

Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2020-2025



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Multi-Year Accessibility Plan Overview

Accessibility planning requires on-going attention and will require continual involvement and discussion between staff, Council and the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) year-round. The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (the Plan) provides the opportunity to demonstrate current achievements and establish an implementation framework and future priority initiatives. Objectives identified within the Plan are both long and short-term; many are ongoing actions or could require implementation over several years. Regular monitoring is necessary to ensure that relevant initiatives are included in the Plan and that progress is identified. The current focus of the Plan is dedicated to implementing the requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, Ontario Regulation 191/11 (the IASR).

To assist with implementation, the Plan outlines accessibility initiatives for the Town with target areas reflecting the five core standards of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, S.O. 2005, CHAPTER 11 (the AODA): customer service, information & communications, transportation, employment and the built environment. Several objectives identified within each target area will assist with achieving accessibility compliance. This document contains objectives and action items identified over the next several years and solidifies the Town's approach to accessibility planning. The Plan's progress will be reviewed and reported annually, and additional identified initiatives will be added.

Guiding Legislation and Ensuring Compliance

The *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001, S.O. 2001 CHAPTER 32* (ODA) ensures that public organizations incorporate accessibility planning into their operations and facilities and document such actions within an accessibility plan. In 2005, a second piece of legislation, the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) was enacted to further qualify the ODA and serve as a framework for the establishment of accessibility standards in five areas: customer service, employment, transportation, information & communications, and the built environment. The standards support the principles of the AODA to ensure dignity, integration, independence and equal opportunity and each have specific timelines for implementation. Compliance with the AODA is required by both public and private sector organizations.

The ODA and AODA are in place for the purpose of ensuring that people with disabilities are not discriminated against. Implementation for both public and private sectors will be phased in over time to achieve the Provincial government's objective of a fully-accessible province by 2025.

Customer Service – Ontario Regulation 429/07

This standard was the first under the AODA to become law. It ensures that people with disabilities can receive goods and services in a manner that takes into account their disability.

All Town staff are trained on Accessible Customer Services when hired and will be trained again if major changes occur to the legislations that necessitate additional training.

Integrated Accessibility Standards – Ontario Regulation 191/11

This standard was the first under the AODA to become law. It ensures that people with disabilities can receive goods and services in a manner that takes into account their disability. Within the IASR there are general requirements for compliance that include, the establishment of policies, accessibility plans, provisions for procurement, self-service kiosks and training. This Multi-Year Accessibility Plan receives an annual review and changes are made as necessary to ensure compliance with current legislation. An Accessible Procurement Procedure (FIN-F18-021) has been put in place to ensure compliance. All of general requirements are met when operations trigger a policy or training to be created. The Town currently does not have any self-service kiosks.

Employment

The employment standards require employers to have processes in place to determine an employee's accommodation needs. This component also addresses key processes in the life cycle of a job such as recruitment, assessment, selection and retention.

The Town's Human Resources Department ensures all policies and practices reflect the requirements under the AODA and will continue to develop or update policies as necessary to continue compliance with this and other legislation.

Transportation

The transportation standard is sector specific to public organizations that provide either specialized or conventional transit services. The goal of this standard is to enable residents and visitors the opportunity to live, work and participate in the community. Specific requirements regarding all aspects of the experience of using transportation are addressed.

Public consultation must take place regarding public transportation. The Town will ensure that annual meetings take place regarding transportation and what is outlined in this Plan. This annual meeting will be advertised in the local newspaper(s) and the Town's website.

The Town continues to develop and implement strategies to gain compliance and provide for accessibility across the organization.

Information and Communication

This component of the standard requires the municipality to provide information in an accessible format upon request that takes into consideration the needs of the individual. Municipalities are also required to ensure that all new materials are produced in an accessible format including disseminated information and website content and that old documents can be made accessible based on the needs of the individual.

Build Environment

The standards for the Built Environment focus on removing barriers in public spaces and buildings. The Design of Public Spaces standard came into effect on January 1, 2013 and ensures that accessible features are included within all new construction and extensive renovations. Technical requirements have been developed for recreational trails, beach access, outdoor public use seating areas, outdoor play spaces, exterior paths of travel, service counters, maintenance, etc. Understanding a wide variety of barriers for persons with disabilities in the physical environment is essential to implementation of the standard.

Public consultation must take place regarding the building or redevelopment of public spaces. The Town will ensure that persons with disabilities, the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) and the public are involved with planning for parks, trails, parking, etc. Yearly, an AAC meeting will include updates from staff on upcoming development or redevelopment of public spaces. Staff will review the design standards that must be met and how they are meeting them. This annual meeting will be advertised in the local newspaper(s) and the Town's website.

