



# **TOWNSHIP OF ZORRA** **ACCESSIBILITY PLAN**

September 5, 2012

## **1. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

The Township of Zorra is committed to promoting a barrier-free Township for employees, citizens and all who live, work, visit, and invest in the Township of Zorra. With this report, the Township of Zorra is proud to present its findings and report on the development of innovative strategies to remove and prevent future barriers for people with disabilities and our maturing population.

In keeping with this vision, the Township of Zorra understands that people with disabilities:

- Represent a growing and diverse community that is dramatically increasing due to the demographic trends of a maturing population.
- Form part of the work force, and include our families, our friends, our customers and the members of the community at large.
- Purchase goods and services and make important financial decisions on where they do business, enjoy recreation or choose to live.
- Understand that accessible features can be of benefit to others, such as automatic doors that assist parents with children in strollers.
- Are aware that their full participation in Canadian society has been long awaited and anxiously anticipated.
- Understand that inclusion and full participation of people with disabilities requires well-considered commitment from all levels of government.

The Township of Zorra is committed to ensuring that people with disabilities enjoy the same opportunities as all others who live, work, visit and invest in the Township of Zorra.

## **2. LEGISLATION**

### ***Ontarians with Disabilities Act, S.O. 2001, C.32***

Under the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, Ontario government ministries, municipalities, hospitals, school boards, colleges, universities and public transportation organizations are required to develop annual accessibility plans to make policies, practices, programs, services and buildings more accessible to people with disabilities. These plans must be made available to the public.

### **Obligations of the Province of Ontario:**

The Provincial Government is required to develop barrier-free design guidelines to promote accessibility to buildings and other premises that the Government either purchases, enters into a lease for, constructs or significantly renovates. These guidelines must meet or exceed the levels of accessibility set out in the *Building Code Act*. Individual Government ministries must each prepare an accessibility plan, which must meet specific requirements.

### ***Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, S.O. 2005, C.11 (AODA)***

In 2005 the Province enacted the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*. It defines a disability as: 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 on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device; a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability; a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language; a mental disorder and an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1977*.

The Act defines a barrier as meaning anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, information or communication barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or practice.

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* provides for the development of minimum standards in order to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodations, employment, buildings, structures and premises on or before January 1, 2025. The Minister responsible for the AODA is required to establish a process to develop and implement all accessibility standards necessary to achieving the purposes of this Act. Within this process, standards development committees are established by the Minister to develop proposed accessibility standards. These standards are adopted by regulation. Persons or organizations may be required to meet more than one accessibility standard under the AODA.

Until all the standards are proclaimed, the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2001* will remain in effect, and government ministries and other affected public sector organizations will continue to have planning obligations in accordance with that legislation.

### **Regulation 429/07 – Provincial Customer Service Standards**

Once fully implemented, *The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, introduces five service standards throughout the province. The regulations will apply to every designated public sector organization and to every person or organization that

provides goods or services to members of the public or other third parties that have at least one employee in Ontario. The five key areas of the accessibility standards are customer service, transportation, information and communications, built environment and employment.

Effective January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008, Ontario Regulation 429/07, the Customer Service Standard, came into force. The Regulation requires every municipality and every person or organization listed in Schedule 1 or described in Schedule 2 to this Regulation, by January 1st 2010, to have the following implemented policies and procedures in place:

- Establish policies, practices and procedures on how the Township will provide goods and services to people with disabilities.
- Set a policy on allowing people to use their own personal assistive devices to access the Township's goods and services and about any other measures the organization offers to enable access to goods and services.
- Use reasonable efforts to ensure that the policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.
- Communicate with a person with a disability in a manner that takes into account his or her disability.
- Train staff, volunteers, contractors and any other people who interact with the public or other third parties on your behalf on a number of topics as outlined in the customer service standard.
- Train staff, volunteers, contractors and any other people who are involved in developing your policies, practices and procedures on the provision of goods or services on a number of topics as outlined in the customer service standard.
- Allow people with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog or service animal in those areas of the premises the Township owns or operates that are open to the public, unless the animal is excluded by another law. If a service animal is excluded by law, use other measures to provide services to the person with a disability.
- Permit people with disabilities who use a support person to bring that person with them while accessing goods or services in premises open to the public or third parties.
- Where admission fees are charged, provide notice ahead of time on what admission, if any, would be charged for a support person of a person with a disability.

