

Corporation of the Township of Springwater

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

2021 - 2025



Approved by Council

December 2, 2020

This document is available in alternative formats upon request

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Introduction

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) was passed by the Government of Ontario in 2005 to augment the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (ODA) that was adopted in 2001. The purpose of these Acts is to create dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity for all individuals within Ontario, and to break down barriers for those with disabilities.

Under the AODA a disability includes any one of the following:

- 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; or,
- An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

The Act stipulates various ways for all government offices, businesses and organizations to achieve a barrier-free province. Specifically, through the development of multi-year accessibility plans and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation that sets requirements that an organization must meet in the areas of customer service, information and communications, employment, transportation and the design of public spaces.

Barrier Identification

As outlined above, the purpose of the AODA and accessibility plans are to remove barriers and obstacles that hinder the way persons with disabilities are able to access services, facilities and information. When talking about barriers, it means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability. Barriers can be further described as:



- **Environmental Barriers**

Features, buildings or spaces that restrict or impede physical access.

- **Communication Barriers**

Obstacles with processing, transmitting or interpreting information.

- **Attitudinal Barriers**

Pre-judgements or assumptions that directly or indirectly discriminate.

- **Technological Barriers**

Occurs when technology cannot be or is not modified to support various assistive devices and/or software.

- **Systemic Barriers**

Barriers within an organization's policies, practices and procedures that do not consider accessibility.

Springwater's Commitment

The Township of Springwater is committed to the promotion of an accessible municipality, to be compliant with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA), and meeting the accessibility needs of persons with disabilities in a timely manner. The Township will continue to develop, implement and maintain policies which govern how the municipality will achieve accessibility measures as required through the AODA.

Municipal governments play a crucial role in the planning and development of our communities; in our streets, parks, public transit, libraries, social housing, emergency services, public buildings and elections, to name a few. This role includes enforcing barrier-free access requirements under the Ontario Building Code ensuring new development significantly takes into consideration accessibility for future generations. The AODA builds on relationships and practices which currently exist among Council, planners, builders, community groups and the general public to make municipalities more accessible. These practices and relationships receive support from the Accessibility Advisory Committee in navigating accessibility legislation and providing vital feedback on accessibility strategies.

Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee

The Township's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) was first formed in 2005 and after ten years, the County of Simcoe and the Township established a Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee (Joint AAC). Since its creation in 2015, additional municipalities have joined including the Townships of Oro-Medonte, Adjala-Tosorontio, and Tay.

The Joint Committee has many benefits and provides for a broader perspective of accessibility needs and the opportunity to comment on County-wide initiatives. Each municipality has one community member representative and one elected official representative. All of the members offer a unique perspective to assist the Joint AAC in fulfilling its mandate and to advise Council on upcoming changes to accessibility regulations, assist in the preparation of reports and other documentation regarding accessibility within the municipality, review site plans and drawings, provide feedback on infrastructure projects, and follow any other function(s) outlined under the Act.

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan Overview

It is a requirement under the AODA and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) that the Township prepare a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. The Plan is an organizational strategy to prevent and remove barriers and enact the requirements contained within the standards. It is also a requirement that the Plan be reviewed and updated at least once every five years.

The 2021-2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan for the Township of Springwater is a living document that is designed to continually meet the requirements of the AODA and its standards regulation, and to highlight and achieve key priorities that are important to Springwater residents. This Plan was developed specifically using input from the public because their different experiences and background are valuable in creating a Plan that supports inclusive communities as Springwater continues to grow.

Routine monitoring of the Plan will ensure that any new initiatives and opportunities are incorporated, and progress is identified. The implementation strategy of this Plan is a bit different from previous years. A key part is that there is no “year” deadline associated in achieving the priorities that are outlined in the Plan, understanding that compliance timelines of the IASR will still be upheld. This change was made to emphasize that the identified priorities are all important over the entire duration of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and to promote continual improvement.

The five core standards of the IASR are:

- Customer Service
- Information & Communication
- Transportation
- Employment
- Design of Public Spaces

The Plan is developed around the above standards, outlining objectives and strategies under each, defining how Springwater can improve upon them. The progress of the Plan will be reviewed and reported on annually, together with any additional initiatives that have been identified. The Township of Springwater has established a strong

foundation for accessibility planning that ensures actions are responsive to community needs and ensures real and effective change for people with disabilities.

