



The Voters' Guide to Accessible Voting



Note To The Clerk

This guide provides details for the public on how to use the voting method being employed by your municipality. It is intended to provide a clerk with 'ready-to-use' information to insert into their communications material, as applicable.

This document contains a variety of voting methods – **but it is not intended to be distributed in its entirety to the voters.** Please select the method(s) that is/are being employed at your municipality and copy it into your communication material, as applicable!

Remember, based on your municipality's individual processes, you will need to customize the information provided here to fit your process. The information in this publication has been made generic and parts requiring customization have been highlighted.

AMCTO

This guide was developed in partnership with
The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario

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Voting Traditionally – At The Voting Place

Note to clerk: this description assumes that election staff (not the voters) will insert and eject ballot cards. If the process is different in your municipality, please customize accordingly. The sections that will require customization have been highlighted

Getting to the Voting Location

- You will find **(insert number of accessible parking spaces)** accessible parking spaces at the **(insert location)** of the voting location. These are clearly marked with the International symbol of Accessibility. Note, you may wish to prepare a list of each of the voting locations and the parking space details pertaining to each.
- You will also find that each voting location is also located on a bus route for easy use of public transportation. **Bus rides to and from voting locations will be free on Voting Day**

Getting into the Voting Location

- An easily navigable route will be clearly marked for entry into the voting location and into the voting area within the location.
- You may wish to also add to your chart of voting locations whether or not there is an elevator available.

Inside the Voting Location

- Seating areas are provided throughout the voting location for electors needing a rest.
- Voting booths shall be placed on tables. Election staff are available to assist if you require any assistance in reaching the voting booth.
- If you require ballots in alternative format (braille, large print, audio) please notify the election staff when you **register to vote/ by (insert date)**.
- If you are bringing a support person to help you, please identify them to the election staff when you **register. Your support person may be required to take an Oath in order to assist you to vote in a secure manner.**
- If you are bringing a service animal with you, please remember to bring documentation to confirm its service animal status, if this is not readily apparent. Documentation can be a letter signed by a Doctor or a Nurse.

Voting

Your municipality uses the **(insert method)** of voting. Please read the information below to see how this voting method works!

Paper Ballot

Note to clerk: this description assumes that election staff (not the voters) will insert and eject ballot cards. If the process is different in your municipality, please customize accordingly. The sections that will require customization have been highlighted.

This system employs paper ballots on which the names of all candidates and issues are printed. Voters record their choices by marking the boxes next to the candidate or question they select and drop the voted ballot in a sealed ballot box. This method allows the use of various means (magnifying glass, large print, braille etc) to read the text and allows improved accessibility for voters.

When you come in to vote, you will be asked to provide your name and appropriate identification (for the list of appropriate ID that you should bring with you, go to: **Insert Link**). Once your identity has been confirmed and the offices that you are entitled to vote for are determined, you will be provided with a ballot(s). Your ballot(s) identify the office(s) for which you are entitled to vote. If you require ballots in accessible format (braille, large print, audio) **please notify the election staff when you register to vote.**

Proceed to the voting booth and mark your ballot with the pen/pencil provided, as shown on the signage at the booth. Large print and braille instructions will also be available. Magnifying sheets are also available. In order to ensure your vote remains secret, your ballot will have to be folded, as shown on the signage/reverse of the ballot, and return to the election staff desk before it is deposited into the ballot box. Should you have difficulties in folding your ballot, you may return it to the DRO, face down, and the DRO shall fold the ballot for you in such a manner as to not disclose your vote.

All election staff at each voting location shall be trained on any assistive voting devices and shall have taken an Oath of Secrecy. At any time during your voting experience, an election official will be available to assist you where necessary.

What happens to your vote?

- Upon close of voting, the ballots at each voting location will be tallied. The voting results will then be combined and tabulated to produce the final results for the election for each office.

Vote Counting Equipment

Note to clerk: this description assumes that election staff (not the voters) will insert and eject ballot cards. If the process is different in your municipality, please customize accordingly. The sections that will require customization have been highlighted.

This system employs machines to count votes. The electronic counting machines allow for greater accuracy in the counting of votes by removing any counting errors.