- Provide notice when facilities or services that people with disabilities rely on to access or use the Township's goods or services are temporarily disrupted.
- Establish a process for people to provide feedback on how the Township provides goods or services to people with disabilities and how the Township will respond to any feedback and take action on any complaints. The information about the feedback process is to be made readily available to the public.

### **Regulation 191/11 – Integrated Accessibility Standards**

The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation 191/11 combines accessibility standards in the areas of information and communication, employment and transportation. This requires Ontario employers to plan how to deal with each of their disabled employees, if and when various types of emergency arise.

The regulation requires every Municipality to have the following items in place by January 1, 2012:

- Make emergency procedures, plans or public safety information available to the public in an accessible format or with appropriate communications supports as soon as practicable upon request;
- Provide individualized workplace emergency response information (i.e. tailored to each employee's needs) to disabled employees, if the disability so requires it;
- Share the individualized workplace emergency response information with a person(s) designated by the employer to assist the disabled employee in the event of an emergency, if the disabled employee so consents; and
- Review the individualized workplace emergency response information whenever the disabled employee moves to a different work location in the organization, his/her overall accommodation needs or plans are reviewed, or the employer reviews its general emergency response policies.
- The Transportation Standards portion of this regulation does not apply to the Township of Zorra.

### **3. OBLIGATIONS OF THE TOWNSHIP OF ZORRA**

Besides simply requiring the Township to have regard to the accessibility of persons with disabilities when purchasing goods and services, the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* requires that the Township to consult with persons with disabilities and others. The Township is also required to monitor and report on the preparation, implementation and effectiveness of its accessibility plan. The annual accessibility plan is a public document approved by Council, which must address the identification, removal and prevention of

barriers to persons with disabilities in policies, by-laws, programs, practices, and services. In addition to following provincial guidelines, the Township of Zorra Accessibility Plan must include:

1. Measures taken by the Township to identify, remove and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities.
2. The measures in place to ensure that the Township assesses its by-laws, programs, practices and services to determine their effect on accessibility for persons with disabilities.
3. A list of the by-laws, policies, programs, practices and services that the Township will review in the coming year to identify, prevent and remove barriers to persons with disabilities.
4. The measures that the Township intends to take in the coming year to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities.

#### **4. TOWNSHIP PERSPECTIVE**

The Township of Zorra recognizes that:

- Long-term planning is imperative to meet the challenges and opportunities of the significantly maturing population as well as people with disabilities.
- That the Township must continue, as an employer, to provide equal employment opportunities that encourage the full participation of people with disabilities.
- That well planned buildings use universal design concepts that provide access for all including families with children, injured or ill people and the elderly as well as persons who rely on a wheelchair or other remedial devices and persons who have a visual, hearing, mental or developmental impairment.
- That education is the cornerstone to effective change, good management, and integrated services. The Township of Zorra is committed to educating its staff and the community on disability issues and accessibility opportunities.
- That a commitment to research and development of products, services and educational material is necessary.
- That visitor and tourism operators also depend upon accessible municipal services and facilities. The Township of Zorra is committed to encourage accessible visitor and tourism facilities.

- That we must prevent introducing new barriers by ensuring heightened awareness of accessibility considerations in the Township planning and inspection processes.
- That existing facilities will take time and resources to make them accessible.
- That the process of municipal government has to be accessible and the Township of Zorra is committed to making public meetings and materials accessible and available to all.

**5. TOWNSHIP STRUCTURE**

Zorra Township is comprised of six departments: Chief Administrative Officer and Clerk's Office, Treasury, Public Works, Building and Drainage, Recreation and Protective Services. Within each section the following services are provided:

<p><b>CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER and CLERK:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council Matters</li> <li>• Municipal Administration</li> <li>• Zoning By-Laws</li> <li>• Election Process</li> </ul>	<p><b>TREASURY:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finance/Budgets</li> <li>• Taxes</li> <li>• Records Management</li> <li>• Human Resources</li> </ul>
<p><b>PUBLIC WORKS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Township Road System</li> <li>• Township Lands</li> </ul>	<p><b>BUILDING AND DRAINAGE:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building Permits</li> <li>• Drainage</li> <li>• Official Plan</li> </ul>
<p><b>RECREATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Township Arenas and Facilities</li> <li>• Administration</li> <li>• Budget</li> </ul>	<p><b>PROTECTIVE SERVICES:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Labour Relations</li> <li>• Recruitment</li> <li>• Health and Safety</li> <li>• Emergency Planning</li> </ul>

**6. OTHER ORGANIZATIONS & AGENCIES PARTICIPATING:**

It is recognized that input from agencies and associations supportive of persons with disabilities needs to be obtained as the accessibility plan is further developed. The Township circulated this plan/will circulate this plan to the various associations throughout Ontario. See Appendix 1.

