



Where Town and Country Meet

MUNICIPAL ELECTION ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

TOWNSHIP OF ESSA
2026

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Alternative format available upon request

1. Introduction

The Township of Essa is committed to ensuring that the 2026 Municipal Election is accessible to all electors. This plan outlines the measures the Township will implement to identify, remove, and prevent barriers throughout the election process, consistent with the principles of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)* and the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*.

The 2026 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan is a living document and may be updated as new best practices and accessibility improvements are identified.

2. Objectives

The objectives of this plan are to ensure that:

- Electors with disabilities are able to independently cast their ballot and verify their selection.
- Electors and candidates with disabilities have full and equal access to election information, including where and when to vote.
- Persons with disabilities can fully participate in the election as electors, candidates, or election officials.
- Accessibility measures are clearly communicated through the Township website, notices, and other communication channels, in accordance with AODA web accessibility standards (WCAG 2.0 AA).
- The voting locations are accessible and barrier-free as reasonably possible, with mitigation measures in place where permanent features are not available.
- Reasonable accommodations are provided upon request.

3. Development of the Plan

To ensure accessibility throughout the election process, the Township will:

- Provide AODA Customer Service Standard training to all election officials, including training on assisting electors with disabilities, communication supports, and service animal protocols.

- Review the voting location to identify barriers and implement mitigation measures where needed.
- Ensure that all staff understand their responsibility to accommodate electors' needs respectfully and effectively.
- Update this plan as improvements are made or new accessibility considerations arise.

4. Voting Methods

In-Person Voting with Paper Ballots

Using traditional paper ballots, electors will mark their preferred candidate(s) by placing a mark in the circle next to the candidate's name.

Voting Dates and Locations

Advanced Vote Days:

Saturday October 17, 2026 between 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

- Angus Recreation Centre – Gymnasium

and

Wednesday October 21, 2026 between 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

- Township of Essa Administration Centre - Council Chambers

Voting Day:

Monday October 26, 2026 between 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Ward 1 - Angus Recreation Centre – Gymnasium

Ward 2 - Thornton Recreation Centre – Meeting Room

Ward 3 - Township of Essa Administration Centre - Council Chambers

Base Borden – La Pinede Academy - Gymnasium

5. Voting Assistance

Accessibility Supports Available

- Electors may be assisted behind the voting screen by a support person or a trained election official.
- Magnifying sheets will be available at each voting booth.

- Clear communication, facing electors when speaking as well as pen and paper will be available to support communication with electors who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have speech-related disabilities.
- Voting areas will be arranged to ensure wide aisle widths, appropriate table heights, and clear maneuvering space for mobility devices.
- Seating will be available for electors who require rest or support.
- Curbside voting at a Voting Location is available when requested.
- Plain language and large print materials are available and clear signage is posted.

Support Person

Persons with disabilities are permitted to be accompanied by a support person at any voting location. A designated support person will be administered an oath of secrecy before providing any such assistance.

Service Animals

Individuals requiring service animals are permitted to be accompanied by them at all Voting Locations.

Proxy Voting

A person with a disability who is unable to attend a Voting Location may designate another qualified elector to serve as their proxy for the purpose of casting a ballot. The appointment must be made on the prescribed form available at the Township of Essa Administration Centre. The person being appointed as a proxy will be required to take a statutory declaration before a Commissioner of Oaths.

Essa Clerk's Department staff can administer this oath at the Administration Centre, at 5786 County Road 21, Utopia. Once the form has been completed by the person appointing the proxy and the proxy voter, and has been duly signed by authorized personnel in the Clerk's Office, the proxy certificate may be used by the voting proxy at the assigned voting station or at any advance voting location during the advance vote.

The appointment of a proxy may only be made no sooner than August 24, 2026 and does not remain in force after Voting Day, Monday, October 26, 2026.

Election Official Assistance

Election Officials are available to assist any person with a disability who is having difficulty or requests assistance. All individuals working in the capacity of an Election Official are formally appointed as such and administered an oath of secrecy before voting day to ensure confidentiality and integrity of the vote.

