



Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2019-2023

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Introduction

The Township of Zorra's 2019-2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan outlines the policies, achievements and actions that the Township of Zorra 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 of Zorra.

Zorra's 2014-2019 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan was the Township's first multi-year accessibility plan. The Plan aligned with the objectives of the Township's 2015-2018 Strategic Plan and long-term vision while continuing to meet the Province's requirements for full development, implementation and enforcement by January 1, 2025. As such, the Township will continue this alignment between the 2019-2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and the Township's 2019-2022 Strategic Plan.

Commitment to Accessibility

The Corporation of the Township of Zorra 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*. Zorra 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's Director of Corporate Services at kmartin@zorra.on.ca or 519-485-2490 ext. 228.

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 of Zorra acknowledges that the Township, though Zorra has made great strides, has much that it can 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 Zorra is defined as a “small designated public sector organization,” as the Township of Zorra 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 of Zorra must work diligently to ensure accessibility legislation standards and requirements are continually complied with.

About the Plan

The Township of Zorra's 2019-2023 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.

This plan includes a review of accessibility work completed throughout the duration of the previous 2014-2019 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, as well as new goals and actions to be completed in the future. 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. Zorra 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.

Development of the Plan

To identify barriers to be addressed by municipal accessibility plans, every municipality is required under the AODA to consult with their Accessibility Advisory Committee ("AAC"). The formation of an AAC is not required when a municipality has a population of 10,000 people or less. Therefore, the Township of Zorra is not required to form an AAC.

However, since Zorra does not have an AAC, alternative organizations, groups and individuals were contacted to consult with persons with disabilities for the development of this plan. As such, the Township has circulated this plan to various agencies, associations and committees throughout Ontario for comment on the plan, including:

- Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Oxford;
- Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB);
- Canadian Hearing Society;
- Citizens with Disabilities – Ontario (CWDO);
- Oxford County's Accessibility Advisory Committee;
- Woodstock and District Developmental Services (WDDS); and
- City of Woodstock Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Additionally, several other actions contributed to the development of the Township's 2019-2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, including:

- Township staff attending accessibility webinars and meetings, including the Joint Accessibility Meeting for Oxford County;

- Networking with other municipalities to share input on accessibility measures and plans in other communities; and
- Township staff researching other municipalities' multi-year plans and accessibility policies.

AODA Progress and Accomplishments

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

Extensive work has been carried out to ensure that the Township of Zorra was in compliance with the general requirements and each of the five standards of the IASR. The Township has taken many steps towards accomplishing the goals put forward in the Township's 2014-2019 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and ultimately, making Zorra an accessible community. The following are milestones that have been achieved throughout 2014-2019:

General Requirements

- ✓ The Township of Zorra's first Multi-Year Accessibility Plan was introduced outlining how the Township will meet its obligations under the AODA (December 2013).
- ✓ The Township has implemented an **IASR Policy #200-18** (January 2019) that encompasses 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 in order to adhere to the IASR regulations:

- **Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy #200-09**
- **Recruitment and Hiring Policy #300-03**

The following policies were established in order to adhere to the IASR regulations:

- **Performance Management, Career Advancement and Redeployment Policy #300-34**
- **Workplace Accommodation & Safe Return to Work Policy #300-35**
- **Accessibility Training Policy #300-36**

- ✓ The Township of Zorra has included accessibility criteria relating to the procurement of goods, services and facilities into its **Purchasing Policy** (December 2018). The **Purchasing Policy** is currently being updated by the Finance Department, but the accessibility criteria has already been added to the policy.
- ✓ An **Accessibility Training Policy** was established in 2018 to comply with the IASR training requirements. All Township employees, volunteers, persons who participate in the development of Township policies, and all other persons who provide goods, services or facilities on behalf of the Township have been trained on the requirements of the IASR and the relevant portions of the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. This requirement is ongoing and forms part of the list of mandated training that must be completed when starting work or volunteering for the Township of Zorra.

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 form can be found online (<http://www.zorra.on.ca/Portals/8/Documents/Forms/AlternateFormatRequest.pdf>) or at the Township office and the request can be made online, in person or over the phone.
- ✓ Accessible formats for information regarding formal complaints is available in accessible format upon request, as per the Township's **Formal Complaint Policy #200-15**.
- ✓ The Township has introduced staff to the use of plain language in their writing whenever possible, so as to limit potential barriers in information sharing. For example, the Township committees' terms of reference were updated in 2018 and use plain language throughout the document.
- ✓ Zorra has committed to ensure website accessibility for persons with disabilities, including making the Township website and web content conform to the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, at Level AA. As of January 2019, the Township's website was 87.4% accessible (as per Siteimprove, a software purchased by Oxford County that measures and tracks accessibility

issues for websites), whereas the industry benchmark for accessible websites was only at 67.7%.