Overview of 2016-2020 Accessibility Achievements

When planning for the future it is important to understand where we came from and what the past successes were. Springwater Township over the past five years has accomplished a lot with respect to removing barriers and evolving our communities to be more inclusive. Below are some highlights of the previous achievements identified in the annual status reports for the 2016-2020 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

2016 Achievements

Council Meetings

- The Township continued to broadcast Council meetings live, allowing residents to view the meetings from any accessible location with internet access.

Township's Website

- Continued to work towards ensuring all posted documents on the website are fully accessible. This process involves updating existing documents by formatting or creating a new version to be posted, and training of staff who frequently post to the website on how to create fully accessible documents.

Design of Public Spaces - Sidewalks

- During the reconstruction of sidewalks, the Public Works Department installed the following accessible (tactile) panels:
 - Amelia Street (7), as well as a crossing at Bishop Park
 - Nash Avenue (2)

General

- Recognized the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 3, through the Springwater Link and social media.
- Springwater Libraries have additional ebooks, audio books and large print materials available to the public.
- Township staff continued to follow the principles of the Multi-Year Plan by ensuring all printed materials and web content are accessible through clear print guidelines, and serve all customers in a manner to meet their needs while providing materials in an accessible format. The Township also continued to participate with the County of Simcoe in the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee.

2017 Achievements

Staff Training

- In April of 2017 two (2) staff members attended the Accessible Word & PDF Documents workshop, and the Making InAccessible PDFs Accessible workshop through Accessibility Ontario. These workshops allowed staff to learn the fundamentals of creating accessible documents, as well as the steps required to create fully accessible documents to enable a screen reader to successfully and efficiently navigate a document.

Township's Website

- Continued to work towards ensuring all posted documents on the website meet accessibility standards. This process involves updating existing documents by formatting or creating a new version to be posted. With the aid of the software SiteImprove, identifying inaccessible documents is made easier.

Tactile Plate Installations

- The reconstruction of Yonge Street saw the installation of tactile plates in thirteen (13) locations, through the Public Works Department. The construction of the Stonemanor Woods subdivision saw the installation of tactile plates in twenty-eight (28) locations, which were installed by the developer.

Accessibility Policy

- In 2009 the Township adopted the Accessible Customer Service Standard Policy, and in 2012 adopted the Accessibility Policy. In 2017, the two (2) policies were merged to have one unified policy on accessibility standards for the Township.

Springwater Library

- The Springwater Library continued to provide additional copies of e-books and e-audio books, talking books for DAISY (digital talking book) from the Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA), purchase of large print and digital magazines, and the introduction of a new simple scanning system.

Inclusive Services

- The Township's camps provided inclusion services for children and youth who require a one to one ratio (1:1) while participating in group programs. Our inclusion facilitators attend specific inclusion training that meet the accessible needs of our campers.

Fort Willow Accessible Trail

Funding was provided by the Government of Canada through the Canada 150 Community Infrastructure Program to construct an accessible gravel trail allowing for clear access from the parking lot to the entrance of Fort Willow. This project was completed in conjunction with the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority and the Friends of Historic Fort Willow.



Facility Review of the Administration Centre

- A facility review of the Township's Administration Centre located at 2231 Nursery Road was conducted on May 18, 2017 by the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee. Overall, the Committee had positive comments to make regarding the Administration Centre, especially from a public access perspective. Reviews look for efficiencies or inefficiencies of accessibility aspects of a building, including its intended use.

Alternative Vote Methods Approved

- Council approved the use of alternative vote methods, including the use of vote counting equipment tabulators and online and telephone voting for the 2018 municipal election. The use of alternative voting methods greatly increases the accessibility of the municipal election from traditional pen and paper. This allows for inclusiveness for those who may not be able to attend a traditional polling station, have vision loss, or dexterity to grip a pen. This voting method allows for an individual to vote from the comfort of their own home or place of work utilizing tools and equipment that meet their specific needs.

2018 Achievements

Customer Service Standard

- Fire & Emergency Services made open air burn permits available online providing ease of access for all residents to obtain their permit.
- Finance Department implemented "My Springwater" which allows residents to view and pay their property taxes and/or water and wastewater bills online.
- Offered online and telephone voting in the 2018 Municipal Election providing an alternative voting method to accommodate all residents. All in-person voting centres were chosen and set-up based on accessibility standards.

- All election workers took the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations training which included the Customer Service Standard.

