



# 2022 Municipal Elections Detailed Accessibility Plan

City of Ottawa

 Elections Ottawa  @ottawavote

[ottawa.ca/vote](https://ottawa.ca/vote)



## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	2
Section 1: Overview of the 2022 Municipal Elections .....	2
Voting in person .....	2
Voting by proxy .....	3
Voting by special mail-in ballot.....	3
Public facing applications.....	3
Information and outreach .....	4
Section 2: Voting places.....	4
Section 3: Accessible voting tools and services .....	6
Accessible Vote Tabulator .....	7
Curbside voting .....	7
Voting in long-term care facilities and institutions .....	8
Voting place disruptions .....	8
Section 4: Transportation .....	9
Section 5: Election workers .....	9
Section 6: Information for electors and candidates .....	10
Online content.....	10
Online tools .....	10
Voter notification letters .....	11
Advertising .....	11
Public outreach events.....	12
Printed materials .....	12
Information for candidates.....	12
Section 7: Report after Voting Day .....	12
Section 8: Contact.....	13

## Introduction

The City of Ottawa's Elections Office is committed to providing an accessible voting process for electors, election workers, and candidates. The *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* ("MEA") governs municipal elections for all Ontario municipalities. Under the MEA, the City Clerk is responsible for the preparation and conduct of municipal elections. In accordance with Subsection 12.1(2), and in consultation with members of the Accessibility Advisory Committee, the City Clerk has prepared the following plan regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

In addition to the requirements set out in the MEA, the Elections Office will continue to comply with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA), the related standards and regulations, and the accessibility-related provisions of the MEA, while administering the 2022 Municipal Elections and providing day-to-day services.

The Elections Office has developed this plan for the 2022 municipal Elections any by-elections that occur in the 2022-2026 Term of Council from November 15, 2022, to November 16, 2026. Should any additional accessibility tools or services become available, the plan will be updated accordingly.

## Section 1: Overview of the 2022 Municipal Elections

Electors have a number of opportunities to vote in the 2022 Municipal Elections, including the option to vote in person, by proxy, and by special mail-in ballot.

### Voting in person

There are three separate in-person voting opportunities, with a total of seven voting days, for electors to cast their ballot in the 2022 Municipal Elections.

Based on the past success of special advance voting days, the Elections Office expanded special advance voting to nine locations over four days from Saturday, September 24 to Tuesday, September 27, 2022. During this voting event, voting places offered "anywhere voting" which allows electors to attend any voting place, regardless of their address, to cast their ballot.

Advance Vote Days will take place on Friday, October 7 and Friday, October 14, 2022, with Voting Day occurring on Monday, October 24, 2022. On these voting days, electors will have the opportunity to vote in their wards. In accordance with the MEA, all voting places will be fully accessible as further described below.

### Voting by proxy

In accordance with Section 44 of the MEA, an elector may appoint a friend or family member to vote on their behalf as their voting proxy. A proxy is someone that can go to the voting place and cast a ballot on someone else's behalf. A proxy must be an eligible elector and can still cast their own ballot. A proxy can vote for only one other person unless they are representing members of their own family. Voting by proxy requires the prior completion and certification of a prescribed form (Appointment of Voting Proxy – Form 3).

### Voting by special mail-in ballot

On March 23, 2022, City Council approved a report from the City Clerk titled "[Update on the 2022 Municipal Elections and amendments to election-related by-laws and policies](#)", which included the recommendation to implement a special mail-in ballot process for the 2022 Municipal Elections as well as any by-elections that may occur during the 2022-2026 Term of Council. This alternative method allows eligible electors, particularly those from high-risk groups, including older adults and electors with disabilities who are more susceptible to the effects of COVID-19, to mark their ballot at home.

In addition, the special mail-in ballot voting method may be used as a contingency plan to facilitate voting in long-term care centres and retirement homes should it be required in response to potential COVID-19 restrictions that may be in place on voting days.

The period to apply for a special mail-in ballot ran from September 1 to September 16, 2022, at 4:30 pm. Electors were able to apply online on [ottawa.ca/vote](http://ottawa.ca/vote), by email, mail, or in person at the Elections Office during the application period.

Electors who are voting using the special mail-in ballot method can mail, or deliver, their ballot to the Elections Office (1221 B Cyrville Road). Electors can also deliver their special ballot to Client Service Centres. All ballots must be received at the Elections Office or Client Service Centres by 4:30 pm on October 24, 2022, in order to be counted.