- ✓ All Township policies are available in an accessible format and include a clause that specifies the accessibility of the document. Additionally, all future Township policies and official documents will include this. The clause reads as follows:

“If you require this document to be in an accessible format, please contact the Director of Corporate Services at kmartin@zorra.on.ca or 519-485-2490 ext. 228.”

Employment Standard

- ✓ The Township implemented a **Work Accommodation and Safe Return to Work Policy** to adhere to IASR requirements. The policy states the Township’s commitment to the accommodation for persons with disabilities throughout their employment, including supporting employees who have been absent from work due to a disability.
- ✓ In order to make the Township of Zorra’s employment practices more accessible, applicants are made aware of the availability of accommodation. The Township’s recruitment process invites individuals of all abilities to apply to Township of Zorra job openings and advertises the availability of accommodation throughout the recruitment process. The Township’s **Recruitment and Hiring Procedures Policy**, as well as the **Work Accommodation and Safe Return to Work Policy**, reflects the Township’s commitment to accommodating individuals with disabilities throughout the recruitment and hiring process as well as their employment with the Township.
- ✓ The Township developed a **Performance Management, Career Development and Redeployment Policy** whereby the consideration of accessibility needs for employees is taken at every stage of performance evaluation.
- ✓ Township staff have continually been made aware of the Township’s accessibility plans and policies. This includes notifying current and new employees of existing accessibility policies for accommodating persons with disabilities.

Design of Public Spaces Standard

- ✓ The Chief Building Official ensures compliance with the Design of Public Spaces Standard and also all accessibility requirements *Building Code Act, 1992*.
- ✓ Construction to the North park booth in Thamesford included a compacted path to and from the booth area and a barrier-free washroom (2013).
- ✓ Accessibility requirements from the Design of Public Spaces standard were applied to outdoor playgrounds and exterior paths, including the splash pad and skate park in Thamesford that was completed in 2018. The splash pad and skate park both have accessible pathways. The splash pad also has buttons for water access of the splash pad in accessible spots.
- ✓ In 2014, two stair chair lifts were installed inside the front entry way in Harrington Hall, providing access to the upper hall and lower floor library/washrooms.
- ✓ Accessibility was incorporated into the Township of Zorra's Recreation, Arts and Culture Master Plan, an initiative which aims to align current and future needs for parks, recreation, trails, arts and culture facilities, programs and services, including:
 - (a) Developing a playground replacement program to establish a plan to renew aging playground structures. The design of new and redeveloped playgrounds should consider accessible features.
 - (b) Engage persons with disabilities by embracing the principles of inclusivity through facility design and service delivery.
- ✓ The Township, in partnership with Thistle Theatre made an application for funding under the Ontario 150 Grant Program to install a lift at Embro Town Hall and for improvements to washroom facilities. An exterior personnel lift and universal washroom were added serving the second floor Embro Library and third floor hall in 2017.
- ✓ In order to improve accessibility for members of the public attending Council meetings a new layout of the Council Chambers with enhanced audio visual capabilities was completed in 2018. Council agendas and supporting documents are readily accessible from all areas of the Council Chamber.

- ✓ Site tours of buildings have been completed to determine how accessibility can be incorporated into certain Township facilities.
- ✓ 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**.

Customer Service Standard

- ✓ The Township's **Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy** has been updated to adhere to the requirements of the IASR accordingly.
- ✓ 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.

- ✓ The Township has a feedback process in place for complaints and suggestions relating to the Township's provision of goods, services and facilities to those with disabilities. The form can be accessed online at the Township's website or in person at the Township's office. Once the complaint/suggestion has been made, the appropriate Township staff will be notified and will review the complaint/suggestion accordingly.

Other Accomplishments:

- ✓ An accessibility clause was added to each of Zorra's committees' terms of reference:

"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, as put forward in Zorra's Accessibility Plan. As such, Committee members are to keep this vision of an accessible Zorra in mind when conducting Committee business."

2019-2023 Accessibility Goals

The Township of Zorra shall continue to be proactive in identifying, removing and preventing barriers to ensure that everyone can participate fully in a diverse and growing community. Barriers encountered by persons with disabilities include:

Attitudinal – personal attitudes and behaviors and how we interact with persons with disabilities;

Physical – design of physical spaces that make it difficult for persons with disabilities to move around easily;

Information/Communication – difficulty accessing sources of information and communications;

Organizational/Systemic – decision-making, policies, procedures, or practices that unfairly discriminate and can prevent individuals from participating fully in a situation and are often put into place unintentionally; and

Technological – poor technologies, systems or devices that can prevent people with disabilities from accessing information.

By addressing such barriers, people with disabilities will be able to maintain their dignity and live more independently in a community that supports them. The Township of Zorra

can address these barriers by continuing to comply with all of the AODA requirements and actively assessing accessibility needs as they arise. The Township of Zorra 2019-2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan aims to create a more inclusive community that people of all abilities can participate in.