Furthermore, Township of Zorra's accessibility plan was distributed for comment to the following organization:

- Citizens with Disabilities – Ontario (CWDO).

CWDO reviewed this plan and noted that "overall, the accessibility plan is appropriate for what is required."

## 7. ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

The Township of Zorra has been pro-actively developing innovative approaches to addressing accessibility issues, including:

- The construction of the barrier-free library in Thamesford. This library is renowned for its state of the art barrier-free technology.
- A curb-cutting program to ensure easier accessibility for those persons utilizing a wheel chair.
- A pro-active approach in designating handicapped parking spaces by signage and painted surface logos.
- The construction of a barrier-free heated viewing area in the Embro West Zorra Community Centre, allowing persons with disabilities the opportunity of enjoying sports and events at this Centre.
- Several measures were taken by municipal staff to ensure increased accessibility during the 2010 municipal election. These included accessibility audits of all polling locations, and allowing staff to assist persons with disabilities who required assistance filling out forms, filling out a ballot, or accessing a voting location.
- All sidewalks throughout the Township were designed to be barrier free when constructed.
- Barrier free entrance at the Embro West Zorra Community Centre during the addition.
- Accessibility standards considered during Urban Design discussions/meetings.
- In considering an upgrade to the Administration Office and Council Chambers construction of automatic doors and accessible washroom facilities were all included in the design for the purpose of increasing the level of accessibility to the building for those with disabilities.
- The Township of Zorra is committed to consulting with persons with disabilities and others regarding the annual Municipal Accessibility Plan, since an Accessibility Advisory Committee is not required when a Municipality has a population of less than 10, 000. - *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, S.O. 2001, C.32, Section 11.(1)(b)(ii)*
- The Thamesford Pool renovation plans were completed and a barrier free washroom and barrier free entrance to the pool were installed in Spring 2012.

- The Township has applied for funding under the Community Infrastructure Investment Fund for a wheelchair accessibility ramp and chair lift at the Harrington Hall.
- The Township of Zorra has adopted the Township's Accessible Customer Service Policy Manual, dated December 15, 2009, as being the guidelines for delivering accessible customer service for the municipality. (*429/07 – Accessibility Standards for Customer Service*).
- The Township of Zorra staff and Council have completed the required training (through the use of a self-study package) in order to successfully assist individuals with disabilities. (*429/07 - Accessibility Standards for Customer Service*).
- The Township of Zorra is committed to make emergency procedures, plans or public safety information available to the public in an accessible format or with appropriate communication supports. (*191/11 – Integrated Accessibility Regulations*).
- The Township of Zorra will provide workplace emergency response information for municipal employees with disabilities. (*191/11 – Integrated Accessibility Regulations*).
- The new Township of Zorra's website is close to adhering to the WCAG 2.0 Level AA - web content accessibility guidelines. The County of Oxford IT Department is currently reviewing the Township website to ensure compliance is met. (*191/11 – Integrated Accessibility Regulations*).  
*Note: This requirement is for new public sector websites that were launched after January, 2012. The Township of Zorra's Website was launched in September, 2011, therefore, this compliance is over and above the standard requirements.*

### **CUSTOMER SERVICE TRAINING**

To comply with the first accessibility standard under the authority of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07, all staff for the Township of Zorra received Customer Service training beginning in December of 2009; any new staff will receive training upon orientation. Training is provided to help people that provide goods or services to the public or other third parties on behalf of the provider, to understand their obligations under the customer service standard and to educate on how to provide customer service to people with disabilities.

### **INTEGRATED ACCESSIBILITY REGULATIONS**

To comply with the second accessibility standard under the authority of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, Integrated Accessibility Regulations 191/11, Township Staff is ensuring emergency procedures, plans or public safety information is available to the public in an accessible format or with appropriate communications support. This will ensure compliance with the *Information and Communications* portion of the

regulation. Furthermore, the Township will provide individualized workplace emergency response information for municipal employees with disabilities, if the disability is such that the individualized information is necessary and the Township is aware of the need for accommodation due to the employee's disability. This will ensure compliance with the *Employment* component of the regulation. The *Transportation* Standards portion of this regulation does not apply to the Township of Zorra since there is not public transit or taxi cab licensing.

