

VOTE



Appendix 15 2022 Newmarket Municipal Election Accessibility Plan

**Approved by the Returning Officer/ Town Clerk of the
Town of Newmarket on May 31, 2022**

Version History:

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Part A: Introduction

This plan has been established in accordance with subsection 12.1(2) of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, as amended. It addresses the specific accessibility requirements in relation to the 2022 Municipal Election in the Town of Newmarket.

Under the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 the Clerk responsible for an election must:

- Conduct an election that will have regard to the needs of voters and candidates with disabilities;
- Ensure that voting places are accessible to persons with disabilities;
- Submit a report to Council about the identification, removal and prevention of election barriers that affect persons with disabilities.

The Town of Newmarket is committed to promoting an inclusive community. These efforts are evident through the implementation of numerous accessibility standards aimed at improving the delivery of customer service to people with disabilities. The 2022 Newmarket Municipal Election Accessibility Plan (“Plan”) was developed in an effort to ensure that the Municipal Election coincides with the core principles of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005. This document was created in advance of the election in order to identify the necessary measures to be taken and reported to Council following the election.

The Town of Newmarket has adopted online voting with a limited paper ballot option for the 2022 Municipal Election. Voters will be able to cast their vote online, anytime, 24 hours a day over a 10-day voting period beginning October 15th at 10 a.m. through October 24th at 8 p.m. or at a designated Voter Assistance Centre from October 15 until October 24. Paper ballot voting during the 10-day voting period will be available by appointment only and will only be available at the Municipal Office, 395 Mulock Dr.

Online ballots will be WCAG 2.0 compliant. Most commonly used browsers have adjustable font sizes, and are compatible with common screen reader software such as NVDA, JAWS, and VoiceOver. Google translate is available for use with the online ballots, allowing voters to translate the ballots into various different languages for voters who use Google Chrome.



Part B: Development of the Plan

The following measures were, or shall be taken, to deliver an accessible Municipal Election in 2022:

- Online voting shall be the primary method for voters to cast their ballot. This means that voters do not have to leave their home to vote and can use their own equipment (i.e., computer or phone).
- A review of the 2018 Town of Newmarket municipal election was undertaken and included an analysis of documents, policies and other supporting materials.
- A review of best practices from the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO), and other Ontario municipalities that have conducted online and paper ballot voting.
- Accessibility standards were a key criteria for the selection of Online Voting and Paper Ballot Voting vendor, and worked the Town worked closely with selected vendors to ensure that ballots meet common accessibility standards.
- A presentation to the Accessibility Advisory Committee was delivered on February 17, 2022 by Town staff and online voting service vendor, Voatz, Inc. to outline proposed plans and accessibility options for the 2022 municipal election. The committee supported the plan and unanimously voted in favour of moving forward with the Voatz mobile application in addition to the web app version to benefit from enhanced accessibility features.
- A second presentation was delivered the Accessibility Advisory Committee on March 17th, to garner feedback on the design of the Voter Instruction Letter. Feedback received was incorporated into the revised design.
- For the first time in Ontario, the Town of Newmarket will make the Voter Instruction Letter available in any format that the voter requires. (e.g. Braille, Large Print, Audio, Accessible PDF, etc.).
- For paper ballot voting, the Town will provide an accessible voting machine for voters to cast their ballot.
- Developed an accessible Candidates' Guide and Third Party Advertisers' Guide. Published all documents related to 2022 Municipal Election online in an accessible format.
- Established staff training standards and practices directly related to the Election to ensure that people with varying abilities are able to vote in a positive and comfortable customer service-centric environment, and that all Election officials recognize that a voter's needs shall be accommodated.
- Voters will be invited to participate in a survey on their voting experience once their ballot has been cast.

Within 90 days after the 2022 Newmarket Municipal Election, the Clerk will report to Council on this Plan, and the report will address the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that impacted voters and candidates with disabilities.

The Plan will be updated and improved upon as best practices and new opportunities to provide accessibility are identified, or as barriers are removed.

The 2022 Newmarket Municipal Election Accessibility Plan will be available at the Legislative Services department at the Town of Newmarket's Municipal Offices and on the Town of Newmarket website. Alternative formats may be available upon request.

