

**2026 City of Thorold  
Municipal and School Board  
Elections Pre-Election  
Accessibility Plan**



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## 1. Introduction

The Office of the City Clerk is responsible for the proper legislative and administrative conduct of municipal elections in the City of Thorold. In accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA) and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, (AODA) the City Clerk is authorized to establish procedures and provide appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities can participate fully in the 2026 Municipal and School Board Election.

Accordingly, the 2026 election will be conducted in such a manner to ensure that:

1. Candidates and voters with disabilities are provided reasonable access to all election-related information, communication, and services.
2. Voting places are accessible to persons with disabilities, allowing voters to enter, navigate, and cast their ballot without barriers.
3. Persons with disabilities have access to alternative methods of voting assistance that enable them to independently and privately mark their ballot. Where a disability cannot be accommodated through available methods, an election official, trained in accessible customer service, will be available to provide assistance.
4. Feedback from candidates and voters with disabilities is collected and documented to help identify barriers and direct resources toward meaningful accessibility improvements in future elections. All feedback will be kept confidential and used solely for the purpose of improving accessible customer service.

In accordance with subsection 12.1(3) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, following the election, the Clerk will submit a formal report to Council outlining the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers affecting candidates and electors with disabilities.

## 2. Staff Training and Election Assistance

### 2.1 Staff Training

All staff involved in delivering election services will receive training to ensure that persons with disabilities are served in a respectful, inclusive, and accommodating manner. Training will provide staff with the knowledge and skills required to respond appropriately to a wide range of accessibility needs and will include instruction on:

1. Communicating and interacting effectively with persons with various types of disabilities;
2. Supporting persons with disabilities who use assistive devices, or who are accompanied by a service animal or support person;

3. Proper use of voting equipment and available assistive tools to ensure accessible election services;
4. Identifying and responding appropriately when a person experiences difficulty accessing election information or services.

## **2.2 Provision of Election Information**

The City will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that candidates and voters with disabilities are able to access election information and receive election documents in a format that accommodates their individual needs. Accessible formats and communication support will be provided upon request.

## **2.3 Notice of Temporary Service Disruption**

If there is a temporary disruption in the delivery of election information or services, a public notice will be issued on the City's website, at the physical location of the disruption, and, when possible, through local media. This notice will outline the reason for the disruption, the anticipated duration, and any alternative methods available for accessing the information or service. Every effort will be made to provide alternative options to ensure that persons with disabilities can continue to access election information and services without undue hardship.

## **2.4 Staff Assistance**

The Office of the City Clerk's staff are available to assist with any issues that may arise with respect to providing a barrier-free election and can be reached by way of the contact information provided below:

**Telephone:** 905-227-6613

**Email:** [Elections@thorold.ca](mailto:Elections@thorold.ca)

**Mail:** Office of the City Clerk, P.O Box 1044, Thorold, Ontario, L2V 4A7

**In Person:** 3540 Schmon Parkway, Thorold, ON, L2V 4Y6

The following members of our election staff can be contacted directly for assistance:

**Nicholas Debono, City Clerk**

Call: 905.227.6613 ext. 270

**Justin Letourneau, Legislative & Municipal Elections Coordinator**

Call: 905.227.6613 ext. 224

**Laura Bubanko, Deputy City Clerk**

Call: 905.227.6613 ext. 226

### **3. Assistance to Candidates**

#### **3.1 Service Animals, Support Persons, Assistive Devices**

Candidates and scrutineers with disabilities are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal, support person, or assistive device at all voting locations and other designated election locations.

#### **3.2 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.

### **4. Assistance to Voters**

#### **4.1 Online Voting**

The use of the online voting system is designed to meet the needs of voters to ensure independence, dignity, integration and equal opportunity. Eligible voters can vote from home without having to travel using the online voting option. Online voting offers menu options that are clear and easy to follow, font size can be enlarged, colour contrast can be adjusted, and a screen reader can be used. Voter Information Letters are designed with appropriate accessible font styles and sizes, appropriate case usage and colour contrast where possible.

#### **4.2 Voting by Proxy**

Prior to Voting Day, a person with a disability that is unable to go out to a voting location may appoint another person to act as a voting proxy to cast a ballot on their behalf. The appointment must be made on the prescribed form available from the Office of the City Clerk and on the City's election website. The person being appointed as a proxy will be required to take a statutory declaration. Staff in the Office of the City Clerk can administer this oath.

Once completed, the voting proxy may be exercised at any advance voting location or on Voting Day. The appointment of a proxy may only be made starting Monday, August 24, 2026, up to and including Voting Day – Monday, October 26, 2026.