When you come in to vote, you will be asked to provide your name and appropriate identification (For the list of appropriate ID that you should bring with you, go to: **Insert Link**). Once your identity has been confirmed and the offices that you are entitled to vote for are determined, you will be provided with a secrecy folder containing your ballot(s). Your ballot(s) identify the office(s) that you are entitled to vote for. If you require ballots in accessible format (braille, large print, audio) please notify the election staff when you register to vote. Magnifying sheets are also available.

Proceed to the voting booth and mark your ballot (**by completing the arrow or filling in the oval**) with the marker provided, as shown on the signage at the booth. Place your ballot back inside the secrecy folder with the DRO's initial showing and proceed to the vote tabulator. Do not fold your ballot. Once at the vote tabulator, **the election staff will insert your ballot(s) into the vote tabulator.**

What happens to your vote?

- The vote tabulator keeps a running total of votes cast.
- This total is maintained on the memory data card stored in the vote tabulator.
- Upon close of voting, the results will be printed and posted at the voting location. It will also be transferred from the memory data card to a central database. The voting results will then be combined and tabulated to produce the final results for the election for each office.

Touch Screens

Note to clerk: this description assumes that election staff (not the voters) will insert and eject ballot cards. If the process is different in your municipality, please customize accordingly. The sections that will require customization have been highlighted.

A touch screen voting unit permits electors to vote by touching the candidate's name on the screen. It may also have an audio component for voters who are visually impaired. This system involves electronic ballot cards that are inserted into counting machines.

When you come in to vote, you will be asked to provide your name and appropriate identification (For the list of appropriate ID that you should bring with you, go to: **Insert Link**). Once your identity has been confirmed and the offices that you are entitled to vote for have been determined, **election staff will insert the electronic ballot card into the machine**. Although most touch screen equipment projects a ballot with a larger size print/font than your typical ballot, the voting equipment used in **(insert name of municipality)** also allow the ballot to be further magnified. Should you require a larger size print/font, you may request this option when you provide your name and identification. The information on the ballot card will only be visible once it has been inserted into the voting machine.

Follow instructions on the screen and vote by touching the designated area beside the candidate(s) name. You may be prompted to move from one voting screen/office to the next, until all offices have been voted for. The system is designed to allow you the opportunity to abstain from voting for any office. The system will also ask you to confirm your choice(s). Once you have confirmed your choice(s), touch the “Cast Ballot” button. Your ballot will be cast and the ballot card will eject from machine.

All election staff at each voting location shall be trained on any assistive voting devices and shall have taken an Oath of Secrecy. At any time during your voting experience, an election official will be available to assist you where necessary.

What makes touch screen voting accessible?

- This method provides for both a larger ballot text size and instructions on the screen for voters with hearing and visual disabilities.
- In addition to the larger size print/text size than a typical paper ballot, the voting equipment also allows the ballot to be further magnified.
- Less pressure is required to touch “mark” your ballot on the screen than is required to mark with a writing utensil.

- The amount of contrast on the screen can be adjusted to address visual impairments.

What happens to your vote?

- The touch screen voting equipment keeps a running total of votes cast.
- This total is maintained on the memory data card stored in the touch screen voting unit.
- Upon close of voting, the results will be printed and posted at the voting location as well as transferred from the memory data card to a central database. The voting results will then be combined and tabulated to produce the final results for the election for each office.

Thumbswitch / Joystick Method

Note to clerk: If the process is different in your municipality, please customize accordingly. The sections that will require customization have been highlighted.

This system involves electronic ballot cards that are inserted into counting machines. The list of candidates or question is read out in the audio device and allow ease of use for voters with visual disabilities.

When you come in to vote, you will be asked to provide your name and appropriate identification (For the list of appropriate ID that you should bring with you, go to: **Insert Link**). Once your identity has been confirmed and the offices that you are entitled to vote for are determined, **election staff will enter the code for the appropriate ballot face for the office(s) you will be voting for.** Please note that paper ballots may be processed through the vote tabulator simultaneously as votes are cast by thumbswitch.

Put on the ear phones provided to you. Follow instructions in the audio and vote by pressing a thumbswitch for the candidate you wish to vote for. You will be prompted to press the thumbswitch to confirm your selections. If you decide your selections are not the people you want to select, you may cancel your selection(s) by pressing the thumbswitch and choosing your candidates once again. You will have the ability to under vote, but not to over vote.

All election staff at each voting location shall be trained on any assistive voting devices and shall have taken an Oath of Secrecy. At any time during your voting experience, an election official will be available to assist you where necessary.

