

Township of North Dumfries 2021 Annual Accessibility Status Report



The TOWNSHIP of
NORTH DUMFRIES

Adopted by Council: December 13, 2021

Accessible formats are available upon request.

Background and Purpose

In December 2001, the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA)* was passed by the provincial government to improve access and opportunities for persons with disabilities. provincial government to improve access and opportunities for persons with disabilities. Under the legislation, all 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. As such, the Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee (GRAAC) was established by Regional Council in 2003. This Joint Committee of the seven area municipalities (the Townships of North Dumfries, Wellesley, Wilmot, and Woolwich and the Region of Waterloo, the Cities of Kitchener and Waterloo) provides vision and direction to members of Council and staff as the participating municipalities develop plans to remove barriers and improve accessibility for people with disabilities.

In June 2005, the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* was enacted into law. The Act is more comprehensive and prescriptive than the ODA and its requirements 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.

The Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation (IASR) was created as part of the AODA. These standards are rules that businesses and organizations in Ontario have to follow to identify, remove and prevent barriers so that people with disabilities have more opportunity to participate in everyday life.

The IASR is broken down into five standards:

- General Requirements
- Information and Communication
- Employment
- Transit
- Design of Public Spaces

The purpose of this status report is to make the public aware of the Township of North Dumfries's progress with regards to our 2020-2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. This plan will provide a summary of key accomplishments made towards inclusions in 2021, and look ahead to 2022. The Township of North Dumfries's 2020-2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan can be found on our website (www.northdumfries.ca). Accessible formats are available upon request.

The Township of North Dumfries is dedicated to promoting a barrier-free Township for employees, citizens and all who live, work, visit, and invest in the Township. With this plan, the Township is proud to present its findings and report on the development of strategies to remove and prevent future barriers for people with disabilities and the aging population.

The 2021 Annual Status Report will be made available on the Township's website at www.northdumfries.ca. It will also be provided to anyone who requests a copy, in addition to providing accessible formats upon request.

The Township of North Dumfries

As the Township of North Dumfries continues to grow, Council and staff are committed to creating and maintaining an accessible and inclusive community for all residents.

The Township of North Dumfries consists of primarily rural areas, in addition to a variety of small villages including Ayr, Clyde, Branchton,

Reidsville and Roseville. The population of the Township of North Dumfries is approximately 10,500. The Council of the Township of North Dumfries is governed by a Mayor and four Ward Councilors.

In order to meet the needs of the Township's growing population, now, and in the future, the Township enacted a strategic plan in 2019.

Township of North Dumfries's Vision: North Dumfries, one of southwestern Ontario's most desirable rural communities honours its culture and heritage; where citizens and leaders strive to improve the quality of life for all residents in a sustainable and secure environment.

Township of North Dumfries Mission Statement: Preserving and enhancing quality of life in North Dumfries through the exceptional delivery of Municipal services.

Organizational Structure

The Township of North Dumfries is comprised of six departments: Chief Administrative Officer, Corporate Services, Development Services, Public Works, Leisure and Community Services; and Fire and Emergency Services.

Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee (GRAAC)

The Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee (GRAAC) is an advisory committee serving the Region of Waterloo and the respective Councils of the Cities of Kitchener and Waterloo and the Townships of North Dumfries, Wellesley, Wilmot and Woolwich. Staff representatives of each municipality participate in a joint recruitment process annually to fill GRAAC vacancies and each Council passes a resolution to appoint new members. GRAAC is made up of between 11 and 15 volunteers and advises the councils on accessibility issues including their annual accessibility plans.

GRAAC Members for 2021:

Brenda Robinson (Co-Chair), Dawn Clelland (Co-Chair), Donna Hartzler, Heather Clark-Harris, Rob Bender, Paula Saunders, Trevor Tamlin, Carrie Speers, Teresa McQuillin, Mamie Sealey-Baker, Jolene MacDonald, Berny Wesselink, Tamara Bell, Dan Lajoie, Brad Sayles

Township of North Dumfries GRAAC staff representative:

Ashley Sage, Clerk
2958 Greenfield Road, P.O. Box 1060
Ayr, Ontario N0B 1E0
519-632-8800 ext. 122
asage@northdumfries.ca

Highlights of 2021

- ❖ Ongoing improvements to enhance the Township website such as making more information, services and forms available online.
- ❖ Township had an accessibility scan done of the website to identify any content, or pages that were not in compliance with the AODA in 2020. In 2021, staff have been working to correct these issues. Staff training was completed with all website editors in 2021 for how to make documents accessible and refresher training was provided to all website staff.
 - With additional training and focus on PDF document accessibility, some legacy documents posted on the Township's website may not be compliant with WCAG 2.0 Level AA specifications. Staff continue to address the accessibility of PDF documents by removing outdated documents, posting information directly on the website where possible, remediating inaccessible documents, or providing an alternative format for anyone who requests it.
 - Staff are looking at possible upgrades to the news module on the Township website that will enhance accessibility.

