2019 to 2023: Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Township of South-West Oxford

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Background:

The 10th Anniversary of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) was celebrated in 2015. The AODA is an important piece of legislation with the ultimate goal of creating an Ontario where it is possible for all people to realize their full potential.

The AODA sets out a process for the development and enforcement of accessibility standards in the province. These standards are intended to help reach a goal of an accessible Ontario by 2025. Ontario was one of the first Provinces and one first jurisdictions in the world to enact legislation which established a goal and time-frame for accessibility. It was also the first jurisdiction to legislate accessibility reporting requirements and to establish standards so that people with disabilities may benefit from more inclusive, barrier-free communities.

The AODA aims to have an accessible Ontario by 2025 through the implementation of mandatory accessibility standards in the areas of:

- Customer Service
- Information and Communications
- Employment
- Transportation
- Design of Public Space

It is known that everyone is likely to be affected by disability as some point in their lives – whether personally or indirectly through the experiences of family, friends or coworkers. Better access helps everyone. It improves the quality of life for our entire community.

Introduction:

In December, 2013, the Township of South-West Oxford created and adopted the first Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. Creating communities where every person can participate is important for people, business and building a sense of community. For this reason, it is important that the Township continue to plan for the future so that Township facilities and services are accessible and welcoming for everyone.

This updated Multi-Year Accessibility Plan for the Township of South-West Oxford builds on the accomplishments of the previous plan and sets new goals for moving forward.

Accessibility Legislation:

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) became law in 2005. It sets out accessibility requirements that an organization must meet in the areas of customer service, information and communications, employment, transportation and the design of public spaces. These are called standards. The Information and Communications, Employment, Transportation and the Design of Public Spaces Standards were all combined under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR).

One of the IASR requirements is to prepare a multi-year accessibility plan. This is a shift from annual accessibility planning under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA). The multi-year plan must include an organization's strategy to prevent and remove barriers and meet the requirements in the standards. Each year the organization must report on the progress in implementing the plan.
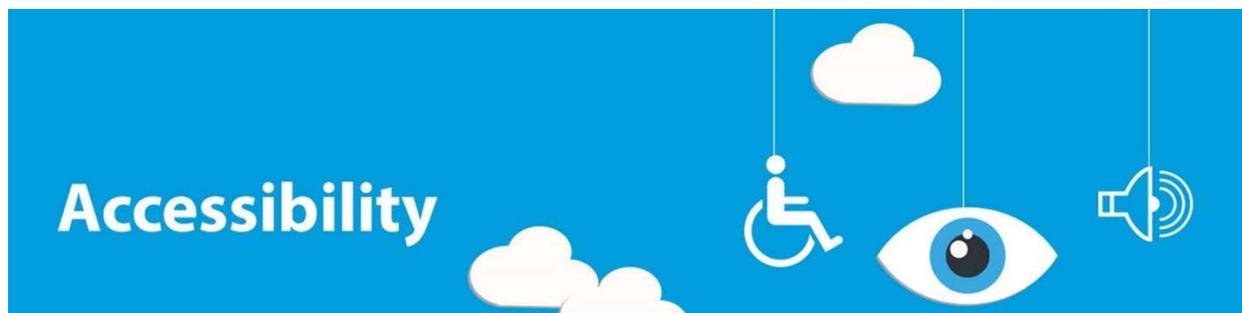
Township's Statement of Commitment:

The Township of South-West Oxford is committed to inspiring all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in integration and equal opportunity. We are committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner, and will do so by preventing and removing barriers to accessibility and meeting accessibility requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

The Township of South-West Oxford will strive to remove existing barriers that limit inclusion and will provide a status report publicly to be available each year to highlight our accessibility achievements.

Township Progress to Date:

Year	Accomplishment
2003-2004	Physical access to the Mt. Elgin Community Hall (Oxford County Library) was made easier with the installation of barrier free door opener and accessible washroom renovation.
2008-2010	Train the trainer program was undertaken to implement the Customer Service Standards of the AODA. Staff and board members received online training.
	Front entrance of the Township Municipal Office was renovated to accommodate and accessible entrance; the Township washroom was reconstructed with an accessible design.
	Brownsville Community Centre was built with an accessible design.
	Vote by Mail voting method was used in the 2010 Municipal election. This voting method allows voters to vote in their place of residence. The one voting location was the municipal office which is accessible.
	Beachville Community Park, Dereham Centre Community Park and the Mt. Elgin Community Park met the accessible component of playground equipment for some of the equipment and the ground cover.
2011-2012	Foldens Community Hall installed an automatic door opener for the front door, a new ramp and accessible washrooms.
	An automatic door opener was installed at the front door of the municipal office.

