RICHMOND HILL VOTES

2026 Municipal Elections Accessibility Plan

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Introduction

The City is committed to providing all candidates and voters with an equal opportunity to participate in the electoral process with dignity and independence. This Plan outlines how the City will identify and eliminate barriers to accessibility. Ultimately, the goal is to create a positive voting experience and ensure that the Elections are accessible to everyone.

References

1) Richmond Hill's Online Voting Procedures – Sections 3, 17, and 19

The City's Online Voting Procedures affirm that accessibility is one of the most important principles of elections (Section 3.5). They also outline how voters can attend a Vote Centre to receive whatever assistance they require to participate in the elections and cast their ballot (Section 17). The Online Voting System itself is designed to meet accessibility standards and be accommodating for all voters, including those accessing it using assistive technology (Section 19).

2) Richmond Hill's Accessibility Policy

The City's Accessibility Policy affirms our commitment to providing accessible services to everyone and to identifying and eliminating barriers to accessibility. The principles outlined in the policy govern how staff provide services in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of all people and complies with accessibility legislation (such as the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*).

3) Accessible Customer Service Procedures

Our Accessible Customer Service Procedures build on the Accessibility Policy and provide more detailed guidance to staff. The procedures help to ensure that the City provides accessible services in specific ways, including processes for providing accommodation, receiving and responding to feedback about accessibility, and more. An updated Accessible Elections Customer Service Handbook and training will be provided to all Election Officials for the 2026 Elections.

4) *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* – Section 12.1

It is the City Clerk's responsibility to conduct elections that are accessible to voters and candidates with disabilities and to make and publish an Accessibility Plan. Using the strategies outlined in this Accessibility Plan, the Clerk will make every effort to ensure an accessible election, including continuing to address any accessibility barriers discovered or brought to his attention during the election period.

5) Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* ("AODA"), aims to identify, remove, and prevent barriers for people with disabilities. The AODA is made up of five standards: Information & Communications, Employment, Design of Public Spaces, Transportation, and Customer Service. The legislation and standards apply to all levels of government, nonprofits, and private sector businesses in Ontario.

Feedback

If you have experienced or are aware of a barrier to participation in the 2026 Municipal Elections in Richmond Hill, the City Clerk wants to hear from you so that we can improve our services. Please contact us and let us know how we can improve.

Phone: 905-771-8800

Email: **elections@richmondhill.ca**

Mail: City of Richmond Hill
225 East Beaver Creek Road
Richmond Hill, ON L4B 3P4
Attn: Office of the Clerk

Objectives

1) Ongoing Identification and Removal of Barriers

Action	Description
Consult with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC)	This plan will be presented to the Accessibility Advisory Committee for feedback and comments. The Election Management Team will incorporate the Committee's feedback into operations and amend this plan as needed.
Internal staff consultation and review	Staff in the Office of the Clerk responsible for the City's accessibility policies will provide advice on how to improve and optimize accessibility for the elections.
Post-election accessibility report	Within 90 days after voting day, the City Clerk will prepare a report on the accessibility of the election. The report will describe how the City addressed barriers to accessibility for candidates and disabilities. The report will be available on Richmond Hill's website.
Receive and respond to feedback	Elections staff will monitor accessibility feedback received through the City's website and Access Richmond Hill contact centre. Any barriers communicated to the City will be addressed promptly.

2) Accessible Information and Communications

Action	Description
Develop an accessible and informative election website – Richmondhill.ca/RHVotes	The City's elections pages will be fully accessible. All the information needed for candidates and voters to successfully participate in the election will be provided clearly and in detail. The City's website provides BrowseAloud, a free web page reader to assist individuals who have difficulty reading online.

Action	Description
Promote accessible voting options and voter participation	The City will increase promotion of accessible voting options for the 2026 Municipal Election compared to the 2022 election. Information regarding accessible Vote Centre locations, online, and curbside voting will be shared through the City's election pages, social media channels, signage and other channels to help voters, caregivers, family members and support persons understand the voting options and supports available.
Provide information in alternative formats upon request	If voters or candidates need any information in a format that has not been made available, the City will work with them to meet their needs.

