



Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2023-2027

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Introduction

The Township of Zorra's 2023-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan outlines the policies, achievements and actions that the Township of Zorra has put in place to remove barriers and improve opportunities for persons with disabilities. The Plan details the Township's approach to building an inclusive organization for all who live, work and visit the Township of Zorra.

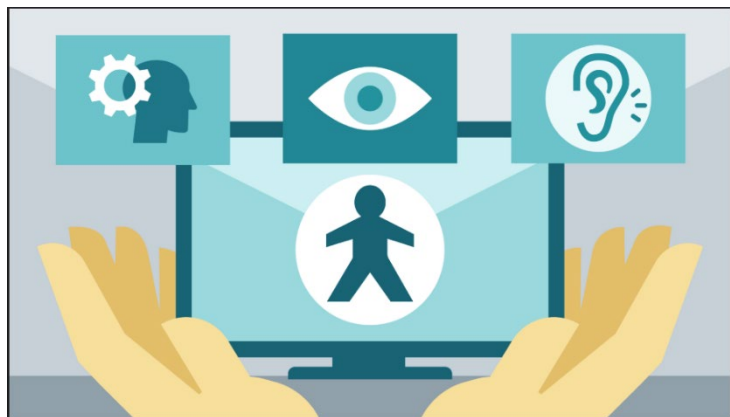
Zorra's 2014-2019 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan was the Township's first multi-year accessibility plan. The Plan aligned with the objectives of the Township's 2015-2018 Strategic Plan and long-term vision while continuing to meet the Province's requirements for full development, implementation and enforcement by January 1, 2025. As such, the Township continued this alignment between the 2019-2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and the Township's 2019-2022 Strategic Plan and will do the same for the 2023-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and the Township's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan.

Commitment to Accessibility

The Corporation of the Township of Zorra is committed to providing quality goods, services, and facilities that are accessible to all persons the Township serves. The Township will continue to work with the community and allocate appropriate resources toward the elimination of accessibility barriers in customer service, information and communication, employment and the design of public spaces and are committed to meeting the requirements of applicable legislation, including the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. As Zorra is committed to eliminating barriers, improving accessibility for persons with disabilities in a manner that respects dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity.

Accessible Format

This document is available in an accessible format at request. If you require this document to be in an accessible format, please contact the Township's Director of Corporate Services at kmartin@zorra.on.ca or 519-485-2490 ext. 7228.



Background

One in seven people in Ontario has a disability. By 2036, that number of persons with disabilities will rise to one in five as the population ages. As such, persons with disabilities represent a significant growing part of Ontario's and the Township's population. Enhancing the ability of people with disabilities to live independently and participate in the community will have positive effects on future prosperity in Ontario. The Township of Zorra acknowledges that the Township, though Zorra has made great strides, has much that it can do to eliminate barriers to persons with disabilities.

A disability is a physical or mental condition that limits a person's movements, senses, or activities. The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (the "AODA") defines disability as follows:

- (a) Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness, and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or in a wheelchair or other remedial appliance device;
- (b) A condition of mental impairment or developmental disability;
- (c) A learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- (d) A mental disorder;
- (e) An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.