Year	Accomplishment
2013	Dereham Community Hall washroom and entranceway was renovated with an accessible design (Accessibility Enabling Grant funding was received).
	Municipal office renovation was completed in November, 2013 with the removal of carpet and the installation of vinyl flooring. Level handles were installed on all washroom doors. Doors were widened to 36"; accessible washroom was added to the basement.
2014	Vote by Mail voting method was used in the 2014 Municipal election. This voting method allows voters to vote in their place of residence. The one voting location was the municipal office which is accessible.
	Employment advertisements were amended to include a statement regarding providing accommodation through the recruitment process, upon request.
	The Beachville Museum includes a ramp for access into the facility and accessible washrooms.
2015	The Township's purchasing By-law was updated to provide for accessibility criteria and features when procuring goods and services.
2016	Accessible features were incorporated into the Salford playground equipment.
2017	Accessible features were incorporated into the Foldens playground equipment.
2017-2018	Salford Hall renovations were completed to include accessible washrooms and entrance design features. Interior doorways were widened to 32" with some funding received from Junior Farmers.
2018	Internet and telephone voting method was used in the 2018 Municipal election. These voting methods allow voters to vote in their place of residence and use any personal assistive devices they may have in the comfort of their own homes and are familiar with. The one voting location was the municipal office which is accessible.
	A redesign of the Township's website was completed to meet requirements of WCAG 2.0 Level AA in cooperation with the County of Oxford.
2019	The Township reviewed, updated and approved their Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation Policy.
	Funding was received from the Ontario Trillium Foundation for an accessible playground in Hilltop Park – Mt. Elgin (July, 2019).

Year	Accomplishment
	The Township will be paving the parking lot and sidewalk at the Brownsville Community Centre to improve access to the entrance of the facility.

About the Plan:

The Township of South-West Oxford's 2019 to 2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan outlines how the Township intends to reach its goal of meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner by preventing and removing barriers to accessibility and meeting accessibility requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. This plan includes an overview of the Township's strategy to prevent and remove barriers and to meet the requirements of the AODA and the IASR.

This plan includes a review of accessibility work that was completed throughout the duration of the Township's previous plan (outlined above), and sets new goals and actions to be completed over the next four years. Many of these goals and actions may be ongoing throughout the length of the plan and beyond.

Identification of Barriers:

Barriers are obstacles which stand in the way of persons with a disability from being able to do many of the day to day activities that many people take for granted. It is defined as anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of their community. There are several categories of barriers to consider:

- **Physical/Architectural Barriers**: features, buildings or spaces which restrict or impede physical access (ex. a doorway that is too narrow, event or meeting spaces which are inaccessible);
- **Informational and Communicational Barriers**: obstacles with processing, transmitting or interpreting information (ex. print on an advertisement that is too small to read, busy or confusing signs/advertisements);
- **Attitudinal Barriers**: prejudgment or assumptions that directly or indirectly discriminate. (ex. assuming that a person with vision loss cannot enjoy movies, TV or concerts, assuming that a person with a speech impairment cannot understand you);

- **Technological Barriers**: when technology cannot be or is not modified to support various assistive devices and/or software. (ex. having only one way for residents to contact you, websites that do not provide for increased text size)
- **Systemic Barriers**: barriers within an organization's policies and procedures which do not consider accessibility. (ex. people with disabilities are excluded from events or event planning, not giving consideration to an accommodation that may be required for a person with a disability to participate).

To identify barriers to be addressed by municipal accessibility plans, municipalities are required under the AODA to consult with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC). The creation of an AAC is not required when a municipality has a population of 10,000 people or less. Since the Township of South-West Oxford does not have an AAC, members of the public (through public notice), Council, community hall and park board representatives and other individuals were asked to comment on the plan in its draft stages. Additionally, Township staff have participated in working groups, including the South West Accessibility Group (SWAG) and Joint Accessibility Meetings for Oxford County.

Multi-Year Accessibility Initiatives: 2019 to 2023

The Township's primary focus moving forward will be to ensure that we are meeting the requirements of the AODA and the IASR. The legislation covers general requirements with respect to customer service, feedback and training, accessible information and communication, employment, transportation and the design of public spaces. This multi-year plan represents the Township's response to the requirements of the legislation and our commitment to providing public service in an accessible manner.