### Public facing applications

Building on the successful rollout of new technologies during past elections, the Elections Office continued to make available several public facing applications on [ottawa.ca/vote](http://ottawa.ca/vote) for the 2022 Municipal Elections. These applications will allow electors to:

- Verify when and where they can vote;
- Verify if they are on the Voters' List;
- Add themselves to the Voters' List;
- Amend their information on the Voters' List;
- Verify their ward name and number;
- View a list of candidates running in their ward; and
- Apply for a special mail-in ballot.

An additional online tool allowed members of the public to apply online to work as an election worker in the 2022 Municipal Elections. Election workers that required accessibility-related accommodations could indicate this on their application form.

The above-noted tools underwent accessibility testing to ensure that they meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 AA standards.

### Information and outreach

As noted in the Office of the City Clerk's report titled "[Update on the 2022 Municipal Elections and Amendments to Election-related By-laws and Policies](#)", the Elections Office recognizes the importance of encouraging diversity and inclusion on City Council and worked with internal stakeholders, including the Accessibility Office, and various community groups and organizations, in an effort to provide more information about how to become a candidate in the 2022 Municipal Elections.

Feedback cards will be available at all voting places listing ways for electors to provide feedback to the Elections Office, as required by the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR). The feedback cards are printed to the Canadian National Institute for the Blind's (CNIB) guidelines for clear print and include Braille.

Finally, within 90 days after voting day, the Elections Office will make public a report on the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that may affect electors and candidates with disabilities as required by the MEA.

## **Section 2: Voting places**

Section 45 of the MEA prescribes that the City Clerk has the statutory duty to establish the number and location of voting places for an election as he or she "considers most

convenient for the electors”. Pursuant to Subsection 45(2) of the MEA, “in establishing the locations of voting places, the clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities.”

Subsection 45(7) of the MEA mandates that on Voting Day, a voting place be provided on the premises of:

1. An institution for the reception, treatment or vocational training of members or former members of the Canadian Forces;
2. An institution in which, on September 1, 20 or more beds are occupied by persons who are disabled, chronically ill or infirm; and
3. A retirement home in which, on September 1, 50 or more beds are occupied.

In addition to the provisions of the MEA, the Elections Office considers Ottawa’s diverse geography (urban, suburban, and rural) as well as the social and economical makeup of the population to ensure that there is equitable access to all electors in every ward and that no undue hardship is experienced when participating in the democratic process of electing their representatives.

In accordance with the above-noted provisions, staff has identified approximately 678 voting places for the 2022 Municipal Elections. This includes multi-residential facilities that provide care that do not meet the “bed count” threshold set out in the legislation but have been historically used as voting places in previous municipal elections.

As in past elections, the Elections Office has reviewed the accessibility of every location that will be used as a voting place. Staff has conducted a comprehensive review of the built environment of each location and has completed a detailed accessibility checklist to ensure that all voting places are accessible to electors and candidates with disabilities.

The accessibility checklist was previously developed in consultation with staff in the City’s Accessibility Office and the City’s former Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Department, and includes the evaluation of features such as parking, elevators, ramps, handrails, lighting, and door widths.

Steps taken to remediate barriers in voting places include:

- Hiring additional election workers to work in voting places without automated power doors or to direct electors to the voting place.

- Creating accessible parking spaces at voting places by installing temporary signage in parking lots, ensuring a reasonable travel distance for electors.
- Installing threshold ramps.
- Installing extra exterior signage to direct electors to the accessible entrance of a voting place.
- Installing extra interior signage to direct electors to the voting place inside the building or facility.

### **Section 3: Accessible voting tools and services**

To ensure that the in-person voting process is accessible for all, the Elections Office offers several accessibility tools that allow electors to mark their ballot privately and independently. A list of the accessible voting tools available at each voting place can be found by using the “Where do I vote?” tool on [ottawa.ca/vote](http://ottawa.ca/vote), or by contacting the Elections Office at [elections@ottawa.ca](mailto:elections@ottawa.ca) or by calling 613-580-2660. Accessibility tools include:

- Large print ballots;
  - A larger replica of the ballot that may be used as a guide for an elector with vision impairments.
  - Large print ballots are available at all voting places and can be used upon request.
- Magnifying sheets;
  - Magnifying sheets can be used to read ballots and other election-related documents.
  - Magnifying sheets are available behind every voting screen, at every voting place.
- Braille listing of candidates and Braille ballot templates; and
  - Electors with vision impairments may choose to use these tools together, by matching the Braille on the listing of candidates to the corresponding Braille on the template.
  - An elector may also choose to use the template on its own. For example, an elector may ask the elections worker to read the candidates’ names in order and out loud from the other side of the voting screen, while they use

the Braille template to feel for the corresponding holes and mark the ballot as desired.

