



TOWN OF MIDLAND

2022 Municipal and School Board Elections
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Elections Accessibility Plan

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This Plan is for use in the 2022 Municipal Elections in conjunction with the Town's current Accessible Customer Service Policy and Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation Policy, guidelines, training and customer service feedback standards.

The Town of Midland abides by the following principles when conducting the Town's Election:

- Integrity of process maintained throughout election
- Secrecy and confidentiality of the individual vote
- Election is fair and non-biased
- Election is accessible to the voters
- Certainty that results reflect votes cast
- Voters and candidates treated fairly and consistently

PROCEDURES MAY BE MODIFIED DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC TO ADHERE TO THE GUIDELINES SET BY THE SIMCOE COUNTY DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT AND THE TOWN OF MIDLAND COVID PROTOCOLS.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The accessibility mandate for the Town of Midland Municipal 2022 Elections is as follows:

“It is the goal of the Town of Midland to ensure that all electors who have a disability or an issue with accessibility are provided with the best opportunity to vote as independently as possible in the 2022 Municipal Elections.”

The Town of Midland has made great efforts in promoting a barrier-free community. This plan will address the specific elections accessibility requirements in an effort to ensure that the 2022 Municipal Elections are consistent with the core principles of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

In accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, as amended, following the election the Clerk will submit a report to Council concerning the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

2. OBJECTIVES

This plan is intended to highlight measures that the Town of Midland will be implementing to ensure equal opportunity for all electors and candidates. These objectives include:

- That persons with disabilities are able to independently cast their vote and verify their selection.
- That persons with disabilities have full and equal access to all information on where and when to vote and on eligible candidates.
- That persons with disabilities can fully participate in the Municipal Elections as an elector, candidate, or election official.
- That efforts are made to ensure that electors with disabilities are aware of the accessibility measures available via channels such as the newspaper, media launches, the Town of Midland website and social media.
- That all Voter Assistance Centres are accessible.

3. MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS ACT REQUIREMENTS

In addition to our pre-existing accessibility requirements and the Town’s current *Town of Midland Accessible Customer Service Policy*, the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* S.O. 1996, chapter 32 states:

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

12.1 (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).

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

4. DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN

This plan will address the specific requirements pertaining to accessibility in relation to the 2022 Municipal Elections in the Town of Midland.

This plan is a “living” document which will be improved and updated as best practices are identified and new opportunities of improvement arise.

During the development process of the *Elections Accessibility Plan*, the following steps were implemented:

- a) Review and analysis of documents, policies and other supporting materials from AMCTO, neighboring municipalities, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, technology suppliers and other various stakeholder groups. In consultation with the Midland Accessibility Advisory Committee, the proposed Accessibility Plan will be reviewed to substantiate needs are being met.
- b) Staff training standards and practices directly related to the elections will be established to ensure that people with disabilities are able to vote in a positive environment, and that all Election Officials recognize that a voter’s needs are to be accommodated whenever possible.
- c) Following the elections, a report will be submitted to Council, and to the Midland Accessibility Advisory Committee about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affected electors and candidates with disabilities.

5. REGARD FOR THE NEEDS OF ELECTORS WITH DISABILITIES

The procedures within this plan must respect the dignity and independence of the electors. The election process should ensure that the policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.

Disabilities can take many forms and can range from temporary to permanent. Often disabilities are non-visible and no one should ever make assumptions. Disabilities include developmental, cognitive and physical challenges/conditions of persons of any age.

a) Examples of Barriers to People with Disabilities:

Barrier Type	Example
Physical	A doorknob that cannot be operated by an elderly person with limited upper-body mobility and strength.
Architectural	A hallway or door that is too narrow for a wheelchair or scooter.
Informational	Typefaces which are too small to be read by a person with low vision.
Communicational	A speaker at a meeting who talks loudly when addressing a deaf participant.
Attitudinal	A campaign event that discourages persons with developmental disabilities from participating.
Technological	Information on a web site, which cannot be accessed by a person who is blind or visually impaired and who has reading software on a computer.
Policy/Practice	A practice of announcing important messages over an intercom that people with hearing impairments cannot hear clearly.

b) Types of Disabilities

Listed below is a brief description of types of disabilities. Understanding people’s needs and challenges may help you better communicate with them.

