

2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan



Niagara-on-the-Lake Municipal Elections

If you need this document in an alternate format, please contact
the Clerk's Department at 905-468-3266 or by e-mailing
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Introduction

This plan addresses the specific accessibility requirements for the 2022 Municipal Election for the Corporation of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake (*the Town*). The Town is committed to making municipal elections accessible to all citizens of Niagara-on-the-Lake – including electors, candidates, employees and volunteers who participate in the election administration. The Town's Accessible Election Plan 2022, supports and enhances the Town's policies, multi-year Accessibility Plan and commitment to respond to the needs of people with disabilities.

To ensure that the 2022 Municipal Election is consistent with core principals of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, this plan was developed in advance of the election to identify measures to be taken and reported following the election.

In addition to the Town's Accessibility (P-CS-16-003) Policy, the following excerpts from the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, S.O. 1996, SCHED 32, define the requirements for conducting an election with regard for persons with disabilities.

Number and location of voting places

45 (1) The clerk shall establish the number and location of voting places for an election as he or she considers most convenient for the electors. 1996, c. 32, Sched., s. 45 (1).

Accessibility of voting places

(2) In establishing the 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).

Plan re: barriers to voting

(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.

Post-Election Report

(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.

Variations for electors with visual impairments

43 (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).

Objectives

The 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan will ensure an equal opportunity for all electors and candidates. Our objectives include:

- Ensure that electoral services are accessible to all electors and candidates
- Ensure voting locations and voting methods are fully accessible and if not, to provide alternatives
- Ensure that people with disabilities can independently cast their vote and confirm their choice
- Identify and eliminate barriers for people with disabilities for this election and future ones

Plan Development

This Plan is an active document which will be updated as best practices are identified and new opportunities for improvement arise. During the development process of the 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan, the following steps are to be implemented:

1. The proposed Election Accessibility Plan was reviewed by the Town's Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee.
2. Staff training standards and practices directly related to the Election were established to ensure that people with disabilities can vote in a positive customer service environment, and ensure that all Election Officials recognize that electors' needs are to be accommodated whenever possible; and
3. Following the Election, a report will be prepared on the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

Disabilities and Barriers

Definition of Disability

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 defines “disability” as follows:

- (a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;
- (b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- (c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- (d) a mental disorder; or
- (e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

Types of Barriers

Attitudinal Barriers: Barriers result when people think, and act based on false assumptions. Example: receptionist talks to an individual’s support person because they assume the individual with a disability will not understand.

Information and Communication Barriers: Barriers created when information is offered in a form that suits some, but not all, of the population. Example: print that is too small for some people to read and public-address systems that alert only people who can hear the message.

Technology Barriers: Barriers occur when technology, or the way it is used, cannot be accessed by people with disabilities. Example: websites that are not accessible to people who are blind and require the use of screen reader software.

Physical and Architectural Barriers: Physical barriers or obstacles that make it difficult for some people to easily access a place. Example: a door knob that cannot be turned by a person with limited mobility or strength, or a hallway or door that is too narrow to allow a person who uses a wheelchair to pass through safely.

Organizational Barriers: Occur when policies, practices or procedures result in some people receiving unequal access or being excluded. Example: A hiring process that is not open to people with disabilities.

Voting Location Information

In this plan, voting location includes the exterior parking and walkways at the location.

A Voting Location Accessibility Audit Checklist will be completed before confirming a site as a voting location to access the location for its accessibility to electors with disabilities.

Prior to the election, a site map of all advance voting and voting day locations will be available on the Town's election webpage.

Entrance/Exit to Voting Locations

All entrances to voting locations will be easy to access and barrier free. Every effort will be made to ensure that the door into the interior voting area is wide enough for a wheelchair, scooter, other assistive device or service animal to pass through safely and easily. Should doors into the interior voting area not be accessible, the doors will remain propped open during voting hours. Routine checks of the entrance and exit routes will be made throughout the day.

Accessible Route

An easily passible route will have signs for the entrance into the voting location and into the voting area inside. The voting area will be identified with signs that are clear and understandable.

Parking

Designated parking for electors with disabilities will be provided close to the entrance of the voting location where possible. Accessible parking spaces will be clearly marked and will be on firm and level ground. Routine checks will be made to ensure all entrances remain barrier free throughout the day.

Interior Voting Area

Access to the interior voting area will be level and easily traversed. Any mats or carpeting will be level with the floor to prevent potential tripping hazards. All voting areas are to be well lit. Seating will be made available.

Accessible Voting Booths

Accessible voting booths will be available at each voting location. Voting booths will be low in height and have a wide area to allow for wheelchairs, scooters, other assistive devices or service animals. This will allow electors to vote independently and privately.

