THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF ST. THOMAS
2026 Municipal Election

SUBJECT: **Accessibility Plan**
APPROVED BY COUNCIL: August 10, 2026

INTRODUCTION

The City Clerk is responsible for the appropriate legislative and administrative conduct of the Municipal Election in the City of St. Thomas.

The Municipal Elections Act, S.O. 1996 c.32, as amended, states that the Clerk shall have regard for the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities. It further 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 year.

The Municipal Election will be conducted in a manner that ensures that candidates and electors with disabilities have full and equal access to election information and services. The election will be conducted in a manner that ensures that persons with disabilities have every opportunity to vote independently and privately with access to voting assistance if required.

The Municipal Elections Act requires that within ninety days after Voting Day, the Clerk shall prepare a report about the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

DEFINITION OF DISABILITY

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, S.O. 2005 c.11, as amended, defines "disability" as follows:

(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, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech 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 can take on many forms, both visible and invisible. The following criteria were considered in the development of this Plan:

- Policies and procedures must be consistent with the principles of the Municipal Elections Act and must respect the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities;
- Access to electoral services must be integrated and equitable;
- Initiatives should address and accommodate a wide range of abilities; and
- The City's Policy: Accessibility Standards for Customer Service for providing services to people with disabilities must be followed throughout the election process. This policy can be found on the City's website at www.stthomas.ca.

PROVISION OF ELECTION INFORMATION

Election information will be provided to electors and candidates with disabilities on the City's website and social media channels and in print. Requests for alternative formats can be made in accordance with the City's Policy: Accessibility Standards for Customer Service.

VOTING

The City of St. Thomas will be offering internet and telephone voting for the 2026 Municipal Election. Internet and telephone voting will be available 24 hours per day during the advance voting period from October 13th, 2026 at 10:00 a.m. until Voting Day, October 26, 2026 at 8:00 p.m.

Internet voting allows eligible electors to vote from anywhere in the world at any time of the day on any device with an internet connection, including cell phones, tablets and computers. Telephone voting allows eligible electors to vote from anywhere in the world at any time of the day using a touch tone dial pad. Telephone calls are toll-free in North America, while charges may apply for international calls.

Electors do not have to spend time in line-ups attending at a voting place or arranging for transportation to get there.

The interface of the third-party voting website is regularly audited against Section 508 and WCAG 2.1 accessibility requirements, which ensures compatibility with screen-reading technology such as JAWS. Telephone voting allows a voter to call from any touch-tone dial pad. A dedicated telephone number will be created by the service provider. The third-party voting platforms utilize standards-compliant interfaces that work on all devices and is minimalist and intuitive for users of all ages and technical ability.

VOTER ASSISTANCE CENTRES

The City of St. Thomas will be providing the use of tablet kiosks at limited times and locations for electors who do not have access to a telephone, computer, or tablet or who require assistance. All Voter Assistance Centre locations chosen for tablet kiosk assistance will be accessible. Election Officials will assist a voter at the Voter Assistance Centres where required in order to allow a voter with a disability to vote.

Additional voting places and special hours of voting will be available for electors residing in institutions where 20 or more beds are occupied by persons who are disabled, chronically ill or infirm and in retirement homes where 50 or more beds are occupied.

SERVICE ANIMALS / SUPPORT PERSONS

Electors with disabilities are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at any Voter Assistance Centre. Election Officials at Voter Assistance Centres shall permit a voter who attends for assistance in voting electronically to have such assistance as the Election Official considers necessary, including the assistance of a support person.

VOTER INFORMATION LETTER

Voter Information Letters will be mailed out to every eligible elector recorded on the Voters' List prior to the start of the voting period. The letter will contain information on how to vote by internet or by telephone, including a unique PIN. Information about Voter Assistance Centres will also be provided in the letter for those electors who do not have access to a telephone, computer, or tablet or who require assistance.

STAFF TRAINING

All staff carrying out election duties will complete specific election training to comply with the City's Policy: Accessibility Standards for Customer Service and to recognize and ensure that persons with disabilities are served in a way that accommodates their individual needs.

NOTICE OF TEMPORARY SERVICE DISRUPTION

Public notice shall be provided on the City's website and in the local media if there is a temporary disruption in the delivery of election services. The notice shall include the reason for the disruption, the expected duration, and an explanation of alternative methods of delivering the service.

STAFF ASSISTANCE / FEEDBACK

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

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

Contact information for assistance and feedback is as follows:

E-mail: customerservice@stthomas.ca

Phone: 519-631-1680, press "0"

In Person: City Clerk's Office, Level 2, City Hall, 545 Talbot Street
Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

By Mail: City of St. Thomas, Attn: City Clerk's Office, PO Box 520, 545 Talbot Street, St. Thomas, ON, N5P 3V7

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional information on accessibility and the 2026 Municipal Election can be found on the City's website at www.stthomas.ca.