Information regarding the accessibility measures provided for the 2022 Newmarket Municipal Election shall be included in general election advertising and provided to Candidates in the Municipal Election.

Part C: Voting

Voting will be available during the 10-day voting period beginning at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, October 15, 2022 through Monday, October 24, 2022 at 8:00 p.m. Eligible electors will be able to cast their ballot from anywhere using an internet-connected device.

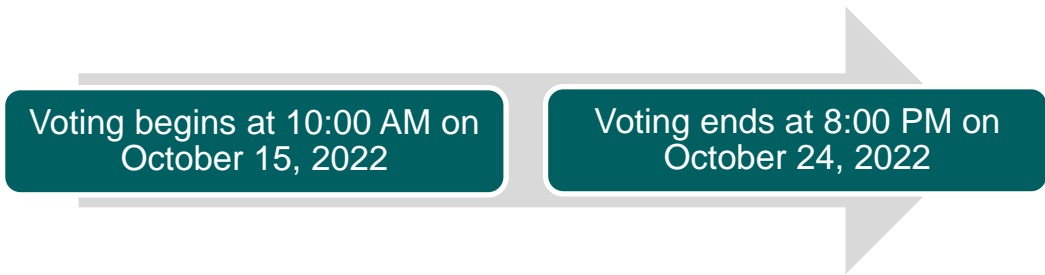
For individuals without access to the internet, Voter Assistance Centres will be established during the 10-day voting period, and will allow eligible electors to vote using a Town-supplied computing device.

Alternately, voters may use a computer at the Newmarket Public Library to submit their ballot.

Comprehensive accessibility audits have been conducted for each of the Voter Assistance Centres. These locations have been selected to meet accessibility standards. Voter Assistance Centres will be equipped with devices for voters to cast ballots online and staffed by Election Officials who can assist voters with the voting process.

While Voter Assistance Centres will be provided as a courtesy, the primary means of voting will be completed by voters at home using their own internet connection.

Under special circumstances, the Town will provide at home assistance to voters during the 10-day Voting Period. The Town will also provide voting assistance at many multi-residential buildings, retirement residents, long-term care facilities and at Southlake Regional Health Centre.



Voting begins at 10:00 AM on
October 15, 2022

Voting ends at 8:00 PM on
October 24, 2022

Paper Ballot Voting

Paper ballot voting during the 10-day voting period will be available by appointment only and will only be available at the Municipal Office, 395 Mulock Dr. The Town will provide an accessible voting machine for voters to cast their ballot.

Internet Voting

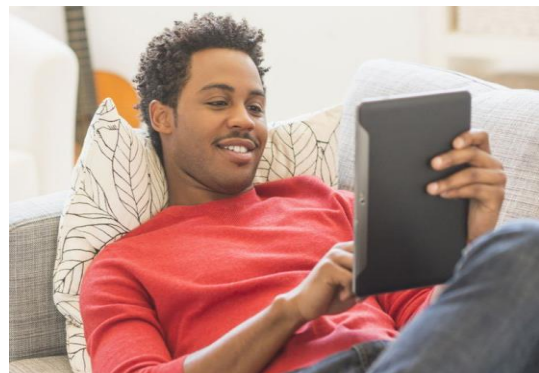
Eligible voters may vote online, using internet-connected device. Any accompanying assistive devices or software voters normally use when browsing the internet can also be used when casting a ballot online.

Potential Barriers with Internet Voting:

- Voters may not be comfortable with using the internet.
- Voters' information may be incorrect on their Voter Information Letter, or they did not receive a letter.

Prevention and Removal of Barriers with Internet Voting:

- The online voting 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.
- Voters who are not comfortable using the internet, can choose to vote by paper ballot by making an appointment and attending the paper ballot voting place at the Town Municipal Office, 395 Mulock Dr.
- Voters requiring assistance can call the Helpline at 905-953-5152, or can attend a Voter Assistance Centre to get in-person assistance.
- Voters are strongly encouraged to ensure they are on the Municipal Voters' List, or update their information on the List at newmarketvotes.ca prior to September 15.
- Under special circumstances, the Town will provide at home assistance to voters during the 10-day Voting Period.



