

2012- 2017 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Accessible Format

If you require this document to be in an accessible format, please contact Deputy Clerk at natlin@town.stmarys.on.ca or 519-284-2340 x241.

Background

In December 2001, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA) was passed by the provincial government to improve access and opportunities for persons with disabilities. The ODA stipulates the following municipal obligations to the Act:

- Municipalities are required to prepare annual accessibility plans;
- Municipalities will be able to stipulate accessibility requirements when granting business licenses;
- Municipalities shall have regard to the accessibility of persons with disabilities when purchasing goods and services;
- In consultation with persons with disabilities, municipalities will develop accessibility plans for municipally-administered, sub-contracted or licensed transit providers;
- Municipalities will improve access to municipal elections by giving greater consideration to accessible voting locations;
- Municipalities will enforce new penalties for counterfeiting and misuse of disability parking permits; and
- Municipalities will increase the minimum penalty for misuse of designated parking, under municipal by laws, to \$300.
- Municipalities, with a population greater than 10,000, are required to establish accessibility advisory committees. In addition, the legislation stipulates that the majority of committee members must self-identify as a person with a disability. Based on the population of St. Marys, we were exempt from this legislation.

In 2003, the government conducted a public consultation on the ODA. The feedback received was as follows:

- There is a need for Government inspections;
- Municipalities were writing plans, but not implementing them;
- ODA had no influence to affect change;
- There is a need for stricter fines for non-compliance; and
- There is a need for provincial standards.

Based on the public consultation, new legislation was developed. In June 2005, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005 (AODA) was enacted into law. The Act is more comprehensive and prescriptive than the ODA and its requirements now apply to the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors. The Act requires the development of accessibility standards, compliance deadlines, and administrative penalties for non-compliance.

Moreover, the fundamental purpose of the AODA is to ensure that Ontario is universally accessible by 2025. Ontario is the first, and only, Canadian jurisdiction to regulate accessibility standards.

Under the Act, the Minister of Community and Social Services established committees to create provincial accessibility standards. Members of these committees included persons with disabilities or their representatives, and representatives of industry/organizations or ministries to which the standard is intended to apply. Standard Development Committees were established in the following areas:

- Customer Service
- Information and Communications
- Employment
- Transportation
- The Built Environment

On July 1, 2011, the Ontario government enacted the Integrated Accessibility Standards (Ontario Regulation 191/11 under the AODA) to encompass Information and Communication, Employment and Transportation.

Although the AODA is in place, until all accessibility standards have been enacted into law, the ODA will remain in force. Therefore, municipalities will be obligated to comply with two pieces of legislation.

Commitment Statement of The Town of St. Marys

The Town of St. Marys is committed to enriching the quality of life for persons with disabilities. The Town recognizes that it is a long-term process, and knows that community collaboration is vital for moving towards full accessibility for persons with a disability. The Town strives to remove existing barriers that limit inclusion while sustaining a community where residents are proud to be a member.

Accessibility Advisory Committee

The members of the AAC shall be appointed by Council for a four year term. The committee is comprised of a member of Town Council, a Town staff liaison, and stakeholders within the

community. The committee is not to exceed six individuals. Ideally the stakeholders on the committee should be comprised of individuals with disabilities. The meetings are open to the public and are held at the Pyramid Recreation Centre on the third Tuesday of March, June, September and December. For agendas, or to be notified of a meeting, please contact the Town of St. Marys' Corporate Services Department.

On April 18, 2011, the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) met for the first time. Discussions involved identifying barriers within Town, initiatives of the Town to meet AODA compliance, and ways to seek more committee members.

2011-14 Committee Members:

Stephanie Lee – Representative from Community Living St. Marys & Area (Chair)
Donna Kurchak – Citizen Member
Laura Langdon – Citizen Member
Lynn Hainer – Council Representative
Jenna McCartney – Staff Liaison

Accomplishments

2008-2010

- In 2008, initiated Train the Trainer program to implement Customer Service Standard of AODA
- During that time, over 200 employees, council members and board members were trained in the Customer Service requirements
- Formed the Accessibility Advisory Committee

2011

- Developed the committee's terms of reference

2011- General

- The Corporation has included notification on the website that content is available upon request in an alternative format.

