



# **Election Accessibility Plan**

**2026 Municipal Election**

**Municipality of the Township of Laird**

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## 1. Introduction

The Township of Laird is committed to ensuring that the 2026 Municipal Election is accessible to all electors and candidates. 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*.

Laird Hall, the designated voting location, is currently partially accessible. The Township is in the process of upgrading the facility to include automatic door openers. If installation is not completed prior to Voting Day, a trained election official will be stationed at the entrance for the full duration of voting hours to provide door assistance to any elector who requires it.

This 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 location is **as 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

Voting will take place at **Laird Hall, 3 Pumpkin Point Road West**, using traditional paper ballots. Electors will mark their preferred candidate(s) by placing a mark in the circle next to the candidate's name.

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.
- **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.

### Proxy Voting

Electors who are unable to attend the voting location may appoint a proxy in accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*. Proxy forms must be certified by the Clerk.

## 5. Entrance and Exit

The route to the entrance of Laird Hall will be kept **clear, level, and unobstructed**. The entrance will be wide enough to accommodate mobility devices and service animals.

Laird Hall does **not currently have automatic doors**. The Township is in the process of installing automatic door openers; however, installation may not be completed before Voting Day.

To ensure accessibility:

- A **trained election official will be stationed at the entrance for the full duration of voting hours** to provide door assistance to any elector who requires it.
- Routine checks of the entrance and exit routes will be conducted throughout the day to ensure they remain safe and accessible.

## 6. Parking

Accessible parking will be available close to the entrance of Laird Hall. Parking spaces will:

- Be clearly marked with the **International Symbol of Accessibility**
- Be located on **firm, level ground**
- Include temporary signage if needed
- Be monitored to ensure they remain unobstructed

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

## **7. Service Animals**

Electors accompanied by a **service animal** are permitted to enter all areas of the voting location. Election officials will be trained on appropriate interaction and support protocols.

## **8. Assistive Tools and Supports**

The following supports will be available at the voting location:

- Magnifying sheets
- Pen and paper for communication
- Seating for electors who require rest
- Additional lighting if needed
- Assistance from trained election officials

Electors may request additional accommodations in advance or on Voting Day.

## **9. Communication of Accessibility Measures**

The Township will communicate accessibility information through:

- The Township website (WCAG 2.0 AA compliant)
- Public notices
- Social media (if applicable)
- Direct communication with electors upon request

Information will include:

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

## 10. Emergency Procedures

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

- Clear communication
- Safe evacuation support
- Ensuring mobility devices and service animals remain with electors whenever possible

## 11. Candidates

Candidates are responsible for ensuring their campaign materials, offices, and canvassing practices are accessible. Candidates are encouraged to:

- Provide materials in accessible formats upon request
- Ensure campaign websites meet **WCAG 2.0 AA** standards
- Consider accessibility when selecting campaign office locations

## 12. 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.