



MERRICKVILLE-WOLFORD  
*Jewel of the Rideau*

# **ELECTION ACCESSIBILITY PLAN**

## **2022 Municipal Election**

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## Introduction

The purpose of this Accessibility Plan is for the use in the 2022 Municipal Election in the Village of Merrickville-Wolford, and it will address specific accessibility requirements.

The municipal Clerk is responsible for the appropriate legislative and administrative conduct of the municipal election in the Village of Merrickville-Wolford. The Village is committed to working towards and promoting a barrier-free community. In Section 12.1 (1) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* (MEA), it states that “A clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities”. Section 12.1 (2) of the MEA further states the following: “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”. This plan is posted on the Village website and is available in alternative formats through the Clerks department, prior to Voting Day on October 24, 2022.

## Objectives

In an effort to ensure that the 2022 Municipal Election is consistent with the regulations and principles set out in the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA), this plan has been put together to identify measures being taken to ensure the Election is accessible to all residents. The municipal election 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 area. This will be reported on and brought to Council following the Election. Section 12.1 (3) 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.

Further objectives include:

- That persons with disabilities are able to independently cast their vote and verify their selection;
- That the voting location is accessible;
- That efforts are made to ensure that electors with disabilities are aware of the accessibility measures available via channels such as the newspaper, media launches and the Village of Merrickville-Wolford website.

## Staff Assistance

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

For assistance, please contact:

Doug Robertson  
CAO/ Clerk/ Returning Officer  
Email: [cao@merrickville-wolford.ca](mailto:cao@merrickville-wolford.ca)  
Phone: 613-269-4791 extension 229

Julia McCaugherty-Jansman  
Deputy Clerk/ Deputy Returning Officer  
Email: [deputyclerk@merrickville-wolford.ca](mailto:deputyclerk@merrickville-wolford.ca)  
Phone: 613-269-4791 extension 257

Mail: Village of Merrickville-Wolford  
317 Brock Street West  
P.O. Box 340  
Merrickville ON K0G 1N0

## Staff Training

All staff carrying out election duties will complete specific Election Training to comply with the Village Accessibility Plan and to recognize and ensure that persons with disabilities are served in a way that accommodates their individual needs. This 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 to electors; and
- What to do if a person is having difficulty accessing election information or services, and how to provide voter assistance if requested.

## Voting Methods

The 2022 Village of Merrickville-Wolford Municipal Election will have three (3) voting methods: telephone voting, electronic internet voting, and paper ballots. The Village will be working with Intelivote Systems Inc. to provide eVoting services to eligible voters. These methods allow for the convenience and independence of voting from anywhere via telephone, internet, or in-person at a voting station during the October 17-24, 2022 voting period.

Internet and telephone voting will be available 24 hours a day during the week leading up to Election Day. If access to a telephone or internet is unavailable to any voters during the voting period, or if they require assistance, they may vote via paper ballot in-person at the Community Centre on Election Day. Providing the opportunity for internet and telephone voting, as well as paper ballots, gives all electors the option for accessible voting methods. By allowing persons with disabilities to vote from any location and from a selection of methods, there is an increase in the capability for the voter to cast a vote independently. Voters with mobility issues, visual impairments, and/or transportation difficulties will have the choice to cast their votes from the comfort of their own homes.

Detailed information about internet and telephone voting is available on the Village of Merrickville-Wolford election site at [www.mwvotes.ca](http://www.mwvotes.ca) or from the Clerk's office. This can be provided in an alternative format upon request.

### Telephone Voting

The telephone voting method allows voters to vote through secured telephone services which provides for easy voting for persons with various disabilities to cast their vote with independence and privacy. Both land lines or cell phones can be used to vote, and this method is compatible with assistive devices.

Potential barriers to this method may be identified as low volume, use of language that is not clear or plain, and confusing menu options. To address these barriers, the Intelivote telephone voting application provides the following:

- Service on all types of touch tone phones and wireless devices
- Clear, plain language
- Menu options that are easy to follow, advising when to select options and provision of confirmation of the voters' selections

- Standard volume is used to allow for adjustment dependent of the telephone being utilized

## **Internet Voting**

The internet voting method allows voters to cast their vote through secured internet services. This provides for easy voting for persons with a variety of disabilities to maintain independence and privacy while voting and allows for having the option of using the assistive tools that they have on their own computers. This method is designed to encourage voter participation, as voters do not have to attend a physical location to cast their ballot. Eligible voters may vote online using a smart phone, tablet device, gaming device or computer and any accompanying assistive devices or software, along with their date of birth and PIN and qualifying information, to access the internet address provided in their Voter Instruction Letter.

The Intelivote System has been created to meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG-2 Level AA), so that persons with disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate and interact with the online voting system.

## **In-Person Voting**

For eligible electors without means to access voting via telephone or internet, or who require assistance of a trained Election Official, Election Day voting station(s) will be open to provide in-person voting using paper ballots.

An accessible voting area will be open at the following location on Monday, October 24, 2022 from 10:00 a.m. until the close of the election at 8:00 p.m.:

Merrickville Community Centre  
106 Read Street  
Merrickville, ON K0G 1N0

## **Voting Location**

The following considerations have been taken into account when determining the Merrickville Community Centre as the voting location for the Municipal Election:

### **Accessible Route**

- The name and/or address of the voting location will be clearly visible. The voting area shall be identified with clear and understandable signage
- Seating areas shall be provided throughout the voting location for individuals needing a rest

### **Parking**

- Accessible parking shall be available at all voting locations. The designated parking space(s) shall be clearly marked with the international Symbol of Accessibility and will be on firm and level ground, close to the entrance of the Community Centre

### **Entrance and Exit**

- The entrance and exit to the Community Centre voting area is level to the ground and accessible via wheelchair or other mobility devices.

### **Interior**

- Access to the interior voting area is level and any potential tripping hazards will be removed
- The voting area is well lit and seating shall be made available
- The interior voting area will be large enough to accommodate wheelchairs or other mobility devices
- Accessible voting booths – the voting area will be low in height and have a wide area to allow individuals using mobility aids to vote independently and privately

## **Voting Assistance**

Persons with disabilities may be accompanied by a support person within the voting area or staff can assist the voter in casting their vote by paper ballot. Voting area staff 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. All individuals working in the capacity as an Election Official are formally appointed as such and administered an oath of secrecy prior to voting day.

All electors are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal and/or support person at the designated election location.

## **Candidates**

Candidates must also have regard to the needs of electors with disabilities. Campaign offices, election materials, and canvassing should all be reviewed in order to ensure that they are fully accessible.

Candidates are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal and/or support person at the designated election location.

## **Communication**

The Village of Merrickville-Wolford 2022 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan will be made available at the Village Municipal Office, located at 317 Brock Street West. It will be posted on the Village of Merrickville-Wolford election website at [www.mwvotes.ca](http://www.mwvotes.ca). It can be made available upon request in an alternative format. The Village of Merrickville-Wolford and the person with a disability may agree upon the format to be used for the document or information requested.

## **Notice of Temporary Service Disruptions**

Due to unforeseen circumstances beyond the Village of Merrickville-Wolford control, temporary service disruptions may be experienced. 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.

## **Provision of Election Information**

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



## **Feedback Process**

Feedback is encouraged and any received will be reviewed by the Clerk and appropriate action will be taken to remove barriers or provide accommodation if necessary. This will be reported on within ninety (90) days following the Election as mandated in the MEA.