What makes thumbswitches / joysticks accessible?

- This method provides for audio instructions and an easy to use apparatus for voters with visual disabilities.
- Less pressure is required to press the thumbstick / joystick than is required to mark with a writing utensil.

What happens to your vote?

- The thumbswitch records your selections on the same card reader that records the votes from the paper ballots. Your selections are saved in a digital format.
- This total is maintained on the memory data card stored in the touch screen voting unit.
- Upon close of voting, the results will be transferred from the memory data card to a central database. The voting results will then be combined and tabulated to produce the final results for the election for each office.

Hand Held Touch Pad

Note to clerk: this description assumes that election staff (not the voters) will insert and eject ballot cards. If the process is different in your municipality, please customize accordingly. The sections that will require customization have been highlighted.

A **hand-held device** (with braille labels, and buttons with different shapes and colours) allows voters to listen to the audio instructions or read the screen to obtain their candidate selections, and then touch the appropriate button to vote for the candidate of their choice.

When you come in to vote, you will be asked to provide your name and appropriate identification (For the list of appropriate ID that you should bring with you, go to: **Insert Link**). Once your identity has been confirmed and the offices that you are entitled to vote for are determined, **election staff will insert the electronic ballot card into the machine**. The information on this ballot card will only be visible once it has been inserted into the voting machine.

A **hand-held device** (with braille labels, and buttons with different shapes and colours) is attached to the voting machine. This will allow you to identify the candidates and the appropriate button to vote for the candidate of your choice.

Put on the ear phones provided next to the machine. The controls allow you to adjust volume, pause and repeat audio messages, and adjust the audio tempo.

Follow instructions in the audio and vote by pressing the appropriate button on the hand-held device for the candidate you wish to vote for.

Once voting is completed, press the appropriate button on the hand-held device to "Cast Ballot". Your ballot will be cast and the ballot card will eject from machine.

All election staff at each voting location shall be trained on any assistive voting devices and shall have taken an Oath of Secrecy. At any time during your voting experience, an election official will be available to assist you where necessary.

What makes hand held touch pads accessible?

- This method provides for an audio version of the ballot for voters with visual impairments.

What happens to your vote?

- The touch screen voting equipment keeps a running total of votes cast.

- This total is maintained on the memory data card stored in the touch screen voting unit.
- Upon close of voting, the results will be transferred from the memory data card to a central database. The voting results will then be combined and tabulated to produce the final results for the election for each office.

Sip-and-Puff

Note to clerk: this description assumes that election staff (not the voters) will insert and eject ballot cards. If the process is different in your municipality, please customize accordingly. The sections that will require customization have been highlighted.

This system involves electronic ballot cards that are inserted into counting machines. The list of candidates or question is indicated on the screen and voters sip or puff on a tube device to indicate their choice to vote.

When you come in to vote, you will be asked to provide your name and appropriate identification (For the list of appropriate ID that you should bring with you, go to: **Insert Link**). Once your identity has been confirmed and the offices that you are entitled to vote for are determined, **election staff will insert the electronic ballot card into the machine**. The information on this ballot card will only be visible once it has been inserted into the voting machine.

A hand-held device (with braille labels, and buttons with different shapes and colours) is attached to the voting machine.

If you are unable to use the touch screen or a hand-held device, disposable mouth pieces are provided near the machine and an election staff person will be available to assist you.

Follow instructions on the screen and vote by sipping/puffing for the candidate you wish to vote for.

Once voting has been completed, touch the “Cast Ballot” button. Your ballot will be cast and the ballot card will eject from the machine.

All election staff at each voting location shall be trained on any assistive voting devices and shall have taken an Oath of Secrecy. At any time during your voting experience, an election official will be available to assist you where necessary.

What makes sip-and-puff machines accessible?

- This method provides for ease of use for voters with mobility disabilities.

What happens to your vote?

- The touch screen voting equipment keeps a running total of votes cast.
- This total is maintained on the memory data card stored in the touch screen voting unit.

- Upon close of voting, the results will be transferred from the memory data card to a central database. The voting results will then be combined and tabulated to produce the final results for the election for each office.

Paddles

Note to clerk: this description assumes that election staff (not the voters) will insert and eject ballot cards. If the process is different in your municipality, please customize accordingly. The sections that will require customization have been highlighted.

