

ACCESSIBLE AJAX



2018 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan



65 Harwood Avenue South
Ajax, ON L1S 2H9
905-619-2529 ext. VOTE (8683)
TextNET: 1-866-460-4489
Fax: 905-683-1061
Email: election@ajax.ca
www.ajax.ca/elections

Alternative formats available on request.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This plan will address the specific accessibility requirements in relation to the 2018 Municipal Election in the Town of Ajax.

Within the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* (MEA) as amended, there are several provisions regarding accessibility considerations mandated for the 2018 Municipal Election. The Clerk responsible for an election must:

- Have regard for the needs of electors, candidates and election officers with disabilities
- Ensure that voting places are accessible to persons with disabilities
- Prepare accessibility plans to identify, remove and prevent barriers that could affect electors and candidates with disabilities, and make the plan available to the public prior to voting day
- Publish a report about the identification, removal and prevention of election barriers that affect persons with disabilities within 90 days after Voting Day

The Town of Ajax has made great efforts in promoting a barrier-free community. This commitment has been echoed through the Town's ongoing implementation of provincial accessibility standards requirements. In an effort to ensure that the 2018 Municipal Election is consistent with the core principles of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, this planning document was developed in advance of the election, in order to identify measures to be taken and reported on following the election.

2. OBJECTIVES

This plan is intended to highlight measures that the Town will be implementing to ensure equal opportunity for all electors and candidates. These objectives include:

- That all Voter Assistance Centre locations are accessible
- That persons with disabilities are able to independently cast their vote and verify their selection, and that assistance is available if desired
- That persons with disabilities have full and equal access to all information on where and when to vote and on eligible candidates
- That persons with disabilities can fully participate in the Municipal Election as an elector, candidate, or election officer
- That efforts are made to ensure that electors with disabilities are aware of the accessibility measures available via channels such as the newspaper, election communications, the Town's website, and social media

3. DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN

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

In order to develop the plan below, several steps have been taken to ensure that the statutory requirements are met and a feasible implementation plan is in place. During the

development of the 2018 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan, the following steps shall be implemented:

- Review and analysis of documents, policies and other supporting materials from Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO), neighbouring municipalities, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and other various stakeholder groups
- Establishment of staff training standards and practices directly related to the Election to ensure that people with disabilities are able to vote in a positive customer service environment, and ensure that all Election Officers recognize that a voter's needs shall be accommodated wherever possible
- Consultation and meetings with the 2018 Election Team and Town of Ajax Accessibility Advisory Committee to ensure that the Plan meets the needs of persons with disabilities
- Presentation of a draft plan to the Town of Ajax Accessibility Advisory Committee (January 2018) and Town of Ajax Diversity and Community Engagement Advisory Committee (February 2018)
- Review of election details, including the Accessibility Plan, to General Government Committee (March 2018)

3.1 Consultation

Consultation with individuals and community groups will provide greater knowledge and understanding in conducting elections that are accessible to all. The Town shall:

- Consult with persons with disabilities as well as individuals and groups knowledgeable in providing services to persons with disabilities in order to gain better understanding, such as the Town of Ajax Accessibility Advisory Committee and Town of Ajax Diversity & Community Engagement Advisory Committee
- Partner with accessibility service providers to channel election information through their networks, clients and communities (using newsletters, links, etc.) e.g. Durham Accessibility Awareness Working Group, Welcome Centre, etc.
- Attend Town community events to demonstrate accessible voting options and raise awareness of the 2018 election

4. VOTING LOCATIONS

A comprehensive accessibility audit of each physical Voter Assistance Centre will be conducted. The purpose of the audits shall be to ensure that voting locations are conducive to the needs of election officers and voters. The following considerations are taken into account when determining which locations will be used:

4.1 Accessible Transit Route

Proximity to accessible public transit routes shall be considered in the selection of Voter Assistance Centres. The name and/or address of the Voter Assistance Centre shall be clearly visible. An easily navigable route will be marked for entry into the Voter Assistance Centre 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.

4.2 Ingress and Egress

The route to the entrance of the Voter Assistance Centre shall be unobstructed and accessible. The route shall be wide enough to allow for an individual using a wheelchair, scooter, other assistive device, and/or service animal to travel safely. Doors into the Voter Assistance Centre and voting area shall be accessible and easy to open or shall remain propped open for the duration of the Voter Assistance Centre's hours. Lineups and the flow of voters into and out of Voter Assistance Centres shall remain unobstructed as much as possible, and clear pathways of travel shall be maintained. Access to emergency exits shall be unobstructed and fully accessible in the event that evacuation is required. Routine checks of entrance and egress routes will be made throughout the voting day.

