



Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2022 Annual Status Update Report

Commitment Statement and Objective

The Township of Edwardsburgh Cardinal is committed to enriching the quality of life for persons with disabilities. The Township recognizes that it is a long-term process, and that communication is important for moving to full accessibility. The Township continues to strive to remove barriers that limit inclusion within the community.

The Township of Edwardsburgh Cardinal is committed to ensuring that persons with disabilities share the same rights, freedoms, and obligations so that they may live as independently as possible and are able to participate in all that the Township has to offer.

In 2021, the Township of Edwardsburgh Cardinal released its new multi-year accessibility plan, which spans from 2021-2026, in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations (IARS).

This report is the annual update on the progress of measures taken to improve accessibility and implement the AODA and IARS. This report includes initiatives that were undertaken in 2022 to implement strategies/goals that were outlined with the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

Background

The AODA is the first law of its kind in Canada. Under the AODA, the Province of Ontario is developing, implementing, and enforcing accessibility standards. The goal of the Act and the standards is to make for a fully accessible province for all people by 2025.

Since 2005, regulations outlining accessibility standards have been made under the AODA. Firstly, the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, and secondly, the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation. Between them, they establish standards for accessible customer service, information and communications, employment, transportation, design of public spaces in the built environment, and for overall training, planning, and reporting of accessibility initiatives.

Accessibility Standards & Achievements in 2022:

Accessible Customer Service

In 2022, the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic has made the Township incorporate new and creative ways to make the area more accessible to everyone while still complying with social distancing requirements. Additional protective equipment was installed, and additional measures continue to be explored within multiple facilities to assist the public.

Information and Communication

The Township is committed to ensuring that universal design principles and best practices are considered when developing, implementing, and maintaining information and communication strategies and products.

What we have done:

- Continued to ensure processes for receiving and responding to feedback are accessible and that the public is notified of the existence of these processes. Another factor that has continued to impact accessibility for some members of the public is those that rely on lip reading; Township staff are aware and are able to communicate through other methods such as a written text or digital exchange when in the office.
- Continued to provide accessible formats and communication supports, upon request.
- Staff make every effort to generate more user-friendly and accessible documents. Staff continue to utilize the Township's agenda and report management software and PDF remediation software when posting to the Township's website.
- Posting of recorded Committee and Council meetings on the Township YouTube and Township Council Calendar website pages for multiple sources of accessibility needs and to reduce the search time.

- Provided the public with Zoom links to Committee and Council meetings to accommodate for COVID-19 restrictions and accessibility requirements.
- Maintain the customer service integration module from Public Sector Digest (Citywide) with the Township website to enable the public to submit service requests directly on the website rather than calling/emailing/coming into the office.
- Provided the public with alternative meeting locations for various Committee and Council meetings to accommodate COVID-19 social distancing requirements while ensuring the locations are accessible to the public wishing to attend in person.
- Developed and maintained a dedicated accessibility guide for the 2022 Municipal and School Board Elections. Provisions of accessible voting methods including telephone, internet, kiosks, and in-person were available. Voting assistance and accessible election materials were offered in alternative formats.

Built Environment (Facilities)

The Township is committed to finding ways to ensure that municipal facilities are accessible in a multiple of ways to be as inclusive as possible in order to permit access to the public.

What we have done:

- The Township is currently discussing and reviewing new concept drawings to renovate/redesign the Township Office, both upper and lower level to improve accessibility, including additional office spaces for employees, renovations to improve accessibility (improve current washrooms, additional barrier free washroom in the upstairs hall, ramps, doors).
- A new accessible play structure is scheduled for installation in 2023 at the Cardinal Waterfront Park.
- Regular and continued maintenance of the elevators located at the Township Office and Cardinal Ingredient Arena.
- Ensured that all facilities utilized for the 2022 Municipal and School Board Election met accessibility requirements.
- Enhanced pedestrian safety through the continued maintenance and upgrades to sidewalks and crosswalks. A total of 22 vertical displacement trip hazards, 84 holes patched, and wheelchair ramp area work is scheduled for the Spring of 2023.

Employment

The Township is committed to ensuring the process of recruiting, obtaining, and maintaining an employee is as inclusive as possible in order to build an effective workforce.

What we have done:

- Offer interviews both in person and virtually to accommodate COVID-19 requirements.
- Accommodations continue to be available throughout the recruitment process and employment life cycle.
- Inform applicants and employees of accessible hiring practices and policies.
- Support employees absent from work because of a short or long-term disability, through the return-to-work policy and process.

Transportation

In 2022, the Township of Edwardsburgh Cardinal, Township of Augusta, Town of Prescott, and City of Brockville has continued their partnership to offer a public bus transportation system that runs along County Rd 2 from Cardinal to Brockville.

Next Steps

The Township will continue to identify, prevent, and remove barriers where we find them. We will engage in the ongoing process of reviewing and refining our policies and practices to better serve our community.