



MERRICKVILLE-WOLFORD
Jewel of the Rideau

Election Accessibility Plan

2026 Municipal Election

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Introduction

The purpose of this Accessibility Plan is for use in the 2026 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 planning document was developed in advance of the election in order to identify measures to be taken and reported to Council following the election.

Objectives

In an effort to ensure that the 2026 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 in accordance with Section 12.1 (3) of the MEA.

Further objectives include:

- That persons with disabilities have full and equal access to all information on where and when to vote and on eligible candidates
- That persons with disabilities can fully participate in the Municipal Election and cast their vote;
- That persons with disabilities can fully participate in the Municipal Election as an elector, candidate, or election official;
- 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.
- That all polling locations and voter assistance locations are accessible.

Development of the Plan

This plan is a “living” document which will be improved and updated as best as practices are identified and new opportunities for improvement arise. In order to develop the plan below, several steps were taken in order to ensure that the statutory requirements were met and that a feasible implementation plan was in place. During the development of the 2026 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan, the following steps shall be implemented:

- Review and analysis of documents, policies and other supporting materials from AMCTO, neighboring municipalities, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, technology suppliers and other various stakeholder groups.
- Establish staff training standards and practices directly related to the Election to ensure that people with disabilities are able to vote in a positive customer service environment and ensure that all Election Officials recognize that a voter’s needs shall be accommodated.

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:

Julia McCaugherty-Jansman
Clerk/ Returning Officer
Email: clerk@merrickville-wolford.ca
Phone: 613-269-4791 extension 257

Darlene Plumley
CAO/ Deputy Returning Officer
Email: cao@merrickville-wolford.ca
Phone: 613-269-4791 extension 229

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. The training offered to Election Staff will be the same accessibility training as required to be completed by all municipal Staff. This involves free online training on the Ontario Human Rights Code and free online Province of Ontario accessibility modules.

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;
- A reminder that the person with the disability should overrule standard operating procedures if they are not comfortable with them. Each person knows their own limits and what they do or do not need help with.

Voting Methods

The 2026 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 internet and telephone voting services to eligible voters. These methods allow for the convenience and independence of voting from anywhere via telephone and internet.

Internet and telephone voting will be available 24 hours a day during the week leading up to Election Day. It will be open on Monday, October 19th at 10:00 a.m. until Friday, October 23rd at 8:00 p.m.

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 Municipal Election website, or from the Clerk's office. This can be provided in an alternative print format upon request.

Election Website – www.mwvotes.ca

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.

Eligible voters may vote using a touch-tone telephone, and the toll-free telephone number, date of birth, and the PIN number contained in their Voter Information Letter to access an audio ballot. Communication barriers can make it difficult for people to receive or convey information. Potential barriers may be identified as low volume, use of language that is not clear or plain, and confusing or unorganized 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 easy voting for persons with a variety of disabilities to maintain independence and privacy while voting and allows them to have 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 Information 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. It is compliant with the guidelines of the World Wide Web Consortium website principles, which include organization, functionality and readability of information provided, as well as alternative ways of representing information, such as with audio.

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 at the following locations, dates, and times:

Location	Date	Times
Eastons Corners Centennial Hall 43 Park Street, Jasper, ON K0G 1G0	Wednesday, October 21 st	10:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m.
Merrickville Community Centre 106 Read Street, Merrickville, ON K0G 1N0	Monday, October 26 th *Election Day*	10:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m.

Voting Location

In compliance with AODA, the Merrickville Community Centre and Eastons Corners Centennial Hall have been chosen as the voting locations for the Municipal Election.

The Municipality will schedule a time with members from the Merrickville Lions Club Accessibility Sub-Committee to come for an accessibility assessment site visit at both locations prior to both the Advance Vote and Voting Day. This will ensure that the voting locations are properly assessed and set up to meet the needs of all electors.

The following provisions have been assessed and included below:

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.

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 and Centennial Hall.
- The Municipality will work with the Merrickville Lions Club Accessibility Sub-Committee to borrow signage to create an accessible drop off/pick up zone at both voting locations.

Entrance and Exit

- The entrance and exit to both the Community Centre and Centennial Hall voting areas are either level to the ground and accessible via wheelchair or other mobility devices, or has a ramp installed. The doors have accessible door openers to assist with voters who require them to enter and exit the building. Staff will explore the option of a threshold cover for door entrances, if deemed necessary.

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. For example, there will be no chair at the voting booth where an individual in a wheelchair requires access. The table shall be an appropriate height to allow for a person using a wheelchair or mobility device access to cast their vote.
- Seating shall be provided throughout the voting locations for individuals needing a rest.

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. A support person will be administered an oath of secrecy/confidentiality by an Election Official prior to providing such assistance.

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. There will be a space for support persons and/or animals inside the voting locations to wait and/or sit if needed.

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.

Here is the link to the AMCTO's Candidates Guide to Accessible Elections:
<https://www.amcto.com/sites/default/files/2025-07/AMCTO-Candidates-Guide-to-Accessible-Elections.pdf>

Communication

The Village of Merrickville-Wolford 2026 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](#) as well.

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.

Information regarding the accessibility measures provided for the 2026 Municipal Election shall be included in general election advertising as well as in the 2026 Municipal Election Nomination Package.

Notice of Temporary Service Disruptions

Due to unforeseen circumstances beyond the Village of Merrickville-Wolford control, temporary service disruptions may be experienced. In the event of a temporary accessible service disruption, Election Officials will commit to making reasonable efforts to ensure that services are reinstated as quickly as possible and that alternative services are provided where feasible.

The Clerk shall provide reasonable public notice in real time on the municipal website and municipal social 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. This process shall be conducted in accordance with Clerk Procedure – Emergency Preparedness on Election Day.

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. Every effort will be made by municipal staff to provide information to electors in alternative formats to the extent possible.

General Election Materials

Large Print – Printed material generated by the Village of Merrickville-Wolford will be provided in Arial font, minimum 12 point, and can be made available in a font (print) size that is 16 to 20 points or larger.

Website – Information generated by the Village of Merrickville-Wolford on the website in relation to the election will be compliant with WCAG 2.0 Level A and allow for assistive software to be utilized. In addition, website font can be adjusted within the browser's functionality to aid the user in reading the information.

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.

Reporting

Pursuant to Section 12,1 of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, within 90 days after Voting Day, the Municipal Clerk shall make a report public about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.