4.3 Parking

Accessible parking shall be available at all Voter Assistance Centre 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 Voter Assistance Centre locations throughout the day.

5. VOTING METHODS

The 2018 Town of Ajax Municipal Election will involve working with Simply Voting to provide eVoting services to eligible voters. This includes the convenience and independence of voting from anywhere via telephone, internet or in-person at Voter Assistance Centres during the Voting Period between October 15 – 22, 2018.

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 Simply 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 use them to assist with casting a ballot privately and independently.

By allowing persons with disabilities to vote from any location and using a variety of methods, there is an increased capability for the voter to cast their ballot without any assistance. This provides persons with disabilities the same independence and privacy in participating in the election as any other voters. If persons with disabilities do require assistance in the voting process, trained Election Officers will be present at in-person Voter Assistance Centres located throughout the Town during the Voting Period, as well as over the phone via the Election Help Line.

5.1 Telephone Voting

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 disorganized menu options. Eligible voters may vote using a touch-tone telephone, and the telephone number and Personal Identification Number (PIN) contained in their Voter Information Letter to access an audio ballot.

The Simply Voting telephone voting system 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

Voters may also use the TTY (Teletypewriter) service to access eVoting services. TTY users should have full confidence when using the TTY service integrated with the Simply Voting application by phone. TTY operators received training and are required by law to maintain confidentiality of the information disclosed. No record-keeping of conversations is stored. Voters interested in using the TTY service to access telephone voting are encouraged to consider utilizing the internet voting service if able to do so, as the user experience will be superior.

5.2 Internet Voting

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

The Simply Voting 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.

5.3 In-person Voting at Voter Assistance Centres

Eligible voters participating in the 2018 Town of Ajax Municipal Election are strongly encouraged to vote from the convenience of their home, either online or by phone during the Voting Period for the best possible voting experience. However, for those individuals without means to access voting via telephone or internet, or who require the assistance of a trained Election Officer, Voter Assistance Centres will be open to provide in-person internet voting opportunities via a public-use computer, also referred to as a voting kiosk.

Access to the interior of the Voter Assistance Centre 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.

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At least one accessible voting area will be available at each Voter Assistance Centre. These areas shall be low in height and have a wide, unobstructed floor area to allow for individuals who use a wheelchair or scooter to vote independently and privately. Such kiosks will be identified with the International Symbol of Accessibility.

If assistance is required, voters may attend any Voter Assistance Centre location throughout the voting period, regardless of their ward of residence within Ajax.

The Town will be operating the following Voter Assistance Centres during the 2018 Voting Period:

Ajax Community Centre, HMS Room (75 Centennial Drive)

- Thursday October 18 - 2:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- Saturday October 20 - 2:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

McLean Community Centre, Gymnasium (95 Magill Drive)

- Friday October 19 - 2:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- Saturday October 20 - 2:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Audley Recreation Centre, Gymnasium (1955 Audley Road North)

- Thursday October 18 - 2:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- Friday October 19 - 2:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

The following Voter Assistance Centres will be open on Election Day, Monday October 22, 2018 from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

- **McLean Community Centre, Gymnasium (95 Magill Drive)**
- **Audley Recreation Centre, Gymnasium (1955 Audley Road North)**
- **Ajax Community Centre, HMS Room (75 Centennial Road)**

A map of Election Day Polling Locations is attached as **Appendix A**.

5.4 Special Voting Provisions

Election staff shall visit long-term care facilities and retirement homes to set up on-site voting kiosks or bedside voting opportunities for residents, as required. Provisions may also be made for special voting at apartments and condominium buildings occupied primarily by older adults.

6. VOTING ASSISTANCE

6.1 Support Person/Friend of the Voter

Pursuant to Section 4.3 of the Town of Ajax Accessible Customer Service Policy, people with disabilities shall be permitted to be accompanied by a support person at any Voter Assistance Centre. A designated support person and/or 'Friend of the Voter' other than an

Election Officer will be administered an oath of secrecy/confidentiality by an Election Officer prior to providing any such assistance to an elector.

