2024 to 2028: Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Township of
SOUTH-WEST OXFORD

Township of South-West Oxford

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2024 to 2028: Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Background:

The 20th Anniversary of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) will be celebrated in 2025. 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.
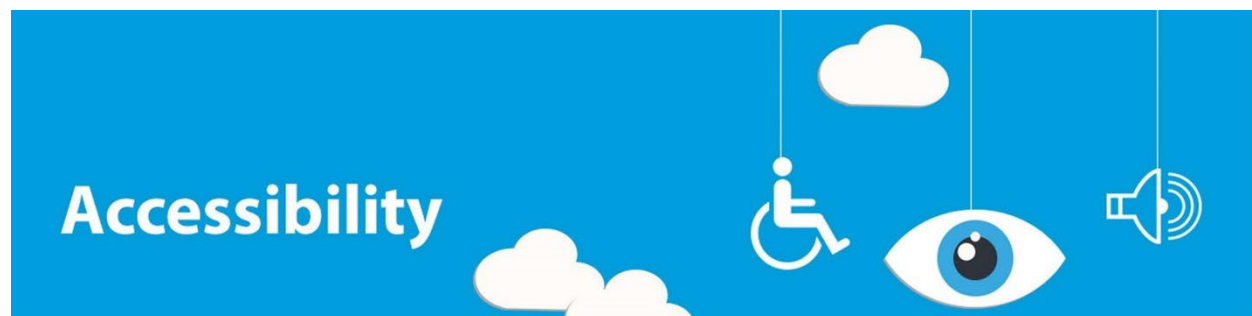
Introduction:

In December, 2013, the Township of South-West Oxford created and adopted the first Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. The plan was revised for 2019-2023 as we continue to work towards the provincial requirement for full development, implementation and enforcement by January 1, 2025. 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.

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.

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.

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 Mount Elgin Community Centre (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 an 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. Lever 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.
	2019-2023 Township of South-West Oxford, Multi-Year Accessibility Plan was approved.

Year	Accomplishment
	Hilltop Park, an accessible park and playground in the Mount Elgin subdivision was completed in consultation with the Oxford County Accessibility Advisory Committee. Funding was received from the Ontario Trillium Foundation for this construction.
	Council approved the Township's new Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation Policy, intended to help identify and improve barriers to improve accessibility for people with disabilities.
	The Brownsville Community Centre's parking lot and sidewalk were paved to improve access to the entrance of the facility.
	SWOX Talks, the Township's municipal publication started being produced electronically (via email) on a monthly basis. A hard copy of the publication is mailed out once per year (instead of bi-annually).
2020	Provided updated training for staff, Council and Township volunteers on the requirements of the AODA, Accessible Customer Service, IASR, the Human Rights Code.
	The Township launched E-Send which will allow for tax bills to be sent electronically to ratepayers.
	The Township began offering Council Meetings via live stream in March 2020. Meetings were broadcast to the Township's YouTube. Subscriptions were purchased to Zoom and Webex to enable virtual and hybrid meetings.
	Township Staff transitioned to utilizing HRIS MyWay, a cloud-based software, for submitting time sheets and time-off requests. Previously, this was completed via PDF.
2021	Oxford County transitioned the Township's website to eSolutions (now GHD Digital) to bring it in accessibility compliance with WCAG Level AA.
	Audio/video equipment was purchased to support continued hybrid Council and Committee meetings.
	Oxford County Accessibility Advisory Committee completed a tour of all Township-owned facilities where they provided a checklist and audit of accessibility features and concerns.
	A Compressed Work Week Policy was adapted to extend the hours of the Municipal Office from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Year	Accomplishment
2022	The Township's Building Department transitioned to Cloudpermit, a web-based building permit application system.
	Internet and telephone voting was utilized in the 2022 Municipal Election. A voter help centre was established for those requiring assistance outside of regular office hours. Staff provided in-person, telephone and email assistance as required.
2023	A kiosk (iPad) was established at the front counter of the Municipal Office for residents to complete building and burn permit applications. Staff continue to provide assistance and support as needed.
	Electronic sign installed at the Mount Elgin Community Centre. Municipal Digital and Non-Digital Sign Policy established to ensure information conveyed on municipal signage be available for review in an accessible format on the Township's website.
	Staff were provided with a training opportunity on unconscious bias and microaggressions in the workplace.
	The Township approved and endorsed the Safe and Well Oxford Plan to establish a Steering Committee. The Plan is Oxford's roadmap for building safe and inclusive communities.
	Emergency Response Plan was updated to include a list of providers that may be contacted to produce/create alternate formats for documents (e.g., Braille, read-aloud, translator services).
	Accessible entrances installed to the barns at the Beachville District Museum. Sidewalks were replaced and upgraded on museum grounds.
2024	Township of South-West Oxford Council approved and adopted the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan.
Ongoing	The Township continues to provide opportunities for members of the public to provide comments/complaints/feedback in relation to the accessibility of Township services. Alternate formats are available upon request.
	The Township provides notice of any temporary disruptions to accessible features/facilities.
	The Township permits service animals in Township facilities unless prohibited by law.