- ❖ Staff rolled out updated training to all staff, Council and volunteers for completion and updated all training records.
- ❖ Play structure was replaced in Browns' Subdivision to provide more inclusivity. Input and feedback was received from GRAAC for this project.
- ❖ Widening of the pathway in Ayr named Wilma's walk that now is wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair.
- ❖ Purchase of some outdoor fitness equipment at Cowan Park. One piece includes a wheel crank that allows someone in a wheelchair to do an upper body workout.
- ❖ A new skatepark was built in Ayr. The skatepark is state-of-the-art, and includes pedestrian and vehicular maintenance access to the skate park facility from the adjacent parking lot and to the adjacent amenity areas as well as hardscape / softscape landscaping to provide the appropriate setting and transition to adjacent activity areas.
- ❖ The Township implemented a recreation and facility booking management software on the Township website that allows the public to view availability for facility bookings and equipment rentals online.
- ❖ A number of resurfacing projects occurred in 2021. This will help to improve the surface and the overall usability for those who may have mobility issues who may use the road for travel. Resurfacing projects included:
 - Gore Road, CP Rail
 - Roseville Road, Northumberland St to Trussler Rd
 - Cooper Street, Willison St to Main St
 - Greenfield Road, 20 m east of Reidsville Road to 2186 Greenfield Rd
 - Alps Road, Dumfries Rd to 700 metres east of intersection

- ❖ Introduced electronic bid submission for request for proposal/tenders.
- ❖ Township staff attended training for creating accessible PDF documents. This helps improve the Township's online forms to ensure PDF's are AODA complaint.
- ❖ Township Council approved an updated Accessibility Policy and Accessible Customer Service Policy.
- ❖ Attended GRAAC meetings and sought GRAAC's input on matters when required.

Looking Ahead to 2022

The Township of North Dumfries is committed to eliminating barriers and improving accessibility for persons with disabilities in a manner that respects dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity. The Township recognizes the diverse needs of all our residents and customers and will respond by striving to provide services and facilities that are accessible to all. The Township is committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner, and will do so by preventing and removing barriers to accessibility and meeting accessibility requirements.

- ❖ Ensure accessible and inclusive municipal election and meet all reporting requirements.
- ❖ Investigate possible upgrades that could be made to the news module on the Township website that will enhance accessibility.
- ❖ Staff continue to address the accessibility of PDF documents by removing outdated documents, posting information directly on the website where possible, remediating inaccessible documents, or providing an alternative format for anyone who requests it. Ongoing staff training will continue in 2022 to address inaccessible documents on the Township's website.
- ❖ Retrofit of barrier free lift at Ayr Community Centre, pending grant approval. This will provide more independence to those using it.

- ❖ Retrofit the Ayr Community Centre community hall bathrooms.
- ❖ Building a new tennis/pickleball courts at Schmidt Park, Ayr that will include any inclusive features.
- ❖ Renovation/construction is expected for a barrier free washroom at Victoria Park. Input from GRAAC will be sought prior to the commencement of this project.
- ❖ Sidewalk improvement project at Gibson Street, Northumberland Street to 88 Gibson Street, also on the south side of Inglis Street, from Elliot Street through to Colquhoun Street, which reduces tripping hazards and improves mobility for those in a wheelchair.
- ❖ Two (2) park washrooms to be updated to be AODA complaint at Cowan Park and Schmidt Park.
- ❖ In 2022 design work for the new Township Office renovation / rebuild will begin, which will include accessible elements.
- ❖ Development Services (building and planning) working to provide more online services that include options for online submissions for various applications.
- ❖ Annually, staff will review policies and procedures as they pertain to accessibility and update and/or make changes if required.
- ❖ Provide ongoing training to staff and provide required training to any new hires.
- ❖ Continue to incorporate accessible features into Township projects when reasonable to do so.
- ❖ Continue to seek GRAAC's input on matters where required.

Conclusion

Council and staff continue to work towards creating a universally accessible community by systematically removing barriers for persons with disabilities.

Feedback on the accessibility of Township facilities, programs, and goods and services is always welcome. Please contact the Corporate Services department to provide any feedback.