- Braille listing of candidates and Braille ballot templates are available at all voting places and can be used upon request.
- A cell phone with elections call centre staff on standby.
  - Electors may use this feature to call elections staff to have their ballot read to them over the phone.
  - A cell phone is available at all voting places and can be used upon request.

### Accessible Vote Tabulator

All special advance voting places, area-wide advance voting places and voting places in retirement residences and long-term care facilities will offer an Accessible Vote Tabulator (AVT). The AVT allows electors with disabilities to vote privately and independently through the use of its accessible features, which include:

- Bilingual visual support through a 19-inch screen with zoom with high contrast features;
- A braille keypad;
- Left-right paddles (colour-coded left and right paddles);
- A sip 'n' puff device; and
- Bilingual audio through headphones.

### Curbside voting

If an elector is physically unable to go inside the voting place, they can request to have their ballot brought to their vehicle, outside of the building, or to another area within the voting place. Electors can notify election workers that they wish to curbside vote when they arrive at the voting place by calling the Elections Office at 613-580-2660 or a friend or support person can notify election workers inside the voting place.



### Voting in long-term care facilities and institutions

Subsection 45(7) of the MEA states that, on Voting Day, a voting place shall be provided in the premises of institutions in which 20 or more beds are occupied by persons who are disabled, chronically ill or infirm and a retirement home in which 50 or more beds are occupied.

Election workers that work in long-term care facilities or institutions may assist an elector in casting their ballot by their bedside if the elector is unable to make it to the designated voting area.

### Voting place disruptions

In the event of a disruption in service related to accessibility, the City has a legal obligation to provide notice to electors. Disruptions of service include, but are not limited to:

- an elevator under repair;
- renovations that limit access to an area; and
- technology that is temporarily unavailable (for example, an accessible vote tabulator).

During a voting event, Notice of Temporary Disruption signs are provided to all Supervisor Deputy Returning Officers. In the case of a temporary disruption, election workers are to complete the blank fields on the sign, indicating the following:

- reason for the disruption;
- the date(s) of disruption;
- its anticipated duration; and
- a description of alternative facilities or services.

Election workers are instructed to post the sign in a highly visible location, with consideration of electors who are most affected by the disruption. The Supervisor Deputy Returning Officer will also notify the Elections Office of the disruption in service so that it might take additional measures to provide notice, such as positing information on [ottawa.ca/vote](http://ottawa.ca/vote) and/or social media, depending on the circumstances.

## **Section 4: Transportation**

New to the 2022 Municipal Elections, Para Transpo customers can reserve their trip to and from a voting place one week in advance on any of the seven in-person voting days on September 24 to 27, October 7, October 14, and October 24.

This extended booking timeline ensures that Para Transpo customers have the opportunity to schedule their trips ahead of the routine 24-hour bookings.

Para Transpo customers can contact Para Transpo at 613-560-5000 for more information or call 613-244-7272 to book their trip.

## **Section 5: Election workers**

The Elections Office is committed to meeting the requirements of the accessible employment standard and ensuring that accessibility is incorporated into its recruitment and hiring practices. The Elections Office attends a number of outreach events in an effort to reach as many individuals as possible who wish to be election workers. These events can include booths at recreation centres or special events and virtual presentations with various community groups.

Eligible individuals can apply using the online election worker application, by email, by mail, or in person at the Elections Office or at one of the above-mentioned outreach events.

The Elections Office will continue to make workplace disability accommodations for all elections workers, as requested. Applicants can note any accessibility requirements on their application forms.

For the 2022 Municipal Elections, all election workers will be required to complete election worker training, which includes a formal section on accessibility. In addition, every City employee who participates in the 2022 Municipal Elections will have completed mandatory AODA training.

Training for the 2022 Municipal Elections provides information about the AODA and emphasizes service delivery to all electors. In keeping with the AODA and the City's [Accessibility Policy](#), the training program covers various processes to ensure that electors with disabilities have equal opportunity to cast their ballot independently and privately, including how to:

- Assist electors through the voting process;

- Assist electors at their beside in institutions;
- Assist electors who cannot physically enter the voting place through curbside voting;
- Assist electors with support persons; and
- Assist electors with service animals.