6. Entrance and Exit

The route to the entrance(s) and exit(s) of each voting location will be kept clear, level, and unobstructed. The entrance will be wide enough to accommodate mobility devices and service animals.

Ensuring accessibility:

- Routine checks of the entrance and exit routes will be conducted throughout the day to ensure they remain safe and accessible.

7. Parking

Accessible parking will be available close to the entrance of each voting location. Parking spaces will:

- Be clearly marked with the International Symbol of Accessibility
- Be located on firm, level ground
- Be monitored to ensure they remain unobstructed

Seasonal considerations such as snow or ice removal will be prioritized if applicable.

8. Communication of Accessibility Measures

The Township will communicate accessibility information through:

- The Township website (WCAG 2.0 AA compliant)
- Public notices
- Social media

Direct communication with electors upon request will include:

- Voting location accessibility features
- Availability of door assistance
- How to request accommodations
- How to appoint a proxy

9. Emergency Procedures

Election officials will be trained on how to assist electors with disabilities during an emergency. Procedures will include:

Clear, Accessible Communication

Officials will provide calm, concise instructions using plain language, visual cues, or alternative formats as needed to ensure all electors understand the situation and required actions.

Safe Evacuation Support

Officials will assist electors in navigating evacuation routes, ensuring support is provided in a manner that respects personal space, mobility needs, and individual safety requirements.

Maintaining Mobility Aids and Service Animals

Whenever possible, officials will ensure electors remain with their mobility devices, assistive equipment, and service animals throughout the emergency response and evacuation process

10. Post-Election Accessibility Report

In accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, the Clerk will prepare a Post-Election Accessibility Report within 90 days after Voting Day. The report will outline:

- Measures implemented to ensure accessibility
- Feedback received

- Recommendations for future elections

The report will be posted on the Township website.

11. Feedback

Input from the public is important to the Township of Essa. It allows us to know how we are progressing with our accessibility goals.

The Township of Essa will accept feedback in various forms, such as:

In-person or in writing to:

Township of Essa Administration Centre
5786 County Road 21
Utopia ON, L0M1T0
Attention Accessibility Coordinator

By Email: clerks@essatownship.on.ca

By Telephone, TTY or Fax:
Tel: 705-424-9917 ext. 116
TTY: 705-424-5302
Fax: 705-424-2367

The municipality will respond in a manner that takes into consideration the individual's needs, upon request.

12. Questions or Comments

For any questions or comments, please contact:

Krista Pascoe, Clerk
Township of Essa
5786 County Road 21, Utopia
705-424-9917 ext. 133
kpascoe@essatownship.on.ca

Appendix A – Voting Place Site Evaluation Form

Name of Voting Place: _____

Address of Voting Place: _____

Checklist

Exteriors	Yes	No
Accessible pedestrian route(s) or path(s) are wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs, scooters or other mobility devices		
Curb cuts or ramps are wide enough for wheelchairs and scooters and are kept clear of snow and ice in winter weather		
Routes are not obstructed by poles, plants, bicycle racks, etc.		
Accessible passenger loading zone accommodates accessible vehicles		
Parking Areas	Yes	No
Accessible parking spaces are clearly marked with the International Symbol of Accessibility		
There is a safe, accessible pedestrian route from the designated parking area to an accessible building entrance		
Entrances	Yes	No
Entrances are accessible to people using wheelchairs or scooters		
Accessible door: - Opens automatically - Has power assisted door operators, or - Can be easily opened with one hand		
People can easily find information		
General Layout and Services	Yes	No
Queuing areas and serving aisles are wide enough for people using mobility aids including electric wheelchairs and scooters		
Counters/tables are accessible to and useable by patrons using wheelchairs or scooters		
Appropriate lighting is installed to ensure that people with vision disabilities may clearly identify colours, patterns and signage		
Accessible Washroom		

Person who Completed Evaluation: _____

Areas of Concern: _____

Site Selected: Yes _____ No _____

Special Accommodations for Site: _____