This system involves electronic ballot cards that are inserted into counting machines. The list of candidates or question is indicated on the screen and voters press on paddles to indicate their choice to vote.

When you come in to vote, you will be asked to provide your name and appropriate identification (For the list of appropriate ID that you should bring with you, go to: **Insert Link**). Once your identity has been confirmed and the offices that you are entitled to vote for are determined, **election staff will insert the electronic ballot card into the machine**. The information on this ballot card will only be visible once it has been inserted into the voting machine.

A hand-held device (with braille labels, and buttons with different shapes and colours) is attached to the voting machine.

Paddles are provided near the machine and can be used to indicate your choice.

Follow instructions on the screen and vote by pressing the appropriate paddle for the candidate you wish to vote for.

Once voting has been completed, press the appropriate paddle to indicate “Cast Ballot”. Your ballot will be cast and the ballot card will eject from machine.

All election staff at each voting location shall be trained on any assistive voting devices and shall have taken an Oath of Secrecy. At any time during your voting experience, an election official will be available to assist you where necessary.

What makes Paddles accessible?

- This method provides ease of use for voters with mobility disabilities.

What happens to your vote?

- The touch screen voting equipment keeps a running total of votes cast.
- This total is maintained on the memory data card stored in the touch screen voting unit.
- Upon close of voting, the results will be transferred from the memory data card to a central database. The voting results will then be combined and tabulated to produce the final results for the election for each office.

Vote by Mail-in Ballot

Note to clerk: this description assumes that a) voters will need to indicate in advance whether they need accessible format kits, and b) the accessible format kits will be in Braille or large print. If the process is different in your municipality, or if you are providing the kits on CD, please customize accordingly. The sections that will require customization have been highlighted.

In this system voters are able to vote from the comfort of their homes through secured postal services.

If you need an accessible format Vote By Mail Kit please contact **(insert contact)** by **(insert date)**.

You will receive a Vote by Mail Kit between **(insert date)** and **(insert date)**. The Kit shall consist of:

- A **Braille/large print** Voting Instruction Sheet
- A **Braille/large print** Composite Ballot
- A **Braille/large print** Ballot Secrecy Envelope (coded with the Ward Number)
- A **Braille/large print** Voter Declaration Form
- An outer Return Voting Envelope (yellow) with prepaid postage
- Such other material as determined by the Municipal Clerk

Upon receipt of the Vote By Mail Kit, you must:

- Complete the ballot and place it in the Ballot Secrecy Envelope. (If you require assistance in voting, mark an “X” on the signature line and have a witness sign in the signature area of the Voter Declaration Form.)
- Seal the envelope.
- Complete the Voter Declaration Form and place it, along with the sealed Ballot Secrecy Envelope, in the prepaid business reply envelope and mail it before **(insert date)** or **deliver** it directly to the Clerk at the “Ballot Return Station” at **(Insert location)**, by **(Insert dates and times)**.

The final day to mail the Return Voting Envelope to ensure delivery by voting day is **(insert date)**. If you haven’t mailed the Return Voting Envelope by this date, please deposit your Return Voting Envelope at the designated “Ballot Return Station” located in the **(insert location)**. Envelopes deposited in this station until 8:00 p.m. on Voting Day **(October 25)** will be considered as having been mailed.

What makes mail-in-ballots accessible?

- This method provides for easy voting for voters with any disabilities.

What happens to your vote?

- **At the end of each day during the Voting Period**, the Clerk will open the envelopes received that day. The Voters List will be updated to indicate you have voted.
- The sealed inner Ballot Secrecy Envelopes will be sorted by Ward and placed in a secure location under the control of the Clerk. On Voting Day, these will be transported to the Counting Centre located in the **(insert location)** to be counted.

Telephone Voting

Note to clerk: this description assumes that voters will need to indicate in advance whether they need accessible format kits. If the process is different in your municipality, please customize accordingly. The sections that will require customization have been highlighted.

In this system voters are able to vote from the comfort of their homes through secured telephone services. This method provides for easy voting for voters with any disabilities.

If you require your Voter Information Package in an accessible format, contact us at **(insert contact info)** by **(insert date)**.

You will receive your Voter Information Package between **(insert date)** and **(insert date)**. If you did not receive your Voter Information Package by **(insert date)** please contact **(insert contact information)**.