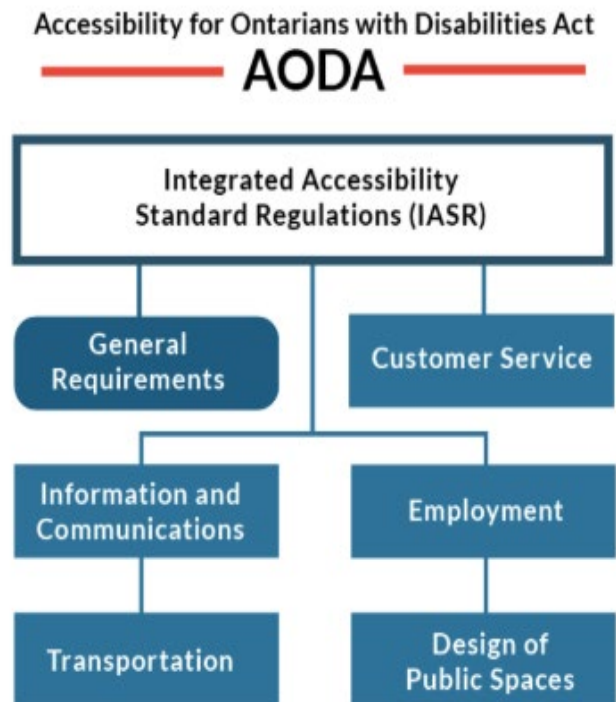
Accessibility Legislation

There are currently two active pieces of legislation in Ontario that specifically address accessibility: the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (the “AODA”) and the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (the “ODA”).

Regulated accessibility planning in Ontario began with the ODA. The purpose of the ODA is to improve the quality of life and experiences of persons with disabilities by identifying, preventing and removing any barriers that may limit opportunities for individuals with disabilities to fully participate in society. Under the ODA, municipalities were required to have annual accessibility plans that would report on the measures taken by the organization to identify, remove and prevent barriers for persons with disabilities.

The AODA, which became law in 2005, builds on the progress made under the ODA. The AODA does not replace the ODA, but advances the goals of the ODA and is more comprehensive and prescriptive. Furthermore, the requirements under the AODA now apply to the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors. The goal of the AODA is to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility in order to make the Province of Ontario fully accessible for all persons with disabilities by 2025. The AODA is made up of five standards and a number of general requirements, including:

- (a) Information and Communication
- (b) Employment
- (c) Transportation
- (d) Design of Public Spaces
- (e) Customer Service



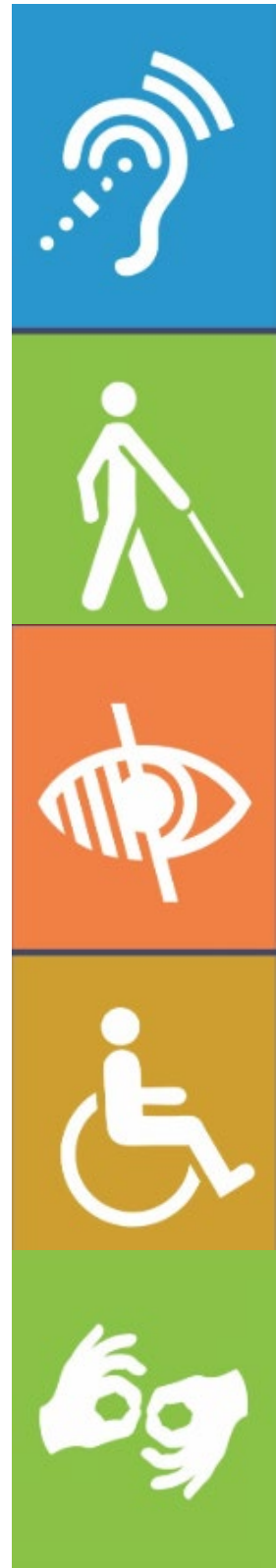
The AODA standards form part of the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* (“IASR”). These standards are rules that businesses and organizations in Ontario have to identify, remove and prevent barriers to improve accessibility for persons with disabilities.

Additionally, the IASR has general requirements for every obligated organization. The general requirements apply to all the standards of the regulation and are as follows:

- (a) To develop, implement and maintain accessibility policies, including a **multi-year accessibility plan** and **annual accessibility status reports**;
- (b) To incorporate accessibility design, criteria and features when **procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities**, except where it is not practicable to do so; and
- (c) To provide **training** on the requirements of the AODA and on the *Human Rights Code* as it relates to persons with disabilities.

Both the standards and the general requirements of the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* must be complied with. There is a schedule that obligated organizations must follow in regards to meeting the IASR standards and requirements. The timelines for compliance are established in relation to the organization's classification under the IASR.

According to the IASR classifications of obligated organizations, the Township of Zorra is defined as a "small designated public sector organization," as the Township of Zorra is a designated public sector organization with "at least one but fewer than 50 employees." The Township will be sure to stay up to date with any new regulations or requirements that are released for all organizations and specifically small designated public sector organizations. Endorsing accessibility is an ongoing process and the Township of Zorra must work diligently to ensure accessibility legislation standards and requirements are continually complied with.