The Township of Zorra shall continue its commitment to building an inclusive Zorra community. Some general goals and ongoing initiatives for Zorra throughout 2019-2023 include:

- The Township’s accessibility policies and plans shall continue to be complied with, and reviewed by staff to ensure the township is providing an adequate level of accessibility standards to those with disabilities. As such, the Township shall review the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan at least once every 5 years or as the need arises. Other Township accessibility plans and policies will also be reviewed and updated regularly in order to stay up to date with all accessibility legislation.
- Annual status reports on progress of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will be presented for Council approval.
- Accessibility Compliance reports shall be filed with the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario. The upcoming reports are due:
 - December 31, 2019
 - December 31, 2021
 - December 31, 2023
 - December 31, 2025
- Accessibility training shall be provided to all new employees, as well as all current employees in respect of any changes to the Township’s accessibility policies.
- The Township shall incorporate accessibility criteria and features into procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities as per the Township’s **Purchasing Policy**.

See pages 18-21 for the Township’s future goals for each IASR accessibility standard.

Information and Communication Standards				
	Goal	Proposed Action	Action(s) Taken	Time Frame
I.1	The Township shall meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines Level AA regarding Township websites and web content.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use an online auditing tool (Siteimprove) to scan the Township’s website content for accessibility and identifying errors. - Oxford County IT department to review and update the Township’s website in compliance with the WCAG Level AA 		January 1, 2021
I.2	Accessible documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ongoing conversion of departmental templates to accessible formats - Train all Township of Zorra staff on making documents (word, PDF, etc.) accessible. 		January 1, 2021
I.3	To provide alternative methods to convey and communicate information to residents based on their abilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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. 		2019
Employment Standards				
E.1	Eliminate accessibility barriers in existing policies and procedures for employees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regularly review policies, procedures and practices to ensure accessibility. 		Ongoing

	Goal	Proposed Action	Action(s) Taken	Time Frame
E.2	Update the Township's Emergency Response Information for all Township buildings and facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Website updates with more detailed fire and safety information for Township facilities for people with disabilities - Accessibility means are considered when completing emergency management mock sessions. 		Ongoing
Design of Public Spaces Standard				
D.1	Park trail development, including a set of intrapark trails providing accessible links to park amenities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Township shall consult with the public and persons with disabilities when constructing new or redeveloping existing trails - The Accessibility Coordinator for Oxford County as well as Oxford County's Accessibility Advisory Committee shall also be consulted to ensure that the technical requirements for the accessibility of trails is being met, including the trail routes and construction materials. 		2019-2023
D.2	Council Chambers accessibility updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Install automatic door openers entering into Council Chambers 		To be determined

	Goal	Proposed Action	Action(s) Taken	Time Frame
D.3	Incorporate accessible features into the Township's recreation retrofit and replacement program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Zorra's 6 play structures will be replaced or retrofitted to comply with Annex H of the CSA Standard-Z614-14 (establishes minimum accessibility requirements for newly constructed playspaces as well as renovations and retrofits to existing playgrounds). 		2019-2023
D.4	Accessible washrooms for Township facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Renovation of the South Lions Park washroom to be barrier-free serving the Thamesford Splash Pad along with the playground and baseball field. - Conversion of Embro Community Centre barrier-free washroom to universal washroom. Door controls and emergency signalling to be added. - Thamesford District Recreation Centre washroom renovation of a seldom used coaches room into an AODA compliant universal washroom 		<p>January 2019</p> <p>2019</p> <p>2020</p>

	Goal	Proposed Action	Action(s) Taken	Time Frame
D.5	Update Harrington Hall to be more user-friendly for those with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Construct a handicap access ramp, with handrails, to the main entrance and install a push button door operator on the main entrance. - Also, install a push button door operator on the washroom door. 		2019
Customer Service				
C.1	The Township will ensure that our programs and services are easy to navigate and that our customers are given options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhancements to physical wayfinding, including improved signage throughout all buildings and increasing font size on posted signs. 		Ongoing

Goal		Proposed Action	Action(s) Taken	Time Frame
C.2	Increase self-serve options for residents to perform tasks themselves.	- Regularly review policies, procedures and practices to ensure accessibility.		Ongoing

Leading the Way Forward: A Final Word

The Township of Zorra is a government that is future-oriented and accountable. Accessibility planning at the Township of Zorra and the requirements under the AODA support the Township of Zorra's Strategic Plan. Accessibility is embedded in many key strategies as to create a community that is accessible and inclusive for all residents throughout the various stages of their lives.

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 2019-2023 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 Zorra will be a team effort.

The Township of Zorra's 2019-2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan sets out the path to an accessible Zorra by reducing and eliminating barriers, making Zorra a community of choice, and a community where persons of all abilities can actively participate and have a sense of belonging.

Contact Information

The Township of Zorra 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.

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