Physical Disabilities: There are many types and degrees of physical disabilities, and while people who use mobility aids like wheelchairs, scooters, crutches or canes are most recognizable, it is important to consider that not all people with physical disabilities require a mobility device.

Vision Loss: There are varying degrees of vision loss and a distinction between blindness and low vision. In some cases, it may be difficult to tell if a person has vision loss.

Hearing Impaired, Deafness and Hearing Loss: Hearing loss ranges from mild to profound. The distinctions between the terms “deaf”, “deafened”, “hearing impaired” and “hard of hearing” are based principally on the individual’s preferred language (spoken or signed) rather than on the actual degree of hearing loss.

Deaf-Blindness: A person who is deaf-blind has some degree of both vision and hearing loss. This results in greater difficulties in accessing information and managing daily activities. Most people who are deaf-blind will be accompanied by an intervener, a professional who helps with communicating.

Speech Impairments: People with speech disabilities may have problems communicating. For many reasons, people may have difficulty speaking clearly – for example, as a result of a stroke or cerebral palsy – which may result in difficulties with verbal communication. Some people may use communication boards or other assistive devices to help communicate. A speech disability often has no impact on a person’s ability to understand. Ask them to repeat the information if you don’t understand. Ask questions that can be answered “yes” or “no” if possible.

Cognitive Disabilities: Cognitive disabilities may affect understanding, communication, or behavior and can be attributed to brain injuries, developmental or learning disabilities. It is not always easy to identify someone who has a cognitive disability.

Mental Illness: Mental illness is a disturbance in thoughts and emotions that may decrease a person’s capacity to cope with the challenges of everyday life. Mental illness can take many forms, just as physical illness does.

6. VOTING METHODS

In 2022, the Town of Midland will be working with Intelivote Systems Inc. to provide eVoting services to eligible voters. This includes the convenience and independence of voting from anywhere via internet or telephone during the October 11 – 24, 2022 voting period.

Everyday tools like computers, telephones and other aids can present accessible opportunities for persons with disabilities to accomplish more, while being consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equal opportunity.

The Intelivote Voting System provides voters with the capability to vote from the comfort of their own home. Voting from home facilitates the voting process for persons with disabilities who may have mobility restrictions, visual impairment, and/or have a difficult time with transportation. Additionally, persons who have assistive devices set up in their homes can now use them to assist with casting a ballot privately and independently.

By allowing persons with disabilities to vote from any location and from a selection of methods, there is an increase in the capability for the voter to vote without any assistance. This provides persons with disabilities the same independence and privacy in participating in the election as other voters. If persons with disabilities do require assistance in the voting process, trained Election Officials will be present

throughout the voting period at the Voter Assistance Centre offered at the Midland Municipal Office, 575 Dominion Avenue, Midland.

6.1 Telephone Voting

Eligible voters may vote using a touch-tone telephone, and the toll-free telephone number, date of birth, and the PIN number contained in their Voter Instruction Letter to access an audio ballot. Communications barriers can make it difficult for people to receive or convey information. Barriers may be identified as low volume, use of language that is not clear or plain, and confusing or unorganized menu options.

The Intelivote telephone voting application provides the following:

- Service on all types of touch tone phones and wireless devices.
- Clear, plain language.
- Menu options that are easy to follow, advising when to select options and provision for confirmation of the voter's selections.
- Standard volume is used to allow for adjustment dependent on the telephone or device being utilized.

6.2 Internet Voting

Eligible voters may vote on-line, using a smart phone, tablet device, gaming device or computer and any accompanying assistive devices or software, along with their date of birth and PIN and qualifying information, to access the internet address provided in their Voter Instruction Letter.

