



**CITY OF THOROLD
INFORMATION SHEET**

**2022 Municipal & School Board Election
Accessibility Pre-Election Report**

1. Introduction:

The City of Thorold's Accessibility Pre-Election Report supports and strengthens the Municipality's commitment to respond to the needs of all voters. The focus of this Plan is to ensure that electoral services are accessible to all electors and candidates. The intention is to identify and reduce or eliminate barriers and create a positive voting experience.

The review of accessibility issues and initiatives and addressing barrier prevention and/or removal is an ongoing practice. This plan will be updated as new opportunities are identified or become available.

1.1 Municipal Elections Act, 1996, as amended – Legislative Requirements

The Clerk is responsible for conducting municipal elections and establishing policies and procedures to ensure that all electors have the opportunity to fully participate in the 2022 Municipal & School Board election.

The Municipal Elections Act, 1996, as amended states the following:

12 (1) A Clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities.

12 (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.

- 12 (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.
- 41 (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).
- 45 (2)** In establishing the locations of voting places, the clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities.

1.2 City of Thorold's Accessible Customer Service Policy No. 200-13

The City of Thorold is committed to establishing policies and practices which are consistent with the accessibility standards and the four core principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity. The Accessible Customer Service Policy provides guidance on meeting the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and in accordance with the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation 191/11 in order to ensure that all persons with disabilities are provided equal opportunities.

1.3 Definition of Disability

The AODA and Ontario Human Rights Code define disability as meaning:

- 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, 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.

Disabilities take many forms, visible and invisible. The following criteria were considered in the development of this Plan:

- Policies and procedures being consistent with the principles of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, respecting the dignity and independence of all people;
- Access to electoral services must be integrated and equitable;
- Initiatives should address and accommodate a wide range of abilities; and
- The Accessible Customer Service Policy will be followed throughout the election. This policy can be found on the municipal website at <http://www.thorold.ca> or by requesting a copy through the Office of the City Clerk at Clerk@thorold.ca or by phone at 905-227-6613.

2. Feedback

The City of Thorold welcomes feedback to identify areas where changes need to be considered and ways in which the Municipality can improve the delivery of an accessible election.

As this Plan is a working document, it will continue to undergo changes. Feedback on this plan can be submitted to the Clerk at elections@thorold.ca or 905-227-6613, or in writing to:

Office of the City Clerk
3540 Schmon Parkway
Thorold, Ontario L2V 4A7

3. Consultations

Consultations with individuals and community groups provide a greater understanding into conducting elections that are accessible to all.

Initiative: Consult with the community about the Accessibility Pre-Election Report.

Actions:

1. Collaborate with community groups to disseminate election information and raise awareness about the Municipality's accessibility initiatives.
2. Attending community meetings, events and fairs where possible, to demonstrate the alternative voting method and raise awareness of the 2022 municipal and school board election.
3. Consult with the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee following the conclusion of the voting period to evaluate the success of various accessibility initiatives.

4. Alternative Voting Procedure

Initiative: Provide an accessible voting method for all City of Thorold eligible voters

Actions:

1. The use of the internet voting system was designed to meet the needs of electors to ensure independence, dignity, integration and equal opportunity
2. Post videos that will outline the voting process in advance of the voting period.
3. Eligible voters are able to vote from home without having to travel using one of the following methods and associated accessibility features:
 - a) **Internet:** menu options are clear and easy to follow, font size can be enlarged, colour contrast can be adjusted, a screen reader can be used
4. Ensure Voter Information Letters are designed with appropriate accessible font styles and sizes, appropriate case usage and colour contrast where possible.

5. Information & Communications

Information and communication initiatives will help ensure election information is accessible and available in alternative formats.

Initiative: Provide an informative and accessible election website at www.thoroldvotes.ca

Actions:

1. Ensure language is available in clear and simple language.
2. Update election information on the www.thoroldvotes.ca website to ensure it is recent and accurate.
3. Ensure the election web pages are WCAG 2.0 Level AA compliant.
4. Investigate the ability to provide a free webpage reader and colour contrasting tool to assist individuals who have difficulty reading online.

Initiative: Provide election information in alternative formats and through multiple channels

Actions:

1. Produce and distribute election related material prior to the election.
2. Post the step-by-step process on how to vote on the municipal election website.
3. Post a video (provided by Dominion Voting) on how to vote on the municipal election website.

6. Assistance to Candidates

Initiative: Provide candidates with information on how to make their campaigns more accessible

Action:

1. Provide candidates links through our municipal election website to accessible election information produced by the provincial and federal governments and other organizations where available.

Initiative: Provide candidates with access to information in alternative formats

Action:

1. Ensure information provided to candidates is available in an accessible format upon request.
2. Making the City of Thorold voters list available in an electronic format, free of charge, to candidates upon request.

Initiative: Ensure candidate information sessions are accessible

Action:

1. Holding candidate information sessions in accessible locations.

7. Help Centres

Initiative: Ensure all help centres are accessible

Actions:

1. Create and use an accessibility checklist for election staff in determining municipal help centres, helping to ensure each has:
 - i. A barrier free path of travel from the parking lot/sidewalk
 - ii. Barrier free parking, where parking is provided
 - iii. Door openers or accessible doors
 - iv. Adequate lighting
2. Inspect help centres during the voting period, making modifications where possible to increase accessibility.
3. Provide adequate signage at help centres.
4. Ensure that elections staff are aware of the municipal Notice of Accessible Service disruption procedure in the event that disruptions to service or unforeseen circumstances may affect the accessibility of help centres during the voting period.
5. Ensure accessible customer service training is provided to election staff.
6. Ensure election official are available in the help centre to assist a voter in casting their ballot when requested.

8. Post-Election Report

Section 12.1 (2) of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 as amended states the following:

“Within 90 days after voting day in a regular election, the clerk shall submit a report to council about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities”.

The post-election report will be posted on the municipal website and provided to as requested.