6.2 Service Animals

Pursuant to Section 4.2 of the Town of Ajax Accessible Customer Service Policy, individuals requiring service animals for the purposes of the 2018 Municipal Election are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at a Voter Assistance Centre.

6.3 Election Officers

At in-person Voter Assistance Centres, upon request, Election Officers are available to assist any voter who requires assistance in casting their online ballot. All individuals working in the capacity of an Election Officer are formally appointed as such and administered an oath of secrecy prior to the Voting Period.

7. ELECTION OFFICERS

7.1 Election Officer Recruitment

Recruitment and training of Election Officers shall be conducted pursuant to ME-WI-005 Recruitment, Selection and Training of Election Staff, and shall include notification of the availability of accommodations throughout the recruitment, screening and training process, pursuant to provincial Accessible Employment Standards.

7.2 Election Officer Training

All staff carrying out Election Official duties shall be trained to recognize and ensure that persons with disabilities are provided customer service in a way that accommodates individual needs. Training content shall include:

- Review of the purposes of the *AODA, 2005*, *Ontario Human Rights Code*, and Accessible Customer Service Regulations
- How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of abilities
- How to interact with persons using assistive devices, or requiring the assistance of a service animal or support person
- How to use voting equipment and assistive devices to deliver election assistance to voters
- What to do if a person is having difficulty accessing election information or services

Pursuant to provincial accessibility standards, a record of all Election Officer training shall be maintained.

8. COMMUNICATIONS

The 2018 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan will be made available at Town Hall and by way of the Town's web site www.ajax.ca/elections. Alternative formats will be made available upon request.

Information regarding the accessibility measures provided for the 2018 Municipal Election shall be included in general election advertising as well as in the 2018 Municipal Election Nomination Package.

8.1 Election Materials

The Town is required, as per the provincial Accessible Customer Service Standards, 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 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 reasonable efforts 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 Town will be provided in a sans serif 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 Town on the website in relation to the election will be compliant with WCAG 2.0 Level A, 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 (how-to) videos created for the 2018 municipal election shall incorporate audio and captioning.

8.2 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 service disruption, Election Officers 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 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

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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 but are not limited to Voter Assistance Centres, Election Help Line, 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 voting period or on Election Day, *notices of disruption* will be posted in real time:

- on the Town's website: www.ajax.ca
- on Facebook
- on Twitter: @TownOfAjax
- at the site of the disruption
- where applicable, a media advisory will be issued

9. CANDIDATES

Candidates should also have regard to the needs of electors with disabilities. Campaign offices, election materials and canvassing should all be reviewed in order ensure that they are fully accessible. Several resources are available to provide candidates with information on how to make their campaigns more accessible:

- [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](#)
- [AMCTO Candidate's Guide to Accessible Elections](#)

The 2018 Town of Ajax Candidates Guide and other relevant publications will be made available in an accessible format. The Town of Ajax 2018 Voter's list will be made available in an electronic format to all candidates, free of charge.

Any candidate information sessions shall be held in accessible locations, with accommodations and communication supports (ASL interpreter, large print, etc.) provided upon advance request.

10. ELECTION FEEDBACK

Pursuant to Section 4.6 of the Town of Ajax Accessible Customer Service Policy, any individual has the opportunity to submit feedback regarding the provision of accessible customer service. This feedback can be submitted through regular mail, email, telephone,

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facsimile, or by using the Town's Customer Feedback Form, which is available to all staff, at all service counters and via the Town's website. Feedback about the manner in which election services are provided will be addressed using the same method.

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Mail: Elections - Town Hall, 65 Harwood Ave. S., Ajax, ON L1S 2H9
Website: www.ajax.ca/elections

All feedback pertaining to election services will be forwarded to the Deputy Returning Officer for response. In addition, staff working at Town facilities can complete the feedback form for submission on behalf of a person with a disability.