The Town understands the importance of an accessibly built environment that allows for independence and participation for persons with disabilities. Public spaces will receive regular inspections and preventative maintenance to ensure that accessible elements are in proper working order. If an accessible element (ramp, tactile surface, elevator,

etc.) is damaged and is unusable a service disruption notification will be placed on the Town's website as well as social media accounts. Emergency maintenance will take place to ensure that the accessible element is restored to working order as soon as parts/labour can be obtained.

Additional to the Design of Public Spaces standard, the Ontario Building Code was amended in 2016 to include accessible requirements. The amended Building Code will be used by the Town when issuing building permits and conducting building inspections.

Additional information on how the AODA is implemented in Bradford West Gwillimbury can be found in the Consolidate AODA Policy – CORP-01-003. This policy includes details on all five areas of the legislation and how the Town ensures that compliance is, and will continue to be met.

Commitment

The Town's vision is to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities and to provide for their involvement in the strategic identification, removal and prevention of barriers to their full participation in Town programs, services and activities. The Town supports the right of access to services and materials to meet the needs of its residents and visitors for information, education and recreation. The Town supports the opportunity of its citizens to enjoy personal development, fulfillment and community pride through the services provided by the Town which are vital to their wellness and quality of life. Accessibility planning will help the community think strategically about identifying, removing and preventing many different types of barriers. Through accessibility planning, the Town will have the opportunity to take a comprehensive look at their services, policies, procedures, practices and programs to determine which aspects of their operations require action to address the accessibility of programs and services to the public. The Town will continue to plan for accessibility in the delivery of all municipal services.

In order to support progress and meaningful implementation of the Plan, a strong foundation built from the following principles is necessary.

Informed & Committed Leadership

- All Town Departments provide input to the Plan.
- Council endorses the Plan.
- The Plan, and related accessibility documentation are publicly available and in alternative formats upon request.
- Accessible customer service training is provided for all Town staff.
- Staff have access to accessibility related resources and information.
- The Town continues to meet legislated timelines for implementation.

Evaluation

Listening to feedback is an integral part of the evaluation process. The Town will continue to review and expand consultation strategies to engage key groups in providing accessibility related feedback, including people with disabilities. For more information on how you can provide feedback on this Plan, please refer to page 13.

Additional evaluation and reporting efforts include:

- Annual review of the Plan
- Completion of Compliance reports to the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario
- Prepare a Municipal Election Plan as required by the Election Act, 1990

Town Accessibility Advisory Committee

The Town's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) was established in 2002. The AAC is responsible for the provision of advice to Council on specific initiatives to be undertaken by the Town. This consultation assists with the prevention, identification and removal of barriers that restrict people with disabilities from participating in Town programs or accessing services, and facilities. The Committee is comprised of dedicated volunteers committed to working towards a barrier-free municipality.

The Town's AAC is made up of citizens and Council representatives. Members are representing and advocating for persons with disabilities in the community.

Committee Membership for 2018-2022 Term

Deputy Mayor James Leduc (Chair)
Councillor Mark Contois
Tina Morrison (Vice Chair)
Andrew Belanger
Daniela Pethick
Tracy McFarlane
Wendi Williams-Gordon

The AAC meets at minimum quarterly each year and meetings are open to the public. During meetings, updates are provided to the AAC which may include presentations or discussions led by staff.

Barrier Identification

The intent of the Plan is to prevent, identify and remove barriers. Barriers are obstacles that stand in the way of people with disabilities from being able to do many of the day-to-day activities that people take for granted. A barrier is anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of a disability. The traditional definition of a barrier used in the context of accessibility has been expanded to include obstacles beyond physical boundaries. There are several other categories of barriers to consider, such as:

Environmental Barriers: Features, buildings or spaces that restrict or impede physical access. For example, a doorway that is too narrow to accommodate entry by person in a motorized scooter.

Communication Barriers: Obstacles with processing, transmitting or interpreting information. For example, print on a brochure that is too small to read or documents not available in alternative formats.

Attitudinal Barriers: Prejudgments or assumptions that directly or indirectly discriminate. For example, assuming that all visually impaired persons can read Braille.

Technological Barriers: Occur when technology cannot or is not modified to support various assistive devices and/or software. For example, a website that does not provide for increased text size or contrast options.

Systemic Barriers: Barriers within an organization's policies, practices and procedures that do not consider accessibility. For example, listing a driver's license as an employment qualification for an office position may prohibit persons with visual impairments from applying.

Report of Initiatives and Future Goals

The following items represent recent achievements and initiatives which have improved accessibility or removed barriers in the Town. The list is formatted to reflect the commitment of the Plan and core standards of the AODA.

General

The Town will continue to review existing and develop new corporate policies, practices and procedures in relation to the AODA requirements (as amended). The Accessibility Advisory Committee will be consulted on any new policies, practices and procedures that are created related to the AODA. Staff from the Clerk's Division will meet with all departments frequently to discuss service specific requirements.