Information & Communications Standard

- Creation of new Township website to be launched in 2019. Staff worked with vendor eSolutions to develop a website conceptual plan that includes accessible features such as:
 - the ability to properly format headings, tables, alternate text and links
 - complying with requirements under AODA and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 AA
 - ability for a user to resize text on each webpage
 - overall visual representation to ensure proper contrast
 - the ability to work with assistive technologies e.g. screen readers
- 12 staff members took the Accessible Word & PDF Documents training through Accessibility Ontario

Design of Public Spaces

- Tactile plates were installed at intersections on Yonge Street, St. Patrick's Drive, Shannon Street and Flos Road 4 West in the Stonemanor subdivision. Tactile walking surface indicators are intended to be detectable underfoot and are used to alert people with low or no vision or potential hazards, such as moving vehicular traffic.
- Construction of the Splash Pad included level grade to access and accessible picnic tables.
- The Elmvale Arena parking lot was repaved providing level access into the facility and ease in using the curb cut.
- Construction of the Doran Park Picnic Shelter included level grade, accessible picnic tables and an accessible concrete path to the playground.
- Creation of an accessible pathway (limestone screenings) to Vespra Downs and a concrete curb around the playground with wood fibre for fall protection.

Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee

- The Townships of Tay, Adjala Tosorontio and Oro-Medonte joined the committee offering the perspective of our neighbouring municipalities.
- Committee conducted a facility review of the Springwater Room located at the Elmvale Arena, providing insight on areas for improvement to make the facility more inclusive.
- For the County of Simcoe Transit System, the Committee reviewed plans to provide accessible bus stops and shelters, and reviewed accessible features of transit vehicles, routes, services and policies.

- Committee reviewed and provided comments on the site plan for the County Paramedic & Adult Day Use Facility located at 191 Queen Street W, Elmvale.

2019 Achievements

Customer Service Standard

- All Township employees and Council received refresher training on the AODA and the Ontario Human Rights Code, as well as training on the Integrated Accessible Standards Regulations through AccessForward.
- The Springwater Library offered a seminar on dyslexia to spread awareness and discuss resources available to the public.

Information & Communications Standard

- Springwater Library added “WonderBooks” integrated audio and print format to their collections.
- Three Library staff members completed the American Sign Language course geared towards libraries to better assist patrons.
- Completion and launch of the new Township website. The website includes accessible features such as:
 - the ability to properly format headings, tables, alternate text and links
 - complying with requirements under AODA and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 AA
 - ability for a user to resize text on each webpage
 - overall visual representation to ensure proper contrast
 - the ability to work with assistive technologies e.g. screen readers

Design of Public Spaces Standard and Transportation Standard

Through financial assistance from the Springwater-Vespra Lion’s Club, the washroom facilities at Doran Park in Midhurst were retrofitted to provide barrier free access to the facilities. Features include clear walkways with even grade, wider entryways, automated doors, grab bars, emergency call switches and adult size change tables.



- The Township created temporary accessible parking stalls to accommodate the public attending the CP Holiday Train event in November.
- Public Works installed six (6) new tactile plates on sidewalks within the municipality, and in Phelpston and Minesing replaced some sidewalk areas to increase the width.



- At Parr Boulevard Park, a barrier free walkway was installed leading to the playground.

- At the Administration Centre accessible doors were installed in the lower level washrooms.

- The Elmvale and District Lion's Club donated funds towards the installation of the new bus shelter in Elmvale. The shelter located along Route 1 of the County's Linx Transit system provides an accessible waiting area for riders.

Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee

- Committee reviewed the first drawings of the new Elmvale & District Food Bank, proposed at 60 Yonge Street North. Members provided insight on the accessibility of the different areas within the building, and resources including the 7 Principles of Universal Design.
- Committee conducted facility reviews of Tay Township's Oakwood Community Centre and the County of Simcoe's new social housing building in Collingwood. Members provided insight on areas for improvement to make the facilities more inclusive. It also provided the opportunity to see new accessible features that are being considered for buildings.
- Members had the opportunity to review and tour the County's LINX buses. County staff provided an overview of the accessible features and discussed how routes were planned to provide an inclusive service to all residents.

2021-2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Moving forward into the next Accessibility Plan for 2021-2025, the Township of Springwater will be working on ensuring the continual and successful implementation of the IASR. With many of the timelines for specific standards to be met by 2021, a key aspect of this Plan will focus on monitoring and improving upon standards and priorities that are already in place, and looking at how to provide better services to the community through new opportunities and public feedback. Below are the key priorities over the next five years.

