



Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2021 Annual Status Update Report

Commitment Statement and 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.

The Township of Edwardsburgh Cardinal is committed to ensuring that persons with disabilities share the same rights, freedoms and obligations so that they may live as independently as possible and are able to participate in all that the Township has to offer.

In 2021, the Township of Edwardsburgh Cardinal released its new multi-year accessibility plan, which spans from 2021-2026, in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations (IARS).

This report is the annual update on the progress of measures taken to improve accessibility and implement the AODA and IARS. This report includes initiatives that were undertaken in 2021 to implement strategies/goals that were outlined with the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

Compliance Reporting

The Township of Edwardsburgh Cardinal filed its annual accessibility compliance report with the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario.

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, regulations outlining accessibility standards have been made under the AODA. Firstly, the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, and secondly, the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation. 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.

Highlights from 2021

- Completed the full implementation of the eScribe agenda/meeting/report management system in order to provide both PDF and HTML accessibility agendas, minutes and reports.
- Continued to provide the public with accessible options both virtually and in-person based on their accessibility requirements.
- Developed and launched the new Township website (www.twpec.ca) with eSolutions Group to ensure the Township is able to provide a fully accessible website. New website meets the AODA WCAG 2.0 Level AA requirements and staff will continue to monitor, update, and create accessible content.
- Integrated the eScribe management system with the new eSolutions created website to ensure all platforms are easily accessible in one place.
- Implemented PDF remediation software to ensure PDF documents are accessible and meet WCAG compliance.
- Provided the public with alternative meeting locations for various Committee and Council meetings to accommodate COVID-19 social distancing requirements while ensuring the locations are accessible to the public wishing to attend in person.
- Provided the public with Zoom links to Committee and Council meetings to accommodate for COVID-19 restrictions.
- Completed the Cardinal Waterfront Recreational Pathway project, which included rehabilitating and expanding the recreational pathway, updating paving and parking area, installation of accessible benches, picnic benches, waste receptacles and landscaping.
- Implemented a customer service integration module from Public Sector Digest (Citywide) to enable the public to submit service requests directly on the new Township website, rather than having to call, email or come into the office.

- Enhanced pedestrian safety through the continued maintenance and upgrades to sidewalks and crosswalks. A total of 37.5 feet in trip hazards, 7 patches and 16 wheelchair ramp areas were enhanced in 2021.

Accessible Customer Service

In 2021, the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic has made the Township incorporate new and creative ways to make the area more accessible to everyone while still complying with social distancing requirements. Additional protective equipment was installed within multiple facilities to assist the public. Additional staff were hired to assist the public and continued with contact tracing and enhanced cleaning methods.

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. Another factor that has continued to impact accessibility for some members of the public is the use of face masks/ coverings, resulting in public that rely on lip reading to make Township staff aware so that they are able to communicate through other methods such as a written or digital exchange when in the office.
- Continued to provide accessible formats and communication supports, upon request.
- Staff make every effort to generate more user-friendly and accessible documents. Staff continue to utilize the Township's agenda and report management software and PDF remediation software when posting to the Township's website.
- Through the use of signage such as arrows, foot placement stickers and health unit signage, the Township has continued to communicate COVID-19 protocols that are in place in all of the Township 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:

- Offer interviews both in person and virtually to accommodate COVID-19 requirements.
- Accommodations continue to be available throughout the recruitment process and employment life cycle.
- Inform applicants and employees of accessible hiring practices and policies.
- Support employees absent from work because of a short or long-term disability, through the return-to-work policy and process.
- Support employees work from home due to ongoing COVID-19 isolation requirements.
- Provided alternative support for employees that did not feel comfortable being a part of the front-line staff by providing various working environments and personal protective equipment.

Transportation

In 2021, the Township of Edwardsburgh Cardinal, Township of Augusta, Town of Prescott, and City of Brockville has explored a pilot project partnership to offer a 6-month public bus transportation system the runs along County Rd 2 from Cardinal to Brockville.

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.