Election workers are trained to apply dignity, equality of opportunity, independence, and integration as the four guiding principles when serving electors with disabilities.

## **Section 6: Information for electors and candidates**

Information about the 2022 Municipal Elections, including information about accessibility tools and initiatives, will be communicated to electors and candidates through a number of bilingual and accessible communications platforms, as set out below.

### Online content

The Elections Office works closely with Service Ottawa to ensure that all content and materials posted to [ottawa.ca/vote](http://ottawa.ca/vote) is accessible and in compliance with the AODA and the IASR.

The Elections Office has a section on [ottawa.ca/vote](http://ottawa.ca/vote) dedicated to providing information about accessibility in the 2022 Municipal Elections. This includes information regarding the accessibility of the voting process, voting tools and voting options for electors.

The Elections Office will also regularly communicate information about the election, including information about accessibility, on its official Twitter account, [@ottawavote](https://twitter.com/ottawavote), and official Facebook account, [Elections Ottawa](https://www.facebook.com/ElectionsOttawa).

### Online tools

As previously noted, the Elections Office and Information Technology Services developed online tools to convey information and assist electors throughout the elections process, as follows:

- Where do I vote?
- Am I on the Voters' list?
- Add my name to the Voters' List
- Who is running in my ward?

- Application for special mail-in ballot
- Election worker application

The online tools were developed and tested to ensure that they meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 AA standards.

It is important to note that the online tools do not replace the availability of paper forms, and inquiries will still be received over the phone, by email, and in person.

#### Voter notification letters

Electors that appear on the Voters' List will receive a voter notification letter listing their voting options and assigned voting places, dates, and times for in-person voting. The voter notification letter also provides an accessible entrance for each voting place listed.

Along with their voter notification letter, electors will receive a brochure which includes information about applying to vote by special mail-in ballot, appointing a proxy to vote on their behalf should they be unable to attend a voting place on voting days, and additional information about voting in person.

#### Advertising

The Elections Office works closely with Public Information and Media Relations staff to ensure that communications about the 2022 Municipal Elections are available to members of the public in a variety of formats, including:

- newspaper advertisements;
- public service announcements;
- radio advertisements;
- media advisories;
- promotional digital signs in City facilities and bus stops;
- billboards;
- television advertisements;
- online advertisements;
- printed material; and
- a variety of infographics and promotional videos shared on social media.

### Public outreach events

Prior to Voting Day, the Elections Office participates in several outreach activities in order to provide electors with information about how and when they can vote, and to raise awareness about the accessibility initiatives and tools available to electors.

Outreach activities include meeting with the Accessibility Advisory Committee, setting up information booths at City recreation facilities, post-secondary schools, public events, and conducting virtual presentations.

### Printed materials

The Elections Office works closely with the City's Print, Mail and Operations Branch to ensure that election-related documents are designed to meet the CNIB's Clear Print Design Standard. This means that forms, signs, Voters' Lists, and other election-related documents are designed and reviewed to ensure that fonts, point sizes, colours/contrast, spacing and other formatting are accessible.

The Elections Office also works with the Survey and Mapping Branch to make the electoral maps more accessible, including making adjustments to the line colour and thickness of the different types of boundaries. During the election cycle, the maps are available for download and printing [ottawa.ca/vote](http://ottawa.ca/vote).

Candidates are also provided with copies of printed ward and city maps upon the filing of their nomination forms.

### Information for candidates

The Elections Office provided candidates with a copy of the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks, and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO) "Candidate's Guide to Accessible Elections" upon the filing of their nomination forms.

Through out the election cycle, information regarding accessible communications, selecting an accessible campaign office, budgeting for accessibility, and accessible customer service is provided to candidates through candidate updates and information sessions.

## **Section 7: Report after Voting Day**

In accordance with Section 12.1 (3) of the MEA, within 90 days after voting day, the City Clerk will make public a report on the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that may affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

This report will be available on [ottawa.ca/vote](http://ottawa.ca/vote) and will be provided in printed formats by request through the Elections Office.

## **Section 8: Contact**

Questions about this plan and accessibility in the 2022 Municipal Elections can be directed to the City of Ottawa's Elections Office by email at [elections@ottawa.ca](mailto:elections@ottawa.ca) or by phone at 613-580-2660.