



# Township of Black River-Matheson

## Accessibility Plan

### 2024 Municipal By-Elections

Approved by  
Clerk/Returning Officer  
Township of Black River-Matheson  
This 3<sup>rd</sup> day of May, 2024

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This plan will address the specific accessibility requirements in relation to the 2024 Municipal By-Election in the Township of Black River-Matheson.

The Township of Black River-Matheson has made great efforts in promoting a barrier free community. In an effort to ensure that the 2024 Municipal Election is consistent with the core principles of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, 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.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

This plan is intended to highlight measures that the Township of Black River-Matheson will be implementing to ensure equal opportunity for all electors and candidates.

These objectives include:

- That persons with disabilities are able to independently cast their vote and verify their selection.
- 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 as an elector, candidate, or election official.
- 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, news bulletin, the township website and social media.
- That at least one (1) voting assistance location is accessible.
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### 3. DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN

This Plan is a “living” document which will be improved and updated as best 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 a feasible implementation plan was in place. During the development of the 2024 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.

### 4. VOTING METHODS

The 2024 Black River-Matheson Municipal Election will be working with Intelivote Systems Inc. to provide eVoting services to eligible voters. This includes the convenience and independence of voting from anywhere via telephone, internet or in-person at a voter help center (s) during the August 1 – 12, 2024 voting period.

Everyday tools like computers, telephones and other aids can present accessible opportunities for persons with disabilities to accomplish more, while being consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equal opportunity.

The Intelivote Voting System provides voters with the capability to vote from the comfort of their own home. Voting from home facilitates the voting process for persons with disabilities who may have mobility restrictions, visual impairment, and/or have a difficult time with transportation. Additionally, persons who have assistive devices set up in their homes can now use them to assist with casting a ballot privately and independently. 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 vote without any assistance. This provides persons with disabilities the same independence and privacy in participating in the election as other voters. If persons with disabilities do require assistance in the voting process, trained Election Officials will be present at help centers offered at 367 Fourth Avenue in Black River-Matheson, throughout the voting period.

#### 4.1 Telephone Voting

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. Communications barriers can make it difficult for people to receive or convey

information. Barriers may be identified as low volume, use of language that is not clear or plain, and confusing or unorganized menu options.

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 voter's selections.
- Standard volume is used to allow for adjustment dependent of the telephone or device being utilized.

## **4.2 Internet Voting**

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. 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.

## **4.3 In-person Voting at Voter Help Center (s)**

For those individuals without means to access voting via telephone or Internet, or who require the assistance of a trained Election Official, Voter Help Centre (s) for the advance poll and on election day will be open to provide in-person internet voting and/or telephone voting opportunities via a laptop, tablet, touch screen monitor or telephone.

Access to the Voter Help Centre station interior and voting area shall be level and slip-resistant. Any doormats or carpeting shall be level with the floor to prevent potential tripping hazards. The voting area shall be well lit and seating shall be available. Entrance corridors shall be clear of obstructions and tripping hazards and will allow sufficient space for use of a wheelchair or scooter.

An accessible voting area will be available at each Voter Help Centre location (s). These areas shall be low in height and have a wide area to allow for individuals who use a wheelchair or scooter to vote independently and secretively.

Voters may attend any Voter Help Centre station location throughout the voting period. The municipality will be operating the following Voter Help Centre location(s) during the Advance Voting Period:

August 1 to August 11, 2024 - 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (ET) (excluding weekends)  
Municipal Hall – 367 Fourth Avenue, Matheson, ON

Or

August 1 to August 11, 2024 – 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (ET) (including weekends)  
Vern Miller Memorial Community Centre (upstairs)

The following Voter Help Centre (s) will be open on Election Day, Monday August 12, 2024 from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. (ET)

Municipal Office, 367 Fourth Avenue, Matheson, ON

Or

Vern Miller Memorial Community Centre (upstairs)

#### **4.4 Special Voting Provisions**

Election staff shall visit sites including long-term care facilities and retirement homes, to set-up on-site voting kiosks, or bedside voting opportunities for residents. This is included in the E-Voting policies and procedures section 9.