Year	Accomplishment
	The Township has incorporated into standard operating procedures and policies that alternate formats of Township documents will be provided upon request.
	The Township's Chief Building Official continues to ensure compliance with accessibility requirements of the Building Code.

About the Plan:

The Township of South-West Oxford's 2024 to 2028 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 (e.g., a doorway that is too narrow, event or meeting spaces which are inaccessible);
- **Informational and Communicational Barriers**: obstacles with processing, transmitting or interpreting information (e.g., 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. (e.g., 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. (e.g., 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. (e.g., 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, website, social media) and the Oxford County's Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee was asked to comment on the plan in its draft stages.

Multi-Year Accessibility Initiatives: 2024 to 2028

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

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.	2024-2025
Incorporate accessibility and the need of people with disabilities when procuring or acquiring goods, services and facilities.	Review and update the Township's procurement policy/by-law.	2024-2025
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 continued use of alternative voting methods for the 2026 Municipal Election (e.g., Internet and Telephone Voting)	2026

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.	Provide training to staff with respect to the use of plain language in writing, whenever possible.	2024-2025
Achieve compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0).	Train administration staff on accessible writing for the web, accessible PDF documents and web content accessibility guidelines (WCAG 2.0).	2024-2025
Create accessible resources and documents for use online.	Train administration staff on accessible writing for the web, accessible PDF documents and web content accessibility guidelines (WCAG 2.0).	2024-2025

Goals/Actions: Employment

What is required?	Goals/Actions	Timeline
Ensure that recruitment, hiring, promotion and retention processes are inclusive and accommodation.	Continue to regularly update standard operating guidelines based on current legislation.	As required
Accommodate current employees who have or acquire a disability.	Develop a standard operating guideline for individual accommodation plans, when required.	As requested

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	2025 to 2026 (Mount Elgin Trail Development)

What is required?	Goals/Actions	Timeline
	aspects of the trail (length, slope, rest areas). New Walking Path in Foldens (2024).	
Outdoor Public Use Eating Areas	Explore the possibility of purchasing and installing an accessible picnic tables for Township Halls and Parks.	Brownsville 2024
Outdoor Play Spaces	Ensure that all new and redeveloped outdoor play spaces consist of an area that includes play equipment that enhances the play 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 the new Phase 6 Park in the Mount Elgin Subdivision and Brownsville to include accessible features/design.	Brownsville and Mount Elgin – 2025 to 2026
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)		2025-2026 (Mount Elgin)
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.		As required

What is required?	Goals/Actions	Timeline
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. Replace playground at the Brownsville Community Centre – equipment to include accessible features/design.	Annually 2025
Identify and plan for the removal of barriers in Township owned spaces	Complete annual accessibility inspections utilizing the checklist formulated by the Oxford County Accessibility Advisory Committee.	Annually

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.	2024 to 2028
Compliance Reports to be filed with the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario (ADO)	Township staff will complete compliance reports for the province, as required.	2025, 2027
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.	2024-2028
Collaborate with the Oxford County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee.	Continued participation in the annual Committee Meeting. Continued collaboration with the accessibility checklist.	2024 to 2028
Continued Endorsement of Safe and Well Oxford Plan	Work with the DEI Action Coalition to finalize and adopt the Inclusion Charter for Oxford County (as drafted by the Coalition).	2024 to 2025

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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