



Annual 2023 Accessibility Status Report  
and  
Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2024-2028

# Annual 2023 Accessibility Status Report and Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2024-2028

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## 1.0 Introduction

The journey for an Accessible Ontario for all by 2025 started eighteen (18) years ago when the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) received Royal Assent on June 13, 2005. The purpose of the AODA is to develop, implement, and enforce accessibility standards or rules so that all Ontarians will benefit from accessible services, programs, spaces and employment. The Integrated Accessibility Standards (IASR) set out in Regulation 191/11 under the AODA outlines the standards by which a more accessible Ontario is to be achieved. A five-year plan is also required under the AODA, which further mandates the continued removal and prevention of barriers that limit the things people with disabilities can do, the places they can go and the attitudes of service providers toward them; ensuring an accessible Ontario for all.

These five (5) standards as named below, are addressed further in the plan:

- Customer Service
- Transportation
- Information and Communication;
- Employment;
- Built Environment (Design of Public Spaces)

In addition to the AODA, the Ontario Human Rights Code (the Code) prohibits actions that discriminate against people based on a multitude of protected grounds, including one's disability. The Code embodies similar principles to that of the AODA in which equal opportunity and respect are provided to all.

## 2.0 Municipal Profile

Oro-Medonte is a thriving rural community of more than 20,000 full-time residents. Covering 61,000 hectares of land in the heart of Simcoe County, the Township is highlighted by a picturesque landscape of prominent rolling hills and nearly 40 kilometres of beautiful Lake Simcoe shoreline.

Located between the cities of Barrie and Orillia, Oro-Medonte serves as the gateway through which Northern and Southern Ontario are connected and is conveniently situated for residents, tourists, and businesses alike.

With a rich history, an abundance of outdoor recreational opportunities, and a flourishing arts & culture scene, Oro-Medonte provides a quality of life that is truly unmatched.

## 3.0 Definitions

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**Accessible Formats:** May include, but are not limited to, large print, plain language, recorded audio, or electronic, such as Word, PDF, Rich Text, or HTML, formats, Braille, and other formats usable by persons with disabilities.

**Assistive Device:** A technical aid, communication device, or medical aid modified or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional abilities of people with disabilities.

**Barrier:** Anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, information or communication barrier, an attitudinal barrier, or a policy or practice.

**Communication Supports:** May include, but are not limited to, captioning, alternative and augmentative communication supports, plain language, sign language, and other supports that facilitate effective communication.

**Communications:** The interaction between two (2) or more persons or entities, or any combination of them, where information is provided, sent, or received.

**Disability:** The term disability covers a range of visible and invisible conditions that may have been present from birth, caused by an accident, or developed over time. For instance, disabilities include:

- Blindness or visual impairment, deafness or hearing impairment, speech, physical or mobility disabilities, such as, paralysis, amputation, difficulty with balance or co-ordination, brain injury, epilepsy, intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, mental health challenges, reliance on a service dog or animal; such as a guide dog, or on a mobility device; such as wheelchair, walker or cane.

**Information:** Data, facts, and knowledge that exists in any format, including text, audio, digital, or images, that convey meaning.

**Medical Aid:** An assistive device which may include, but is not limited to, respirators and portable oxygen supplies.

**Mobility Aid:** A device used to facilitate the transport, in a seated posture, of a person with a disability. Examples include, but are not limited to, wheelchairs, scooters, and walkers.

**Mobility Assistive Aid:** A cane, walker, or similar aid.

**Service Animal:** Any animal specially trained to provide support or perform tasks for a person with a disability to benefit the individual's daily life.

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Support Person: Another person, identified by the service provider, who accompanies the person with a disability in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods, services, or facilities.

## 4.0 Reflecting on the Impacts of COVID-19

Despite the pandemic's significant impact on service delivery worldwide, Senior Management and Township staff were able to pivot as the COVID-19 pandemic evolved to ensure that compliance with health and safety guidelines were adhered to.

Some of the key initiatives staff undertook to stop the spread of COVID-19 and protect the vulnerable sector, while still continuing to provide goods, services and information/communication to Residents and Stakeholders were:

- Implementation of online meeting platforms;
- Initiating public facing software, remotely accessed application initiatives;
- Enabling on-line registrations and payments for services;
- Creation of Standard Operating Procedures for business continuity;
- Hosting online Council meetings enhancing accessibility;
- Installation of plexi-glass barriers to prevent the spread of disease;
- Release of public health updates;
- Adequate signage in public spaces;
- Signage advising of health unit protocols;
- Remote working agreements for staff; and
- Disbursement of sanitization and masks for use in public spaces.