## **8. METHODOLOGY**

### **8.1 Identification**

The types of methodologies that will be used in identifying barriers:

- Department audits
- Site audits
- Consultation with staff
- Consultation with community organizations

### **8.2 Review Process**

A review of current policies and procedures will be initiated with the goal of preventing future barriers from being created and viewing the identified ones as opportunities for improvement. The following information will be required:

- a. Type of barrier with description
- b. Review date – e.g. date review took place, date of planned review, and completion date
- c. Description of the review methodology – e.g. office sites reviewed, building plans reviewed, client questionnaire, etc.
- d. Strategy for removal or prevention
- e. Status of review – e.g. completed, ongoing; planned

## **9. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

The Township of Zorra is committed to improving accessibility and promoting opportunities for persons with disabilities to fully participate in the community. The plan attempts to balance the needs of persons with disabilities against the need to balance available budget funds. The plan also attempts to set a sound foundation for initiatives proposed by initially formulating good inclusion policies and standardizing design, construction and retrofit guidelines.

**Goals for 2012:**

1. The Township's Accessible Customer Service Policy Manual will continue to be complied with, and reviewed by staff to ensure the Township is providing an adequate level of Accessible Customer Service to the public;
2. Accessibility will continue to be considered when reviewing site plans;
3. The Township will continue committing to encouraging the private sector, when undergoing material alterations, to retrofit existing buildings for accessibility and developing suitable policies and procedures;
4. All Township staff will continue to be made aware of the Township's Accessibility Plan, and Township's Accessibility Policies;
5. Multiple formats for policies and procedures will be made available;
6. Disabled parking spaces at municipal facilities will continue to be monitored and maintained to ensure there are an adequate number of spaces in reasonable condition, and in reasonable locations;
7. The Township of Zorra's Parking By-law will be reviewed and the Accessibility Standards will be an important part of this process.
8. Education on accessibility issues faced by persons with disabilities will continue to be provided to the public;
9. To identify and document relevant issues and concerns;
10. To recognize that the needs of all persons are constantly changing, growing and in need of refinement.

**10. COMMUNICATION OF PLAN**

The availability of the Township of Zorra Accessibility Plan will be announced publicly in the Council minutes, published in a local newspaper and the Zorra Now newsletter. The Accessibility Plan will also be posted on the Township of Zorra website: [www.zorra.on.ca](http://www.zorra.on.ca). Notification of the Accessibility Plan availability will be given to applicable support and service organizations which are outlined in Appendix 1.

The key contact for inquiries regarding the Municipal Accessibility Plan is:

Karen Graham  
Clerk  
Township of Zorra  
274620 27<sup>th</sup> Line, PO Box 306,  
Ingersoll, N5C 3K5  
519-485-2490  
kgraham@zorra.on.ca

## 11. CONCLUSION

The Township of Zorra is committed to addressing existing barriers and preventing future barriers to allow people with disabilities full participation in our communities. The Township encourages input from all Township of Zorra residents. The Township of Zorra is of the opinion that this legislation should improve accessibility in workplaces and public spaces and improve access to employment, customer service, communication and transportation. However, as the financial impact of this legislation on municipal taxpayers is significant, the Township also recommends that the province assume some financial responsibility for these requirements.

Approved by the Council of the Corporation of the Township of Zorra this 18<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2012 by Resolution #: 37-09-12.

  
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Mayor Margaret Lupton

**APPENDIX 1**

**ORGANIZATIONS TO BE NOTIFIED OF TOWNSHIP OF ZORRA  
ACCESSIBILITY PLAN**

Canadian Mental Health Association Oxford County Branch 522 Peel Street Woodstock, ON N4S 1K3 Contact: Joe Penton, joepenton@cmhaoxford.on.ca	Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) 749 Baseline Road East London, ON N6C 2R6
Children's Aid Society of Oxford County 92 Light Street Woodstock, ON N4S 6H1	Canadian Red Cross Society 77 Finkle St. Woodstock, ON N4S 3C9
Community Care Access Centre 1147 Dundas Street Woodstock, ON N4S 8W3	Multiple Sclerosis Society 635 Devonshire St Woodstock, ON N4S 5P9
Oxford County Self-Help Centre 554 Princess Street Woodstock, ON N4S 4H1	The Salvation Army & Emergency Housing Advocacy Centre 906 James St. Woodstock, ON N4S 1S4
Citizens with Disabilities - Ontario (CWDO) 1201 Jasper Drive, Box 103, Thunder Bay, Ontario P7B 6R2 Contact: Terrance Green, tjgreen@bellnet.ca	