The Intelivote System has been created to meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG-2 Level AA), so that persons with disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate and interact with the online voting system. It is compliant with the guidelines of the World Wide Web Consortium website principles, which include organization, functionality and readability of information provided, as well as alternative ways of representing information, such as with audio.

6.3 In-person Voting at Voter Assistance Centers

For those individuals without means to access voting via telephone or Internet, or who require the assistance of a trained Election Official, a Voter Assistance Centre will be open to provide in-person internet voting opportunities via a laptop or tablet or via telephone.

Access to the Voter Assistance Centre interior and voting area shall be level and slip resistant. Any doormats or carpeting shall be level with the floor to prevent potential tripping hazards. The voting area shall be well lit, and seating shall be available. Entrance corridors shall be clear of obstructions and tripping hazards and will allow sufficient space for use of a wheelchair or scooter.

An accessible voting area will be available at the Voter Assistance Centre. The area shall be low in height and have a wide area to allow for individuals who use a wheelchair or scooter to vote independently and secretly.

Voters may attend at the Voter Assistance Centre throughout the voting period. Midland will be operating the Voter Assistance Centre at the following dates and times

Tuesday, October 11	10:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Wednesday, October 12 – Friday, October 14	8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Saturday, October 15	12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Monday, October 17 – Friday, October 21	8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Saturday, October 22	12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Monday, October 24	8:30 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.

6.4 Resident Voting at Long-term Care/Retirement Homes

The *Municipal Elections Act* states:

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.

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.

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).

Election Officials will be available at pre-determined times to set up on-site a Voter Assistance Centre or bedside voting opportunities for residents at the following long-term care/retirement homes:

Villa Retirement Lodge	689 Yonge Street
The Villa Care Centre	658 King St.
King Place Retirement Residence	750 King St.
Hillcrest Village Care Centre	255 Russell St.
Chartwell Tiffin House	105 Pillsbury Dr.

(Voting at these locations for residents of the home only)

Accessibility of the voting place in institutions will be addressed to the best of the Town's ability through the cooperation of the institution administrator. The voting time within each institution will be arranged with the institution administrator.

An Election Official will be available to attend anywhere within the voting place to allow an elector with a mobility disability to vote.

7. VOTER ASSISTANCE CENTRE

A Voter Assistance Centre will be located in the Council Chambers of the Town of Midland Municipal Office, 575 Dominion Avenue, Midland. The Municipal Office, including the Council Chambers, is fully accessible.

The Voter Assistance Centre will be available to voters throughout the voting period and on Voting Day until 8:00 p.m.

The entrance to the Voter Assistance Centre can be accessed from Dominion Avenue via a ramp with handrails leading to the entrance. The exterior doors have automatic door opening devices and are wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair or other mobility device.

A secondary access from the Third Street parking lot is level. The exterior doors have automatic door opening devices and are wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair or other mobility device. The Council Chambers are accessible from this floor via an elevator.

Interior Access to the Council Chambers is level. Any carpeting and doormats will be level with the floor. The Chambers is well lit, and seating will be made available. For those wishing to vote by telephone or internet at the Voter Assistance Centre the voting area will have a wide area to allow individuals using mobility aids to vote independently and secretly. Routine checks of entrance and exit routes will be made throughout the hours of operation.

The Municipal Office Council Chambers is on the public transit bus route.

Accessible parking is available in the Third Street parking lot. The designated parking space(s) are clearly marked with the international Symbol of Accessibility and are on firm and level ground, close to the accessible Third Street building entrance. By-law officers will monitor and enforce parking throughout the voting period.

The Town's electronic sign is located beside the Dominion Avenue entrance and will identify the Voter Assistance Centre. Directional signs will clearly mark the Voter Assistance Centre location within the building.

