open to people with disabilities

Architectural and **physical** barriers are features of buildings or spaces that cause problems for people with disabilities.

- Hallways and doorways that are too narrow for a person using a wheelchair, electric scooter or walker
- Poor lighting for people with low vision
- Parking spaces that are too narrow for a driver who uses a wheelchair

Types of Disabilities:

Listed below is a brief description of types of disabilities. Understanding people's needs and challenges may help you better communicate with them.

Physical Disabilities: There are many types and degrees of disabilities, and while people who use mobility aids like wheelchairs, scooters, crutches or canes are most recognizable, it is important to consider that not all people with physical disabilities require a mobility device.

Visual Impairment: There are varying degrees of vision loss and a distinction between blindness and low vision. It can be difficult to determine if a person has a vision loss.

Hearing Impaired: Hearing loss ranges from mild to profound. The distinction between the terms "deaf", "deafened", "hearing impaired" and "hard of hearing" are based principally on the individual's preferred language (spoken or signed) rather than on the actual degree of hearing loss.

Deaf-Blindness: Persons with some degree of both vision and hearing loss. This results in greater difficulties in accessing information and managing daily activities. A deaf-blind individual will often be accompanied by an intervener, a professional who helps with communicating.

Speech Impairments: Difficulty communicating for many reasons, may have difficulty speaking clearly – for example, as a result of a stroke or cerebral palsy – may result in verbal communication difficulties. Individuals may use communication boards or other assistive devices to help communicate. A speech disability often has no impact on a person's ability to understand. Ask them to repeat the information if you don't understand. Ask questions that can be answered "yes" or "no" if possible.

Cognitive Disabilities: Affect understanding, communication, or behaviour and can be attributed to brain injuries, developmental or learning disabilities.

Mental Illness: A disturbance in thoughts and emotions that may decrease a person's capacity to cope with the challenges of everyday life. Mental illness can take many forms.

Voting

Telephone/Internet Voting (E-voting)

E-voting combined with everyday tools like computers, telephones and other aids can present opportunities for persons with disabilities to accomplish more, while being consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity. There is the potential to eliminate long line-ups at polling stations and better address accessibility issues for persons with disabilities, those suffering from illness, those serving in the military or living abroad, those away on personal travel and other groups of citizens such as single parents who may find it difficult to visit a traditional polling station.

Internet voting affords electors the opportunity of being able to vote at any time, a feature that further enables electors' ability to cast a ballot. Internet and telephone voting could allow greater secrecy for special populations of electors with disabilities (including visually or hearing impaired). By voting electronically and therefore unassisted, these electors are afforded a greater degree of anonymity when casting a ballot. Enabling secrecy for these groups enhances the equality of the vote. E-voting has the greatest potential to positively impact accessibility for voters.

For the 2026 Municipal Election, the Town will be using E-voting exclusively. Electors can vote using any device—desktop, laptop, tablet, or smartphone—across all major operating systems (Android, iOS/macOS, Windows). The voting platform is fully responsive and accessible through a web browser or optional mobile app.

To ensure equitable access, the platform supports a variety of assistive technologies, including screen readers, keyboard navigation, magnification tools, and voice-over features. It meets WCAG 2.1 Level AA accessibility standards and includes clear visual cues, multilingual prompts, and intuitive navigation to help all voters participate confidently and independently.

The telephone voting system is delivered through an audio ballot that provides step-by-step instructions outlining all voting options. Electors make their selections using the numbered touch-tone keypad.

Eligible electors must use a touch-tone or wireless telephone to access the system. Rotary dial telephones are not supported, and "digi-pulse" telephones must be set to touch-tone mode. Where an unsupported device or incorrect input is detected, the system will issue an error message advising the elector to seek assistance.

Telephone and internet voting will be available for voting from October 16 to October 26, 2026.

Voting Place

For the purpose of this plan, voting place includes the exterior parking and walkways associated with the location.

In order to ensure that each voting place is accessible to Electors with disabilities, a Site Evaluation Form (Appendix A) will be completed prior to confirming the site as a voting place.

Upon completion of the Evaluation, a list of barriers which have been identified will be reviewed to determine if they can be rectified in order to accommodate Electors with disabilities. This may include the implementation of site-specific accommodations for that voting place on Advance Voting Day and Election Day.

Election Materials

Alternate Format

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 Town 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 Town or is supplied by a third party, the Town 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.

Large Print – Printed material generated by the Town will be provided in Arial font, 12 point and can be made available in a font (print) size that is 16 to 20 points or larger.

