

## **Town of Erin Multi-Year Accessibility Plan – 2023**

### **Introduction**

In a world that is rapidly evolving, where we find ourselves focusing on cutting-edge technologies, innovations, and achievements, Town of Erin recognizes that true advancement is looking out for everyone, regardless of their abilities, and ensuring that everyone can fully experience the wonders of this world. Commitment to accessibility is a catalyst for innovation. It creates an inclusive society that values diversity and empowers every individual to contribute their unique talents and perspectives.

Since the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) was passed, Town of Erin has relentlessly committed to ensuring that all residents, employees, and other stakeholders have access to equal services by identifying and removing barriers that prevent accessibility to its services and facilities.

Throughout our journey to ensure that the Town of Erin remains accessible, we have made important changes to policies and facilities through our Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, which is to be updated at least once every five years. Our new Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, to be adopted from 2023 through 2027, seeks to improve on our past achievements in accessibility to outline our approach to ensuring that the Town of Erin remains an inclusive community with accessible services to the public, thus fulfilling the requirements under the Ontario Regulation 191/11 - Integrated Accessibility Standards (IASR) and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

The Town will continue to review this plan once every 5 years at a minimum and conduct an annual progress report on this living document.

### **Key Achievements in Accessibility | Section 1. Past Achievements to Remove and Prevent Barriers**

In order to meet its obligations, the Town set up a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan with measures to ensure compliance. Since the Town's accessibility plan was first published, Town of Erin has remained in compliance with AODA Standards and has hit notable accessibility milestones in required areas including -

#### **Accessible Customer Service**

- Town established an Internal and external process to request alternative format of documents through the Town Clerk
- A training plan on accessible customer service for all staff and volunteers was designed and implemented. Training contents are reviewed quarterly to identify and remove barriers to accessible customer service. In addition, the Town mandates employees and volunteers to complete an annual refresher training on Accessible Customer Service. Completion

of these trainings are monitored monthly to ensure 100% compliance. Based on these measures, all employees of the town are well equipped to provide accessible customer service to the public

- The Town's Accessible Customer Service Policy has been integrated into the Town's purchasing procedure to ensure that third party contractors are AODA compliant in their operations
- Town Hall's front lobby was renovated by installing power doors, accessible counter and elevator
- A budget line has been created for accessibility in the Town's Community Improvement Plan Initiatives Budget yearly
- A vote by mail system was launched to provide voters with the capability to vote from the comfort of their homes using assistive devices set up in their homes

### **Information and Communication**

- Town of Erin updated its emergency evacuation procedures for municipal facilities to make colored visual floor plans available to patrons in case of an evacuation
- Town put process in place to deal with temporary disruptions when accessible features are not in order or unavailable
- Town conducts Accessible Documents Training (Word and PDF) for staff to ensure that staff have the capability to create alternative format documents on request.
- Town website was upgraded to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 level AA with mobile access enabled and accessibility features enhanced. In addition, the Town began videotaping council and public meetings with closed captions enabled, and have made it accessible to general public

### **Employment**

- Our employee onboarding forms have been revised to inform new hires that new ergonomic adjustable desks are available on request
- Employee and volunteer onboarding process are reviewed quarterly to identify and remove potential barriers to accessibility
- All job postings include an accommodation statement and contact for candidates. New hires are also trained extensively on accessibility using a robust training manual designed and adopted

- Individual contractors now sign a mandatory accessibility training agreement during RFP engagements to guarantee accessibility training for all partner organizations of Town of Erin.

### **Design of Public Spaces**

In June 2005, the County of Wellington collaborated with the City of Guelph, Homewood Health, and the Upper Grand District School Board to create the Facility Accessibility Design Manual (FADM), a regional approach to accessibility design surpassing the Barrier-Free section of the Ontario Building Code. The Town of Erin Council adopted the FADM in 2005 and is committed to ensuring that facilities align with its guidelines.

- Hillsburgh Community Center was renovated to include hockey ice pads and dressing rooms, all complying with the adopted FADM
- Accessible playgrounds were installed in Hillsburgh's Victoria Park and Erin's Lion's Park
- The River Walk Trail Phase II was inaugurated in June 2023, and is in compliant with the FADM

### **Transportation**

In order to enhance accessibility for all travelers within the Province, the Town has committed that every transportation development will incorporate accessibility measures. Presently, the majority of the Transportation standard does not affect the Town of Erin, except for taxi services.

The Town of Erin passed the Taxicab, Limousine and Vehicle for Hire By-Law #19-20 to participate in the County Wide Initiative which reflects the requirements in the Integrated Accessibility Regulation.

### **Our Approach to Sustaining Accessibility at Town Erin in 2023 -2027**

Town of Erin recognizes that accessibility is a fundamental human right and every person regardless of their disability deserves to access quality service, employment, information, transportation and physical facilities. To ensure that Town of Erin remains inclusive, the Town will ensure accessibility through –

### **Customer Service**

The Town of Erin is committed to ensuring that all customers receive accessible services in a timely manner. Members of the public will receive an equitable customer service experience that meets their needs. The Town will achieve this by:

- Reviewing policies to detect accessibility barriers in Town of Erin's policies and updating the policies to ensure that barriers are completely removed.

- Organizing focus group meetings with persons with disabilities and their families to collect feedback in order to develop better tools for accommodation
- Updating staff training materials on accessibility standards and effective communication strategies
- Creating a diversity and inclusion strategy with an accessible customer service plan included in it
- More focus on teleconferencing for town hall meetings for reduced physical meetings
- Organizing awareness sessions for disabilities to employees and the general public

### **Information and Communications**

- Compliance with requirements under Information and Communications Standards
- Upgrades to the Town's website to ensure that website will conform to WCAG 2.1, Level AA
- Continuous training of Town staff to create accessible documents
- Review of training materials to ensure that documents are available in alternative formats and are easily accessible
- Updates to Plain Language Training for Managers and reassignment of accessibility trainings to all employees. Yearly refresher trainings will be implemented and achievement will be monitored to ensure 100% compliance.

### **Employment**

- Review of previous accommodation requests to improve the Town's accommodation structure for persons with disability
- Review of Town policies to ensure compliance with AODA standards and that barriers in candidate and employee experience are completely removed
- Retention of job postings and policies in alternative formats
- Review of and updates to individual work plans and development of a manager's guide, tools and templates to remove barriers from the recruitment process

- Review of the Town's employee committee guidelines to ensure that employees with disabilities are represented for more inclusive outputs
- Feedback request from employees with disabilities and employees who have requested accommodation, feedback will be reviewed and used to improve employee accommodation process
- Notification to employees that ergonomic tools are available on request

### **Transportation**

The majority of the Transportation standard does not apply to the Town of Erin, with the exception of taxi services.

The Town of Erin passed Taxi By-Law #12-12 to participate in the County Wide amending Taxi By-Law #5266-11 which reflects the requirements in the Integrated Accessibility Regulation.

### **Design of Public Spaces**

- Review and adherence to the Accessible Built Environment Standard once enacted by the Province of Ontario, ensuring compliance with or surpassing the standard in all renovation and construction projects.
- Continuous upgrades to schools, parks and public spaces to ensure that facilities are accessible and signs are visible
- Consistent monitoring of accessibility on facilities
- Routine assessment of facilities to detect and eliminate barriers

### **Contact Information**

The Town of Erin is committed to ensuring accessibility is a reality throughout all facilities and business operations. There is still so much to accomplish, and as we progress, we would like to hear from you. Do you have any thoughts or feedback on what has been accomplished so far or ideas on how to plan or how projects could be improved?

Please contact us with your questions and ideas.

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