### **5. VOTING LOCATION(S)**

An accessibility assessment of each physical polling location will be conducted. The following considerations are taken into account when determining which location(s) will be used:

#### **5.1 Accessible Route**

Proximity of the Voter Help Centre to accessible public transit routes shall be considered in the selection of voting location(s). The name and/or address of the Voter Help Centre shall be clearly visible. The voting area shall be identified with clear and understandable signage. Seating areas shall be provided throughout the Voter Help Centre for individuals needing a rest.

#### **5.2 Entrance and Exit**

The route to the entrance of the Voter Help Centre shall be unobstructed and accessible. The route shall be wide enough to allow for an individual using a wheelchair, scooter, other

assistive device, or service animal to travel safely. Doors into the voting location and voting area shall be accessible and easy to open or shall remain propped open for the duration of the voting location hours. Routine checks of entrance and exit routes will be made throughout the hours of operation.

### **5.3 Parking**

Accessible parking shall be available at all Voter Help Centre (s). 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 voting location.

## **6. VOTING ASSISTANCE**

### **6.1 Support Person/Friend of the Voter**

Pursuant to the Township of Black River-Matheson Accessible Customer Service Policy people with disabilities shall be permitted to be accompanied by a support person at any Voter Help Centre (s). A designated support person and/or 'Friend of the Voter' will be administered an oath of secrecy/confidentiality by an Election Official prior to providing any such assistance.

### **6.2 Service Animals**

Pursuant to the Township of Black River-Matheson Accessible Customer Service Policy individuals requiring service animals are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at all voting locations.

### **6.3 Election Officials**

At Voter Help Centre locations, upon request, Election Officials are available to assist any voter who requires assistance in casting their online ballot. All individuals working in the capacity of an Election Official are formally appointed as such and administered an oath of secrecy prior to voting day.

## **7. COMMUNICATION**

The 2024 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan will be made available at the municipal office located at 367 Fourth Avenue, Matheson, ON and by way of the township's web site [www.blackriver-matheson.com](http://www.blackriver-matheson.com). Alternative formats will be made available upon request.



Information regarding the accessibility measures provided for the 2024 Municipal By-Election shall be included in general election advertising.

## **7.1 Election Materials**

The Township of Black River-Matheson is required, as per the Accessible Customer Service Standard, to provide a copy of a document to a person with a disability, or the information contained in the document, in a format that takes into account the person's disability upon request.

### **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 a user.

The Township of Black River-Matheson and the person with a disability may agree upon the format to be used for the document or information.

In the event the information is not generated by the Township of Black River-Matheson or is supplied by a third party, the Township of Black River-Matheson will make every effort to obtain the information from the third party in an alternate format and/or will attempt to assist the Elector by providing assistive equipment.

### **General Election Materials**

**Large Print** – Printed material generated by the Township of Black River-Matheson will be provided in an Arial font, minimum 11 point, and can be made available in a font (print) size that is 16 to 20 points or larger.

**Website** – Information generated by the Township of Black River-Matheson on the website in relation to the election will be compliant with WCAG 2.0 Level AA, 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.

**Video** – Promotional and educational videos created for the 2022 municipal election shall incorporate audio and captioning.

## **7.2 Service Disruptions**

From time to time and/or for unforeseen circumstances beyond the municipalities 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.

In these instances of service disruptions, the municipality shall provide reasonable notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by persons with disabilities.

Notice of these temporary disruptions shall be provided in a conspicuous place and manner at the respective location(s) and information shall also be posted on the municipality's website. This notice shall include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

Accessible services in relation to this plan include voter help locations, election materials and/or voting provisions for Electors with disabilities at the help centre (s).

In the event of disruptions to service or unforeseen circumstances that affect the accessibility of voter help locations during the advance vote or on Election Day, notices of disruption will be posted in real time on the municipality's website.

## 8. 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. The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario has released several quick reference documents to assist candidates with accessible elections considerations:

- [Count Us In: Removing Barriers to Political Participation - Quick Reference Guide to Accessible Campaign Information and Communication](#)
- [Count Us In: Removing Barriers to Political Participation - Quick Reference Guide to Accessible Constituency, Riding Association, Central Party and Campaign Offices](#)
- [Count Us In: Removing Barriers to Political Participation - Quick Reference Guide to Accessible All Candidates Meetings](#)

## 9. REPORTING

Pursuant to Section 12.1 of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, within 90 days after voting day, the Black River-Matheson Clerk shall submit a report to Council about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.