Information & Communication

The standard outlines requirements for organizations to create, provide, and receive information and communications that are accessible for people with disabilities. The Township of Springwater is committed to providing accessible information and communication and will:

- Ensure that the Township's website is compliant with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA so that all members of the public can access information easily. This will be completed based on the timelines outlined in the IASR.
- Ensure that documents created by the Township are in accessible formats (using proper fonts, headings and graphics).
- Publicize more frequently that Township information and communication is provided in alternative formats upon request, and including this statement in key documents and plans.
- Continue to work with the Township's consultants in providing documents requisitioned by the municipality, in an accessible format.

Employment

The standard requires that employers must make their workplace and employment practices accessible to potential or current employees with disabilities. The Township of Springwater's employment programs and policies are developed to ensure inclusivity of people with disabilities. To continue meeting the requirements within the Employment Standard the municipality will:

- Review Township policies and procedures and make updates as needed to remove barriers in the workplace.
- Frequently review the recruitment process for improvement to ensure participation of all candidates. This includes articulating the availability of accommodation during the recruitment process and having alternative methods to propose to candidates.

- Support training of staff in Management positions and in Human Resources on current Human Rights law and the Duty to Accommodate.

Transportation

For transportation, the standard sets out the requirements for transportation service providers. Particularly, features and equipment on vehicles, routes, and services offered must be accessible to people with disabilities. Although the Township of Springwater does not directly provide municipal transportation services, Springwater is still committed to the requirements outlined in the Transportation Standard and will:

- Promote and support the County of Simcoe's accessible Linx Transit Service and the specialized transit service through the Township's social media pages and through engagement with residents.
- Provide input from Springwater residents to the County of Simcoe regarding their accessible transit services through the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee.
- Stay current on new initiatives of how to provide accessible transportation, and learn from experiences and programs provided by other municipalities.

Design of Public Spaces

The design of public spaces standard outlines the need for newly constructed or redeveloped public spaces to be accessible for people with disabilities. The Township of Springwater is committed to meeting the requirements outlined in the IASR Design of Public Spaces Standard including:

- Ensure that newly constructed municipal outdoor play spaces are accessible to all members of the public and meet standards set out in the AODA and applicable regulations.
- Provide information to developers through the planning process on the construction of new recreational trails and the accessibility requirements, specifically accessible types of trails surfaces and design.
- Ensure that all municipal building plans, new construction and significant renovations, are reviewed by the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee for comments and feedback on accessible design features.
- Support local businesses in finding solutions to provide unimpeded access to their buildings. This can be through exploring programs and initiatives that design and construct portable ramps.

- Participate in annual accessibility reviews of municipal buildings with the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee. Reviews provide the opportunity for the Township to see different accessible layouts and features, such as barrier free washrooms, and understand how people with disabilities are able to move and access the space.

Customer Service

The standard outlines requirements for removing barriers for people with disabilities so they can access goods, services, and/or facilities. The Township of Springwater will maintain compliance with the Customer Service Standard including:

- Actively encouraging public feedback about the manner in which goods, services and facilities are provided to persons with disabilities.
- Provide refresher training to employees and volunteers on requirements under the customer service standard through the AODA.
- Conduct monthly reviews of accessible features within Township facilities to ensure they are working properly and to address any maintenance that needs to be undertaken, for example checking automatic doors. Reviews will also include identifying any barriers that will impede persons with disabilities in accessing goods within our facilities.
- Upon request, providing a copy of a document in an accessible format based on the needs of the requester. Ensuring that customer service staff understand that this can be as easy as reading a document to a member of the public.

General

Outside of legislative requirements the Township can promote accessibility and inclusive communities through a multitude of actions and engagement of stakeholders to improve the quality of life for citizens, such as:

- Promote how to make public events more accessible and provide resources to local organizations and businesses on best practices for accessible events.
- Explore partnerships with community organizations for funding opportunities to upgrade existing infrastructure to make more public spaces accessible.
- Offer support to local businesses and institutions such as churches, on accessible customer service practices and compliance with regulations, including how to make their place of business accessible to all patrons.

Feedback and Contact Information

The Township always encourages feedback from the public on accessibility, including suggestions about new initiatives and how we can better provide our services. This is everyone's community and there's value in our experiences and how it provides different perspectives.

Copies of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and the annual status reports are available on the Township's website www.springwater.ca and at the Administration Centre, located at 2231 Nursery Road, Minesing. To provide feedback or request a document in an alternative format please contact the Clerk's Department at:

Email: info@springwater.ca
Telephone: (705) 728-4784 ext. 2015
Mail: 2231 Nursery Road, Minesing ON, L9X 1A8