



ST. CATHARINES  
**MUNICIPAL  
AND SCHOOL BOARD  
ELECTION**  
OCTOBER 26, 2026

---

---

**2026 Municipal and School Board  
Elections**

---

**Accessible Election Policy**

# 2026 Municipal and School Board Election

## Accessible Election Policy

### 1. Introduction

The Office of the City Clerk is responsible for the legislative and administrative conduct of municipal elections in the City of St. Catharines.

Section 12.1(1) of the *Municipal Elections Act*, 1996, states that

“a Clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities.”

Section 12.2(2) of the *Municipal Elections Act*, 1996, states 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”

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 have the opportunity to participate fully in the 2026 Municipal Election.

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

- Candidates, third party advertisers and electors with disabilities have full and equal access to all election information and services.
- Persons with disabilities have access to Voting Locations.
- Persons with disabilities are able to independently and privately mark their ballot and have access to alternative methods of voting assistance.
- Persons will have an opportunity to access an alternative voting method.

Within 90 days after voting day the City Clerk shall submit a report to Council about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors, candidates and third-party advertisers with disabilities.

### 2. Staff Recruitment Training and Election Assistance

#### Recruitment / Assessment / Selection

Applications for recruitment of election officials will be available on the City of St. Catharines website, as well as, in the Office of the City Clerk. Applicants may be required to complete a short skills test.

The City of St. Catharines is an equal opportunity employer committed to inclusive, barrier-free recruitment and selection processes and work environments. We will accommodate the needs of applicants and election officials under the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) throughout the recruitment and selection process. Please advise staff to ensure your accessibility needs are accommodated.

During the application process, the applicant may disclose, via the application form, if they require accommodations. Accommodation will be undertaken in a manner that takes into account the applicant's needs due to a disability.

Accommodations are available upon request throughout the recruitment and employment process.

## **2.1 Staff Training**

All staff carrying out election duties will receive training to ensure that persons with disabilities are served in a way that accommodates their needs. Training will include:

- How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disability.
- How to interact with persons who use assistive devices or require the assistance of a service animal or support person.
- How to use voting equipment and assistive devices to deliver election services (when available).
- What to do if a person is having difficulty accessing election information or services.
- Review of the purposes of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and the Customer Service Standard's requirements of Ontario Regulation 191/11 for the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation.

## **2.2 Provision of Election Information**

Candidates and electors can request information and election documents in alternative formats. Election officials shall consult with the requester and shall provide or arrange for the provision of a suitable format. The City of St. Catharines website is fully compliant to WCAG 2.0.

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

If there is a temporary disruption in the delivery of election information or services, the Office of the City Clerk shall provide public notice in accordance with AODA. The notice shall include the reason for the disruption, anticipated duration and a description 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.

## **2.4 Staff Assistance**

Election Officials 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:** 905.688.5601, ext. 1517

**TTY:** 905.688.4TTY (4889)

**Email:** elections@stcatharines.ca

**Mail:** Office of the City Clerk, 50 Church St., P.O. Box 3012, St. Catharines, ON,  
L2R 7C2

## **3. Candidates**

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

In accordance with [O. Reg. 191/11](#) persons 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, unless prohibited by law.

If a service animal is excluded from the premises by law, staff will work the individual to identify alternative methods for the person to access municipal goods, services and facilities.

## **4. Voters**

### **4.1 Voting by Proxy**

Eligible electors, including a person with a disability who is unable to attend at 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 at the Office of the City Clerk and on the City of St. Catharines website. The person being appointed as a proxy is required to take a statutory declaration before the City Clerk or a Commissioner of Oaths. Staff in the Office of the City Clerk can administer this Oath (Third Floor, City Hall, 50 Church Street).

Voting Proxy forms can be submitted after nominations have been certified by the City Clerk on Monday, August 24, 2026 at 4:00 p.m., unless additional nominations are required under Section 33(5) of the Act. Proxy appointments cannot be issued after 4:30 p.m. on Voting Day, Monday, October 26, 2026.

Voting Proxy applications may be presented for certification at the Office of the City Clerk (Third Floor, City Hall, 50 Church Street):

- Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (excluding statutory holidays)
- On advance vote days occurring during regular business days: 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- On advance vote days outside of regular business days: 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Once completed, the voting proxy may be exercised at any advance voting location or on voting day. On voting day, the proxy must be exercised at a poll in the ward of the person for whom the proxy is voting. A voting proxy does not remain in force after Election Day – Monday, October 26, 2026.

#### **4.2 Vote-by-Mail**

Vote-by-mail kits are available to electors who are unable to vote at an advance poll or on voting day. The option to request a vote-by-mail ballot is an alternative to appointing a voting proxy.

An elector who wishes to request a vote-by-mail ballot must make their request using the online portal, visiting the Office of the City Clerk or by calling City Hall beginning on August 2, 2022. The request, accompanied by a copy of acceptable ID, must be received by the City Clerk on or before September 11, 2026.

An elector may choose to have their vote-by-mail kit held in the Office of the City Clerk for pick-up rather than having it mailed. Should an elector choose this option they will be required to show photo ID, and where they are choosing to have an agent pick up the package on their behalf, the agent must swear a declaration and show photo ID at the time of pick-up.

