



Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2023 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 2023 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 2023:

Accessible Customer Service

In 2023 the Township finalized the follow-up post 2022 election accessibility report which outlined the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers from the election and noted areas of improvement for future elections. During 2023 Council implemented a 6-month trial period for inclusive engagement of the community through the “Doors are Open” weekly meetings where residents can access members of council at accessible locations within the municipality at various times.

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.
- 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.

- Following the 2023 AODA Accessibility Compliance Audit, the Township implemented detailed signage along the Cardinal Waterfront pathway to indicate information about the pathway and clearly identifying where the pathway transitions from paved to gravel surfaces.

Built Environment (Facilities) / Public Spaces

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:

- A new inclusive play structure was installed in 2023 at the Cardinal Waterfront Park.
- Regular and continued maintenance of the elevators located at the Township Office and Cardinal Ingredion Arena.
- Renovations to the Council Chambers is in progress and will carry over to 2024 to update the flooring, layout of the room and upgrading the audio/visual technology to improve accessibility to the public in person and those that watch the Council video recordings in Youtube.
- Ensured that all facilities utilized for the 2022 Municipal and School Board Election met accessibility requirements and followed up with the post election accessibility report.
- Enhanced pedestrian safety through the continued maintenance and upgrades to sidewalks and crosswalks. A total of 13 vertical displacement trip hazards, 16 additional wheelchair ramps added, 7 holes patched, 6 full panels replaced. Approximately 500m of new sidewalk along County Rd 2, including 6 wheelchair ramps and 6 detachable warning plates installed.

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:

- The Township provided updated AODA, IASR, and Workplace Violence and Harassment training to all Township employees, including Council members, Committee members, union and non-union staff, part-time employees, and summer students.
- 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 2023, 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. The River Route bus continues to review and assess pick up and drop off locations to accommodate areas needed within the communities.

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.