Goals/Actions: Customer Service Standard

What is required?	Goals/Actions	Timeline
Accessible Customer Service training for staff, Council and volunteers	Provide updated training for staff, Council and Township volunteers on the requirements of the AODA, IASR, the Human Rights Code.	2019/2020
Incorporate accessibility and the need of people with disabilities when procuring or acquiring goods, services and facilities.		Ongoing

What is required?	Goals/Actions	Timeline
Provide feedback and complaint processed in an alternate format, upon request.	Provide an electronic option compliant with WCAG 2.0 to provide feedback on accessibility within the Township.	2019/Ongoing
Provide notice of any temporary disruptions to accessible features/facilities.		Ongoing
Permit service animals in Township facilities unless prohibited by law.		Ongoing
Accessible Elections (the Clerk is required to plan for the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates during Municipal Elections)	Give consideration to alternative voting methods for the 2022 Municipal Election (ex. Vote by Mail or Internet and Telephone Voting)	2021-2022

Goals/Actions: Information and Communication

What is required?	Goals/Actions	Timeline
Provide information that produced and controlled by the Township in alternate formats, upon request.	Develop a list of providers that may be contacted to create/produce alternate formats for documents (ex. Braille, read aloud, translator services) Provide training to staff with resect to the use of plain language in writing, whenever possible.	Ongoing, 2019
Achieve compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0).		Ongoing
Create accessible resources and documents for use online.	Provided training to staff that prepare documents for use online; create quick reference materials/resources for staff with respect to creating accessible documents. Create accessible document templates for staff's use.	Ongoing, 2020

Provide emergency plans and other emergency alert information in an alternate format, upon request.	Develop a list of providers that may be contacted to create/produce alternate formats for documents (ex. Braille, read aloud, translator services)	Ongoing, 2019

Goals/Actions: Employment

What is required?	Goals/Actions	Timeline
Ensure that recruitment, hiring, promotion and retention processes are inclusive and accommodation.	Develop standard operating guidelines for performance management, career advancement, workplace accommodation and safe return to work.	2019
Accommodate current employees who have or acquire a disability.	Develop a standard operating guideline for individual accommodation plans, when required.	2019

Goals/Actions: Design of Public Spaces

What is required?	Goals/Actions	Timeline
Recreational trails and beach access routes	Ensure that members of the public and persons with disabilities are consulted when new trails are developed (ex. location of rest areas). Ensure that any new trail signage includes information about the technical aspects of the trail (length, slope, rest areas).	2019-2023
Outdoor Public Use Eating Areas	Explore the possibility of purchasing and installing an accessible picnic table for Township Halls and Parks.	2019-2023
Outdoor Play Spaces	Ensure that all new and redevelopment outdoor play spaces consist of an area that includes play equipment that enhances the play	2019-2023

What is required?	Goals/Actions	Timeline
	opportunities and experiences for children and caregivers with various disabilities; consult with members of the public and people with disabilities on the features of the park. Include sensory components and active play, accessible ground cover. Installation of new play space at Hilltop Park (Mt. Elgin) to include accessible features/design.	
Exterior Paths of Travel; ensure that the technical aspects of the Design of Public Spaces Standards are followed (ex. width, surface, slope, height of overhead obstacles, tactile walking surface indicators)	Paving of the parking lot and sidewalk of the Brownsville Community Centre to improve access to the entrance of the facility.	2019, Ongoing
Accessible Parking; provide Type A and B accessible parking spaces for off-street parking that includes access aisle and is on an accessible path of travel. Consult with members of the public regarding the need, location and design of on-street parking.		Ongoing
Maintenance; ensure that existing public spaces are in good working order and condition.	Continue to conduct regular health and safety inspections to identify any need for repair/improvement.	Ongoing
Identify and plan for the removal of barriers in Township owned spaces	Work with Township Hall and Park Committees to conduct site visits to identify barriers that may exist; develop an accessibility checklist. Invite a member of the Oxford County Accessibility Advisory Committee for a	2019-2020

What is required?	Goals/Actions	Timeline
	walkthrough of Township facilities for comment on accessibility/barriers. Consider options to remove/improve any barriers that are identified. Foldens Park washroom renovation to include an accessible design.	
Compliance with the *Ontario Building Code Act, 1992*	The Township's Chief Building Official ensures compliance with accessibility requirements of the Building Code.	Ongoing

Goals/Actions: General

What is required?	Goals/Actions	Timeline
Ensure that the Township is compliant with Provincial Accessibility Legislation	Township staff will continue to monitor and follow amendments to accessibility legislation and respond/report to Council as necessary. The Province is currently undertaking a review of the Employment and Information and Communication Standards.	Ongoing
Compliance Reports to be filed with the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario (ADO)	Township staff will complete compliance reports for the Province, as required.	2019, 2021, 2023
Accessibility Plan Status Report	Township staff will report to Council annually, by January 31st of each year on the status of this Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.	2020-2023

Comments/Feedback

The Township of South-West Oxford is committed to ensuring that accessibility is considered throughout our services, facilities and business operations. Your feedback is welcome and helps us to identify other areas for improvement. Please contact us with your questions, ideas or comments:

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