Accessible Voting Session (AVS)

Electors will listen to instructions and ballot content through audio headphones that are connected to the Audio Tactile Interface. Electors choosing to use an Accessible Voting Session (AVS) will select one of the following assistive devices:

- **ATI:** The Audio Tactile Interface is a handheld controller with 10 buttons. The buttons are distinctive in colour and shape, and each button is marked in Braille. ATI is the quickest and easiest device for electors who can firmly push buttons.
- **Paddle Buttons:** Paddle Buttons can be used instead of ATI. They are ideal for electors who may have difficulty pushing buttons. They can be used with either hands or feet. The elector navigates the ballot and makes selections by pressing the Left (L) and Right (R) paddles when instructed on the audio track.
- **Sip n' Puff:** The Sip n' Puff can be used instead of the ATI by electors who do not have the use of their hands or feet. The elector navigates the ballot and makes selections by sipping or puffing on a straw when instructed on the audio track.

After the voter confirms their ballot selections using the assistive device, the system will print a paper copy of their ballot. The paper ballot will come out of the printer in a privacy sleeve. At this point the Accessible Voting Session is complete and the printed ballot is handled in the same manner as standard marked ballots.

Support Persons

Electors with disabilities may be accompanied by a support person within the Voting Place. In addition, an Election Official in each Voting Place can help the elector in casting their vote. Prior to entering the voting booth, the Election Official will, along with the elector with the disability, determine how much help they need and the best way in which this help can be given. This may actually be marking the ballot as directed by the person with the disability.

Assistive Personal Equipment

Electors with disabilities may use assistive personal devices including wheelchairs, walkers, white canes, walking canes, note taking devices, portable magnifiers, recording machines, assistive listening devices, personal oxygen tanks and devices for grasping.

Service Animals

A service animal is any animal trained to assist a person with a cognitive, physical or emotional disability. For example, this could be a guide dog for person who has low vision or who is blind or a service animal that alerts someone of an oncoming seizure. Physical indicators may be present including harnesses or tags as proof that the animal is a service animal. Service animals will be permitted in voting places.

Low Vision

Each voting place will have magnifying sheets to assist electors with low vision.

Hard of Hearing and Deaf

Each voting place will be equipped with pen and paper to communicate with people who are hard of hearing or deaf, if needed.

Voting Locations in Institutions

The Municipal Elections Act requires that on voting day, a voting location shall be provided on the premises of the following:

Voting places in institutions, retirement homes

45 (7) On voting day, a voting place shall be provided on the premises of the following:

An institution for the reception, treatment or vocational training of members or former members of the Canadian Forces;

An institution in which, on September 1, 20 or more beds are occupied by persons who are disabled, chronically ill or infirm;

A retirement home in which, on September 1, 50 or more beds are occupied. 1996, c. 32, Sched., s. 45 (7); 2016, c. 15, s. 34 (2, 3)

Attendance on resident

(8) The deputy returning officer for a voting place described in subsection (7) may attend on an elector who is a resident of the institution or retirement home, to allow him or her to vote. 1996, c. 32, Sched., s. 45 (8)

Attendance on electors with disabilities

(9) To allow an elector with a disability to vote, a deputy returning officer shall attend on the elector anywhere within the area designated as the voting place. 2001, c. 32, s. 30 (3).

For the 2022 Municipal Election, the following three institution locations have been identified:

Chateau Gardens, 120 Wellington St., Niagara-on-the-Lake

Upper Canada Lodge, 272 Wellington St., Niagara-on-the-Lake

Pleasant Manor, 15 Elden St., Virgil

Advance Voting Locations

There will be four advance voting locations for the 2022 Municipal Election as follows:

1. Saturday, October 8, 2022 from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
St. David's Public School
1344 York Rd, Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON
2. Wednesday, October 12, 2022 from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
Town Administration Building, Council Chambers
1593 Four Mile Creek Road, Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON
3. Saturday, October 15, 2022 from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
Community Centre, Auditorium
14 Anderson Lane, Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON
4. Wednesday, October 19, 2022 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
Town Administration Building, Council Chambers
1593 Four Mile Creek Road, Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON

