

TOWN OF ST. MARYS MULTI-YEAR ACCESSIBILITY PLAN 2019-2025

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005



Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

Provincial legislation was passed in June 2005 that provided direction to making Ontario accessible by 2025. The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005* (the “AODA”) was more comprehensive and prescriptive than the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* from 2001 and applies to public sector, private sector and non-profit organizations. The AODA includes accessibility standards, compliance deadlines, and administrative penalties for non-compliance.

As stated, the purpose of the AODA is to make Ontario accessible by 2025. Ontario is the first and only Canadian jurisdiction to regulate accessibility standards. As the Act is prescribed today, these are the following standards:

- Customer Service
- Information and Communication
- Employment
- Transportation
- Built Environment

Repeal of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act

The *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (the “ODA”) established the foundation for accessibility in the public sector by requiring municipalities over the population of 10,000 to establish Accessibility Advisory Committees (the “AAC”) and develop accessibility plans. These have been municipal requirements since the legislation was enacted in 2001.

In 2005, the AODA was established. The AODA allowed for the development of accessibility standards to be developed by the Province of Ontario. The Ontario government has removed sections of the ODA which are comparable to those addressed by the AODA or its regulations.

Effective December 1, 2017, many sections of the ODA have been repealed. These sections are largely duplicated or addressed in a comparable manner by the AODA or its regulations. This change will positively reduce the administrative burden on municipalities.

Implementation Strategy

The Town of St. Marys supports the implementation of the AODA to make the Province of Ontario accessible by 2025. St. Marys is striving to become more accessible and inclusive to people with disabilities by ensuring accessibility is a reality throughout all goods, services and facilities offered by the Town.

Applicable Parties to the Act

St. Marys is comprised of multiple departments and services. The overarching purpose of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan is to encompass all departments and services and work towards the purpose of the AODA.

Within St. Marys the following departments and services are included under the municipal umbrella:

- Administration
- Building and Development
- Corporate Services
- Community Services
- Finance
- Fire and Emergency Services
- Human Resources
- Public Works
- St. Marys Public Library

Commitment Statement

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

As stated, within the legislation of the AODA, municipalities with 10,000 or more must establish an advisory committee. The 2010 – 2014 term of Town Council made the commitment to accessibility by establishing an AAC. Over the years the committee has focused on identifying barriers, accessible related capital projects and community education.

The Committee is comprised of the public that are living with a disabilities, are caring for a family member with a disability, or represent an agency caring for persons with disabilities. The Committee advises Town Council on accessible matters and operates on a mandate prepared by Council.

Monitor and Review

The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis at which time the Annual Status Update is prepared. The purpose of the Status Update is to document the progress taken to implement the Town's strategy and meet the requirements under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation.

Accomplishments

2008-2010

- Implement Customer Service training for existing employees
- Formed the AAC

2011

- Developed the Committee's terms of reference
- Website notification that content is available upon request in an alternative format
- Updated employment practices

2012

- Prepared multi-year accessibility plan with AAC
- Developed Corporate Accessibility Policy
- Improved procurement process to include accessible consideration
- Began to make publically available documents accessible formatted
- Created process for public to provide feedback about barriers around Town
- Trained staff on accessible documents so that when uploaded to Town website, content would be accessibly formatted
- The St. Marys Public Library is providing accessible materials as they become available within the system
- Reviewed employees needs for workplace emergency accommodations
- AAC worked closely with staff to construct a barrier-free family change room at the Aquatic Centre consisting of an adult change table and ceiling track lift. Within the pool area, a pool-side lift was purchased and installed
- Completed a File Review for the Ministry of Community and Social Services

2013

- Implement customer service training during orientation for all new employees, volunteers, board members, committee members and council members
- Job descriptions updated to include statement that workplace emergency response information will be included in an accommodation plan unique to each individual
- Staff trained on existing policies related to accessibility
- Notify successful applicant within the letter of employment of existing policies for accommodating persons with disabilities
- Review requirements of Design of Public Space standard and developed an implementation plan
- Completed 2013 Compliance Report

2014

- Staff began providing comments during site plan reviews related to accessibility
- Began recording Council meetings and amplifying voices to offer improved accessibility to local governance proceedings
- 283 metres of sides were replaced with number curb cuts made to improve path of travel
- Increased the number of accessible parking spots in the downtown core

2015

- Trained all new Council, Committee and Board members on the Town's accessibility policy and the requirements of the AODA

- As a recommendation by the AAC, the Town purchased four new accessible picnic tables to be disbursed throughout Town parks
- The AAC was consulted on a number of capital projects including the accessible amenities at the North Ward playground, facility washrooms, Town Hall entrance doors, accessible ramp to the Museum, sidewalk replacement and a complete refurbishment of the second floor of the Public Library
- Staff and a member of the AAC began joining the review committee for the upcoming downtown reconstruction project
- Completed 2015 Compliance Report

2016

- Redesign of the Town's website was launched. Compliance to WCAG 2.0 A standards were met.
- Staff and a member of the AAC met regularly with the review committee for the downtown reconstruction project. Topics that received comment include pedestrian crossings (equipment, tactile warning strips, placement of lines), future accessible access to store fronts, temporary access to store fronts during construction
- High School Inclusion Committee created a 5 minutes video that highlighted the vast improvements made to removing barriers within the downtown core during the reconstruction project
- AAC involved in the relocation of the Child Care Centre to a single-level, fully accessible facility
- Council and staff embraced the philosophy of involving the AAC for project review prior to capital projects being tendered

2017

- Significant park revitalization project began which required consultation from the AAC and the public to ensure vital accessible amenities were included and barriers were not created
- Council supported procurement for barrier-free accessible seasonal washrooms at multiple sites throughout Town
- Completed 2017 Compliance Report

2018

- Improvements made to the stone steps and railing leading to the Public Library to improve accessibility. As well, improved signage has been placed at the front of the Public Library to direct individuals as necessary

2019

- Trained all new Council, Committee and Board members on the Town's accessibility policy and the requirements of the AODA

- Library Board and Council have identified a number of barriers to access at the Public Library and are therefore working towards removing those barriers
- Recreation staff have been working to improve inclusion in all programming
- Completed 2019 Compliance Report

Future Goals

2019

- Accessible circulation desk to be installed at Public Library
- Accessible pathway to the Museum Barn

2020

- Review of Public Library lift to second level to determine if function still exists

2021

- Achieve WCAG 2.0 Level AA

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 Clerk's Office as indicated below:

Phone: 519-284-2340

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