About the Plan

The Township of Zorra’s 2023-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan outlines how the Township intends to reach its goal of building an inclusive organization as well as how it will continue to work towards the AODA’s goal of being barrier free by 2025. This plan includes an overview of the Township’s strategy to prevent and remove barriers and meet the requirements under the AODA, including the IASR.

This plan includes a review of accessibility work completed throughout the duration of the previous 2019-2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, as well as new goals and actions to be completed in the future. Objectives identified within this plan are both long- and short-term, several of which being ongoing throughout the life of the plan.

The phased-in strategy of the Plan aims to prevent and remove barriers and addresses the current and future requirements of the Act. Zorra will report annually on the progress and implementation of the plan, post the information on its website and will provide it in alternative formats upon request. The Plan will be reviewed and updated at least once every 5 years.

Development of the Plan

To identify barriers to be addressed by municipal accessibility plans, every municipality is required under the AODA to consult with their Accessibility Advisory Committee (“AAC”). The formation of an AAC is not required when a municipality has a population of 10,000 people or less. Therefore, the Township of Zorra is not required to form an AAC.



However, since Zorra does not have an AAC, the Township utilizes Oxford County’s Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee for the development and review of this plan. Other

additional alternative organizations, groups and individuals were contacted to consult with persons with disabilities for the development of this plan. As such, the Township has circulated this plan to various agencies, associations and committees throughout Ontario for comment on the plan, including:

- Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Oxford;
 - Lynn Wardell – Executive Director, Director: Crisis, Outreach & Specialized Services
- Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB Foundation);
- Canadian Hearing Services (CHS)
- Citizens with Disabilities – Ontario (CWDO);
- Oxford County’s Accessibility Advisory Committee;
- Woodstock and District Developmental Services (WDDS); and

Additionally, several other actions contributed to the development of the Township’s 2023-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, including:

- Township staff attending accessibility webinars and meetings, including the Joint Accessibility Meeting for Oxford County;
- Networking with other municipalities to share input on accessibility measures and plans in other communities; and
- Township staff researching other municipalities’ multi-year plans and accessibility policies.

AODA Progress and Accomplishments

The Township of Zorra's second Multi-Year Accessibility Plan was approved by Council and introduced in December 2019. This plan laid the groundwork for how the Township of Zorra would continue to meet the obligations set out in the IASR.

The Township has taken many steps towards accomplishing the goals put forward in the Township's 2014-2019 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and ultimately, making Zorra an accessible community. The following are milestones that have been achieved throughout 2019-2023:



General Requirements

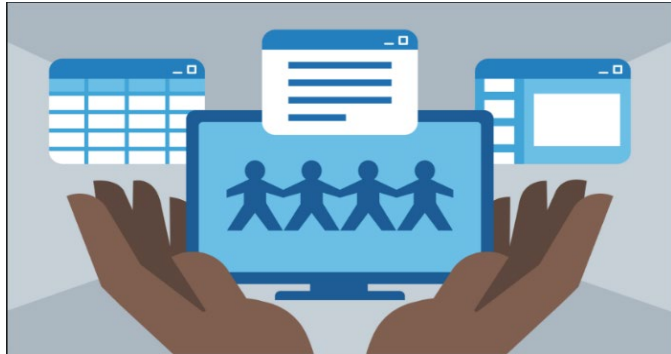
- ✓ As of January 8, 2019 the Township has fulfilled all legislative requirements of the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation*. This included:
 - Adopting the Township's **Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy #200-18; Performance Management, Career Advancement and Redeployment Policy #300-34; Work Accommodation and Return to Work Policy #300-35; and Accessibility Training Policy #300-36**
 - Amending the Township's **Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy #200-09 and Recruitment and Hiring Procedures Policy #300-03.**

- ✓ In 2023, the Township's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan was reviewed and updated.

Information and Communication Standard

- ✓ Staff signed up to receive monthly reports regarding accessibility of the website.