Electors requiring specialized transit services are encouraged to contact Midland Accessible Transportation (AT) at 705-526-4321 or e-mail transportation@communityreach.ca

8. VOTING ASSISTANCE

8.1 Support Person/Friend of the Voter

Pursuant to the *Town of Midland Accessible Customer Service Policy* people with disabilities are permitted to be accompanied by a support person at the Voter Assistance Centre.

A designated support person and/or 'Friend of the Voter' will be administered an oath of secrecy/confidentiality by an Election Official prior to providing any such assistance. The support person may then accompany the elector behind the voting screen to assist the elector in the voting process.

8.2 Service Animals

Pursuant to the *Town of Midland Accessible Customer Service Policy* individuals requiring service animals are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at all voting locations.

An animal is a "service animal" if it is readily apparent that the animal is used by a person with a disability for reasons relating to his or her disability, for example a guide dog wearing a harness.

8.3 Election Officials

At the Voter Assistance Centre, upon request, Election Officials are available to assist any voter who requires assistance in casting their online or telephone ballot. All individuals working in the capacity of an Election Official are formally appointed as such and administered an oath of secrecy prior to the voting period.

9. COMMUNICATION

The *2022 Elections Accessibility Plan* will be made available at the Town of Midland Municipal Office and by way of the Town of Midland website at www.midland.ca. Alternative formats will be made available upon request.

Information regarding the accessibility measures provided for the 2022 Municipal Election shall be included in general election advertising as well as in the 2022 Municipal Elections Nomination Package.

10. ELECTION MATERIALS

The Town of Midland 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 contained in the document, in a format that takes into account the person's disability.

10.1 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 of Midland 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 generated by the Town of Midland or is supplied by a third party, the Town of Midland will make every effort to obtain the information from the third party in an alternate format and/or will attempt to assist the Elector by providing assistive equipment.

10.2 General Election Materials

a) Large Print

Printed material generated by the Town of Midland will be provided in an Arial font, minimum 11 point, and can be made available in a font (print) size that is 16 to 20 points or larger.

b) Website

Information posted on the Town of Midland website in relation to the election will be done so under WCAG 2.0 Level AA guidelines. Should you encounter any accessibility issues, please contact elections@midland.ca for further assistance.

11. SERVICE DISRUPTIONS

From time to time and/or for unforeseen circumstances beyond the Town of Midland's control, temporary service disruptions may be experienced. In the event of a temporary accessible service disruption, Election Officials will commit to making reasonable efforts to ensure that services are reinstated as quickly as possible and that alternative services are provided where feasible.

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

In the event of disruptions to service or unforeseen circumstances that affect the accessibility of the Voter Assistance Centre during the election period, notices of disruption will be posted in real time on the Town of Midland website and election website.

12. ACCESSIBILITY TRAINING FOR ELECTION OFFICIALS

All Election Officials are required to complete the Town’s general Accessible Customer Service and IASR training which includes:

- the purpose of the Act,
- how to interact with people with various disabilities,
- how to interact with people who use the assistance of a service animal or support person.

In addition to the Town’s general Customer Service and IASR Training, all Election Officials will be provided with customized training on this plan and the related materials contained within.

13. CANDIDATES

Candidates must also have regard to the needs of electors with disabilities. Campaign offices, election materials and canvassing should all be reviewed in order to ensure that they are fully accessible. The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario has released several quick reference documents to assist candidates with accessible elections considerations.

The Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO) also provides a [Candidate’s Guide to Accessible Elections](#).

14. CAMPAIGN EXPENSES

In accordance with Section 76(5) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, as amended, 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. Examples of these expenses are: sign language interpreters for door-to-door campaigning, accessible transportation to attend campaign events/candidates meetings, and cost of specialized software.

15. REPORTING

Pursuant to section 12.1 of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, within 90 days after voting day, the Town of Midland Clerk shall submit a report to Council about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

The report will be provided to the Midland Accessibility Advisory Committee. It will also be made available to the public via the Town’s website and through the Clerk’s Office at the Municipal Office.