



Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Adopted November 15, 2023

1. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

The *Accessibility of Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) is a law passed by the Ontario legislature that allows the government to develop specific standards of accessibility and to enforce them. The standards are made into laws called regulations, and they provide the details to help meet the goal of the AODA. The AODA is the foundation on which the standards are built. The purpose of developing and implementing accessibility standards is to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities in key areas of daily living.

To meet the goal of a fully accessible Township of Chatsworth on or before January 1, 2025, as required in the Act, the Township must establish, implement, and maintain a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan that outlines the Township's strategy to prevent and remove barriers.

2. Integrated Accessibility Standards, O. Reg 191/11

The Integrated Accessibility Standards, or IASR, is a provincial regulation governed by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. It establishes the accessibility standards for each of the defined areas:

- Information and Communication
- Employment
- Transportation
- The Design of Public Spaces; and
- Customer Service

Regulation 191/11: Integrated Accessibility Standards under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) requires that the Township, as a public sector organization with over fifty employees, create a multi-year accessibility plan, update them once every five years and post the plan on the Township's website.

The requirements set out in the IASR do not replace or a substitute the requirements established under the Human Rights Code nor do the standards limit any obligations owed to persons with disabilities under any other legislation.

3. Commitment to Accessibility

The Township of Chatsworth (hereinafter referred to as ("the Township")) values the contributions of all residents and visitors and believes that these contributions have enhanced our community spirit.

The Township is committed to building an inclusive society and providing an accessible environment in which all individuals have access to our programs and services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.

The Township is committed to providing support to its employees and will apply these principles when working with staff requiring accommodation.

The Township supports the goals of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and will establish policies, practices, and procedures that are consistent with the accessibility standards established under the AODA, including accessible customer service, information and communication, employment, transportation, and the built environment.

Dignity—Service is provided in a way that allows persons with disabilities to maintain self-respect and the respect of others.

Independence—All people are allowed to do things on their own without unnecessary help or interference from others.

Integration—Service is provided in a way that all persons with disabilities

can benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in the same or similar way as other customers unless an alternate measure is necessary to enable persons with disabilities to access goods or services.

Equal Opportunity—Service is provided to persons with disabilities in such a way that they have an opportunity to access goods and services equal to that given to others.

The Township will continue to prevent barriers by promoting inclusivity and supporting positive approaches that address attitudes which undervalue and restrict the potential of persons with disabilities.

In working toward its goals under this statement, the Township is committed to meeting the requirements of existing legislation and to its own policies and goals related to the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers to people with disabilities and becoming a barrier-free community.

4. Definition of a Barrier

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act defines a barrier as anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communication barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy, or a practice. The following table provides examples of barriers.

Barrier Type	Example
Physical	A door knob cannot be operated by a person with limited upper-body mobility and strength or manual dexterity.
Architectural	A hallway or door that is too narrow for a wheelchair or scooter.
Informational	Information printed in font too small to be read by a person with low vision.
Communicational	A person who talks too loudly when addressing a person with a hearing impairment
Attitudinal	A receptionist who ignores a customer in a wheelchair.

Technological	A sound system which amplifies background noise
Policy/Practice	A practice of announcing important messages over an intercom that people with hearing impairments cannot hear clearly.

5. Definition of a Disability

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act states that a disability means:

- a) Any degree of physical disability infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impairment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device.
- b) A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability.
- c) A learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language.
- d) A mental disorder; or
- e) An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

6. The Township of Chatsworth Multi-Year Accessibility Plan – Strategies and Actions

The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan lays out how the Township will make the community more accessible for both residents and visitors. This plan will be updated every five years, with progress reports being created annually.

Information and Communication Standards

The municipality will create, provide, and receive information and communications in ways that are accessible to people with disabilities, where practicable.

If the municipality determines that it is not technically feasible to convert the information/communications, or does not have the technology available to convert the information/communication, the municipality will be obligated to provide the person that requires the information with:

- An explanation as to why the information/communications are unconvertible; and
- A summary of the unconvertible information/communication.

Feedback

The municipality has a process in place for receiving and responding to feedback and will ensure that those processes are provided in an accessible format and with communication supports, upon request. The Township will notify the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports.

Accessible Formats and Communication Supports

The municipality shall be obligated to provide or arrange for accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities:

- Upon request in a timely manner that considers the person's accessibility needs due to disability.
- At a cost that is no more than the regular cost that is charged to others.
- Consult with the person making the request and determine suitability of an accessible format or communication supports.
- Notify the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports, where available.

Emergency Procedure, Plans and Public Safety Information

When the municipality prepares or updates emergency procedures, plans or public safety information, Administration will make the information available to the public as soon as practicable. The municipality shall provide information in an accessible format or with the appropriate communication supports, as soon as practicable, upon request.