- ✓ Oxford County has transitioned to using Monsido, a web-based program that uses automated scans and error detection to enhance accessibility on the Township website. Township staff have regularly been checking Zorra's website for accessibility errors.



- ✓ The County is also continuing their work from previous years by reviewing and updating the Township's website accessibility compliance with WCAG Level AA.
- ✓ In 2020, the Township purchased the iCompass program, an agenda-setting and meeting management software, that publishes all Council and committee agendas and minutes in accessible formats. iCompass also has a feature that will convert documents into accessible PDFs. The Township used this feature to convert all agendas and minutes that were posted on the Township website.
- ✓ The Corporate Services Intern converted all Township corporate documents on Zorra's website into accessible formats. All Zorra documents uploaded onto the website are converted into accessible formats first. Township staff also developed an internal procedure for converting documents into accessible documents.
- ✓ The Township's municipal publication, Zorra Now, is available online in an accessible PDF format.
- ✓ Township staff (in the Corporate Services Department) registered a webinar hosted by AMCTO on Accessible Documents. Staff are to disseminate the information to Township staff in early 2021.
- ✓ The Township of Zorra offers documents in accessible format upon request. All Township policies have been updated to include an accessibility clause, which states the following:

“If you require this document to be in an accessible format, please contact the Karen Martin, the Director of Corporate Services at kmartin@zorra.ca or 519-485-2490 ext. 7228.”

All policies moving forward will also have this wording.

- ✓ The Township of Zorra began livestreaming the Township Council meetings in April 2020 onto YouTube. Township staff have updated the sound system in the Council chambers, which provides a clearer sound for those listening. This provides an alternative method to convey information to residents about the Township of Zorra Council's decision-making.

Employment Standard

- ✓ The Township has updated their Work Accommodation and Safe Return to Work Policy to adopt a process to support employees who have been absent from work due to a disability, including documenting individual accommodation plans for individuals with disabilities.

Design of Public Spaces Standard

- ✓ The Township applied to the Enabling Accessibility Fund grant in 2018 for funding for accessibility improvements to the hall, which was approved in January 2019. This funding allowed the municipality to complete the accessible entrance and washroom upgrades.
- ✓ The Township constructed a new AODA compliant trail from Boyd Boulevard to Middleton Street in the Village of Thamesford.
- ✓ The Township purchased cameras and an updated audio system for live-streaming Zorra Council meetings in 2020. Throughout 2021, Township staff have continued to work on improving the sound and image quality for residents watching Council meetings.
- ✓ The Township replaced the play structures at Wallace Park in Embro in 2020 and the Lions South Park in Thamesford in 2021 with AODA compliant play structures and surfacing. The play structures now comply with Annex H of the CSA Standard Z614-14
- ✓ The Recreation Department has plans in place to continue to replace the remaining playgrounds in Zorra (that are inaccessible) at a rate of one per year.

- ✓ Accessible washroom controls have been added to the Embro-Zorra Community Centre washrooms.
- ✓ The South Lions Park washroom was renovated in May 2020. The washroom is now barrier-free and serves the Thamesford Splash Pad along with the playground and baseball field. The oversized office space at the Thamesford District Recreation Centre was reduced in size to create new space for an AODA complaint universal washroom in June 2021.
- ✓ The Township of Zorra Recreation Department has plans to begin the intrapark trails project in 2022. The Accessibility Coordinator for Oxford County as well as Oxford County's Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee shall be consulted on this project.
- ✓ The Township will continue to review and update annually its procedure for preventative and emergency maintenance of the accessible elements in public spaces and procedures for dealing with temporary disruptions when accessible elements are not in working order.

Customer Service Standard

- ✓ Staff updated the Township's Purchasing Policy to include accessibility requirements regarding the procurement of goods and services.
- ✓ The Township purchased new facility signs in late 2020. The signs have a large font size and there is a distinct contrast between the letter colour and the background that meets AODA standards. These signs were installed in 2021.
- ✓ The Township is increasingly moving services and documents online so that residents have the option to complete tasks in person or online. In 2020 the Township initiated a public engagement form on the Township of Zorra iCompass portal so that residents can complete this form directly online.