Throughout the challenges faced during the pandemic, staff remained cognizant of the AODA's legislative requirements. In fact, the pandemic expedited implementation of digital initiatives resulting in an accelerated move toward an accessible Ontario for all.

## 5.0 Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee

The AODA requires that municipalities with populations greater than 10,000 form an accessibility advisory committee, which may be joint with multiple municipalities. Since 2015, the County has facilitated a Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee (JAAC) in cooperation with participating lower tier municipalities that have elected to share costs and resources rather than operate separate committees, as permitted under the AODA. These municipalities include the Townships of Oro-Medonte, Adjala-Tosorontio, Springwater and Tay, alongside the County of Simcoe and most recently the Town of Midland.

The administration for this committee i.e. scheduling, agenda, minutes, streaming, etc. is facilitated by the County.

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The JAAC consists of ten to twelve members as follows:

- a) Five non-elected (citizen) members who in accordance with Section 29.3 of the AODA, are persons with disabilities.
- b) Five elected officials, wherever possible people with disabilities, consisting of the County Warden or a designate as ratified by Council and one member of Council of each of the participating municipalities

The County may, at their discretion, authorize the appointment of:

- a) One citizen at large who may not be a person with a disability but who has special interest or expertise in the identification or removal of barriers or has specific expertise as a care giver to a person(s) with disabilities; and/or
- b) A representative of an organization representing persons with disabilities.

The Committee shall:

- a) Provide input on the preparation of the multi-year accessibility plans for consideration by the respective municipal Council. The plans will address and include steps that each municipality has taken and plans to take with respect to the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to persons with disabilities as required by legislation.
- b) Advise on major accessibility issues related to the significant renovation, operation, purchase or lease of buildings or structures or parts of buildings or structures used as municipal buildings with special attention to those that the public are encouraged to utilize through the review of site plans and drawings as described within the Planning Act that the Committee selects as outlined in the Site Plan Review Guideline document.
- c) Advise on opportunities with respect to the identification and removal of barriers to persons with disabilities at facilities owned or operated by the municipalities.
- d) Advise on ways to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities with respect to programs and services offered by the municipalities.
- e) Perform other functions that are specified in the Regulations of the Acts.

## 6.0 Our Commitment to Accessibility

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Municipal governments play a crucial role in the planning and development of our communities. Be it maintenance of streets, parks, beaches, public buildings, communications and information through social media and the Township website, provision and maintenance of municipal water and waste water services, fire and emergency services, planning and development processes, facilitating municipal elections or enforcing the barrier-free access requirements under the Ontario Building Code, all initiatives in some way affect the day to day lives of persons of all abilities within our community.

The Township of Oro-Medonte maintains its commitment to the principles of independence, dignity, inclusion and equality through the provision of quality goods, services, facilities and information in an accessible manner that respects all persons. We believe in inclusion and continue our commitment to removing and preventing barriers by meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner remaining steadfast to the legislative mandate of an accessible Ontario by 2025.

## 7.0 Identify Barriers

The intent of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan is to prevent, identify, and remove barriers and obstacles that stand in the way of persons with disabilities from being able to access goods, services, facilities, and information. A barrier is defined as anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in aspects of society because of a disability or limitation. The traditional definition of a barrier used in the context of accessibility has been expanded to include obstacles beyond physical boundaries.

There are several categories of barriers to consider:

**Attitudinal Barrier:** An attitudinal barrier is prejudgments or assumptions that directly or indirectly discriminate. For example, assuming that all visually impaired persons can read Braille.

**Communication Barrier:** A communication barrier includes obstacles with processing, transmitting, or interpreting information. For example, print on a brochure that is too small to read, or documents that are not available in alternative formats.

**Environmental Barrier:** An environmental barrier includes features, buildings, or spaces that restrict or impede physical access. For example, a doorknob that cannot be operated by a person with limited upper-body mobility and strength or a doorway that is too narrow to access by a person in a motorized scooter.

**Systemic Barrier:** A systemic barrier is a barrier within an organization's policies, practices, and procedures that do not consider accessibility. For example, a practice of announcing important messages over an intercom that people with hearing impairments

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cannot hear clearly or listing a driver's licence as an employment qualification for an office position, may prohibit persons with visual impairments from applying.

**Technological Barrier:** A technological barrier occurs when technology cannot or is not modified to support various assistive device and/or software. For example, a website that does not provide for increased text size or contrast options.

## 7.1 Consultation

All Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee (JAAC) meetings are open to the public. Township staff, JAAC members and members of the public have opportunity for input into the plan.

## 7.2 Review and monitoring

Annual status reports are conducted on the Township's progress in prevention and removal of barriers through the multi-year accessibility plan.