2011- Employment

- All job postings now include a standard statement to express our desire to accommodate individuals with disabilities during the hiring process and leading into successful employment.

- When an applicant is contacted to move forward with the selection process, it is stated that accommodations are available upon request to assist the application with the process.
- The existing 'Return to Work' program has been reviewed to ensure it meets the requirements of the standard.

2012- General

- Review multi-year accessibility plan with Accessibility Advisory Committee and make it available to the public (add to website) in an accessible format.
- Develop Corporate Accessibility Policy and make it available to the public.
- Ensure all RFP/RFT include a statement indicating the Proponent is required to show proof that their staff have been trained in Accessible Customer Service.
- Develop a standard template for RFP/RFT that has been accessibly formatted to ensure equal opportunity to all vendors.
- Include a statement within the RFP/RFT that indicates we are wishing to accommodate vendors that have accessible needs.
- Ensure a section within the RFP/RFT has been designated to accessibility and that it shows how the project may include accessibility into the procurement process.
- The Corporation shall incorporate accessible features when designing, procuring or acquiring self-service kiosks.

2012- Information and Communication

- Corporation's emergency plan has been reviewed and made available to the public. The content is in accessible format and posted on the website.
- Processes have been set up to ensure individuals have the a way to provide feedback about barriers around Town.
- New website content complies with WCAG 2.0 A.
- The St. Marys Public Library is providing accessible materials as they become available within the system.

2012- Employment

- Human Resources met with current employees that have existing disabilities to prepare an accommodation plan in the event of a workplace emergency. The accommodation plan will be kept on file. At the discretion the Team Member, another Team Member may be brought in to discuss the accommodation plan in the event that an additional employee is required to carry out the set plan.

- Human Resources informed all Team Members that individualized workplace emergency response plans will be created with the assistance of Team Members input that require assistance in the event of an emergency.

Plan for the Future

Yearly

- AAC will provide advisory role for all corporate projects to ensure that accessibility is considered.
- Continue to channel input regarding accessibility from public through the AAC.

2013- Employment

- Human Resources will modify job descriptions to include a statement that the employer will modify workplace emergency response information to include an accommodation plan for individuals with disabilities.
- Department managers will complete a survey of their local emergency plans based on site location to determine if the accessibility criteria is in place.
- Notify successful applicant within the letter of employment of existing policies for accommodating persons with disabilities.
- Existing Team Members have been notified of existing policies for accommodating persons with disabilities.
- Should Team Members express an interest in obtaining an accessible format or communication support in order to perform their job, the request will be handled by Corporate Services department.

2013- Facilities

- AAC will plan a site tour of Town Hall and Milt Dunnell Field to determine how accessibility can be incorporated into those facilities.

2013- Built Environment

- Review requirements of standard with committee of Team Members and develop an implementation plan.

2013- Information and Communication

- If there Corporation were to create a new website after January 1, 2014, we will ensure the entire website meets WCAG 2.0 A standards.

- Create opportunities for the public to provide feedback through accessible formats as well as notifying the public of the availability of accessible formats are available upon request.

2014- Information and Communication

- Provide accessible formats or communication supports in a timely fashion and at no additional charge to the user.

Conclusion

The Town of St. Marys has made significant milestones in adopting practices that ensure ‘accessibility for all’ is at the forefront of our planning and development of business practices. Whether it be through improvements to by-laws, policies, work procedures, facilities, services, or programs, we will strive to reach ‘accessibility for all’ by 2025.

Feedback on the accessibility of the Town’s facilities, programs, and goods and services is always welcome. Please contact the Deputy Clerk as indicated below:

Phone: 519-284-2340, ext. 241

E-mail: natlin@town.stmarys.on.ca