Website – Information generated by the Town on the website in relation to the Election will be formatted and designed to meet diverse needs. The Town's website supports this service by use of AllAccessible on each page, which provides a range of tools to enhance browsing experience, user-friendly accessibility feature to allow the user to adjust text size, contrast, spacing, and other settings to improve readability and navigation. Whether adjusting visual elements, enabling text-to-speech, or simplifying page layouts.

E-Voting Device – Voting platform is designed to be responsive and compatible across all major operating systems and devices, including desktops, laptops, tablets, and smartphones. The voting platform includes screen readers, keyboard navigation, magnification tools, and voice-over functionalities and adheres to WCAG 2.1 Level AA accessibility standards.

Voting Provision for Electors with Disabilities at the Voting Place

The following voting provisions are in place to accommodate the voting needs of Electors with disabilities:

Support Persons – In relation to a person with a disability, a Support Person accompanies them in order to help with communications, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services.

The Deputy Returning Officer may permit an Elector who needs assistance in voting to have such assistance as the Deputy Returning Officer considers necessary. The Support Person, upon the completion of the prescribed oath, may accompany the Elector behind the voting screen to assist the Elector in the voting process.

Assistive Personal Equipment – Assistive personal devices include, but are not limited to, wheelchairs, walkers, white canes, walking canes, note taking devices, portable magnifiers, recording machines, assistive listening devices, personal oxygen tanks and devices for grasping. Personal assistance from an Election Official is also available.

Service Animals – An animal that is used by a person with a disability for reasons relating to their disability; for example, a guide dog wearing a harness. Service Animals are permitted in all voting places.

Physical Disabilities – With E-voting, Electors can cast their vote from the comfort of their home or any location of their choice. This eliminates the need to travel to a voting location, reduces reliance on assistance, and supports a more independent voting experience.

For those wishing to vote in person, all voting locations—including parking areas, entrances, and voting stations—will be selected and/or set up to accommodate electors with physical disabilities.

In the event an Elector is unable to access the established voting area due to a physical disability, the Deputy Returning Officer may attend to the Elector anywhere within the voting place (including curb-side voting in the parking lot).

Vision Impairment – The E-voting platform supports a range of accessibility tools, including screen readers, keyboard navigation, magnification, and voice-over functionality. A telephone voting option is also available, providing an audio ballot with step-by-step instructions to support independent voting. Personal assistance from an election official will also be available, if needed.

Hearing Impaired – The E-voting platform is designed for ease of use, with clear visual cues, streamlined navigation, keyboard accessibility, and multilingual prompts to support Electors with hearing impairments. Personal assistance from an election official will also be available, if needed.

Speech Impairments, Cognitive Disabilities & Mental Illness – Personal assistance from an Election Official will be available.

Accessible Voting Booths –Will be available at each voting place. Booths will be low in height and have a wide area to allow individuals utilizing mobility aids to vote independently and secretly. Chairs will also be provided.

Accessibility Training for Election Officials

All Election Officials are required to complete the Town's Accessibility Customer Service training which includes:

- The purpose of the Act;
- How to interact with people of various disabilities;
- How to interact with people who use the assistance of a service animal or support person.

Election Officials will be provided with training to assist them in delivering and maintaining customer service by:

- Being aware of accessibility features at/for the voting place;
- Providing tips on how to maintain these accessibility features;
- Being aware of various tools available to assist with customer service such as assistive devices;
- Knowing when and how to report a disruption of service;
- Knowing how to collect Customer Feedback.

In addition to the Town's Customer Service Training, all Election Officials will be provided with customized training on this plan and the related materials contained within, as well as the following:

- A requirement to monitor Electors with disabilities to ensure that their needs are met (e.g., if an individual with a walker is in a long line, staff are to observe, and if it is felt that the Elector is having difficulties, then offer a chair, ensure that their place is saved in the voting line-up, etc.);
- A requirement to ensure that Electors are aware that assistance (in varying forms) is available if required;
- Direction for Election Officials to observe Electors during discussions with them, and if it appears that the voter is having difficulty understanding, ensuring that the voter is able to clearly see the speaker;

- Encouraging Election Officials to approach an Elector if it appears that the Elector requires assistance to get around in the voting place, offer assistance;
- Conduct routine checks of the voting place to ensure accessible features are maintained (e.g., check the access doors frequently);
- Offer assistance and watch for Electors unable to easily enter the building.

Upon completion of the training program, each Election Official will be provided with certification noting their successful completion of the required training.