3) Accessible Vote Centres

Action	Description
Vote Centre Inspections	The City will only use accessible facilities that have been inspected for basic accessibility. Election officials will also perform accessibility checks on each day that Vote Centres are open. Election Officials responsible for managing Vote Centres will receive feedback about the location's physical accessibility and either address any concerns right away or escalate them to the Election Management Team for response.
Collaborate with host organizations	This City will only be using City-owned facilities as Vote Centres. Election officials will collaborate with staff across departments to ensure these locations remain fully accessible and are not affected by construction or maintenance activities within the buildings, in adjacent parking areas, or on nearby roads and sidewalks.
Accessible Candidate Nominations	Candidate nomination meetings will occur in an accessible location. Additional accommodation will be provided upon request.
Accessible signage at Vote Centres	Clear, prominent signs will guide voters to the voting place. Signs will follow accessibility guidelines and be easy to read and understand. The accessible entrance and exit locations will be the same as the main access points for all voters.

4) Accessible Voting Process

Action	Description
Provide alternative voting methods (Online Voting)	Online voting will be available in addition to paper ballot voting. The Online Voting System is designed to meet accessibility standards and be accommodating to all users. Voters can use their own internet connected devices, including those with accessibility tools and features, to cast their ballot. Voters can also visit a Vote Centre for assistance using the Online Voting System.
Permit support persons and service animals in Vote Centres	People with disabilities will be able to bring a support person or service animal with them to a Vote Centre. Election Officials at the Vote Centres will be trained on accessible customer service, including understanding that some people will bring a support person or service animal with them, and will help to ensure a smooth and easy voting experience.
Support from Election Officials	Election Officials at the Vote Centres will be trained on accessible customer service, and are able to provide assistance to Voters as required.
Schedule Continuous Voting	In-person voting will be available for three days. Online voting will be available continuously, without interruption, for seven days of voting. This will provide flexibility for anyone that has difficulty voting during designated hours at Vote Centres, including voters with disabilities.

Action	Description
Provide other voting opportunities for seniors and persons with disabilities	Election officials will provide dedicated, on-site voting opportunities at: • Retirement homes where 50 or more beds are occupied; • Institutions where 20 or more beds are occupied by persons with disabilities or chronic illness. If voting opportunities are not possible at these locations due to emergency or other health circumstances, the Clerk will make sure that the facility's residents still have the opportunity to vote. The facility will be assigned its own designated voting hours, and Election officials will be on stand-by to support its residents during this time. The City will also provide the facility with the technology needed to use the Online Voting System if necessary.
Curbside Voting	A voter who attends a Vote Centre but is unable to exit a vehicle can have Election Official(s) come to the vehicle with a ballot and all additional supplies necessary to permit a voter to vote using a paper ballot.
Voter lookup	Residents will be able to go to the City's website to check if they are on the Voters' List, add their name if they are not, and update or correct their information if needed. Voters can also get help with this by calling the Voter Assistance Helpline at 905-771-5555 or visiting a Vote Centre during its hours of operation.

5) Accessibility Training and Promotion of Accessible Campaigns

Action	Description
Provide candidates with information on how to make their campaigns accessible	Candidates will be provided with a copy of AMCTO's "Candidate's Guide to Accessible Elections." Links to accessibility resources and plans will be shared under the Elections Resources section of the City's election website at RichmondHill.ca/RHVotes. The Clerk will provide updates to Candidates throughout the election period, and will include any new information about accessibility in these updates.
Develop accessibility training for election staff	All Election officials, including temporary election workers, will be trained in accessible customer service. City staff have all completed accessible customer service training already, and any external workers will need to either complete training or verify that they have completed some equivalent training with another municipality.