



**TOWNSHIP OF SOUTHWOLD  
MULTI-YEAR ACCESSIBILITY PLAN  
2016-2020**

January 6, 2016

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# INTRODUCTION

## COMMITMENT

The Township of Southwold is committed to removing barriers that prevent people with disabilities from accessing our facilities and services.

This Multi-Year Accessibility Plan outlines the Township's approach to ensuring that services provided will be done so in an accessible manner. The Township will continue to develop inclusive workplace policies and procedures.

The Township endeavours to demonstrate leadership for the local municipalities. Our goal is to ensure accessibility for our employees and the public we serve in our services and facilities.

## BACKGROUND

For several years, the Joint Accessibility Working Group has been removing barriers through processes outlined in the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA), 2001. This process will continue, however, it will become integrated into the multi-year planning cycles. This process will combine the planning requirements of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005. This combined planning process will be reviewed once every five years or until the ODA, 2001 is repealed.

## ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Joint Accessibility Working Group consists of staff members from the Township. The purpose of the committee is to provide advice to Councils on the removal and prevention of barriers.

## OBLIGATIONS

This Multi-Year Plan is based upon requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). The AODA sets out the roadmap for an accessible Ontario by 2025. It contains standards in the following five areas:

- Customer Service
- Information and Communications
- Employment
- Transportation and;
- Built Environment

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The Accessible Customer Service Standard came into effect in 2008. In 2011, under the Integrated Accessibility Regulation, the Province combined Information and Communications, Employment and Transportation.

This plan outlines the requirements of the AODA along with projected timelines. An annual status report will be developed that will report on the previous years accomplishments.

Annually this plan will be updated to include a review of current barriers. At that time a status report will developed and made available to the public. Once every five years the entire plan will be updated along with a public consultation.

## **MONITOR AND REVIEW**

This Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will be reviewed and updated at least once every five years. An annual status report will be completed to document the progress and measures taken to implement the Township's strategy and meet the requirements under the Integrated Accessibility Regulation.

## **PLAN COORDINATION**

The Township's Accessibility Coordinator is responsible for the development of this plan, in consultation with the Accessibility Working Group.

All staff have a role to play in identifying, removing and preventing barriers.

Employees who are engaged and knowledgeable are able to incorporate accessibility considerations into their daily business practices.

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## TIMELINE AND DELIVERABLES

### OUTCOMES

- People with disabilities will receive quality goods and services in a timely manner.
- People with disabilities will have access to Township-produced information and communications. Alternate formats and communication supports will be made available if original format is not accessible.
- A barrier-free recruitment process.
- Greater accessibility in municipal-owned facilities.
- Staff will be able to identify barriers to accessibility and actively seek solutions to prevent or remove them.

### APPROACH

- Develop policies and procedures.
- Incorporate accessibility into planning processes.
- Train staff
- Engage the public in feedback.
- Work to remove barriers to employment.
- Continue to make facilities accessible and;
- Ensure there is access to information and communications.

### TIMELINES

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The development of policies</li><li>• Developing a multi-year accessibility plan</li><li>• Purchasing requirements</li><li>• Emergency and public safety information</li></ul>	<b>2012-2013</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Employment</li><li>• Training</li><li>• Feedback process</li><li>• Accessible formats and communication supports</li><li>• Accessible Websites and web content</li></ul>	<b>2014-2016</b>

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## **ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE**

The Township of Southwold is committed to ensuring that all customers receive accessible services in a timely manner. Members of the public will receive an equitable customer service experience that meets their needs. The Township will achieve this by:

- Reviewing and updating policies to ensure high quality, accessible service.
- Embedding accessibility requirements into staff training and orientation materials.
- Reviewing customer feedback and taking appropriate action.

### **Progress**

- Developed Accessible Customer Service Policy (2009)
- Alternate formats are available through the Accessibility Coordinator
- Customer Service Training to all staff.(2009)
- Customer Service Training to volunteers.
- Continuing to review and updating policies to ensure consideration of people with disabilities.
- Accessible Customer Service Training to new employees – as required.
- Updated purchasing policy to ensure that third party contractors are familiar with the AODA and the Township of Southwold's Accessibility Policy.
- Reviewed Accessible Customer Service Policy and incorporated requirements under the Integrated Accessibility Regulation.
- Updated Accessible Customer Service Training for new staff

### **Goals**

- Review current processes to receive feedback from the public.
- Review current processes on how public can request an alternate format.
- Continue to fulfill the needs of residents and customers under the Accessible Customer Service Standard.
- File ongoing reports with the Ministry of Community and Social Services
- Review requirements under Accessible Customer Service pending update in 2015/16

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# INTEGRATED ACCESSIBILITY REGULATION

## GENERAL

The Integrated Accessibility Regulation requires the Township to:

- Develop policies on how the Township will achieve accessibility and meet the requirements of the regulation
- Develop a statement of organizational commitment
- Develop a multi-year accessibility plan and make available to the public the annual status report outlining the progress that has been made.
- Train staff on the requirements of the regulation and the Ontario Human Rights Code as it pertains to people with disabilities.