#### **4.3 Institutional Voting**

Subsections 45(7) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* requires that a voting location be located in the following institutions on voting day:

1. An institution for the reception, treatment or vocational training of members or former members of the Canadian Armed Forces.
2. An institution in which, on nomination day, 20 or more beds are occupied by persons who are disabled, chronically ill or infirm.

3. A retirement home in which, on nomination day, 50 or more beds are occupied.

For the 2026 election, Cobblestone Gardens Retirement Residence will have election workers setup a voting location for the residents at reduced hours as established by the City Clerk. A voting place located within an institution, long-term care facility, or retirement home, the Deputy Returning Officer may attend to voters in their individual living areas or at their bedside to provide voting assistance.

#### **4.4 Transit to the Voting Location**

Proximity of the voting location to accessible public transit routes shall be considered in selection of voting locations, however, the location may not necessarily be located on the same street as the transit stop.

#### **4.5 Parking**

Designated or reserved parking for people with disabilities who display a valid Ontario Accessible Parking Permit (APP) is to be provided close to the entrance of the Voting Location where possible. Accessible parking spaces will be clearly posted and marked with the international Symbol of Accessibility. Barrier free paths of travel between parking and the voting location entrance should be provided.

#### **4.6 Entrance to the Voting Location**

Every effort has been made to use only accessible facilities for Voting Locations. If, however, the main entrance to the Voting Location is inaccessible due to steps or other barriers, an alternative entry point that is accessible will be used and clearly signed. Wherever possible the accessible entrance is to be used as the main entrance for everyone. Every reasonable effort will be made to ensure that entrances are barrier-free. This includes providing doorways wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs and scooters, ensuring door hardware can be operated using a closed fist, and addressing doors that are heavy, difficult to open, or fitted with inaccessible hardware. Where necessary, such doors will be safely propped open or staffed to facilitate accessible entry.

#### **4.7 Interior Voting Area**

Access to the interior voting area and voting booth shall be level and easily traversed. Any doormats or carpeting shall be flush with the floor surface to prevent potential tripping hazards. All voting areas will be well-lit, and seating will be made available for electors who require it.

#### **4.8 Accessible Voting Booths**

Voting booths that are easily accessible will be available at each Voting Location. Voting booths will have a wider area of access to allow individuals who use a mobility device to

vote independently and secretively. Magnifying sheets are available upon request from the Deputy Returning Officer (DRO) to any individual.

#### **4.9 Ballot Marking Device**

The advance voting locations being held in Thorold, and at one location on Voting Day, will be equipped with a ballot marking device for voters with disabilities to vote secretly and independently. When a voter wishes to use the accessible voting feature, the election worker will escort the voter behind the privacy screen near the tabulator equipped with the ballot marking device. For more information regarding this process, please contact the Office of the City Clerk.

#### **4.10 Voting Assistance**

Voters with disabilities may be accompanied by a support person while inside the voting place. In addition, election officials at each voting place are authorized to assist an elector with a disability in casting their vote, upon request.

Prior to entering the voting booth, the election official will consult with the voter to determine the nature and extent of assistance required and the most appropriate way to provide that assistance. This may include marking the ballot on behalf of the voter, strictly in accordance with the voter's direction.

Further, where a voter is unable to enter the physical voting place, a Deputy Returning Officer is authorized to attend to the voter at an alternative location within the designated voting place, including the parking lot or any on-street areas immediately adjoining the voting place.

All election officials are required to swear an oath that includes a commitment to secrecy and are obligated to always uphold these standards.

### **5. Resources**

#### **5.1 City of Thorold – Office of the City Clerk**

The Office of the City Clerk is located at 3540 Schmon Parkway, Thorold. The Office of the City Clerk's election staff can answer any questions you may have about running for office, the election in general or specific provisions for persons with a disability.

#### **5.2 City of Thorold – Election Website**

The City of Thorold Election Website is continuously updated to reflect the most recent developments and information. Visit the site for an up-to-date list of candidates and other important messages or events throughout the election year at the [city's election website \(www.thorold.ca/elections\)](http://www.thorold.ca/elections).

### **5.3 Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing - Election Website**

The [Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing website](http://www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-municipal-affairs-housing) (<http://www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-municipal-affairs-housing>) contains information about municipal elections, the Province of Ontario 2026 Municipal Elections Candidates Guide and the Ministry's commitment to promote greater accessibility for voters and candidates with a disability.

### **5.4 Ministry of Community and Social Services**

The Ministry of Community and Social Services provides information on accessibility and accessibility legislation. For more information visit [their website](http://www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility-laws) (<http://www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility-laws>)

### **5.5 Service Ontario – e-Laws**

This [website](http://www.ontario.ca/laws) (<http://www.ontario.ca/laws>) contains all current statutes including the *Municipal Elections Act*, the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*.