Accessible Websites and Web Content

The municipality shall ensure that all municipal internet websites and web content comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA within legislated timelines in accordance with Ministry guidance.

Person First Language

Person First Language is a linguistic prescription that recommends that people place the emphasis on the person before the diagnosis, describing what a person has, rather than what a person is. By carefully constructing language to avoid marginalization or dehumanization, language becomes more egalitarian and treats everyone with the dignity and respect they deserve as a person.

Example of Person First Language include:

- Person with a disability
- Person without a disability
- Person with an intellectual, cognitive, and/or developmental disability
- Person who uses a wheelchair
- Person with epilepsy or seizure disorder
- Accessible parking or accessible washroom

Action

The Township will continue to review and monitor the implementation information and communication standards with regard to printed material, web content, etc.

The Township has also identified the need to provide training to its various board members on the requirements of the Information and Communication Standard.

Employment Standards

The process of finding, getting, and keeping a job must be inclusive and accessible to build an effective staff team in the Township.

Our Vision

The Township is committed to fair and accessible employment practices.

Recruitment and Retention

We will take the following steps to notify the public and staff that, when requested, the Township will accommodate people with disabilities during the recruitment and assessment processes.

The following statement shall be included in all job postings: “The Township of Chatsworth is an equal opportunity employer. Accommodation will be provided in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code for all parts of the recruiting process. Applicants need to make their needs known in advance.”

If an applicant requests an accommodation, the municipality shall consult with the applicant and provide or arrange for provisions of a suitable accommodation that considers the applicant's disability.

Notice, Informing of Supports

The Township will take the following steps to develop and put in place a process for developing individual accommodation plans and return to work policies for employees that have been absent due to a disability that includes:

- the way an employee requesting accommodation can participate in the development of the individual accommodation plan.
- The way the employee is assessed on an individual basis.
- the way the employer can request an evaluation by an outside medical or other expert, at the employer's expense, to determine if and how accommodation can be achieved.
- the way the employee can request the participation of a representative from their bargaining agent, where the employee is represented by a bargaining agent, or other representative from the workplace, where the employee is not represented by a bargaining agent, in the development of the accommodation plan.
- the steps taken to protect the privacy of the employee's personal information.
- the frequency with which the individual accommodation plan will be reviewed and updated.
- if an individual accommodation plan is denied, the reasons for the denial will be provided to the employee.
- the means of providing the individual accommodation plan in a format that considers the employee's accessibility needs due to the disability.
- Ensure that the current written return-to-work process for employees that have been absent due to a disability and require disability-related accommodations is reviewed, updated, and maintained. The process will include the steps taken to facilitate the return to work of the employees and the use of individual documented accommodation plans.
- Review employee's accommodation plans to determine if adjustments are needed to help the employee succeed, learn new skills, or take on more responsibilities in their current job.

- Make performance management documents available in accessible formats.
- Provide feedback to employees in a way that is accessible to them.

Accessible Formats and Communication Supports

Where an employee with a disability requests an accessible format, the municipality will consult with the employee to provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for:

- Information that is needed to perform the employee's job.
- Information that is generally available to employees in the workplace; and
- Consult with the employee making the request to determine the suitability of an accessible format or communication support.

Workplace Emergency Response Information

The municipality will provide individualized emergency response information to employees who have a disability:

- If the disability is such that individualized information is necessary and the employer is aware of needs for accommodations due to the employee's disability.
- If the employee that received individual workplace emergency response information requires assistance, the municipality shall provide, with the employee's consent information to a person designated by the municipality to aid the employee.
- As soon as practicable after becoming aware of the need for accommodation due to the employee's disability; and
- A review of the individualized workplace emergency response information when the employee moves into a different location within the organization when overall accommodation needs or plans are reviewed, and when the employer reviews its general emergency response policies.

Performance Management

The municipality considers the accessibility needs and/or individual accommodation plans of employees when:

- Using performance management processes.
- Providing career development and advancement information; and
- Using redeployment procedures.

Career Development and Advancement

The Township of Chatworth provides career development and advancement opportunities to its employees. The Township will consider the needs of its employees with disabilities as well as any individual accommodation plans needed when providing career development and advancement to employees with disabilities.

Transportation

The Township does not operate a transit service and therefore strategies and actions related to the transportation standard are not captured in this plan; however, the Township will continue to work with and support the Saugeen Mobility and Regional Transit System (SMART), a local organization that provides accessible transportation throughout the County of Grey, so long as the municipality is a partner to this service.

The Township has two public bus stops located within the Township for other transit providers (County of Grey). Both bus stops meet the goal of accessibility.