Reporting

As per the Municipal Elections Act:

Section 12.1 (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. 2016, c. 15, s. 11.

In addition, said report will be provided to the Petawawa Accessibility Advisory Committee. It will also be made available to the public via the Town's website.

Additional Information

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

The Customer Service Feedback Forms can be accessed on the Town's website <https://petawawa.ca/town-hall/accessibility/> to download and submit a copy in writing, by email, or in person to:

Town of Petawawa

1111 Victoria Street, Petawawa, ON K8H 2E6

Phone: 613-687-5536

Email: email@petawawa.ca

Accessible Service Disruptions

From time to time and/or for unforeseen circumstances beyond the Town's 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 the services are reinstated as quickly as possible and that alternative services are provided where feasible.

In these instances of service disruptions, the Town 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 locations and information shall also be posted on the Town's 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.

APPENDIX A – VOTING PLACE SITE EVALUATION FORM

Name of Voting Place: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Contact Name: _____

BUILDING ENTRANCES AND DOORS	YES	NO	N/A
Are signs adequate to assist in locating accessible entrances and exits, are entrances and exits marked with the International Symbol of Accessibility?			
Is the door width adequate for wheelchairs (32 to 36 inches)? (42 inches ideal)			
Vision panel in door to assist vision impaired 75 mm (3 inches) wide and 900 mm (36 inches) above the floor, operable by closed fist or automatic sensor.			
Lighting (100 lux) for vision impaired.			
Is the door power equipped with a power door opener or does it have an electronic sensor?			
BUILDING GENERAL ISSUES	YES	NO	N/A
All handrails must be constructed in a manner to be graspable by persons with limited finger dexterity.			
Fire alarms must have large display and be operable by a person with limited finger dexterity.			
Hallways, minimum width 1200 mm (48 inches) or 1500 mm (60 inches) when designed for two-wheel chairs to pass.			
Bold direction signage and symbols with high contrast lettering at eye level.			
Bold stripes on clear glass doors.			
Door handles, lever type and highlighted with contrasting colours.			
BARRIER FREE PATH OF TRAVEL (INTERIORS)	YES	NO	N/A
Is the path stable, firm and slip resistant?			

Are ramps installed correctly and are changes level or beveled correctly at door openings, floor changes, etc.?			
Are controls for all services, elevators, lights, heating and air conditioning, accessible to wheelchairs and operable by one hand?			

ASSEMBLY AREAS	YES	NO	N/A
Are there adequate wheelchair spaces (two for up to 100 seats and one for each 100 additional seats) and are there attendant seats available and are they adjacent or nearby?			
Are the wheelchair spaces clear and level and adjacent to the barrier-free path of travel?			
Are there attendants or ushers to assist in seating, entering and exiting?			
Are accessible washrooms available and are there signs indicating their location?			
Are assistive listening systems available for the hearing impaired?			
ELEVATORS	YES	NO	N/A
Signage at building entrance to lead persons to Barrier Free elevators when the elevators are not clearly visible; and entrance to elevator clearly marked by International Symbol of Accessibility?			
Opening between cab floor and landing should be less than 13 mm (1/2 inch). Telecommunications should be connected to a staffed area, with the controls within easy reach of a seated person. Less than 1200 mm (48 inches) above floor. Telecommunications should preferably be hands free. If cord connected, cord should be 920 mm (38 inches) long.			
Door to close slowly and to be equipped with a photoelectric sensor and rubber bumper guards; and doors to be equipped with tripping device to quickly open upon contact with a person.			
Numbers in Braille beside the numeric.			
CURB CUTS	YES	NO	N/A
Curb ramp slip resistant material.			

Where a curb exists smaller than 50 mm (2 inches) provide a curb cut.			
Curb ramp lip flush with pavement.			
Obstructions to curbs less than 760 mm (30 inches) not to be near sewer outlets, maintenance hole lids.			
WASHROOMS	YES	NO	N/A
Faucets, lever type, not spring loaded, or to be automatic type.			
Toilets same as TOILETS/URINALS section.			
Coat hook 1200 mm (48 inches) to 1400 mm (55 inches) from floor, 50 mm (2 inches) from wall.			
Braille signs on doors to indicate gender.			
Toilet to be Highboy type for ease in transferring.			
GRAB BARS	YES	NO	N/A
Grab bar, slip resistant and 30-40 mm (1 ¼ to 1/38 inch) OD and space between wall and bar to be 30-40 mm (1 ¼ to 1/38 inch).			
At urinal, vertical grab bar on each side.			
Beside toilet, away from wall to facilitate horizontal transfer from wheelchair.			
CUSTOMER SERVICE AREAS	YES	NO	N/A
Checkout counter accessibility 920 mm (36 inches).			
ORIENTATION CUES FOR BLIND AND VISION IMPAIRED	YES	NO	N/A
Signage on doors, directions etc. be raised with contrasting colours with the wall and be extra large.			
Stairs have 50 mm (2 inches) wide solid strip on edge of tread and riser 100 mm (4 inches) in contrasting colours on all stairs and risers, e.g., brown stair and yellow or white stripe.			
PARKING ITEMS	YES	NO	N/A
Paved pedestrian walkway in front of parking spaces with curb ramp at access aisle.			
Snow removal enforced.			
Designated location must be next to walkway.			

