

2024-2028

Access Blandford-Blenheim

MULTI-YEAR ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

TOWNSHIP OF BLANDFORD-BLENHEIM MULTI-YEAR ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

Table of Contents

- Township of Blandford-Blenheim’s Commitment to Accessibility 3
- Accessible Format..... 3
- About the Township of Blandford-Blenheim’s Accessibility Plan 4
- Consultation 4
- Implementation Strategy 4
- Structure and Governance 5
- Township of Blandford-Blenheim Council..... 5
- Funding for Accessibility..... 5
- Legislative Background 6
 - Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA) 6
 - Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) 6
 - Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (O. Reg. 191/11) [IASR]..... 6
 - Canadians with Disabilities Act..... 6
 - Ontario Building Code..... 6
 - Ontario Human Rights Code..... 6
- Progress on AODA/IASR to Date 7
 - Customer Service Standard**..... 7
 - Information and Communication Standard** 8
 - Employment Standard**..... 8
 - Transportation Standard**..... 9
 - Design of Public Spaces Standard (Built Environment)** 9
 - Other Requirements** 9
- Goals for Compliance with AODA/IASR for 2024-2028 10
 - Customer Service Standard**..... 10
 - Information and Communication Standard** 10
 - Design of Public Spaces Standard (Built Environment)** 10
- Review and Monitoring 13

Feedback 13
Availability of the Plan 13
Contact Information 13

Township of Blandford-Blenheim's Commitment to Accessibility

The Township of Blandford-Blenheim is committed to promoting a barrier-free Township for employees, citizens and all who live, work, visit, and invest in the Township of Blandford-Blenheim. In this plan, the Township of Blandford-Blenheim is proud to present its findings and report on the development of innovative strategies to remove and prevent future barriers for people with disabilities and our maturing population.

In keeping with this vision, the Township of Blandford-Blenheim understands that people with disabilities:

- Represent a growing and diverse community that is dramatically increasing due to the demographic trends of a maturing population;
- Form part of the work force, and include our families, our friends, our customers and the members of the community at large;
- Purchase products and services and make important financial decisions on where they do business, enjoy recreation or choose to live;
- Understand that accessible features can be of benefit to others, such as automatic doors that assist parents with children in strollers or wagons;
- Are aware that their full participation in Canadian society has been long awaited and anxiously anticipated; and,
- Understand that inclusion and full participation of people with disabilities requires well-considered commitment from all levels of government.

The Township of Blandford-Blenheim is committed to ensuring that people with disabilities enjoy the same opportunities as all others who live, work, visit and invest in the Township of Blandford-Blenheim.

Accessible Format

The Township of Blandford-Blenheim offers documents in accessible format upon request. Township policies have been updated to include an accessibility clause.

If you require this document to be in an accessible format, please contact the administration office at generalmail@blandfordblenheim.ca or 519-463-5347 or toll-free at 1-800-410-6882.

About the Township of Blandford-Blenheim's Accessibility Plan

This is the Township of Blandford-Blenheim's second Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. This plan outlines our strategy to prevent and remove all types of barriers as well as meet requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (O. Reg. 191/11).

Consultation

The consultation process involved Township staff, particularly the senior leadership.

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.

With an approximate population of 7,565 (based on the 2021 Statistics Canada Census of Population) the Township of Blandford-Blenheim is exempt from having an accessibility advisory committee.

Implementation Strategy

The Township of Blandford-Blenheim is committed to the intention of the AODA to make the Province of Ontario accessible by 2025. The Township is determined to ensure that accessibility is a priority in all of our municipal facilities and operations.