The last day that the City Clerk will mail out vote-by-mail kits is September 25, 2026.

#### **4.3 Voting Locations**

Each voting location shall be accessible to electors with disabilities. Advanced voting locations are selected for their highly accessible attributes and considered to provide greater accessibility than other buildings that may be used as voting locations on Voting Day

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

Proximity of the voting location to accessible public transit routes is considered in selection of voting locations, however, the location may not necessarily be located on the same street as the transit stop. Electors requiring specialized transit services are encouraged to contact Niagara Region Transit 1-833-678-5463 ext. 1 or Niagara Transit Plus app.

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

Electors requiring a service animal, support person or assistive devices are permitted to be accompanied at all voting locations, in accordance with [O. Reg. 191/11](#).

According to the AODA's Customer Service Standards, one of two conditions must apply for an animal to be considered a service animal.

1. The animal is easily identifiable as relating to your disability (for example, is a guide dog or other animal wearing a vest or harness).
2. You can provide documentation from a regulated health professional confirming the animal is required due to a disability.

If a service animal is excluded from the premises by law, staff will work the individual to identify alternative methods for the person to access municipal goods, services and facilities.

#### **4.7 Entrance to the Voting Location**

Every voting location shall be audited for accessibility. If 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. All entrances will be clearly marked and any alternative accessible entrances will be clearly signed using the International Symbol of Accessibility.

Where possible the door hardware is to be accessible, if the doors are heavy, awkward to open or have handles that are out of reach, where possible they will be propped open in a safe manner. Where it is not possible to prop the door open, an election official will be assigned to operate the door for all electors entering and exiting the voting location.

#### **4.8 Interior Voting Area**

Access to the interior voting area and voting booth shall be level and easily accessed. All voting areas are to be well lit and have seating available (where possible). Any doormats or carpeting shall be level with the floor to prevent potential tripping hazards. All voting areas are to have sufficient space to maneuver a mobility device.

#### **4.9 Voting Location Standards**

Each voting location shall be physically attended and inspected by the City Clerk or designate. A standard Polling Place Accessibility Checklist shall be completed for each facility. At the conclusion of the inspection, an Accessibility Report Card, will be completed based on the following:

- Parking
- Building Exterior
- Building Entrance
- Building Interior

#### **4.10 Accessible Voting Booths**

Accessible voting booths 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 election staff.

#### **4.11 Accessible Voting Technologies – Advance Voting**

All advance polls will be equipped with a ballot marking device. The Ballot Marking Device produces a human and machine readable marked paper ballot from a blank sheet of paper, completely indistinguishable from a paper ballot marked by hand. The voter is provided with headphones to listen to the ballot presentation (or refers to an instruction card) and uses an accessible voting controller, with braille labels and buttons of different colours and shapes for voters with visual impairments, to control the voting session and select votes. The controller can also be operated by assistive devices such as sip and puff, and/or foot paddles can be used to press selection buttons.

When a voter wishes to use the accessible voting features, the poll worker will offer to assist the voter behind the privacy screen near the tabulator equipped with the ballot marking device.

#### **4.12 Voting Assistance**

Persons with a disability may be accompanied by a support person within the voting location. Alternatively, an Election Official in each voting location can assist the voter in casting their vote.

Prior to entering the voting booth, the elector and the Election Official shall jointly determine the extent and method of assistance. This may include actually marking the ballot as directed by the elector.

Where a voting location is located in an institution or retirement home, the Deputy Returning Officer can visit voters in their specific living areas or at their bedside to assist them to vote. All Deputy Returning Officers are sworn to an oath of secrecy.

## **5. Additional Information**

### **5.1 City of St. Catharines – Office of the City Clerk**

The Office of the City Clerk is located at City Hall on the Third Floor, 50 Church Street, St. Catharines. The Office of the City Clerk election staff can answer questions about running for office, the election in general or specific provisions for persons with a disability.

### **5.2 City of St. Catharines Website**

The City of St. Catharines 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.

### **5.3 Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing**

The website [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:

[www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility-laws](http://www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility-laws)

### **5.5 Service Ontario – e-Laws**

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

## **6. Feedback Process**

Feedback about the manner in which election services are provided to persons with disabilities may be submitted to the City Clerk through a variety of methods including:

1. Telephone (905) 688-5601 ext. 1517
2. In Person City of St. Catharines  
Office of the City Clerk  
50 Church Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, City Hall
3. Email [elections@stcatharines.ca](mailto:elections@stcatharines.ca)
4. Mail Office of the City Clerk  
City of St. Catharines  
50 Church Street  
St. Catharines, ON L2R 7C2

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 services.

### **Advance Polls and Election Day**

There will be eight (8) advance polls; locations and times to be announced at a later date, check the City's website for more information.

There will be three (3) polls per ward on Election Day, locations and times to be announced at a later date, check the City's website for more information.

### **Election Day is Monday, October 26, 2026 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.**

Although voting locations are accessible to people with a disability, the accessible voting ballot marker device will only be available at all advance poll locations. Every effort has been made to use only accessible facilities for all voting locations however the advance polls have been selected for their accessible attributes that provide a more barrier-free opportunity to vote.