Voter Assistance

Helpline

Questions regarding how to vote, when to vote, and how to correct information on a Voter Instruction Letter can all be answered over the phone or by email!

The Election Helpline will be staffed Monday to Friday between 8:30 AM and 4:30 PM and during the Voting Days (October 15 to October 24) between 8:30 AM and 8:00 PM.



Helpline: 905-953-5152



Email: elections@newmarket.ca

Voter Assistance Centres

Voter Assistance Centres are available for those individuals without access to the internet or phone, or who require the assistance of a trained Election official to walk them through their ballot. Voters can attend either one of the Voter Assistance Centres listed below.

Magna Centre

Gymnasium
800 Mulock Drive
Newmarket, ON L3Y 9C1

Ray Twinney Recreation Complex

Lounge 2
100 Eagle Street West
Newmarket, ON L3Y 6T5

Voter Assistance Centres' Hours of Operation:

October 15 to October 24
10 AM to 8:00 PM

Prevention and Removal of Barriers at Voter Assistance Centres:

- The name and/or address of the Voter Assistance Centre shall be clearly visible from the road or sidewalk;
- An easily navigable route will be marked for entry into the assistance area;
- The assistance area shall be identified with clear and understandable signage;
- If needed, the assistance area will be accessible by ramp or elevator;
- Road or sidewalk work will not interfere with access at Voter Assistance Centres;
- The route to the entrance of the Voter Assistance Centre shall be unobstructed and accessible;
- The route shall be wide enough to allow for an individual using a wheelchair, scooter, or other assistive device, or service animal to travel safely;
- Doors into the Voter Assistance Centre shall be equipped with working power doors, or an election worker will be present to open the doors for all voters;
- Routine checks of entrance and routes will be made throughout the day;
- The entrances and interior routes shall be well-lit and in good working condition (no abrupt changes in the level of the pathway or obstructions);
- Accessible parking shall be available at all Voter Assistance Centres;
- 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 Voter Assistance Centre;
- In locations where parking is limited, an election worker will be acting as a parking attendant to ensure that accessible voting spaces are being used appropriately;
- Consideration has been given to the distance between accessible parking and the voting area;
- Accessible washrooms shall be available at the Voter Assistance Centre;
- Election workers will be trained in providing accessible customer service (See [Part E](#) of this Plan).



Voting Assistance

Pursuant to the Town of Newmarket Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) Policy, all Voter Assistance Centres are physically accessible for individuals with disabilities.

Elections officials will be available to provide help if needed. Any designated Election official who has taken an oath or affirmation of secrecy from the Clerk or their designate may assist a voter in any manner the voter requests. Voter Assistance Centres will also each be staffed by dedicated Voter Assistance Officers specifically trained to aid voters in casting ballots on computing devices.

Pursuant to the Town of Newmarket Accessibility Standards for Customer Services, persons with disability are permitted to be accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal at any Voter Assistance Centre.

Special Voting Provisions

Election officials will visit sites including long-term care facilities and retirement homes, throughout the 10-day Voting Period, to set-up on-site voting kiosks, or to provide bedside voting opportunities for residents.

Municipal Voters' List

Beginning January 2, 2022, potential voters can confirm and/or update their information through the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) [online voter look-up tool](#).

Beginning September 1, 2022, qualified voters will be able to add their name to the Voters' List through Newmarket's own online voter look-up tool, which can be accessed through the Town of Newmarket website: newmarketvotes.ca. These online tools allow voters to add their name onto the Voters' List at their own convenience, from a variety of devices.

Qualified voters will also be able to update their information or have themselves added to the Voters' List at the Municipal Offices Customer Service Desk, or at the Newmarket Public Library.

Am I on the Municipal Voters' List?

