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**To:** Mayor and Council

**From:** Jennifer Marshall, Deputy Clerk

**Date:** March 20, 2024

**Subject:** 2023 Annual Accessibility Status Report

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### Report Highlights

- Council approved the 2021-2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan in 2020.
- As per the AODA, annual status reports need to be presented outlining updates and implementation of the Plan.
- In 2023 the Township ensured all new Committee, Board and Council members were trained as required on accessible customer service, other Ontario accessibility standards and aspects of the Ontario Human Rights Code that relates to person with disabilities.

### Background

As required under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), section 4(1) of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) states that municipalities shall establish, implement, maintain and document a multi-year accessibility plan that outlines an organization's strategy to prevent and remove barriers and meet its requirements under the Act and regulations.

The Township of Springwater's 2021-2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan was approved by Council in 2020, and as required an annual status report is prepared on the implementation of the Plan as per legislation. The status report allows the Township to outline and communicate the past year's achievements in regards to accessibility. Springwater is committed to achieving a barrier free community and is proud of the goals it has achieved thus far.

The Township's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan primarily focuses on the five (5) Integrated Accessibility Standards that have phased in compliance deadlines. These standards were established to prevent and remove barriers for people with disabilities. The standards are:

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

Below is a summary of the Township's achievements for 2023 in relation to the standards that were outlined in the Multi-Year Plan and general compliance.

## **General Requirements**

The general requirements outlined in the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation includes the establishment of policies, accessibility plans, procurement, self-service kiosks and training.

## **2023 Achievements**

- The Township's Procurement By-law outlines the incorporation of the AODA requirements into the procurement activities of the Township including the requirement for third parties that provide goods and services to members of the public on behalf of a public sector organization to be in compliance with the regulations under the AODA.
- Springwater Township Public Library staff members participated in mental health training, homelessness in libraries and sensory Storytimes training.
- All new Township employees completed the required AODA orientation training on HRdownloads, a human resource training system that tracks and keeps required records of all training completed. The training included accessible customer service, other Ontario accessibility standards and aspects of the Ontario Human Rights Code that relates to persons with disabilities.
- New Committee, Board and Council members were trained as required on accessible customer service, other Ontario accessibility standards and aspects of the Ontario Human Rights Code that relates to person with disabilities.
- Township staff shared with the newly appointed Elmvale BIA the BIA Handbook on the AODA from the Ontario BIA Association, a link to free AODA training and the Province's Guide on Planning Accessible Events.
- Township staff shared with the newly appointed Community Recreation Associations a link to free AODA training and the Province's Guide on Planning Accessible Events.
- The Springwater Township Public Library hosted a Centre for Equitable Library Access training for Springwater and neighbouring libraries. The Centre for Equitable Library Access collection is Canada's largest collection of alternative format books and online resources for people who have difficulty reading print due to a visual, physical or learning disability.

## **Customer Service Standard**

The customer service standard outlines requirements for removing barriers for people with disabilities so they can access goods, services, and/or facilities.

### **2023 Achievements**

- The Springwater Township Public Library hosted a Tech Tools for Accessibility evening at the Elmvale Branch.
- The Springwater Township Public Library hosted a decodable book story walk at the Elmvale and Midhurst branches.
- The Township maintained its compliance with the Customer Service Standards, including the legislative requirements for use of service animals, support persons, and assistive devices.
- The Township notified the public when there was a service disruption to facilities, programs and services that are used by persons with disabilities.
- Training on accessible customer service is provided to all new employees, as part of the Township's orientation training.

## **Information and Communications Standard**

The information and communications standard outlines requirements for organizations to create, provide, and receive information and communications that are accessible for people with disabilities.