Obstructions such as trees, planters, etc. 2.5 m (8.2 feet) from vehicle door.			
PUBLIC BUILDING	YES	NO	N/A
Fire alarm flashing light in washroom for hearing impaired.			
Assistive listening devices for hearing impaired.			
Lighting, 100 Lux in libraries, at book stacks ≥ 200 Lux.			
RAMPS AND SLOPES	YES	NO	N/A
Ramp gradient, < 1 in 12.			
Ramps with handrails and guards on both sides, unless in an aisle-way.			
Ramp provided next to stairs.			
RECEPTION AREAS	YES	NO	N/A
Controls easily operable from wheelchair with one hand and or automatically operated.			
Counter top, lowered area < 865 mm (34 inches).			
STAIRWAYS	YES	NO	N/A
Handrail must be graspable.			
Stair, non-resilient and non-skid surface.			
Nosing of contrasting colour.			
Handrail, if more than one step then placed on both sides.			
Lighting, no glare on user.			
WALKWAYS, EXTERIORS, PARKS	YES	NO	N/A
Continuous plane without steps or abrupt change in level. Permanent surface that is firm and slip resistant, free from obstruction, not small units, gravel or cobblestone. Asphalt is recommended or textured concrete with interlocking brick on the side to denote the pathway.			
Free from obstructions for full width of walk to a minimum height of 1980 mm (78 inches) except handrails are permitted to project not more than 100 mm (4 inches) from either side. Obstructions include, vending machines, planters, waste baskets, etc.			

Lighting 30 Lux.			
Where pathway crosses a driveway the textured concrete and the denoted pathway edges carried across the area to denote, 1) a pathway, 2) gives right of way to pedestrians.			
Warning, linear detectable strips at edge and at hazards.			
Picnic Tables accessible with clearance, 760 mm (30 inches) extension on one end for wheelchair and 820 mm (32 inches) for PMD.			
WASHROOMS	YES	NO	N/A
Entrance, clearly marked by the International Symbol of Accessibility.			
Washrooms not designated for disabled persons must be marked to indicate the location of the barrier free facility.			
Door to room > 800 mm (32 inches). Recommended 36 inches.			
Faucets, lever type, not spring loaded, or to be automatic type.			
Soap and towel dispensers < 1200 mm and > 900 mm (48 inches and 35 inches) from floor.			
At least one mirror, bottom < 1 m (39 inches) from floor, or inclined to be usable by person in a wheelchair.			
Lighting, 100 Lux.			
At least one toilet stall is barrier free.			
Toilet stall 1500 mm x 1500 mm (59 inches x 59 inches).			
Toilet centre > 460 mm and < 480 mm (18 inches and 19 inches) from the side wall. Toilet seat > 400 mm and < 460 mm (16 inches and 18 inches) above floor. Or equipped with raised toilet seat.			
Door to toilet stall opens outward, or increase the size of the stall to suit.			
Toilet paper dispenser to be beside and slightly to front and above seat, large type without sharp or serrated edge. To facilitate person with poor finger dexterity, small leaf inter-fold paper a NO-NO.			
Urinal, clear floor space 760 mm wide x 12 mm (90 inches x 48 inches) deep.			

SAFETY	YES	NO	N/A
Building is equipped with audible emergency exit route safety device.			
Equipped with alarms with flashing lights.			
Does this facility have an existing evacuation plan?			
ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	YES	NO	N/A
Staff/public are informed about scent related disabilities, and the use of various products in public areas.			
The use of scent-free products in washrooms, general areas, and facilities.			
Are signs posted indicating the usage of such products?			

Areas of concern:

Site selected: Yes: _____ No: _____

Special accommodations for site: _____

Audit Completed By: _____ Date: _____