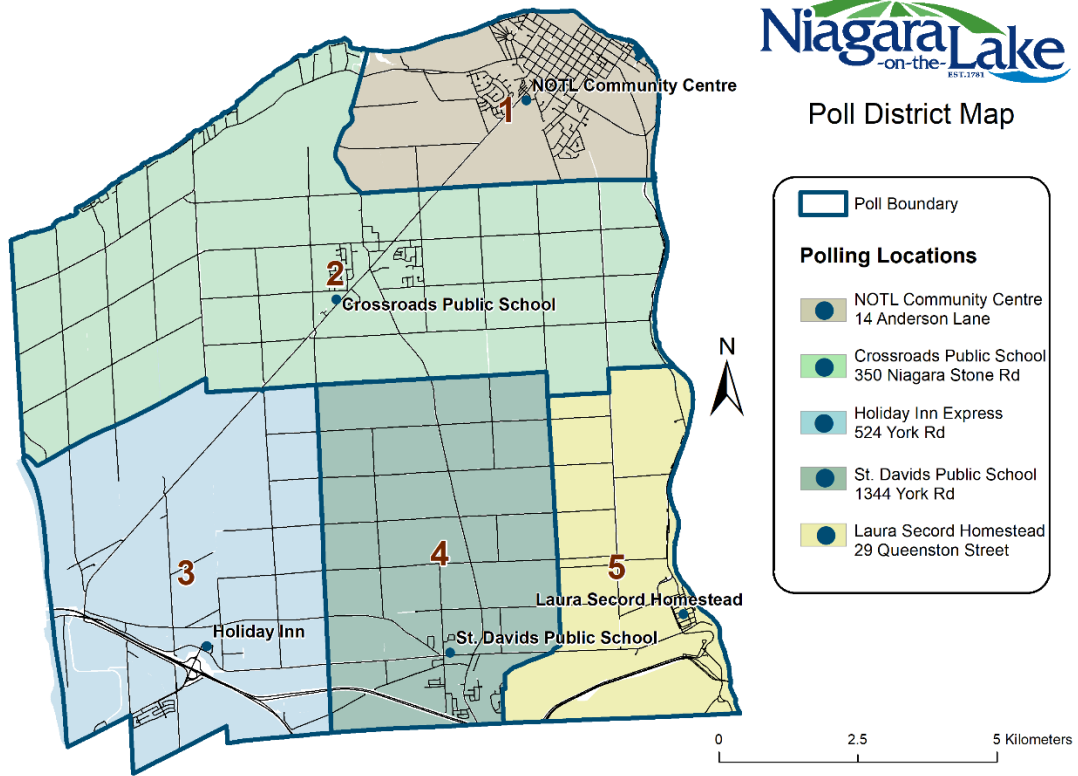
Electors may use any one of the advance voting locations to cast an advance vote. At the Advance Voting Locations, a ballot marking machine will be available to assist those electors with disabilities. This machine will also be available for use at the Community Centre from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on voting day, October 24.

Election Day Voting Locations

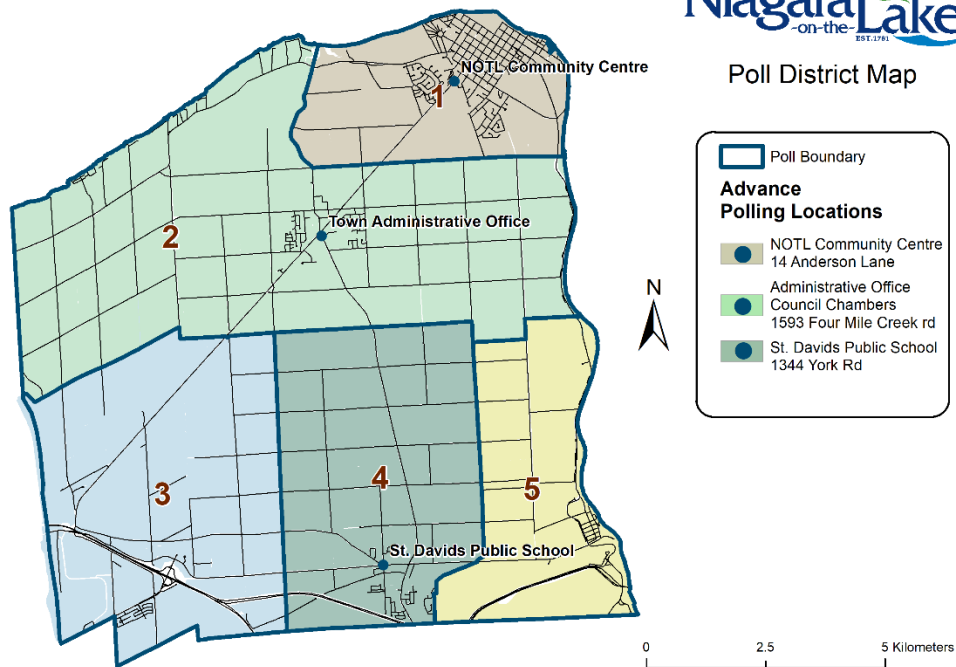
Staff has identified five voting locations which will be used on October 24, 2022:

1. Holiday Inn Express
524 York Rd, Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON
2. Crossroads Public School
1350 Niagara Stone Rd, Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON
3. Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre
14 Anderson Ln, Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON
4. St. David's Public School
1344 York Rd, Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON
5. Laura Secord Homestead
29 Queenston St, Queenston, ON L0S 1L0

Poll District Map



Poll District Map



Voting Methods

Voting Anywhere

In the 2022 Election Staff will implement a 'Vote Anywhere' strategy as a convenience to the elector. This allows electors the ability to determine the location which best suits their mobility needs. Although voters will be able to vote at any location, the ballots have the capability to track the voter's polling subdivision. Staff have decided to once again implement this strategy in the 2022 Election.