Customer Service

Implementing accessible customer service is an ongoing effort and will require continued training for new staff, volunteers, Council, etc. Customer feedback will be used to improve and progress accessibility across the Town.

Inclusive and adapted programming is offered by Leisure Services and will continue to be expanded as demand increases. Customer specific accommodations will be made by all Town department upon receiving requests. The Town can use the types of accommodations that are requested to evaluate how services/programming is being delivered, and if a change should be made to the current format.

The AAC has consulted, reviewed or made recommendations with respect to internal and external programs/initiative such as:

- Accessible documents training for Town staff
- Adopted the *Illustrated Technical Guide to the Design of Public Spaces* created by the Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments (the 'GAATES Guide')
- BWG Transit accessibility and service levels
- The AODA Integrated Accessibility Standards
Accessible Taxicab licensing
- The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan
- StopGap
- Public education materials
- Accessible transportation service options
- Independent Living Services Presentation – My Business Welcomes Everyone!
- Accessible business brochures

The Town continues to gain insight into accessibility through staff in the Clerk's Division's membership with the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals and ongoing consultation with Independent Living Simcoe. The Clerk's Division conducts, reviews and plans for fully accessible municipal elections and provides a post-election accessibility report to Council and the public.

Leisure Services staff serve both March of Dimes and Community Living Association members at the Leisure Centre through adapted programming. The Leisure Centre was built with accessibility in mind when it opened in 2012 and continues to make improvements. As new parks and outdoor play spaces are created the AODA standards are being met; three accessible splash pads have been built at Lions Park, Kuzmich Memorial Park and Henderson Park.

The number of accessible parking spaces have been increased at the Leisure Centre and Bradford West Gwillimbury Library and Cultural Centre and will continue to be increased as needed by patrons. The Town will ensure that the cleaning of snow in all municipally owned parking lots keeps the accessible parking spaces fully cleared.

The Bradford West Gwillimbury Library offers a wide range of materials in alternate formats for customers with different visual, physical, and learning abilities. There are large print books, audiobooks for all ages, EBooks, eAudiobooks, eMagazines, eNewspapers and CELA (Centre for Equitable Library Access) Deposit Collection of audio books and magazines for borrowers with a print disability. The Library Facility includes wide doorways and automatic door openers at both entrances, wide aisles between bookshelves, accessible washrooms at the library's entrance and on the first and second floors. There is also a family and gender-neutral washroom on the first floor, an elevator for movement between floors, large format keyboard for use in our public computer lab, two Light Therapy Lamps for in-library use and two VictorReader DAISY playback devices, both generously supplied by the Friends of the Bradford West Gwillimbury Public Library for use with the CELA Deposit Collection of audio books.

Information and Communication

Emergency procedures and public safety information created by the Town will be provided to the public in accessible formats proactively wherever possible and always upon request. All other documents created by the Town or on behalf of the Town will be reproduced in specified accessible formats upon request. Applicable Town staff that create documents have completed corporate training on *Creating Accessible Documents*.

The Town's website will continue to work towards meeting the applicable WCAG standards under the AODA. Staff auditing of the Town's website will be ongoing to ensure all content is accessible. Staff will create a process to audit documents that have been created by consultants or other external individuals on behalf of the Town, to ensure their compliance with the legislation.

Employment

The AODA requirements regarding workplace emergency response information are met through the Town's Personal Emergency Response Procedure (PERP). This procedure ensures that all employees who identify themselves will have individual emergency plans created for them in the case of an emergency and/or evacuation. Employees are made aware of the PERP during new hire orientation or staff training on AODA updates.

The AODA requirements for employee/employment accommodations are met through the Town's Early and Safe Return to Work Program. This program works with individuals to ensure accommodations are made throughout the recruitment, screening and selection process and then once there are hired. Current employees will request accommodations in accordance with this program as well as plan for a return to work after any kind of medical leave. The Human Resources Department also ensure that performance management, career development and redevelopment practices take accessibility and accommodations into consideration.

Moving forward the Town will continue to advertise the availability of accommodations during the recruitment, screening, selection and hiring process. Accommodations will be made for current employees as needed in conjunction with returning to work safely following any kind of medical leave. The Town will also ensure that workplace emergency response information is provided in an accessible format or with accommodations upon requests.

Transportation

The Town is responsible for licensing municipal taxicabs and in doing so ensures that the owner/operator of a taxicab does not charge a higher fare for persons with disabilities or for the storage/loading of their assistive devices. Owners/operators must also display their vehicle registration and identification information on the back bumper of the vehicle and have the same information available in Arial 14 font inside the vehicle. Both of these requirements are reviewed and checked on at the annual renewal process with the Town's licensing process.