The Township of Blandford-Blenheim recognizes that:

- Long-term planning is imperative to meet the challenges and opportunities of the significantly maturing population as well as people with disabilities;
- The Township must continue, as an employer, to provide equal employment opportunities that encourage the full participation of people with disabilities;
- Well-planned buildings use universal design concepts that provide access for all including families with children, injured or ill people and the elderly as well as persons who rely on a wheelchair or other mobility devices and persons who have a visual, hearing, mental or developmental impairment;
- Education is the cornerstone to effective change, good management, and integrated services. The Township of Blandford-Blenheim is committed to educating its staff and the community on accessibility issues and opportunities;
- A commitment to research and development of products, services and educational material is necessary;
- Visitor and tourism operators also depend upon accessible municipal services and facilities. The Township of Blandford-Blenheim is committed to encourage accessible visitor and tourism facilities;

- Preventing the introduction of new barriers by ensuring heightened awareness of accessibility considerations in the Township planning and inspection processes is continuously necessary;
- Existing facilities will take time and resources to make accessible. As updates are considered and scheduled, accessibility will always be a priority; and,
- The process of municipal government has to be barrier-free and the Township of Blandford-Blenheim is committed to making public meetings and materials accessible and available to all.

Structure and Governance

The responsibility for the implementation of the AODA falls within the Clerks Department.

Accountability for the various clauses within the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation is a shared responsibility between municipal departments. The Clerks Department is responsible for ensuring compliance at the corporate level and is responsible for legislative analysis and subject matter expertise. Each Township Department is accountable for ensuring that their respective responsibilities are executed according to legislative requirements pertaining to the service delivery.

Township of Blandford-Blenheim Council

The Township of Blandford-Blenheim Council is committed to continuously eliminating barriers and improving accessibility for persons with disabilities in a manner that respects dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity.

Township Council allocates funds each year through the Community Grants Program where inclusivity and accessibility are significant considerations in deciding the allocation of funds. Township Council has implemented streaming their meetings via the YouTube platform which has its own accessibility features such as closed captioning.

Funding for Accessibility

The Township has successfully applied for and received grants in the past in order to assist in meeting and exceeding accessibility requirements. The Township has successfully received grants through the Canada 150 Community Infrastructure and the Ontario Trillium Foundation for:

- Plattsville Park Surface and Equipment;
- Plattsville Park Splash Pad;
- Richwood Community Hall Ramp & Washrooms;
- Drumbo Park Splash Pad.

The Township is committed to seeking additional funding opportunities to aid in the removal of barriers and improving accessibility within its municipal borders.

Legislative Background

Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA)

The Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA), was enacted in 2001. The Act requires municipalities to develop an annual accessibility plan aimed at identifying, removing and preventing barriers to accessibility.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) was enacted in 2005. The purpose of the Act is to develop, implement and enforce accessibility standards in order to remove barriers for Ontarians with disabilities in relation to products, services, facilities, accommodations, employment, structures and premises.

Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (O. Reg. 191/11) [IASR]

The IASR establishes accessibility standards and introduces requirements for:

- Accessible Customer Service Standard
- Information and Communications Standard
- Employment Standard
- Transportation Standard
- Design of Public Spaces Standard

Canadians with Disabilities Act

The Government of Canada is planning new legislation known as the Canadians with Disabilities Act. Employment and Social Development Canada consulted with Canadians on planned accessibility legislation from July 2016 to February 2017.

Ontario Building Code

The Ontario Building Code outlines accessibility / barrier-free design requirements in newly constructed buildings and existing buildings that are to be extensively renovated. There are many accessibility requirements for barrier-free access.

Ontario Human Rights Code

The Ontario Human Rights Code is an individual, complaints-based legislation that addresses discrimination. The Ontario Human Rights Code requires organizations to accommodate people with disabilities to the point of undue hardship.

Progress on AODA/IASR to Date

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

Customer Service Standard

Customer Service

The Township follows our Corporate Guidelines for Delivering Accessible Customer Service in daily operations.

All staff and Council have completed the required training (through the use of a self-study package) in order to successfully assist individuals with disabilities. The Clerks Department attends further training.

Accessible Customer Service Standards are also built into the Township's procurement policies and procedures.

Township of Blandford-Blenheim is committed to making emergency procedures, plans or public safety information available to the public in an accessible format or with appropriate communication supports.

Council Meetings

The Township began livestreaming the Township Council meetings in Spring 2023 to YouTube. YouTube has their own accessibility features such as closed captioning and playback speed adjustments to make the stream more accessible. The option to watch Council meetings from anywhere is also an accessible feature.