The Voter Information Package contains:

- Your personal identification number and confirmation number
- instructions on how to place your vote by phone
- a list of candidates
- the phone numbers to call to place your vote. Note, you must ensure that you call the correct phone number (e.g. local, long distance, rotary or TTY) when calling to cast your vote.

Telephone voting will be available from **(insert date)** to **(insert date)**. During this time period, you will be able to call and cast your vote from anywhere in the world, 24 hours a day from any kind of phone.

When voting opens, call the telephone number that pertains to your telephone type. The interactive voice system will ask you to enter your personal identification number and confirmation number.

The system will use these numbers to identify which ward and school board you are entitled to vote for. You will be asked to confirm if this information is correct. Once you confirm this, you will be able to move to the next step.

If you cannot confirm whether the information is correct, please call **(insert information)**.

Once you have confirmed the information on the telephone, follow the instructions given by the interactive voice system to place your votes. The

system is tailored to allow you the opportunity to abstain from voting for any office. The system will also repeat your choice and ask you to confirm your choice. You will not be able to move to the next step until you confirm your choice. Once you have confirmed your choice, the system will move to the next office. You will not be able to return to change your vote for this office.

Once you have completed voting for all the eligible offices, and exited the system, you will be counted as having 'voted'.

What makes telephone voting accessible?

- This method provides for easy voting for voters with any disabilities.

What happens to your vote?

- At the end of the voting period, **(insert vendor)** will tally the votes and provide the results to the municipality.

Internet Voting

Note to clerk: this description assumes that a) voters will need to indicate in advance whether they need accessible format kits; and b) they need to first login and register as online voters. If the process is different in your municipality, please customize accordingly. The sections that will require customization have been highlighted.

If you require your Voter Information Package in an accessible format contact us at **(insert contact info)**.

Getting set up to Vote online:

In this system voters are able to vote from the comfort of their homes through secured internet services. This method provides for easy voting for voters with any disabilities.

You will receive your Voter Information Package between **(insert date)** and **(insert date)**. If you did not receive your Voter Information Package by **(insert date)** please contact **(insert contact information)** to verify if you are on the list of electors. If you are not on the list you can not vote online. If you are on the list and have not received your package you can request a replacement Kit

The Voter Information Package contains:

- Your Voter Notification Card and election information
- a website address and an ID Number for access to the online voter register program
- a **list of candidates**

Internet voter registration will begin **(insert date and time)** and will end on **(insert date and time)**.

In order to vote online, you must first register as a 'registered online voter'. Log on to the **(insert web site)** provided on the Voter Notification Card, enter your last name and the ID Number provided in your package and follow the instructions on this website. The ID Number is a randomly generated alpha-numeric code using high encryption levels to provide proper secrecy and security of your information.

Once you register, a username and password will be generated – **this will be mailed to you along with directions for voting.**

Registered voters will have access to the Internet voting starting at (Insert time and **date**) and ending at (Insert time and **date**).

Log on to (insert Internet Voting site) and enter the username and password mailed to you and follow the instructions on the screen.

You will now have voting access to all offices and candidates that you are qualified to vote for.

You will be prompted to move from one voting screen to the next until all offices have been voted for. You cannot 'over vote' on any of the offices but can elect not to vote, or under vote, for an office.

You will have several opportunities to review your votes for each office before casting your ballot and will be able to change the vote for any of the offices at any time before finalizing the vote and transmitting the ballot.

Once you have finalized your votes, cast your ballot by hitting **(insert command)**.

You will receive a confirmation page acknowledging that your vote has been successfully completed.

Disruption of Voting

If at any anytime during the voting process there is a disruption of service or the system times out, call the election online technical support hot line at **(Insert Number/TTY Number)** to have your election status reviewed and reactivated.

The technical staff will review the status of your vote and will be able to determine whether your vote was cast or not. If the system indicates that your ballot had been accepted, your voting status cannot be reset. If the status indicates that you have "not voted", then your access will be reset and you will be able to recast the ballot. Election staff does not have access to your username, password or your security question – they can only reset the system to reactivate your username and password if your status level reads "not voted".

What makes internet voting accessible?

- This method provides for easy voting for voters with any disabilities.

What happens to your vote?

- At the end of the voting period, **(insert vendor)** will tally the votes and provide the results to the municipality.