The Township does not currently have taxi cabs licensed to operate within the Township. However, any future licensing will prohibit operators:

- From charging a higher fare or an additional fee for persons with disabilities than for persons without disabilities for the same trip; and
- From charging a fee for the storage of mobility aids or mobility assistive devices.

Action

The Township will ensure that should the Township license taxi cabs, the requirements as set out in the IASR are met as a condition to licensing.

Customer Service Standards

The Township provides services to 7,000 residents and hundreds of visitors each year. Accessible customer service is essential to meeting the needs of the community.

The Township is committed to providing goods and services to all residents of our community. We strive to offer the same opportunity for members of the public to access municipal goods using all reasonable efforts, regardless of disability, in similar or alternative formats.

Municipal goods will be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.

Municipal staff will consider all goods or services their department provides to the public and integrate/accommodate, whether temporarily or on a permanent basis, to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use, or benefit from the good or service.

The Township shall ensure that all residents, including persons with disabilities, are given equal opportunity to obtain, use and benefit from the good or service.

Customer Service Initiatives

- Sensitivity training program as part of employee orientation
- Provide training to all Township staff on providing accessible customer service.

Accessibility Policies

The Township maintains both an Accessible Customer Service Standards Policy and an Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy to ensure the protection and provision of accessible goods and services in accordance with

provincial legislation. The Township's Accessibility policies are attached to this Plan as Appendix A.

The Township will review the policies annually.

Our Accomplishments

The Township created its Accessible Customer Service Policy in 2009 and has since trained all staff. The Customer Service Policy is located on the Municipal website and is available in alternative formats upon request.

Training for Staff

The Township will ensure that staff receive accessibility training as required. The amount and format of training given will be tailored to suit each person's interactions with the public and his or her involvement with the development of policies, procedures and practices pertaining to the provision of goods and services.

The content of the training will include:

- A review of the purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005
- The requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, O. Reg. 191/11, under the Act.
- Responsibilities under the Human Rights Code, 1990.
- Instruction on the Township's policies procedure and practices pertaining to the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities.
- How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities.
- What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing the Township's goods or services.
- How to interact with persons with disabilities who use assistive devices or who require the assistance of a support person or service animal; and
- Information about the equipment or assistive devices available on the Township's premises that may help with the provision of goods or service to persons with disabilities.

The Township will ensure that it abides by the dictates of the Accessible Customer Service Standards Policy with regards to the timeline and associated records regarding training of staff.

Feedback

The Township is committed to providing high quality goods and services to all members of the public. Feedback from the public is welcomed as it assists the Township in identifying any areas that may require change or improvement.

The public can provide feedback on the accessibility of the provision of goods and services by the Township either by phone or in writing through the Clerk's office.

Format of Documents

The Township shall be obligated to provide or arrange for accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities:

- a) Upon the request in a timely manner that considers the person's accessibility needs due to the disability.
- b) At a cost that is no more than the regular cost that is charged to others
- c) Consult with the person making the request and determine suitability of an accessible format or communication supports.
- d) Notify the public about the availability of formats and communications supports, where available.

Action

The Township will schedule regular training for both new and existing employees on the AODA legislation and the customer service standard.

The Township has identified the need to train Council member and various board members on the Customer Service Standards.

Design of Public Spaces

The Township is home to beautiful parks, and trails. All residents and visitors are welcome to enjoy the amenities of our area.

The design of public spaces standard of the AODA outlines the need for newly constructed or redeveloped public spaces to be accessible for people with disabilities. This standard describes ways to make communal spaces more accessible, with a focus on outdoor environments. The standard applies to new spaces and buildings. It also applies to existing spaces undergoing major renovations. However, existing spaces that do not need major reconstruction do not need to comply.

Residents and visitors of all ages will be able to take advantage of the accessible features of our public spaces and enjoy all indoor and outdoor features of our Township.

The Township is committed to enhancing accessibility of our public spaces.

Many buildings have already been renovated to include accessible features, such as automatic door openers and accessible toilets. Renovations of other facilities that are in progress will meet the required standards for Design of Public Spaces.

The IASR provides the requirements to abide by with regards to the creation of the following:

- Recreational Trails/beach access routes
- Outdoor Public Eating Spaces
- Outdoor Play Spaces
- Exterior Paths of Travel
- Accessible Parking (on-street and off-street)
- Service-Related Elements (such as customer service counters and waiting areas)
- Maintenance and Restoration

Action

The Township will create and adopt Facility Accessibility Design Standards to act as an information guide to assist in the development, redevelopment and reconstruction of Township owned and operated facilities in accordance with Council direction.

The Township has identified the need for better identification and signage at all disabled parking spaces at all of our municipal facilities. The signage will be improved early in 2024.