### **2023 Achievements**

- The Springwater Township Public Library added a greater selection of decodable books for those with dyslexia and reading disabilities.
- Any virtual programming offered by the Springwater Township Public Library included closed captioning.
- Springwater Township Public Library updated signage for the washrooms in the library branches that includes Braille.
- The Springwater Township Public Library continued to offer resources such as:
  - CELA Library Collection for any person who has trouble reading print because of a visual, physical, or learning disability
  - Audio books on CD, Playaway and downloadable, including DAISY (Digital Accessible Information Systems) audio books
  - C-Pen Scanning Reader pens (that read text aloud)

- Large print books
- WonderBooks
- The Township continued to incorporate accessibility features into both internal and external documents created by its many departments and consultants. Considerations include font size and style, color contrast, spacing, use of white space, and use of formatting techniques such as bold, italics, underlining and use of capital letters.
- The Township continued to utilize fillable online forms making them easier for applicants to fill out and submit to the Township. Alternative accessible forms such as fillable PDFs and word versions of these applications forms are kept on hand in case of a request for an alternate format.
- The Township continued to utilize accessible templates for reports to Committees and Council.
- The Township continued to utilize a software application called Siteimprove to regularly check the accessibility features of the public website, based on criteria set out in the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0).
- The Township provided documents in alternative format and/or with communication support, upon request.

## **Employment**

The employment standard requires that employers must make their workplace and employment practices accessible to potential or current employees with disabilities.

### **2023 Achievements**

- The Township continued to articulate the availability of accommodations during the recruitment process and having alternate methods to propose candidates.
- The Township maintained its compliance with the employment standard by monitoring and documenting employment policies and procedures, where required, to provide accommodations in all stages of hiring and employment. The County communicates to employees about workplace emergency response information and plans.

## **Transportation**

The transportation standard sets out the requirements for transportation service providers. The Township of Springwater does not directly provide municipal

transportation services; Springwater is still committed to the requirements of the Transportation Standard.

### **2023 Achievements**

- The Township utilized social media to promote and support the County of Simcoe's Linx Transit Service including the specialized transit service.

### **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.

### **2023 Achievements**

- The Township implemented a Temporary Outdoor Patio Program for restaurants where accessibility requirements were a focus including ensure the patios are accessible for everyone including having a patio that is easily accessible from the sidewalk as well as ensuring the sidewalks are safe and usable for pedestrians including people using mobility devices and caregivers with strollers.

### **AODA Compliance**

- The Township of Springwater completed the mandatory 2023 accessibility compliance report to the Province by the December 31, 2023 deadline.

### **Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee**

The Township continued to participate in the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee with the County of Simcoe, Township of Tay, Township of Oro-Medonte and Township of Adjala-Tosorontio. This joint committee has many benefits and provides for a broader perspective of accessibility needs and the opportunity to comment on County wide initiatives. Springwater has one community member representative and one elected official representative that sit on the Committee.

### **2023 Achievements**

- The Committee reviewed and received the Township's 2022 Annual Status Report.
- The Committee completed in person facility reviews of the Township of Springwater's Public Library – Elmvale Branch and the Elmvale Community Centre.
- The Township and participating municipalities prepared a 2023 Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee Work Plan. The work plan outlined projects and tasks for the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee for 2023.

## Promote Accessibility and Disability Awareness

Events such as proclamations, flag raisings and social media campaigns are an important way for the Township to promote accessibility and disability awareness throughout the Township.

## 2023 Achievements

- The Township of Springwater held a flag raising at the Township Administration Centre for Dyslexia Awareness Month in October.
  - The Township and Springwater Public Library further participated in the “Mark it Read” public awareness campaign by illuminating the Administration Centre and Elmvale Library Branch in red lights.
- The Township utilized social media to promote and celebrate National AccessAbility Week from May 28 – June 3.
- The Springwater Township Public Library CEO presented at the Atlantic Provinces Library Association on dyslexia friendly libraries.
- The Springwater Township Public Library CEO participated on an American-led committee on decodable books.

## Financial Implications

The costs incurred for the achievements outlined in this report were funded through the corresponding departmental budgets.

## Pillars of Commitment

The above initiative supports the following Strategic Pillars of Commitment:

- Community Development

## Approvals

**Submitted by:** Jennifer Marshall, AMP, Deputy Clerk

**Reviewed by:** Renée Ainsworth, Dipl. M.A, AOMC, Director of Corporate Services/Clerk

**Approved by:** Jeff Schmidt, CPA, CGA, Chief Administrative Officer

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**Applicable Municipal Policy or Legislation**

[Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\)](#)

**Background or Relevant Reports on Subject**

[2021-2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan](#)