



2022 Election Accessibility Plan

The Municipal Clerk is responsible for the appropriate legislative and administrative conduct of the municipal elections in Bluewater.

The Municipal Elections Act, (MEA), Section 12.1 (1) places responsibility on the Clerk to have regard to the needs of the electors and candidates with disabilities. Accessible Customer Service Standards must be followed when conducting municipal elections.

Section 12.1 (2) of the MEA requires that 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.

Bluewater municipal elections will be conducted in a manner that shall ensure that candidates and electors with disabilities have full and equal access to all election information and services, including the voting kiosk at the municipal office. The election shall be conducted in a manner that ensures that persons with disabilities are able to vote independently and privately with access to voting assistance if required.

Section 12.1 (2) of the MEA requires that within ninety (90) days of voting day the Clerk who is responsible for conducting the election shall submit a report to Council regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect elector and candidates with disabilities.

Staff Training and Election Assistance

Staff Training

All staff carrying out election duties will complete the Bluewater Accessible Customer Services Training and specific Election Training to comply with the municipal Accessibility Plan and to recognize and ensure that persons with disabilities are served in a way that accommodates their individual needs.

Training will include:

- How to interact/communicate with persons with various types of disability;
- How to interact with persons with disabilities who use assistive devices, require the assistance of a support person or a service animal;
- How to clearly explain internet and telephone voting, as well as the touch-screen voting kiosk option;
- What to do if a person is having difficulty accessing election information or

- services;
- How to provide voter assistance if requested.

Provision of Election Information

Election information will be provided to electors and candidates with disabilities in an alternative format upon request, agreed upon between the requester and the Clerk.

Notice of Temporary Service Disruption

The Clerk shall provide public notice on the municipal website and in the local media if there is a temporary disruption in the delivery of election information or services. The Notice shall include the reason for the disruption, the expected duration and an explanation of alternative methods of delivering the information or service. Every effort shall be made to provide alternative methods of providing the information or service to persons with disabilities.

Staff Assistance

The Clerk's Department Staff are available throughout the election to assist with any issues that may arise with respect to providing a barrier-free election.

Contact information for assistance:

Telephone:	519-236-4351
Toll Free:	1-877-236-4351
Email:	clerk@municipalityofbluewater.ca
In Person:	Clerk's Office 14 Mill Avenue Zurich, ON

Assistance to Electors

General

The 2022 Bluewater Municipal Elections will be conducted with Internet and Telephone Voting methods. Detailed information about each voting method is set out in the 2022 Election Procedures Manual, available from the Clerk's Office and can be provided in an alternative format upon request.

Please contact us at 519-236-4351 or clerk@municipalityofbluewater.ca if you require your Voter Information Package in an accessible format.

The Clerk's Department Staff are available throughout the election to assist with any issues that may arise with respect to providing a barrier-free election.

Accessible Voting Kiosk

Section 45(2) of the MEA requires that the Clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities.

An accessible voting kiosk located at the municipal office, 14 Mill Avenue, Zurich will be available to voters throughout the voting period during regular office hours and on Election Day until 8:00 p.m.

Parking

The municipal office parking lot has designated parking for individuals with disabilities that are clearly posted and located close to the entrance to the Voting Kiosk.

Entrance

The entrance to the municipal office Voting Kiosk has steps and a ramp with handrails leading to the entrance door. Doors to the municipal office have automatic door opening devices or will be propped open in a safe manner. They are wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair or other mobility devices.

Interior

Access to the interior voting area and voting booth is level. Carpeting and doormats are level with the floor to prevent potential tripping hazards. The voting area is well lit, and seating shall be made available.

Accessible Voting Booth

The Voting Kiosk will be low in height and have a wide area to allow individuals using mobility aids to vote independently and secretively.

Voting Assistance

Persons with disabilities may be accompanied by a support person within the Voting Kiosk or an appointed Election Official can assist the voter in casting their vote. The Election Official shall, in conjunction with the person with the disability, determine the extent to which they need assistance and the best way to provide the assistance.

A mobile voting kiosk with a touch screen and Election Staff will be on-site at Queensway Nursing Home in Hensall and Bluewater Rest Home in Zurich during one day in the voting period to increase accessibility to residents of the homes. Election officials can attend on voters in their specific living areas or at their bedside to assist them to vote. All Election Officials are sworn to an oath of secrecy.

Accessible Voting Technologies

Voting Kiosks will have a touch screen computer for internet voting that will assist voters with disabilities in casting their votes with independence and privacy. Staff will be available at all times to assist voters at the kiosk upon request. Support persons and service animals will be accommodated.

Huron County libraries in Bluewater also provide internet access during regular library hours and will have trained staff available to assist voters in accessing the electronic voting site throughout the voting period for voters that choose to vote from that location. This provides voters another option of location to access the internet if they do not have their own access to the internet.

Internet Voting

Internet voting allows voters to vote from their home through secured internet services. This

method provides for easy voting for persons with a variety of disabilities to cast their vote with independence and privacy as voters have the option of using the assistive tools they have on their own computer such as a thumbswitch or sip and puff technology.

This method of voting is designed to encourage voter participation as voters don't have to attend a physical location to cast their ballot and accessibility and privacy for persons with disabilities is maximized.

Telephone Voting

Telephone voting allows voters to vote from their home through secured telephone services which provides for easy voting for persons with a variety of disabilities to cast their vote with independence and privacy. Land lines or cell phone can be used to vote, the method is compatible with assistive devices.

Voters can register their vote selections with the telephone keypad or voice commands, greatly increasing accessibility, privacy and independence for voters who do not have internet access.

Assistance to Candidates

General

The 2022 Bluewater Municipal Elections will be conducted with Internet and Telephone Voting methods. Detailed information about each voting method is set out in the 2022 Election Procedures Manual, available from the Clerk's Office and can be made available in an alternative format upon request.

Please contact us at 519-236-4351 or clerk@municipalityofbluewater.ca if you require your Candidate Package in an accessible format.

The Clerk's Department Staff are available throughout the election to assist with any issues that may arise with respect to providing a barrier-free election.

Accessibility measures for Candidates to consider in regards to their campaign messaging are included in the Candidate Package.

Service Animals/Support Persons

Candidates are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal and/or support person at all designated elections 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.

Feedback Process

Any feedback received will be reviewed by the Clerk and appropriate action will be taken to remove barriers or provide accommodation if necessary.

The information received will be summarized in the post-election Election Accessibility Report and will be used to improve accessibility measures in future municipal elections.