Other Accomplishments

- ✓ Township staff participated in the annual Oxford County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee meetings.
- ✓ Township staff attended the “Accessibility and Year End Deadlines Webinar” hosted by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.
- ✓ Township staff attended the “Accessibility & Your Municipality: Meeting your Legal and Ethical Obligations” hosted by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

2023-2027 Accessibility Goals

The Township of Zorra shall continue to be proactive in identifying, removing and preventing barriers to ensure that everyone can participate fully in a diverse and growing community. Barriers encountered by persons with disabilities include:

Attitudinal – personal attitudes and behaviors and how we interact with persons with disabilities;

Physical – design of physical spaces that make it difficult for persons with disabilities to move around easily;

Information/Communication – difficulty accessing sources of information and communications;

Organizational/Systemic – decision-making, policies, procedures, or practices that unfairly discriminate and can prevent individuals from participating fully in a situation and are often put into place unintentionally; and

Technological – poor technologies, systems or devices that can prevent people with disabilities from accessing information.

By addressing such barriers, people with disabilities will be able to maintain their dignity and live more independently in a community that supports them. The Township of Zorra can address these barriers by continuing to comply with all of the AODA requirements and actively assessing accessibility needs as they arise. The Township of Zorra 2023-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan aims to create a more inclusive community that people of all abilities can participate in.

The Township of Zorra shall continue its commitment to building an inclusive Zorra community. Some general goals and ongoing initiatives for Zorra throughout 2023-2027 include:



- The Township’s accessibility policies and plans shall continue to be complied with, and reviewed by staff to ensure the township is providing an adequate level of accessibility standards to those with disabilities. As such, the Township shall review the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan at least once every 5 years or as the need arises. Other Township accessibility plans and policies will also be reviewed and updated regularly in order to stay up to date with all accessibility legislation.
- Annual status reports on progress of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will be prepared.
- Accessibility Compliance reports shall be filed with the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario. The upcoming reports are due:
 - December 31, 2023
 - December 31, 2025
 - December 31, 2027
 - December 31, 2029
- Accessibility training shall be provided to all new employees, as well as all current employees in respect of any changes to the Township’s accessibility policies.
- The Township shall utilize Zorra’s **Purchasing Policy** to incorporate accessibility features and criteria into the procurement and acquisition of all goods and services. See pages 17-21 for the Township’s future goals for each IASR accessibility standard.



Information and Communication Standards				
Goal	Proposed Action	Action(s) Taken	Staff Responsible	Time Frame
I.1	The Township shall meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2 Level AA regarding Township websites and web content.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue to utilize Monsido to periodically review and ensure the website meets accessibility requirements - All new material uploaded to the website is to be in accessible format 	Corporate Services Department	Ongoing
I. 2	Accessible documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ongoing conversion of departmental templates to accessible formats 	Corporate Services Department	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Train all Township of Zorra staff on making documents (word, PDF, etc.) accessible by incorporating accessible document training within general staff training at all levels. 	Corporate Services Department	2024
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Begin only accepting documents from Township Staff that are in accessible format in 2026 	All departments	2026
I. 3	Accessible videos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Add closed captioning to all Zorra Township YouTube videos 	Corporate Services Department	Ongoing
I.4	Provide accessible communication in emergency situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gather, review, and prepare resources (interpreters, procedures, etc.) to allow for accessible communication and the elimination of communication barriers in emergency situations 	Corporate Services Department / Fire Chief	2024

I.5	Facilitate increased accessibility throughout the Township	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Host an educational event for community businesses with the focus on sharing information on Customer Service, AODA Standards, and other general education as it pertains to accessibility and inclusiveness 		Corporate Services Department	2025
Employment Standards					
E.1	Eliminate accessibility barriers in existing policies and procedures for employees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regularly review policies, procedures and practices to ensure accessibility. 		Corporate Services Department	Ongoing
E.2	Update the Township's Emergency Response Information for all Township buildings and facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete website updates with more detailed fire and safety information for Township facilities for people with disabilities 		Recreation / Corporate Services Staff	2024
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accessibility means are considered when completing emergency management mock sessions. 		Fire Chief	Ongoing
E.3	Provide a safe and accessible workplace for all employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide workplace emergency response information for municipal employees with disabilities 		Senior Management Team	As necessary

