

Township of North Dumfries 2023 Annual Accessibility Status Report



The TOWNSHIP of
NORTH DUMFRIES

Adopted by Council: March 11, 2024

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. 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 2022-2026 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. This plan will provide a summary of key accomplishments made towards inclusions in 2023, and look ahead to 2024. The Township of North Dumfries's 2022-2026 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 2023 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 11,500. 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 Council has established a Corporate Strategic Plan for the 2024 – 2026 time period.

The Vision Statement for the Strategic Plan – North Dumfries, a growing and welcoming rural community. The Mission Statement - Serving our community to enhance the quality of life in North Dumfries.

The Core Values and Behaviour as outlined in the Corporate Strategic Plan is the value statement of being inclusive. The Township as it makes decisions and conducts its activities will embrace the principle of *inclusiveness*. In this respect the Township will commit to welcome, listen, learn and understand, and, foster an environment of respect and a sense of belonging for all.

Organizational Structure

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

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.

Township of North Dumfries GRAAC staff representative:

Kyle Kruger, Acting Clerk
106 Earl Thompson Road, 3rd Floor
Ayr, Ontario N0B 1E0
Phone 519-632-8800
kkruger@northdumfries.ca

Highlights of 2023

- ❖ Continued to utilize Form Builder to enhance online form submission processes on the Township website. Examples for 2023 included Committee Application forms and certain building services application forms.
- ❖ Completed play equipment/structure replacement in Branchton Park. The new play structure has been updated with (3) ground level accessories as well as (2) transfer stations to access the slide areas.
- ❖ Completed AODA compliant improvements at Schmidt Park, including an accessible trail system throughout the park and the installation of climbing / play apparatus with ramp systems to improve access to all .
- ❖ Completed new parkette construction at the Freer/Challenger development, with an accessible trail, half multi-purpose court and play structure.
- ❖ Completed a new park at the Legacy/Broos subdivision with an accessible trail, multi-purpose court and play structure.
- ❖ Made a successful grant application for the retrofit of the barrier free lift at Ayr Community Centre, to provide for independent use by patrons.
- ❖ Continued negotiations with GRCA regarding potential trail construction to improve mobility – Nith River, Piper Glen Park, to Greenfield Road West.
- ❖ Completed design work and substantially completed the new Township Administrative Office renovation, incorporating a number of accessible elements such as accessible doors, elevator access, compliant staff

and public washrooms, travel passes, wheelchair height front service counter, and barrier free parking.

- ❖ Sidewalk improvements continued at various locations, to meet minimum maintenance standards to reduce tripping hazards and improve mobility/access - 227 square metres of sidewalk were replaced.
- ❖ Undertook design works for the new the Public Works Depot and Fire Hall administration area renovation/construction, to include accessible elements.
- ❖ Provided ongoing training to current and new staff to include AODA training, Accessible Customer Service and Ontario Human Rights Code as it relates to people with disabilities.
- ❖ Annually, staff will continue to review policies and procedures respecting accessibility, for updates and improvements.

Looking Ahead to 2024

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.

- ❖ The 2024 Capital Budget includes funding to undertake a major update to the Corporate website. A key component of this update is to improve the website to align with AODA elements.
- ❖ The 2024 Capital Budget includes funding for improvements to audio/visual systems at the township Council Chambers to better serve residents and improve meeting accessibility. Also included is an adjustable podium for in-person delegations to Council.
- ❖ Plans continue to utilize Form Builder to enhance online forms on the Township website. Plans for 2024 include By-law Enforcement Department forms.

- ❖ Completion of the retrofit of the barrier free lift at Ayr Community Centre is scheduled in 2024, to provide for ability for patrons to utilize the lift independently.
- ❖ Resurfacing of the Victoria Park Tennis Court is planned, to improve mobility, overall usability of surface and reduce tripping hazards.
- ❖ Trail construction to improve mobility continues to be pursued – Nith River, Piper Glen Park, to Greenfield Road West, pending successful negotiations with the GRCA.
- ❖ Funding for the retrofit of the Ayr Community Centre community hall bathrooms to improve accessibility continues to be pursued.
- ❖ Opening of the new parkette, with an accessible trail, half multi-purpose court and play structure at the Freer/Challenger development is planned for Spring 2024.
- ❖ Construction at the Legacy/Broos subdivision park, to include a splash pad, junior ball diamond, two play structures (junior and senior), multipurpose court, swing set with accessible seat, asphalt pathway, shade structure and seating planned to be complete in Spring 2024.
- ❖ A redesign of the Clyde park will be completed in May 2024. The new design will include an accessible path to park amenities, resting benches near the play structure, picnic tables with accessible seating and an accessible multi-purpose pad.
- ❖ A redesign and installation of improvements at Browns Community Subdivision Park, to include accessible path around the park, resting benches around the path, shade and picnic tables with accessible seating and an accessible multi-purpose pad to be completed.
- ❖ The Township will continue to provide three season maintenance of park trails to help improve the overall usability of the surfaces.
- ❖ The 2024 budget includes park furniture at various locations, that includes picnic tables with accessible seating, benches with arms, and concrete pads that are accessible.
- ❖ Play equipment will continue to be reviewed and replaced on a yearly basis, as required. Recommendations are made by staff for which play structures are priority for the following year.
- ❖ Sidewalk improvements to meet minimum maintenance standards, reduce tripping hazards and improve mobility will continue. The 2024

budget includes funding for approximately 180 square metres of sidewalk.

- ❖ The Township service standards will continue to include snow clearing and salting of the full municipal sidewalk system (approximately 30 km) within the community.
- ❖ Renovation/construction for the new the Public Works Depot and Fire Hall administration area are scheduled, with various accessibility elements. The renovation / construction projects includes construction of a universal barrier free washroom facilities and the installation of an automatic door opener at the main entry door combined with barrier free passage through the principal corridors / work stations
- ❖ The Township will continue design of public spaces compliant with the Barrier Free requirements as regulated by the Ontario Building Code and accessible parking pursuant to the Township Zoning by-law
- ❖ Annually, the Township staff and Council 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 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.