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# 2024 to 2029 Accessibility Plan

Working towards an accessible Severn

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# Section 1: Introduction and Background

## Purpose of the Plan

The 2024 to 2029 Accessibility Plan is the five-year road map to help Severn reach its accessibility requirements and contribute to the [goal of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005](#) (AODA) of an accessible Ontario.

## Legislation and Resources

### Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA)

In 2001, the [Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#) (ODA) was passed by the provincial government to improve access and opportunities for persons with disabilities. This act applies to provincial and municipal governments, colleges and universities, hospitals, and school boards.

### Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)

Building on the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*, requirements, AODA will help ensure full accessibility for people with various disabilities. The purpose of the AODA is to ensure that Ontario is universally accessible by 2025. This legislation differs from the ODA in that the accessibility standards will be enforced with specific timeframes for implementation.

### Accessibility Standards

The Government has issued a set of five accessibility standards under the AODA that will help organizations identify and remove barriers to improve accessibility for persons with disabilities. The accessibility standards are: customer service, communication and information, employment, transportation, and design of public spaces.

### ***Accessible Customer Service Standard***

The Customer Service Standard was the first of the five standards to become law. It pertains to the way in which we provide our goods and services to the public.

Requirements of this standard involved policy development and extensive training to all employees who deal directly or indirectly with the public. The purpose of training is to make people more aware of various disabilities and learn helpful tips to ensure accessible customer service.

### ***Integrated Accessibility Standard***

The next three standards, which also includes a General Requirement component, have been combined into the [Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation \(IASR\)](#) which came into effect in 2011.

### ***General Requirements***

The General Requirement component of the IASR focuses on the establishment of accessibility policies, plans, the procurement of goods and services, self-service kiosks, and training requirements.

The **Information and Communications Standard** focuses on accessible information and communications relating to the provision of goods and services such as websites, brochures, flyers, invoices, order forms, etc.

Requirements for the **Employment Standard** prescribe how organizations provide accessibility for people with disabilities across all stages of the employment life cycle; for example, recruitment, retention, performance reviews, etc.

Requirements for the **Transportation Standard** will prevent and remove barriers to allow easier travel throughout the province. Note: The Transportation Standard does not currently apply to the Township of Severn as we do not provide a public transit system.

### ***Design of Public Spaces Standard***

The Design of Public Spaces Standard came into force in 2013. The standard was designed to help organizations make new and redeveloped public spaces and buildings accessible to persons with disabilities.

### **Notice of Temporary Disruptions**

The Township of Severn's Accessible Customer Service Policy outlines how the Township will provide notice of temporary disruptions if there is a temporary disruption in facilities or with respect to services.

### **Training**

A training program on the requirements of the accessibility standards included in the IASR and [\*Ontario Human Rights Code, 1990\*](#) is provided to all full-time and part-time staff. Further, applicable training is provided to volunteer firefighters, members of Council, and volunteers appointed to all Township boards and committees.

Each of these provincial standards has established implementation targets and compliance requirements for obligated organizations. In addition, the Province intends that all five standards will be reviewed and updated every five years.

### **Ontario Building Code**

The [\*Ontario Building Code, 1992\*](#) regulates the minimum building standards for the construction of all new buildings and for buildings that undergo significant renovation. The Code includes requirements for minimum accessibility within buildings. The Ontario Building Code was amended to include enhancements to accessibility in buildings. As of January 1, 2015, most new construction and extensive renovations are subject to updated accessibility requirements. Existing buildings, where no work is planned, are not affected by these new requirements.

# Section 2: Accessibility Plan Objectives

## Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

This report describes the measures that the Township of Severn has previously taken and the measures to be taken in the next year and the future, to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities who use the facilities and the services of the Township. This Multi-Year Accessibility Plan has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the *ODA, 2001*, and the *AODA, 2005*.

The Plan includes:

- actions that the Township of Severn has taken over the past year to remove barriers;
- processes by which the Township has identified, removed, and prevented barriers to persons with disabilities;
- measures the Township will be taking to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities;
- the monitoring process for the Accessibility Plan; and
- actions to be taken to communicate the Township's Accessibility Plan to the public.