Design of Public Spaces Standard					
D.1	Park trail development, including a set of intrapark trails providing accessible links to park amenities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Township shall continue to consult with the public and persons with disabilities when constructing new or redeveloping existing trails - The Accessibility Coordinator for Oxford County as well as Oxford County's Accessibility Advisory Committee shall also be consulted to ensure that the technical requirements for the accessibility of trails is being met, including the trail routes and construction materials. 		Recreation Department	Ongoing
D.2	Council Chambers accessibility updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Council Chambers accessibility updates will be taking place with the new build of the ZMCCC 		CAO	2023-2024
D.3	Incorporate accessible features into the Township's recreation retrofit and replacement program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Replace/retrofit the remaining play structures according to the replacement strategy brought to Council in November 2022 (designed in compliance with Annex H of the CSA Standard and with consultation by the Oxford Accessibility Advisory Committee). - The following is a list of parks and their scheduled year of replacement/retrofit: North Park (2023), Memorial Park (2024), South Lions Park (2025), Community Centre Park (2026), Harrington Community Park (2028), and Wallace Park (2029). 		Recreation Department	2023-2029

D.4	Have a completely accessible Township Office for both employees and residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure the new ZMCCC build is completely AODA compliant 		CAO	2023-2024
D.5	Ensure Township parking is accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Incorporate integrated accessibility standard requirements when constructing all new or redeveloped parking lots/spaces. 		Recreation / Public Works Department	Ongoing
D.6	Keep all Township facilities accessibility compliant with continued maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement a maintenance review plan for all facilities and open spaces - Create accessibility checklists to be used when reviewing facilities and open spaces 		Recreation Department / Corporate Services	Ongoing
D.7	All new Township facilities should meet or exceed AODA standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Investigate implementing Facility Accessible Design Standards for the Township 		Corporate Services / Public Works / Recreation Department	2024

Customer Service

C.1	The Township will ensure that our programs and services are easy to navigate and that our customers are given options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhancements to physical wayfinding, including improved signage throughout all buildings and increasing font size on posted signs. - Ensure there are accessibility options in all recreation programs (ex. behavioural aids) 		Recreation Department	Ongoing
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C.2	Increase self-serve options for residents to perform tasks themselves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regularly review policies, procedures, and practices to ensure accessibility. - Continue to explore possible self-serve options for existing services 		All departments	Ongoing
C.3	Guarantee all facets of customer service are accessibility compliant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct a thorough review of all customer service policies and procedures and update accordingly - Provide assistive devices at customer service counters 		Corporate Services Department	2025
C.4	Ensure all staff are up-to-date on customer service accessibility best practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Require staff to complete the AODA Customer Service training video annually 		All departments	Ongoing

Leading the Way Forward: A Final Word

The Township of Zorra is a government that is future-oriented and accountable. Accessibility planning at the Township of Zorra and the requirements under the AODA support the Township of Zorra's Strategic Plan. Accessibility is embedded in many key strategies as to create a community that is accessible and inclusive for residents with accessibility needs.

Council, employees, volunteers and those providing a good, service, program or facility on the Township's behalf are responsible for adhering to the parameters of this 2023-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and for ensuring that the needs of people with disabilities are addressed when accessing the Township's goods, services, programs and facilities. Ensuring an accessible Zorra will be a team effort.

The Township of Zorra's 2023-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan sets out the path to an accessible Zorra by reducing and eliminating barriers, making Zorra a community of choice, and a community where persons of all abilities can actively participate and have a sense of belonging.

Contact Information

The Township of Zorra 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 be pleased to hear from you. Please contact us with your questions, ideas, or comments.

Karen Martin, Director of Corporate Services/Clerk

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