11. REPORTING

Pursuant to Section 12.1 of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, within 90 days after voting day, the Town Clerk shall publish a report on the implementation of the Municipal Election Accessibility Plan, including details on the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

12. KEY CONTACTS

Further election accessibility information can be found by visiting the Town's election website www.ajax.ca/elections, or by contacting any one of the following individuals:

Sarah Moore, Accessibility Coordinator/Election Support

905-619-2529, ext. 3347
1-866-460-4489 (TextNET)
sarah.moore@ajax.ca

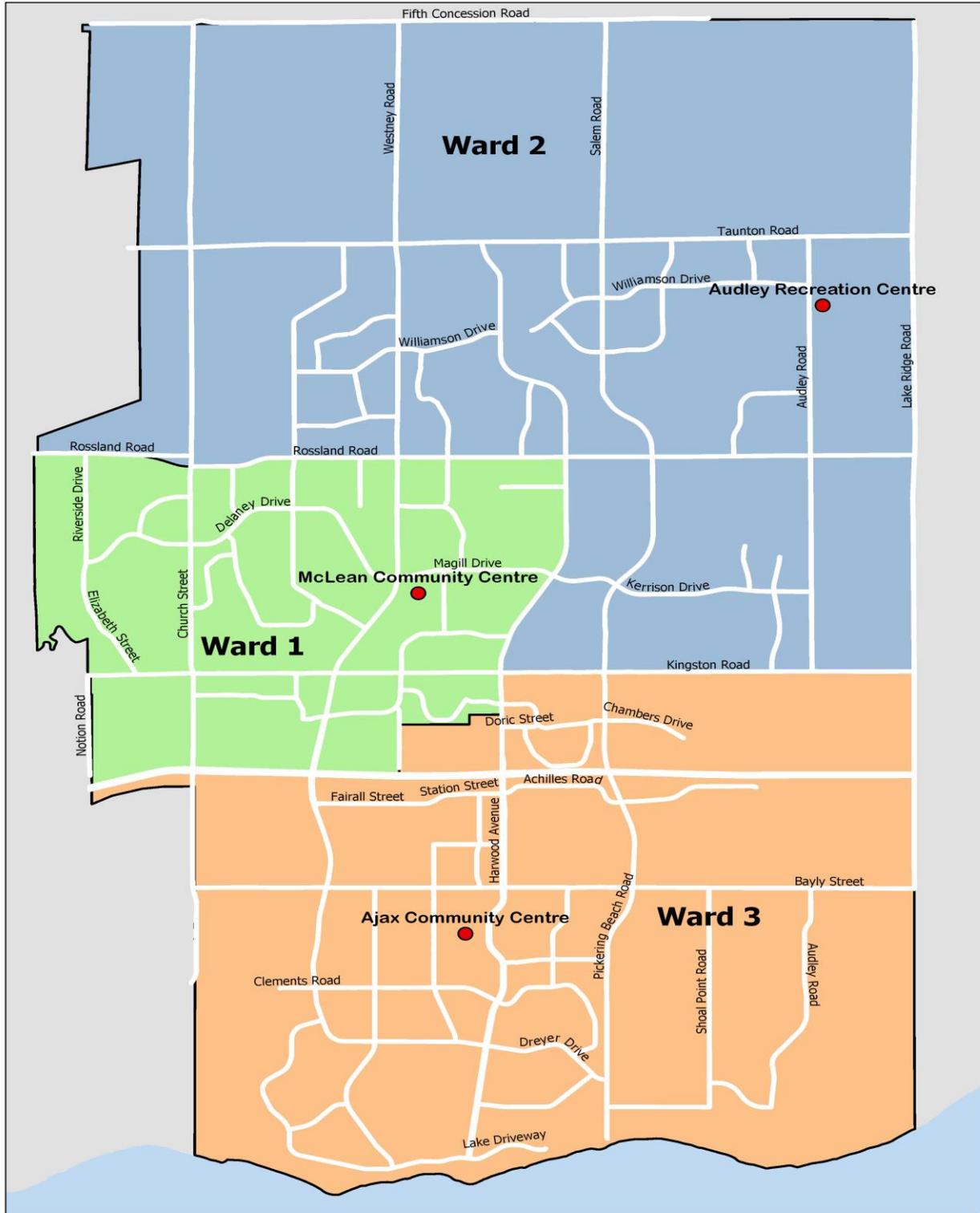
Alexander Harras, Deputy Clerk/Deputy Returning Officer

905-619-2529, ext. 3342
1-866-460-4489 (TextNET)
alexander.harras@ajax.ca

Nicole Cooper, Town Clerk/Returning Officer

905-619-2529, ext. 3336
1-866-460-4489 (TextNET)
nicole.cooper@ajax.ca

APPENDIX A – VOTER ASSISTANCE CENTRE MAP



**Town of Ajax
2018 Voter Assistance Centres**

