
To: Mayor and Council

From: Katja Awender, Legislative – Records Coordinator

Date: April 2, 2025

Subject: 2024 Annual Accessibility Status Report

Report Highlights

- Council approved the 2021-2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan in 2020.
- As per the AODA, annual status reports must be presented outlining updates and implementation of the Plan.
- In 2024, the Township of Springwater advanced accessibility by maintaining AODA compliance in procurement and training, continuing Customer Service Standards, and developing accessible information systems and public spaces. Employment practices ensured accommodations were available, collaborative initiatives were fostered through the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee, and awareness campaigns spotlighted the Township's commitment to an inclusive community.

Background

As required under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), section 4(1) of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) mandates 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 its Regulations.

The Township of Springwater's 2021-2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan was approved by Council in 2020. In compliance with legislation requirements, an annual status report is prepared to detail the implementation progress of the Plan. The status report serves as a means for the Township to communicate its accessibility achievements over the previous year. Springwater remains steadfast in its commitment to fostering an inclusive, barrier-free community, and takes pride in the significant goals achieved to date.

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

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

Below is a summary of the Township's 2024 achievements concerning the standards 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.

2024 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.
- All new Township employees completed the required AODA orientation training including accessible customer service, Ontario accessibility standards, and aspects of the Ontario Human Rights Code that relates to persons with disabilities. Records of the training completed were kept in accordance with the Act.

Customer Service Standard

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

2024 Achievements

- 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.
- All new Township employees completed the required AODA orientation training, including accessible customer service, Ontario accessibility standards, and

aspects of the Ontario Human Rights Code that relates to persons with disabilities.

- The Township celebrated its 30th anniversary with an event where residents had the opportunity to engage with Township employees about available services. The event's design took into consideration accessibility and provided wide aisles and spaces with a terrain of crushed limestone screening, allowing for persons using assistive devices to access the event. The event was service animal friendly, and included accessible parking, washrooms, and seating areas. An audio technician was hired to ensure that all speeches and entertainment were delivered at clear and comfortable volumes. Staff were trained in disability awareness and etiquette, ensuring a welcome atmosphere for all attendees. Additionally, all promotional materials adhered to AODA information and communication standards.

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 individuals with disabilities.

2024 Achievements

- The Township continued to incorporate accessibility features into both internal and external documents created by its many departments and consultants. Considerations included font size and style, color contrast, spacing, use of white space, formatting techniques such as bold, italics, underlining and use of capital letters, use of ALT text for imagery where necessary, and close captioning for any videos produced. The Township also ensured written materials were clear and used straightforward language wherever possible.
- The Township continued to utilize fillable online forms making them easier for applicants to fill out and submit to the Township. Said forms were in compliance with AODA standards and were accessible and fillable by screen reader devices. Alternative accessible forms such as fillable PDFs and word versions of these application forms are kept on hand in case of a request for an alternate format. The following online forms were introduced in 2024: short-term rental licenses, special event permits, backyard chicken applications, and property standard appeal applications. Continuing into 2025, staff aim to develop online forms for noise exemptions, and business license applications including refreshment vehicles, campgrounds, kennels to further enhance digital accessibility.

- 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). Specific website improvements included the Township's building guides, applications, and building permit submission portal, all of which were updated to comply with the AODA digital accessibility standards. A technical bulletin section was also added to provide clear interpretations of key building code items.
- The Township developed a mobile app compliant with the WCAG 2.0 requirements and accessible by screen-readers for residents to access Township information and services. Specific services available on the mobile app include but are not limited to: media releases including emergency alerts and road closures, Township newsletters, Council information and webcasts, access to My Springwater (the Township's webpage for online tax and utility billing), access to online forms, registration for recreation programs, information on parks and community halls, a Township event calendar, and a "Report a Concern" feature.
- The Township provided documents in alternative format and/or with communication support, upon request.
- In 2025, the Township will strive to include diverse imagery and multimedia that represents persons with various disabilities.

Employment

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

2024 Achievements

- The Township continued to articulate the availability of accommodations during the recruitment process and having alternate methods to proposed candidates. The Township's career webpage continued to identify the availability of said accommodations during any step of the recruitment process.
- 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 and Township communicates to employees about workplace emergency response information and plans.

- The Township implemented online recruitment/applicant tracking and onboarding modules through its human resources information system.
- Moving into 2025, staff plan to review and update the Township's human resources policies, integrating accessibility considerations from the outset. This initiative aims to ensure policies and practices align with the AODA standards. Additionally, an online reference check form will be implemented for candidate's references to use during the recruitment process.

Transportation

The transportation standard sets out the requirements for transportation service providers. While the Township of Springwater does not directly provide municipal transportation services, Springwater is still committed to the requirements of the Transportation Standard.

2024 Achievements

- The Township utilized their website and mobile app to promote and support the County of Simcoe's Linx Transit Service including the specialized transit service for accessible transit.

Design of Public Spaces

The design of public spaces standard outlines the need for newly constructed or redeveloped public spaces to be accessible for individuals with disabilities.

2024 Achievements

- The Township converted Homer Barrett Park's and Parr Boulevard Park's playground surfacing from sand to "Fibar", an engineered wood chip material that provides a surface possible for wheelchair mobility in addition to cushioning falls.
- The Township updated the pathways from Shaw Street and Ritchie Crescent to Homer Parrett Park to be accessible and in compliance with AODA standards, as well as improved the pathway's surface to assist with mobility devices.

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.

2024 Achievements

- The Committee reviewed and received the Township's 2023 Annual Status Report.
- The Township and participating municipalities prepared a 2025 Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee Work Plan. The work plan outlined projects and tasks for the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee for 2025.

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.

2024 Achievements

- The Township of Springwater held a flag raising at the Township Administration Centre for Dyslexia Awareness Month in October.
 - o The Township further participated in the "Mark it Read" public awareness campaign by illuminating the Administration Centre's Digital Sign in the "Mark it Read" logo.
- The Township utilized social media to promote and celebrate National AccessAbility Week from May 26 to June 1, 2024.
- The Township shared messaging related to the County of Simcoe's #ItStarts Campaign.

Financial Implications

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

Strategic Priorities/Goals

The above initiative supports the following Strategic Priorities/Goals:

Goal 3 - Building community unity to support a sense of place.

Approvals

Submitted by:	Katja Awender, Legislative – Records Coordinator
Reviewed by:	Jennifer Marshall, AMP, Clerk
Approved by:	Doug Herron, Interim Chief Administrative Officer

Approvals

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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](#)