## Addressing Accessibility

The Township of Severn aims to address accessibility through the development of strategies to identify, remove and prevent barriers, taking into account the implementation of AODA legislation to ensure that both public and private businesses, facilities, goods, and services are more accessible.

The Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee advises Council and staff in the preparation and implementation of the Accessibility Plan, they provide advice and guidance to Council with respect to policies, practices, planning matters, services

and programs as well as provide a forum for persons with disabilities to raise issues and concerns.

Further, the Township has adopted an Accessible Customer Service Policy that works to provide those with disabilities in Severn with access to goods and services in a manner consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, and equal opportunity. The Policy identifies where the Township has assistive devices, electronic door openers, accessible parking, accessible washrooms, and various other assistive devices while also providing the opportunity to submit feedback. It further sets out how service disruptions will be handled as well as staff training, admission fees, service animals, and support persons.

When reviewing services within municipal departments or implementing new processes and technology the Township examines the processes and products used to remove barriers to ensure accessibility to persons with disabilities. Accessibility achievements for the prior year are reported to the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee at the start of the next year.

## **Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee**

The Township established a Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee in 2022 with the Township of Ramara. The Committee's key responsibilities and activities are defined under the *ODA, 2001*, and are replicated in the *AODA, 2005* as:

- identifying barriers
- providing Council and Staff with recommendations for remediation of barriers
- supporting the implementation of IASR-related initiatives
- providing comments on site plans for review
- working collaboratively, both on an individual and group basis, with the Clerk and staff on the development and implementation of compliance requirements to develop policies and procedures and accessibility plans.



## Section 3: 2018 to 2023 Accessibility Plan Achievements

When planning for accessibility it is important to understand where we came from, past successes, and to be aware of any plans or audits that have been completed that can help set Severn up for success in the future.

### General Accomplishments

- Training: In 2022, all staff completed online accessibility training to ensure continuing education is provided. Training continues with all new hires.
- New website: In 2021, the Township launched a new accessible website that meets WCAG 2.0 requirements and continues to work towards ensuring that all content and documents on the website meet accessibility standards. Staff completes weekly audits of websites for accessibility errors and repairs,
- New Joint AAC: With the start of the 2022-2026 Council Term, the Township created a new Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee with the Township of Ramara.
- 2022 Election AODA Plan: The Clerk developed a comprehensive accessible election plan for the 2022 Election that reviewed the measures in place to ensure that voting was accessible. The Plan was posted online as required under the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* and a post-election report was also provided to Council.
- By-laws: The Township's Parking By-law No. 2022-20 was enacted with updated parking requirements and terms for accessible parking spaces.
- Council agendas, minutes and meetings: The Township implemented a new agenda and meeting management software system in 2020, iCompass, to improve the accessibility of agendas and minutes. As part of the phased implementation, in 2021 the Township began livestreaming its

meetings to YouTube as well as the Township's website.

The livestreams, done through the BoxCast software system, provide closed captioning of meetings.

- Completion of two Provincial accessibility audits and filing of required Provincial compliance reports.
- Site Plan Reviews continue to be conducted by the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee on various planning applications and Township capital improvements.

## **2020 Facility Audits**

In 2020, a major audit was conducted of the following Township facilities:

- Administration Building
- Coldwater and District Community Centre
- Coldwater Fairgrounds
- Severn Township Public Library
- Fire Station No. 1
- Fire Station No. 2
- Fire Station No. 3
- Fire Station No. 4
- Lake St. George Community Centre
- Matchedash Community Centre
- Washago Centennial Park
- Washago Community Centre

The facility audit reports were received at the September 2, 2020 Special Corporate Services Committee meeting and are available online:

- [Administration Building Barrier Free Accessibility Report](#)
- [Coldwater Community Centre Barrier Free Accessibility Report](#)
- [Coldwater Fairgrounds Barrier Free Accessibility Report](#)
- [Coldwater Library Barrier Free Accessibility Report](#)
- [Fire Station No. 1 Barrier Free Accessibility Report](#)

