



EZT

EAST ZORRA-TAVISTOCK

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2023 - 2028

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Introduction

The Township of East Zorra-Tavistock's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan outlines the policies, achievements and actions that the Township has put in place to remove barriers and improve opportunities for persons with disabilities. The Plan details the Township's approach to building an inclusive organization for all who live, work and visit the Township.

Commitment to Accessibility

The Township is committed to providing quality goods, services, and facilities that are accessible to all persons the Township serves. The Township will continue to work with the community and allocate appropriate resources toward the elimination of accessibility barriers in customer service, information and communication, employment and the design of public spaces and are committed to meeting the requirements of applicable legislation, including the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. The Township is committed to eliminating barriers and improving accessibility for persons with disabilities in a manner that respects dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity.

Accessible Format

This document is available in an accessible format at request. If you require this document to be in an accessible format, please contact the Township at ezt@ezt.ca or 519-462-2697.

Background

One in seven people in Ontario has a disability. By 2036, that number of persons with disabilities will rise to one in five as the population ages. As such, persons with disabilities represent a significant growing part of Ontario's and the Township's population. Enhancing the ability of people with disabilities to live independently and participate in the community will have positive effects on future prosperity in Ontario. The Township acknowledges that although it has made great strides, there is much that it can still do to eliminate barriers to persons with disabilities.

A disability is a physical or mental condition that limits a person's movements, senses, or activities. The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (the "AODA") defines disability as follows:

- (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 co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or in a wheelchair or other remedial appliance device;

- (b) A condition of mental impairment or 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;
- (e) An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

Accessibility Legislation

There are currently two active pieces of legislation in Ontario that specifically address accessibility: the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (the “ODA”).

Regulated accessibility planning in Ontario began with the ODA. The purpose of the ODA is to improve the quality of life and experiences of persons with disabilities by identifying, preventing and removing any barriers that may limit opportunities for individuals with disabilities to fully participate in society. Under the ODA, municipalities were required to have annual accessibility plans that would report on the measures taken by the organization to identify, remove and prevent barriers for persons with disabilities.

The AODA, which became law in 2005, builds on the progress made under the ODA. The AODA does not replace the ODA, but advances the goals of the ODA and is more comprehensive and prescriptive. Furthermore, the requirements under the AODA now apply to the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors. The goal of the AODA is to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility in order to make the Province of Ontario fully accessible for all persons with disabilities by 2025. The AODA is made up of five standards and a number of general requirements, including:

- (a) Information and Communication
- (b) Employment
- (c) Transportation
- (d) Design of Public Spaces
- (e) Customer Service

The AODA standards form part of the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* (“IASR”). These standards are rules that businesses and organizations in Ontario have to identify, remove and prevent barriers to improve accessibility for persons with disabilities.

Additionally, the IASR has general requirements for every obligated organization. The general requirements apply to all the standards of the regulation and are as follows:

- (a) To develop, implement and maintain accessibility policies, including a **multi-year accessibility plan and annual accessibility status reports**;
- (b) To incorporate accessibility design, criteria and features when **procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities**, except where it is not practicable to do so; and
- (c) To provide **training** on the requirements of the AODA and on the *Human Rights Code* as it relates to persons with disabilities.

Both the standards and the general requirements of the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* must be complied with. There is a schedule that obligated organizations must follow in regards to meeting the IASR standards and requirements. The timelines for compliance are established in relation to the organization’s classification under the IASR.

According to the IASR classifications of obligated organizations, the Township of East Zorra-Tavistock is defined as a “small designated public sector organization,” as the Township is a designated public sector organization with “at least one but fewer than 50 employees.” Municipalities with less than 50 employees must meet the majority of requirements of the IASR by 2016, except for accessible websites and web content under the Information and Communication Standards with a compliance date set in 2021. However, endorsing accessibility is an ongoing process and the Township must work diligently to ensure accessibility legislation standards and requirements are continually complied with.

About the Plan

The Township's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan outlines how the Township intends to reach its goal of building an inclusive organization. This plan includes an overview of the Township's strategy to prevent and remove barriers and meet the requirements under the AODA, including the IASR.

Objectives identified within this plan are both long- and short-term, several of which being ongoing throughout the life of the plan. The phased-in strategy of the Plan aims to prevent and remove barriers and addresses the current and future requirements of the Act. The Township will report annually on the progress and implementation of the plan, post the information on its website and will provide it in alternative formats upon request. The Plan will be reviewed and updated at least once every 5 years.

AODA Progress and Accomplishments

The Township's first Multi-Year Accessibility Plan was approved by Council and introduced in December 2013. This plan laid the groundwork for how the Township would meet the obligations set out in the IASR.