Part D: Communication Plan

Communication and outreach initiatives will ensure that election information is accessible and available in alternate formats. The Town of Newmarket plans to provide an informative and accessible election in the following ways:

- Ensure election-related communication is available in clear and simple language.
- Voter Instructions Letters shall be made available in an array of accessible formats at voter request.
- Staff to attend Newmarket Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting to demonstrate how this election will be accessible: allow voters to cast their ballot from anywhere (more flexibility and convenience), reduce wait times, deliver quick and accurate results and provide voters with accessibility needs greater independence.
- Members of the 2022 Election team will demonstrate accessible voting at Town-run and community events.
- Information regarding accessibility and language support for the election will be communicated through a media release.
- Election advertisements will be placed in local media including the Newmarket Town Page, Newmarket Era and social media (@TownofNewmarket).
- Updated election information posted on the Town's website to reflect most recent developments.

Election Materials

In accordance with the Town of Newmarket’s Accessibility Standards for Customer Service policy, the Town will provide a copy of a document to a person requiring the document in an alternate format, or provide the information contained in the document, in the preferred format.



Large Print – Printed material generated by the Town will be provided in a sans serif font, minimum 12 point, and can be made available in a font (print) size that is 16 to 20 points larger.



Website – Information generated on the Town website in relation to the election will be compliant with WCAG 2.0 Level A guidelines, 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 through BrowseAloud™.



Video – Promotional and educational video created for the 2022 Municipal Election shall incorporate closed captioning.

Alternate Format Documents

The Town of Newmarket communicates with persons of all abilities in ways that take into account their preference of receiving information. Staff are trained on how to interact and communicate with persons of all abilities. One way of doing this is providing information in alternate formats. Alternate formats are other ways of publishing information besides regular print. Some of these formats can be used by everyone while others are designed to address the specific needs of the user.

The Town of Newmarket and said persons may agree upon the format to be used to communicate the document or information within it.

In the event the information is not generated by the Town or is supplied by a third party, the Town will make every effort to obtain the information from the third party in an alternate format and/or will attempt to assist the voter by providing assistive equipment.

Accessible Voting

Information regarding accessible voting will be communicated through various electronic and printed means and in-person events during the election year.



Community Events

Members of the 2022 Election team plan to attend community events leading up to voting period to distribute information regarding the Municipal Election (including information about accessible voting). Some of these events include:

- Newmarket Canada Day
- Moonlight Movies evenings
- [TD Newmarket Music Series concerts](#)
- New'bark'et
- Newmarket Farmers' Market
- Newmarket Home Show
- Touch-A-Truck

Community Outreach

The Town of Newmarket plans to contact community groups that work with persons of all abilities to provide them with information about internet and telephone voting.

Service Disruption

Planned and/ or unexpected temporary service disruptions may be experienced. In the event of a temporary service disruption, election staff will commit to making reasonable efforts to ensure that services are restored as quickly as possible and that alternate services are provided.

Notice of these temporary disruptions shall be provided in a conspicuous place and manner at the respective locations and information shall be posted on the Town of Newmarket website. This notice shall include information about the reason for the disruption, anticipated duration, and description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

Accessible services in relation to this plan include voting places, election materials and/or voting provisions for persons of all abilities at the voting place.

In the event of disruptions to service or unforeseen circumstances that affect the accessibility of voting places during the voting period, notices of disruption will be posted:

- On the Town of Newmarket website – home page & on the elections page
- On Facebook: Town of Newmarket
- On Twitter: @TownofNewmarket
- At the site of the disruption
- Where applicable, a Public Service Announcement will be issued.



Part E: Election Staff

Staff working at the Voter Assistance Centres will receive training under the Accessible Customer Service Standard and the Integrated Standard and will work under the direct supervision of a Location Manager.

Customer Service Training

Customer service training will focus on creating a positive voting experience. Staff will be trained to:

- Make eye contact
- Smile
- Greet voters as they arrive
- Use a welcoming tone
- Listen
- Be polite and respectful
- Focus on problem solving

Inclusivity Training

Staff will ensure that everyone has full and equal access to elections and can vote in the same place and in similar ways as others.

Staff will be trained to use words that are gender neutral, such as:

- You
- They
- The voter
- This person
- The Election Official

Staff may also identify the person by what they are wearing:

- “Excuse me, the person in the blue shirt”
- “Can you help the person in the blue shirt?”

Staff will be trained to be mindful of not questioning someone's gender based on the identification they provide.