Township staff have also implemented a process for individuals to participate in the meeting virtually. The Township subscribes to Webex, a virtual meeting tool, which is linked so those participating virtually are part of the stream.

Township staff have furthermore updated the audio-visual system in the Council chambers, which provides a clearer sound and picture for those listening and watching.

Adult Drop-in-Centre

The Township hosts a drop-in-centre for adults weekly. The drop-in is hosted at two municipal halls, Plattsville Lion's Hall and the Princeton Centennial Hall, both of which are barrier free. Drumbo drop-in is hosted at the local senior's apartment, which is also barrier free. Programming makes inclusivity a priority.

Municipal Election, 2022

Several measures were taken by municipal staff to ensure increased accessibility during the 2022 municipal elections. These included accessibility audits of all polling locations, and training staff to assist persons with disabilities who required assistance filling out forms, filling out a ballot, or accessing voting locations.

Snow Removal in Township Villages

The Township of Blandford-Blenheim Public Works Department removes snow and applies salt to melt ice on all the sidewalks in the villages of Bright, Drumbo, Plattsville and Princeton. This ensures barrier free public spaces and connecting routes even in the winter.

Information and Communication Standard

Corporate Website

The Township is increasingly moving services and documents online so that residents have the option to complete tasks in person or online. In 2023, the Township of Blandford-Blenheim corporate website was redesigned to update the functioning as well as content of the site to provide a better user experience.

In collaboration with the upper tier, Oxford County Information Services Team, as well as private specialists in municipal websites, GHD Digital, content on the Township website was reorganized to allow visitors to more easily find what they are looking for. The search function was improved to return relevant results. Content was reorganized to be less crowded and more simply organized. Content employs all required accessible features such as captioning and optical character recognition to ensure that information is accessible and that content is compatible with accessible software, such as screen readers. Staff receive monthly reports regarding the accessibility of the website and are regularly providing maintenance to the website to fix any accessibility errors. All documents uploaded to the website are converted into accessible formats first. Photos all have alternate text assigned.

Municipal Newsletter

The Township's municipal newsletter, published bi-annually is available on the Township website in an accessible PDF format.

Employment Standard

Policies

The Township has fulfilled all legislative requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation. This includes:

- Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy;
- Performance Management, Career Advancement and Redeployment Policy;

- Work Accommodation and Return to Work Policy;
- Accessibility Training Policy;
- Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy; and,
- Recruitment and Hiring Procedures Policy.

The multi-year accessibility plan was reviewed and updated.

Education

Staff in the Clerks Department attended annual Joint Accessibility Committee meetings for information purposes.

Transportation Standard

The Township does not provide transportation to the public.

Design of Public Spaces Standard (Built Environment) Subdivision Creation and Expansion in Township Villages

New development and expansion to current development areas, as part of Subdivisions Agreements must comply with AODA/IASR Standards. Curb lowering and textile plates on sidewalks at intersections or crossing areas have been implemented in development areas of Bright, Drumbo, Plattsville and Princeton Villages.

Princeton Road Reconstruction

All sidewalks in the Village of Princeton have been reconstructed. Curb lowering and textile plates on sidewalks at intersections or crossing areas have been implemented.

Plattsville Park Splash Pad

Plattsville Park has a newly installed Splash Pad which is barrier free and features accessible water play structures. There is an accessible pathway from the parking area to the splash pad for barrier free access. Picnic tables have been installed with accessible features such as three benches and one benchless side for mobility devices, wheelchairs or strollers to park at. The picnic tables are strategically placed so that users may benefit from natural shade of the park trees.

Other Requirements

Reporting

The Township of Blandford-Blenheim files annual accessibility compliance reports, as required.

Goals for Compliance with AODA/IASR for 2024-2028

Customer Service Standard

Customer Service

The Township's Accessible Customer Service Policy Manual will continue to be complied with, and reviewed by staff to ensure the Township is providing an adequate level of Accessible Customer Service to the public. Township staff will continue to be made aware of the Township's Accessibility Plan and Township's Accessibility Policies. New employees will be notified and trained on existing policies for accommodating persons with disabilities. Accessible formats for policies and procedures will continue to be made available.