Extensive work has been carried out since December 2013 to ensure that the Township was in compliance with the general requirements and each of the five standards of the IASR. The Township has taken many steps toward being an accessible community, with the following milestones being achieved:

General Requirements

- ✓ The Township introduced its first Multi-Year Accessibility Plan in 2013, with this new Plan building on the milestones achieved to date;
- ✓ The Township has implemented an **IASR Training Program** (August 2015) for all employees, volunteers and members of Council, and an **IASR Policy** (October 2023), which encompass the Township's commitment to adhering to the accessibility specifications, both the general requirements and the five standards, as put forward in the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation*. The following policies were amended and/or established in order to adhere to the IASR regulations:

- **IASR Policy and Training Program #2.28**
 - **Hiring Policy #2.05**
 - **Employee Orientation Program 6.1.g-i**
 - **Emergency Response Information Policy #2.24**
 - **Performance Evaluations Policy #2.10**
 - **Early and Safe Return to Work Policy #12.1**
- ✓ The Township has incorporated accessibility criteria relating to the procurement of goods, services and facilities into its updated **Purchasing Policy** (December 2020).

Information and Communication Standard

- ✓ Accessible formats for information or communication supports are provided upon request and take into account the disability of the member of the public requesting the information. This includes information for emergency or public safety made available to the public. The alternate format request can be made by email (ezt@ezt.ca), by phone (519-462-2697) or in person at the Township Office (90 Loveys Street East, Hickson, ON);
- ✓ Accessible formats for information regarding formal complaints is available in accessible format upon request, as per the Township's **Formal Complaint Policy #GP2.14**.
- ✓ The Township's website conforms to the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA, and the Township has committed to ensure website remains at Level AA on a go forward basis;

Employment Standard

- ✓ The Township has incorporated accessibility requirements into its recruitment process through its **Hiring Policy #2.05** (December 2007);

- ✓ The Township shall inform all new and current employees of its policies and procedures used to support employees with disabilities, including but not limited to, policies on the provision of job accommodations that take into account an employee's accessibility needs due to a disability.
- ✓ The Township shall, upon request, work with the employee with a disability when providing or arranging for the provision of accessible formats or communication supports for information that is needed in order to perform the employee's job and information that is generally available to employees in the workplace;
- ✓ The Township has implemented a **Workplace Emergency Response Information Policy #2.24** (December 2011). Through this policy, the Township shall provide individualized workplace emergency response information to employees who have a disability, if the disability is such that individualized information is necessary and the Township is aware of the need for accommodation due to the employee's disability;
- ✓ The Township has an established **Early and Safe Return to Work Policy #12.1** (September 2014). The Township shall work with employees who have been absent from work due to a disability and require disability-related accommodations in order to return to work;
- ✓ The Township has incorporated performance management, career development, advancement and redeployment accessibility requirements into its **Performance Evaluations Policy #2.10** (October 2016).

Transportation Standard

- ✓ At this time, the Transportation Standard component of the Integrated Accessibility Standards does not apply to the Township.

Design of Public Spaces Standard

- ✓ The Chief Building Official ensures compliance with the Design of Public Spaces Standard and also all accessibility requirements within the Building Code Act, 1992;
- ✓ The Township shall meet accessibility requirements when constructing and maintaining new or redeveloped elements of public spaces including:
 - Recreational trails and beach access routes
 - Outdoor eating areas for public use
 - Outdoor play spaces (such as playgrounds)
 - Exterior paths of travel (such as walkways across parks or between buildings)
 - Accessible on and off street parking
 - Service counters and waiting areas
- ✓ When undertaking new construction or redevelopment in any of the above categories, the Township shall refer to and comply with the legislative requirements for that category. Depending on the project, consultation with the public may be required;
- ✓ The Township has procedures for preventative and emergency maintenance of the accessible elements in public spaces as well as procedures for dealing with temporary disruptions when accessible elements required under the Design of Public Spaces standard are not in working order. The procedures are as follows:

Departments that maintain accessible elements in public spaces shall:

- (a) Apply best practices in the preventative maintenance of accessible elements with periodic checks, such as annual inspections, or as deemed necessary, after storms or events that might affect accessible elements, or as part of any reports of vandalism or complaints
- (b) Apply best practices in the emergency maintenance of accessible elements with active response once notified
- (c) Repair as soon as possible

(d) Provide public notification of temporary disruptions. The notice of maintenance or disruption of accessible elements will follow the same principles as the notice of temporary disruption laid out in the **Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy #2.04**;

- ✓ As per the legislation, the Township is not required to make changes to existing public spaces. The standard only applies when organizations build new or make major changes to existing elements of public spaces.