## Progress

- Developed Township Accessibility policy which describes how Southwold Township will achieve accessibility through meeting the requirements under the Integrated Accessibility Regulation.
- Included in the Township Accessibility Policy is a statement of organizational commitment.

## Goals

- Review HR policies to ensure they reflect the requirements of the AODA.
- The Township of Southwold will prepare an annual status report identifying the progress made in implementing this multi-year accessibility plan. The plan, and annual status report will be available at the municipal office and in an accessible format upon request.
- Training will be provided to staff on the Integrated Accessibility Regulation and the Ontario Human Rights Code. This training will be provided to staff on an ongoing basis.
- Consult with Joint Accessibility Working Group and the public on the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

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## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

Information and communications are a large part of the Township of Southwold's daily business. It is because of this that it so important to ensure that information and communications are created in a way that considers accessibility.

The Township will follow universal design principles and best practices when developing, implementing and maintaining information and communications strategies. This includes websites, print communications materials as well as face-to-face interactions.

The Township is committed to ensuring that information and communications are available and accessible to people with disabilities. We will do this by:

- Achieving compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0) to ensure external websites are accessible to people with disabilities.
- Developing resource materials for creating accessible documents for common software programs such as MS Word, Excel and PowerPoint.
- Ensuring that emergency information, procedures, plans and public safety information is available in alternate formats, when requested.
- Developing a training strategy to ensure that staff have the knowledge, tools and technical advice to create accessible materials.

### Progress

- Website Redesign in accordance with WCAG 2.0 (April 2013)
- Training for staff on how to make documents accessible, in accordance with WCAG 2.0 requirements. **(April 2013)** and ongoing.
- Emergency Plan and related procedures are available in an alternate format, upon request
- Developed resources for staff on making documents accessible
  - Creating Accessible Documents Training (Word and PDF)
- Developed strategy to ensure WCAG compliance for web documents. (ongoing)
- Developed accessible templates for web documents. (ongoing)
- Reviewed Library resources that are available to people with disabilities.
- Purchased hand-held magnifiers for people with low vision. These are available for use at the Library Branches.
- Purchased large print keyboards for people with low vision. These are available for use at the Library Branches.

### Goals

- Documents are available in an alternate format, upon request. Staff should ensure that "alternate formats available upon request" is on all print documents.

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- Educate staff on the need for accessible documents
- Review Communications Policy
- Develop a strategy of how to ensure existing (pre 2012) documents are accessible or available upon request.
- Develop corporate templates
- Research accessible communications and determine if a guideline is needed for staff.

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## **EMPLOYMENT**

The Township of Southwold is committed to ensuring that the process of finding, getting and keeping a job is as inclusive as possible in order to build an effective workforce. Managers will be provided resources in order to meet compliance under the Integrated Accessibility Regulation. It is expected that training will cover a variety of topics, including:

- Understanding employer obligations to provide employment accommodations.
- How to identify and remove barriers in the workplace.
- Enhancing workplace emergency responses through individualized emergency response information and assistance as required.
- Revising individual work plans and developing a manager's guide, tools and templates to remove barriers from the recruitment process.

### **Progress**

- Candidates will know that accommodations will be provided, upon request. Applicants need to make their accommodation needs known in advance.
- Developed workplace emergency response information policy and notified staff.
  - Emergency Workplace Response for Employees with Disabilities

### **Goals**

- Amend Accommodations Policy and notify staff
- Develop a barrier-free recruitment process to remove barriers from the hiring process.
  - Reviewing job advertisements and descriptions on a go-forward basis.
  - Removing barriers from the selection process. All applicants invited to interviews will be asked if they require accommodations in order to participate.
- Job advertisements are currently posted in a variety of newspapers and websites. Job advertisements and descriptions will be provided in an alternate format upon request.

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## **ACCESSIBLE BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

The Township of Southwold will strive to ensure that new facilities are designed and built with Universal Design Principles in mind. All building plans are currently reviewed by the Accessibility Working Group.

As part of the procurement process staff are required to consult with a variety of standards and guidelines to determine the most accessible and feasible design choice.

On January 1, 2013 the Province of Ontario amended the Integrated Accessibility Regulation (O.Reg 191//11) to include the Design of Public Spaces. This section was previously known as the Accessible Built Environment as it relates to exterior spaces.

During the development of this plan, the Province released the proposed accessibility requirements for the Ontario Building Code. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing accepted public feedback on these proposed amendments until March 1, 2013. It is anticipated that these amendments will be included in the Ontario Building Code in 2014.

This plan will be updated in 2014 to include provisions as outlined in the Design of Public Spaces and the Ontario Building Code.

The Township accomplishments and planned projects will be outlined in the Annual Report.

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## **COMMUNICATION**

This plan will be available at the Township of Southwold's Municipal Office, located at 35663 Fingal Line, Fingal, ON

A copy of this plan is available by contacting the Accessibility Coordinator.

## **FEEDBACK**

The Township of Southwold 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 like to hear from you.

Do you have any thoughts or feedback on what has been accomplished so far? Or ideas on how to plan or how projects could be improved?

Please contact us with your questions and ideas.

## **CONTACT**

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**This document is available in alternate formats.**

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