



Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2019-2020 Status Update

Objective

The Township of Edwardsburgh Cardinal is committed to enriching the quality of life for persons with disabilities. The Township recognizes that it is a long-term process and that communication is important for moving to full accessibility. The Township continues to strive to remove barriers that limit inclusion within the community.

In 2013, the Township of Edwardsburgh Cardinal released a multi-year accessibility plan, which was updated in 2015 to span 2015-2020, in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations. The plan outlined the strategy to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility, which included how the Township will meet phased-in requirements under the AODA.

Background

The AODA is the first law of its kind in Canada. Under the AODA, the Province of Ontario is developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards. The goal of the Act and the standards is to make for a fully accessible province for all people by 2025.

Since 2005, two regulations outlining accessibility standards have been made under the AODA. The first regulation was the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (O.Reg. 429/07). The second was the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (O.Reg. 191/11) (IASR). Between them, they establish standards for accessible customer service, information and communications, employment, transportation, design of public spaces in the built environment, and for overall training, planning and reporting of accessibility initiatives.

Our Commitment to Accessibility

The Township of Edwardsburgh Cardinal makes every effort to ensure that its programs, services and facilities are barrier-free and continues to support the goal of an accessible Province by 2025. The Township strives to meet regulations made under the AODA by ensuring equal opportunities are provided to people with disabilities and that

goods and services are provided in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.

Highlights from 2019-2020

- Implemented a new agenda/meeting/report management system with eScribe in order to provide both PDF and HTML accessible agendas, minutes, and reports.
- Continued efforts were made to generate more user-friendly documents through converting documents to PDF to make them more easily accessible on the Township's website.
- Working with eSolutions Group to create and implement a fully AODA compliant accessible website for the beginning of 2021.
- Additionally, eSolutions Group will be creating an accessible mobile app to focus on important information to be relayed to the public.
- The Township's Waterfront Improvement Subcommittee has proposed new design concepts for the Cardinal Galop Canal waterfront to assist in making the area more accessible and user friendly. These are only concepts to be further discussed in 2021 with plans to improve a walking trail, boat launch, and parking area.
- Providing the public with alternative public meeting locations for various Committee and Council meetings to accommodate COVID-19 social distancing requirements while ensuring the location(s) are accessible to the public wishing to attend in person.
- Updated the meeting recording policy to permit the Community Development Committee meeting to be recorded and uploaded to the Township Youtube channel to provide an alternative accessible viewing stream for the public.

Accessible Customer Service

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has made the Township staff incorporate new and creative ways to make the area accessible for everyone and comply with social distancing restrictions. New directional signage and protective equipment have been installed within multiple facilities to assist the public. Additional staff have been hired to assist the public during the pandemic, and have implemented multiple contact tracking and cleaning methods.

Another factor that has impacted accessibility for some public members is the use of face masks/coverings, resulting in members of the public that rely on lip reading to make Township staff aware so they are able to communicate through other methods such as a written word exchange when in the office.

Information and Communication

The Township is committed to ensuring that universal design principles and best practices are considered when developing, implementing and maintaining information and communication strategies and products.

What we have done:

- Continued to ensure processes for receiving and responding to feedback are accessible and that the public is notified of the existence of these processes.
- Continued to provide accessible formats and communication supports, upon request.
- Provision of the Township's Emergency Plan in an accessible format, upon request.
- Staff continue to make every effort to generate more user-friendly and accessible documents. Staff continues to promote best practices for creating accessible documents by converting Word documents to PDF for posting to the Township's website.
- Through the use of signage such as arrows, foot placement stickers and health unit signage, the Township has communicated the COVID-19 protocols that are in place in all of our facilities

Employment

The Township is committed to ensuring the process of recruiting, obtaining and maintaining an employee is as inclusive as possible in order to build an effective workforce.

What we have done:

- Accommodations continue to be available throughout the recruitment process and employment life cycle.
- Continued to inform applicants and employees of our accessible hiring practices and policies.
- Continued to support employees absent from work because of a short or long-term disability, through our return to work policy and process.
- As a result of COVID-19, the Township provided alternative support for employees that did not feel comfortable being a part of the "front-line" staff through providing alternative working environments and personal protective equipment.

Transportation

The Transportation Standard does not apply to the Township as neither public transportation nor taxi cab licensing is provided.

Next Steps

The Township will continue to identify, prevent and remove barriers where we find them. We will engage in the ongoing process of reviewing and refining our policies and practices to better serve our community. The Township plans to complete a fulsome review and create a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan in 2020/2021 to span 2021-2026 for the 5 year plan requirements.