The Town's Accessibility Advisory Committee consults with the public every three years regarding the need for on-demand accessible taxicabs. The Committee takes this information and makes recommendations to Council regarding the demand for such service availability. In 2017 the AAC made a recommendation to Council to provide a grant to locally licensed taxicab companies for the purchase of an on-demand wheelchair accessible taxicab. This resulted in a wheelchair accessible taxicab becoming part of one company's fleet in 2018 that has been well utilized.

The Town began operating accessible community buses in 2013 after consulting with the Accessibility Advisory Committee, staff, the public and other municipalities for best practices. All bus drivers are trained on how to properly harness a passenger and their training records are disclosed to the municipality. In compliance with the AODA the Town has an Accessible Transit Service Handbook and has a support person program. To date all applications received under the support person program have been granted. Accessibility will be a consideration when making changes to or creating new bus stops and shelters. An accessible feedback method specific to the transit system has been created to monitor feedback and prioritize corrective actions.

Staff are considering adaptations to current community busing system that would create an opportunity for more 'door-to-door' like services. In 2020, as a result of the COVID-

19 pandemic, the Town's community busing routes and scheduling pivoted to an on-demand like system. Staff is investigating different systems to continue this delivery system which would enhance the accessibility of the Town's existing community busing.

The Town will hold public meetings, involving persons with disabilities, to review the transit accessibility plan and provide feedback in accordance with Section 41 (2) O.Reg. 191/11 of the Act. Finally, the Town will ensure that pre-boarding announcements of route, direction, destination or next major stop are made as well as ensure that all destination points are available, route stops are announced through electronic means and are legibly and visually displayed through electronic means in accordance with Section 58 and 52 of O.Reg. 413/12.

Built Environment

The Town's Leisure Centre and the Bradford West Gwillimbury Library and Cultural Centre were both built with accessibility in mind and continue to have improvement and maintenance to ensure a high level of accessibility. As Town offices are relocated, new locations are renovated to meet the current Ontario Building Code and therefore have accessible services counters, customer seating areas, etc in compliance with sections 80.41, 80.42 and 80.43 of O. Reg. 413/12. All new or redeveloped parks meet the new standards for the Design of Public Spaces.

The Town's Finance Office, 61 Holland Street East, was renovated in the winter of 2020/2021 to include an accessible ramp entrance as well as door opener and accessible service counter.

The Town's Accessibility Advisory Committee will review site plans, as well as encroachment agreements that would affect public paths of travel for accessibility features. All new Town owned and maintained trails will be built to the applicable standards, ensuring that the technical requirements of the IASR are met. Note that this does not apply to trails solely intended for cross-country skiing, mountain biking or the use of motorized snow vehicles or off-road vehicles or wilderness trails, backcountry trails and portage routes as per O. Reg. 413/12, s. 6.

Work will continue on the curb cut and sidewalk repair schedule. In 2019 Corporate Services issued an Interpretation Bulletin regarding AODA/IASR and sidewalks. It was required to provide clarification to staff, as well as contractors, when completing work on new or existing sidewalks to ensure the Town is meeting compliance under the Act.

There will be yearly consultations regarding accessibility for the creation or redevelopment of outdoor play spaces, recreational trails, exterior paths of travel (sidewalks) and on-street parking. Additional to public consultation the following requirements have been made relating to the built environment standards of the AODA:

- Ensure new/redeveloped outdoor public use eating areas have a minimum of 20% accessible eating areas in compliance with section 80.17 O. Reg. 413/12.

- Ensure all new/redeveloped play spaces incorporate accessibility features for children/caregivers with various disabilities to comply with section 80.20 O. Reg. 413/12.
- Ensure newly constructed/redeveloped exterior paths of travel constructed for pedestrian travel to serve a functional purpose conform to section 80.23 O. Reg. 413/12.
- Ensure new/redeveloped off street parking areas provide both Type A and Type B parking spaces outlined in section 80.34 O. Reg. 413/12
- Ensure new/redevelopment of on-street parking includes consultation on the need, location and design of accessible on-street parking spaces with members of the public, persons with disabilities and the AAC as outlined in section 80.39 (1) O. Reg. 413/12
- Ensure new/replaced service counters, fixed queuing guides and waiting areas for both inside and outside comply with sections 80.41, 80.42 and 80.43 of O. Reg. 413/12

On September 18, 2017 the Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury adopted the *Illustrated Technical Guide to the Accessibility Standard for the Design of Public Spaces* created by the *Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments* as the design standards to be followed by all municipal departments to ensure continued compliance with the legislated requirements under the AODA.

Conclusion and Feedback

The Town makes every effort to update this Plan as legislation is created or amended but discrepancies may exist until an update can be completed. Details not contained in this Plan may be captured in the Town's Consolidate AODA Policy – CORP-01-003.

Members of the public are encouraged to make comments on the Town's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and accessibility matters in general. Please contact the Town to express your accessibility related comments.

Contact Information

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