Customer Service Standard

- ✓ The Township's **Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy #2.04** (January 2010) has been reviewed to ensure that it adheres to the requirements of the IASR.
- ✓ All Township staff have been trained in the provision of the Township's goods, services or facilities, as the case may be, to persons with disabilities as dictated under the Customer Service Standard of the IASR.
- ✓ Through its **Formal Complaints Policy #GP2.14** (September 2016) the Township has a feedback process in place for all residents to provide complaints and suggestions relating to the Township's provision of goods, services and facilities. Upon request, accessible formats and communication supports may be arranged or provided for under the Policy.

Leading the Way Forward: A Final Word

The Township of East Zorra-Tavistock is a government that is future-oriented and accountable. Accessibility planning and adhering to the requirements under the AODA will create a community that is accessible and inclusive for all residents throughout the various stages of their lives. The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan sets out the path to an accessible East Zorra-Tavistock by reducing and eliminating barriers, making East Zorra-Tavistock a community of choice, and a community where persons of all abilities can actively participate and have a sense of belonging.

Council, employees, volunteers and those providing a good, service, program or facility on the Township's behalf are responsible for adhering to the parameters of this Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and for ensuring that the needs of people with disabilities are addressed when accessing the Township's goods, services, programs and facilities. Ensuring an accessible East Zorra-Tavistock will be a team effort.

Contact Information

The Township is committed to ensuring accessibility is a reality throughout all facilities and business operations. There is still so much to accomplish, and as we progress, we would be pleased to hear from you. Please contact us with your questions, ideas or comments.

Township of East Zorra-Tavistock

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Appendix “A” - 2023-2028 Accessibility Goals

General Requirements Goals

- ✓ Monitor and update accessibility policies, as necessary;
- ✓ Monitor and update the accessibility plan, as required;
- ✓ Incorporate accessible design, criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services and facilities, unless it is not practical to do so;
- ✓ Train new employees, Council members and volunteers on the requirements of the IASR and Human Rights Code, as it relates to people with disabilities;
- ✓ File an accessibility compliance report every two years.

Information and Communications Standard Goals

- ✓ Continue its work to ensure that the Township’s website and web content meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Level AA;
- ✓ Create a statement to be added to the Township’s website to inform the public that documents are available in an accessible format, upon request;
- ✓ Ongoing conversion of departmental templates to accessible formats;
- ✓ Continue to support and educate staff on creating accessible documents;
- ✓ Ensure that documents and content posted online are in accessible formats.

Employment Standard Goals

- ✓ Continue to regularly review its employment policies and practices to ensure applicants and employees with disabilities receive the supports they need;
- ✓ Ensure employees with disabilities are aware of the availability of accommodations and individual emergency response plans;

- ✓ Work with employees to regarding ergonomics in the workplace, addressing any accommodation or accessibility needs that employees may have;
- ✓ Consider accessibility means when completing emergency management mock sessions.

Transportation Standard Goals

- ✓ The requirements of the Transportation Standard will be implemented should they apply to the Township in the future.

Design of Public Spaces Standard Goals

The Township is committed to removing barriers and ensuring that all of its municipal facilities are accessible. This is achieved by ensuring industry best practices are met and identifying opportunities for improvement. Ongoing consultation with the public will assist staff in identifying and breaking down barriers.

- ✓ Continue to enhance the accessibility of new and redeveloped playgrounds;
- ✓ Continue to enhance the accessibility of new and redeveloped trails;
- ✓ Continue to enhance the accessibility of outdoor eating spaces;
- ✓ Enhance accessibility in outdoor spaces and improve access to nature, including infrastructure for recreation and active transportation;
- ✓ Explore community engagement opportunities during the project design phase
- ✓ Align accessible parking requirements with the Township's Zoning By-law. New line painting in parking lots to comply with all accessibility requirements;
- ✓ Ensure exterior paths of travel such as sidewalks, ramps, curb ramps and rest areas meet the AODA technical requirements.

Customer Service Standard Goals

- ✓ Ensure staff remain up-to-date on accessibility legislation, corporate policies and best practices for interacting with people with disabilities;
- ✓ Regularly review policies, procedures and practices to ensure accessibility;
- ✓ Enhance physical wayfinding, including improved signage through all buildings and increasing font size on posted signs, on an ongoing basis;
- ✓ Increasing self-serve options, including more online options for residents to perform tasks themselves through the use of various technologies;
- ✓ Continue to ensure that community groups providing programs are offered community spaces that are accessible to enable inclusion of all families who wish to participate.