Youth Drop-in-Centre

The Township is continuously working with community groups and residents to offer an accessible space for youth, similar to the drop-in-centre for adults. The Township is committed to all programming being hosted in accessible locations and making inclusivity a priority.

Information and Communication Standard

Corporate Website

The Township shall continue to ensure that all features and additions to the corporate website or any Township-owned website meet or exceed AODA/IASR Standards. In collaboration with the Oxford County Information Services Team, routine website redesigns will meet WCAG 2.0 Level AA or higher.

Design of Public Spaces Standard (Built Environment)

Drumbo Park Pavilion

The Pavilion in the Drumbo Park is to have an addition installed. This addition will have a level entrance and a crushed stone path for barrier free access. The existing pavilion is to be retrofitted to include a multi-purpose pad with lines and materials for multiple sports.

Plattsville Park Playground

Playgrounds are intended to develop the physical, cognitive, sensory and social skills of children. Accessible play spaces are a priority in the Township. The surface of the Plattsville Park Playground is to be rubberized in 2024 to provide unitary surfacing. Accessible play features are to be added in order to offer more choice.

Plattsville Park Multipurpose Pad

Plattsville Park is to have a multipurpose pad installed. It will be a hard surface with lines and materials for multiple sports.

Trails

The Township is looking at creating walking trails around certain storm water management ponds in the Villages. Future walking paths and trails are to incorporate crushed stone to create a barrier-free surface. This is essential not only for those with disabilities, it benefits seniors with mobility difficulties and families travelling with young children using strollers or wagons.

Benches in the Village of Drumbo

Four benches within the Village of Drumbo are to be installed in the downtown core. The pad on which the benches sit is to be lengthened to accommodate the parking of wheelchairs, mobility devices, strollers or wagons.

Electric Vehicle Chargers

The Township is seeking funding for Electric Vehicle Chargers throughout the municipality. Accessible considerations will be made such as a wider parking space to access the charger as well as curb cuts to allow mobility devices to access any sidewalk or other amenities near the charger.

Public Spaces

The Township is committed to ensuring that any new or redeveloped public spaces meet the Design of Public Spaces Standards (Part 4.1). Consultation for Outdoor Play Spaces, On-Street Parking, and Recreational Trails are ongoing.

Princeton Fire Hall

The construction of a barrier-free fire hall in Princeton is to be completed.

Princeton Park

Accessible pathway to be constructed in the Princeton Park leading to the multi-purpose pad. This will assist wheelchairs and other mobility aid devices in gaining access to a hard-surface recreation pad with the opportunity to play multiple sports.

Township Village Sidewalks

The Township is committed to continue removing snow and applying salt to melt ice on all the sidewalks in the villages of Bright, Drumbo, Plattsville and Princeton.

Other Requirements Reporting

The Township of Blandford-Blenheim is committed to continue filing annual accessibility compliance reports, as required.

Review and Monitoring

The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will be reviewed and updated at least once every five years. An annual status report will be completed to document the progress and measures taken to implement the Township of Blandford-Blenheim's strategy and meet the requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation.

Feedback

The Township of Blandford-Blenheim welcomes public input as feedback helps to identify areas where changes need to be considered and ways in which the Township can improve facilities, products and services. Should a member of the public wish to provide feedback, comments or suggestion please contact the Clerks Department in the Administration Office at generalmail@blandfordblenheim.ca or 519-463-5347 or toll-free at 1-800-410-6882.

Availability of the Plan

The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will be made available through:

Website:

This Plan can be accessed through the Township of Blandford-Blenheim's website. <http://www.blandfordblenheim.ca/Accessibility>

Hard Copy:

The Plan may be accessed at Township of Blandford-Blenheim Administration Office:
47 Wilmot Street South, Drumbo, ON, N0J 1G0

Contact Information

For more information, contact the Township of Blandford-Blenheim Clerks Department:

519-463-5347 | 1-800-410-6882 | generalmail@blandfordblenheim.ca

Township of Blandford-Blenheim Clerks Department
47 Wilmot Street South, Drumbo, ON, N0J 1G0