## 7.3 Communication

Copies of the plan and annual reports are made available in alternate format upon request and are posted on the newly designed Township's website.

## 7.4 Feedback

Feedback is encouraged and welcome, as it provides staff with an opportunity to better serve persons of all abilities. The Township's Accessibility Policy speaks to the feedback process which is an integral part of identifying barriers. The feedback form or process is accessible to persons with disabilities on the newly designed Township website and through accessible format, upon request.

## 8.0 Integrated Accessible Standards Regulation (IASR)

The integrated Accessibility Standards Ontario Regulation 191/11 includes standards for Customer Service, Employment, Transportation, Design for Public Spaces (including the built environment), Information and Communication.

Each standard has a phased in approach for compliance based on organization type and size, with the goal of a fully accessible Province by 2025. Listed below are the standards and annual report of the Township's achievements for 2023.

### 8.1 Accessible Customer Service Standard



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The Accessible Customer Service standard requires that services be delivered in a manner that supports dignity and independence, integration, and equal opportunity for all. The Township has developed policies and procedures in accordance with IASR.

The policies and procedures are reviewed and amended as necessary and initiatives to enhance customer service are undertaken. In 2023 the Township continued its roll out of online application and permitting systems through cloud permit for Building and Planning Applications and the Township's online parking permit system are just some examples of the Township's continued commitment to enhanced accessibility Customer Service initiatives. A public facing software providing access to taxpayers' own information remotely through Virtual City Hall is scheduled for launch in 2024.

## 8.2 Transportation Standard

The Transportation Standard sets out the requirements to prevent and remove barriers pertaining to public transportation, including buses and taxis. The Township does not have a municipal public transportation system; however, a public transportation system is facilitated through the County of Simcoe, which the Township is a lower tier municipality of.

## 8.3 Information and Communication Standard

The Information and communication standard requires the Township to communicate and provide information in ways that are accessible to persons with disabilities.

With change over in staff, the Clerk's department will ensure heightened diligence in sharing literature and continuous training on how to create accessible documents. The Township has a full time communications officer dedicated to all communications related to the business of the Township i.e., meeting highlights, communication releases, Township initiatives, public notices, etc. and in 2023 the Township transitioned from a short term contract to a full time website coordinator position furthering the Township's commitment to ensuring full compliance of the Township's newly designed website with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0) standards and future WCAG AAA standards as they come into effect. The Communication Officer and Website Coordinator staff work in concert with the various departments to achieve accessible communications for all.

## 8.4 Employment Standard

The Employment Standard sets out the requirements to support the recruitment and accommodation of employees with disabilities. These requirements, as well as the Human Right Code form part of the Township's Accessibility Policy and continue as part of the recruitment practices: Recruitment, Assessment and Selection, Accessible Formats and Accommodation Support for Employees, Workplace Emergency Response

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Information, Individual Accommodation Plans, Return to Work Process and Performance Management and Career Development.

Previously the Township successfully underwent a AODA desk audit confirming that all of the policies and practices were in place in accordance with AODA requirements. Staff will continue to build on these policies and practices to enhance accessibility where necessary.

## 8.5 Built Environment Standard

The Built Environment Standard's or more commonly referred to as Design of Public Spaces objective is to remove and prevent barriers in newly constructed or developed public spaces and buildings.

The Standard includes technical requirements such as the surface types and width of public trails, the slope of ramps, the number of required accessible parking spaces, accessible public washrooms and the number of required accessible service counters.

The Township will continue consultations with the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee prior to the design and construction of new or redeveloped public spaces. Reviews of and feedback of the Township's facilities and Administration Centre by the JAAC, will be conducted on a regular basis throughout each term of Council.

Redevelopment of the Shanty Bay Fire Hall into office space for the Municipal Law Enforcement Division will come before the committee for review in 2024 and the School Board and Community Centre project will also return for review as the project progresses over the next few years.

As noted earlier, the Township also continues its compliance with the Ontario Building Code's requirements for accessibility in the built environment. The Township ensures that municipal facilities that are newly built or undergo significant renovations, including outdoor spaces parks and playgrounds conform to all required specifications of the Ontario Building Code and IASR. One such barrier was identified at the Administration Centre in 2023, resulting in the removal of a centre railing that impeded full opening of the accessible doorway. Removal of this railing ensured staff or public using motorized devices, requiring rear access to the Administration Centre could access via the rear access door in the same way as others.

## 9.0 Summary

This combined Annual 2023 Accessibility Status Report and Multi-Year Accessibility Plan outlines the requirements of the AODA and Integrated Accessibility Standards outlined in Regulation 191/11, as well as the Township of Oro-Medonte's successful initiatives and continued commitment toward an accessible Ontario for all.