Vote by Mail

Council approved the use of vote by-mail as an alternative voting method through by-law 5405-22, attached as Appendix I, on March 28, 2022. The 2022 Municipal Election will also provide the 'Vote by Mail' alternative voting method option to electors who are unable to vote in person at the advance polls or on election day. The vote by mail procedure will remain the same as the 2018 election and will only be offered to those electors who register to vote by mail at our office prior to a date we will publish shortly. A procedure to register for the vote by mail option will be made available to anyone interested, on the Town's 2022 Municipal Elections website.

Proxy Voting

An elector with a disability that is homebound or otherwise unable to go to a Voting Location may appoint another person to act as a voting proxy to cast a ballot on his or her behalf. The appointment must be made on the prescribed form available on the Town's Election webpage. Once completed, the voting proxy may be exercised at any advance voting location or on election day. On election day, the proxy must be exercised at a Voting location on behalf of the person who is unable to attend. The appointment of a proxy may only be made after 2:00 p.m. on Nomination Day, August 19, 2022 and is null and void after election day.

Elections Communications and Information

The Town is required, as per the Accessible Customer Service Standard, to provide a copy of a document to a person with a disability, or the information 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 created by the Town or is supplied by a third party, the Town will make every effort to get the information from the third party in an alternate format and/or will attempt to assist the elector by providing assistive equipment.

General Election Material

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

Website: Information created by the Town on the website regarding the election will be compliant with WCAG 2.0 Level A and allow for use of assistive software. Also, the website font can be adjusted within the browser's functionality to aid the user in reading the information.

Service Disruptions

From time to time and/or for unforeseen circumstances beyond the Town's control, temporary service disruptions may happen. Should there be a temporary accessible service disruption, Election Officials will make reasonable efforts to make sure that services are restored as quickly as possible and that alternative services are provided where feasible.

In these instances of service disruptions, the Town will provide reasonable notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by persons with disabilities.

Accessible services in relation to this plan include voting places, election materials and/or voting provisions for electors with disabilities at the Voting Location.

In the event of service disruptions or unforeseen circumstances that affect the accessibility of Voting Locations during the advance vote or on election day, Notices of Disruption will be posted in real time:

- on the Town's website and election website;
- on Facebook;
- on Twitter;
- posted at the site of disruption; and
- where applicable, a media advisory will be issued.

Assistance to Candidates

Service Animals

Candidates and scrutineers are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at all Voting Locations and other designated election locations.

Campaign Expenses

Expenses that are incurred by a candidate with a disability that are directly related to the disability and would not have been incurred but for the election to which the expenses relate, are excluded from the permitted spending limit for the candidate in accordance with Section 67(2) 8.2 of the Municipal Elections Act.

Staff Training

All staff being trained to work at voting locations during the 2022 Election will be provided training by staff on customer service standards.

Election Feedback

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 feedback process provides election staff with an opportunity to take corrective measures to prevent similar recurrences, address training needs, enhance service delivery and provide alternative methods of providing election information and services.

Telephone:	905-468-3266
TTY Bell Relay Service:	1-800-855-0511 (Voice to TTY) or 711 (TTY to Voice) TTY bell service relay details
In Person or Mail:	Town Hall 1593 Four Mile Creek Road, Virgil, ON L0S 1T0
Fax:	905-468-2959
E-mail:	elections@notl.com

Post-Election Report

Following the election, the Town Clerk will review any barriers experienced during the election as well as identify any potential areas of improvement. This feedback will be included and addressed in future elections. The Town Clerk will report to Council within 90 days of the election on the outcomes and performance of the 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan.

Additional Information

Town Election Website

Please visit the Niagara-on-the-Lake's Election website for an up-to-date list of candidates and other important messages or events throughout the election year.

<https://www.notl.com/council-government/elections>

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing – Election Website

This website contains information about municipal elections, the Province of Ontario 2022 Municipal Elections Candidates and Voters Guide as well as the Ministry's commitment to promote greater accessibility for electors and candidates with disabilities. <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page219.aspx>

Service Ontario – e-Laws Website

This website contains all current statutes including the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005. <https://www.ontario.ca/laws>