- vi. [Fire Station No. 2 Barrier Free Accessibility Report](#)
- vii. [Fire Station No. 3 Barrier Free Accessibility Report](#)
- viii. [Fire Station No. 4 Barrier Free Accessibility Report](#)
- ix. [Lake St. George Community Centre Barrier Free Accessibility Report](#)
- x. [Matchedash Community Centre Barrier Free Accessibility Report](#)
- xi. [Washago Centennial Park Barrier Free Accessibility Report](#)
- xii. [Washago Community Centre Barrier Free Accessibility Report](#)

Administration Report No. A20-017 was presented to Council at the October 28, 2020 Corporate Services Committee meeting where Council established, per Motion CSC2020-078, the following top three priorities for barrier-free renovations:

1. Administration Centre/Building
2. Coldwater and District Community Centre
3. Washago Community Centre

Since the approval of the last multi-year plan the following updates have been made to these priority locations.

### **Coldwater and District Community Centre (and associated lands)**

- 2019: New accessible swing set added to playground
- 2020: Washroom renovation
- 2022: Audible and visual fire alarms installed
- 2023: New accessible surface/base installed to playground

### **Washago Community Centre**

- 2021: New accessible outdoor rink door/entrance
- 2022: New front and interior sliding doors
- 2022: Audible and visual fire alarms installed
- 2023: New accessible front door ramp and sidewalk
- 2023: New water bottle refill station
- 2023: Light switches and alarms lowered to correct height
- 2023: New access ramp to outdoor rink

## Other General Capital Improvements

- 2023: Playground surface/base replacements
  - Washago Centennial Park
  - Marchmont Community Park
  - Ian Creighton Memorial Park
  - Bass Lake Woodlands Park
  - Ardtrea Park
- 2023: MacLean Lake Boat Launch – reconstructed, now fully accessible
- 2022: Port Stanton Dock – temporary ramp installed
- 2022: Washago Centennial Park – accessible pathway installed from parking to washroom building and playground unit
- 2019: Accessible paths installed to Ardtrea Park
- 2018: Accessible playground, picnic table and bench installed at Ardtrea Park

# Section 4: 2024 to 2029 Accessibility Plan

## Identifying Barriers, Strategies and Actions

When planning for the future, the Township will continue to work to identify, prevent, and address the following types of barriers:

- Built Environment: Features, buildings or spaces that restrict or impede access.
- Attitudinal: Prejudgements or assumptions that directly or indirectly discriminate.
- Communicational: Obstacles with processing, transmitting or interpreting information.
- Systemic: Barriers within an organization's policies, practices and procedures that do not consider accessibility.
- Technological: Occur when technology cannot or is not modified to support various assistive devices and/or software.

The Township will continue to work on the recommendations of the 2020 facility audits by including renovations as finance and resource permit into future budget years. Included in the continual improvements and actions will be the replacement and upgrades of signage throughout the Township in accordance with the Signage Implementation Plan adopted 2022.

2024 (some project commenced in 2023)

- completion of the Severn Falls Dock rehabilitation
- completion of the Multi-sport courts – Marchmont Community Park, Coldwater Fairgrounds, and Washago Centennial Park
- new Uthoff Trail and parks signage
- continued improvements and updates to the Township's website and social media channels

2025 and beyond

- Continued staff training
- Production of staff guides and procedures respecting the creation of accessible documents.
- Continued accessible capital improvements in accordance with the 2020 Facilities Audit
- Work to align accessible recreation capital improvements with the recommendations of the 2022 Recreation Master Plan

## **Review and Monitoring of the Plan**

The Township is committed to the continual improvement of access to all services and facilities for all those with disabilities.

The Plan will be reviewed, monitored, and reported on annually to the Joint AAC who will monitor and make recommendations on the progress the Township is making.

## **Communication of the Plan**

This Plan will be available online as a draft for public comment prior to final approval, with any comments being considered by the Joint AAC. The opportunity for public comment will be communicated and promoted to the Township's various stakeholders directly and via the Township's social media and website.

The final Plan will be approved by Council and published online for reference. Copies of this Plan will be available in an alternative format upon request.