

The Corporation of the Town of Blind River

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and Policies 2016 – 2020

Introduction

This accessibility plan outlines policies and actions to be implemented by the Town of Blind River for a five-year period, commencing in 2016, in order to improve access and opportunities for people with disabilities.

This multi-year plan will be reviewed and updated annually. Reports of annual reviews will be posted in digital format on the website for the Town of Blind River. Reports of annual reviews will also be available in print format for review at the reception counter at the municipal office.

Guiding Legislation

In accordance with the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA), municipalities and public organizations incorporated accessibility planning into their day-to-day operations and design of facilities. Accessibility planning was initiated in order to comply with the stated purpose of the Act: “to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities and to provide for their involvement in the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to their full participation in the life of the province.” The implementation of accessibility planning was documented by annual plans

In 2005, the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA), was enacted to serve as a framework for the establishment of accessibility standards in five areas:

- Customer service
- Information and communications
- Transportation
- Employment
- The built environment

Guiding Legislation (con’t)

Both public and private sector organizations are required to comply with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. Not only does the Act acknowledge “the history of discrimination against persons with disabilities in Ontario,” but its stated purpose is to “benefit all Ontarians” through the establishment of two primary objectives:

- (a) developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises on or before January 1, 2015; and
- (b) providing for an involvement of persons with disabilities, of the Government of Ontario and of representatives of industries and of various sectors of the economy in the development of the accessibility standards. 2005, c. 11, s. 1

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, ensures that people with disabilities will be included in all aspects of society.

Statement of Commitment

The Town of Blind River regards all people with dignity and respect while acknowledging and maintaining the independence of each person. Dedicated to integration and equal opportunity, the Town of Blind River is committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner, to the removal and elimination of barriers to accessibility, and to compliance with accessibility requirements under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

The Town of Blind River supports the full inclusion of all persons with disabilities in accordance with the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. Accordingly, the Town of Blind River will ensure compliance with accessibility requirements in four key areas:

- Customer Service
- Information and Communications
- Employment
- Accessibility Standards of the Built Environment

The Town of Blind River is committed to the provision of services in ways that respect the dignity and independence of all persons with disabilities in the community

The Town of Blind River strives to ensure that every employee and constituent receives equitable treatment with respect to employment and services without discrimination.

The Town of Blind River meets the accommodation needs of employees and constituents in a timely manner as required by the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*

Accessible Emergency Information

The Town of Blind River is committed to the provision of emergency information, available to the public, in an accessible format upon request. The

Town of Blind River will also provide individualized emergency response information to its employees with disabilities when necessary.

Training

The Town of Blind River will train staff members, employees and volunteers to ensure that they are aware of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and the *Ontario Human Rights Code* as it applies to people with disabilities. Such training will be provided in a way that best suits the roles and duties of staff members, employees and volunteers.

Kiosks

The Town of Blind River does not provide information or offer services by using kiosks at this time. In the future, if kiosks are utilized by the municipality, the Town of Blind River will procure self-service kiosks designed to comply with accessibility standards in order to meet the needs of people with disabilities.

Procurement

The Town of Blind River will apply accessibility criteria to its procedures for the purchase and acquisition of goods, services and facilities.

Information and Communications

The Town of Blind River is committed to meeting the communication requirements of people with disabilities. Through its Accessibility Advisory Committee, the Town of Blind River will consult with people with disabilities in order to identify their information and communications requirements.

The Town of Blind River will continue to ensure that content on its municipal website conforms with accessibility standards.

The Town of Blind River will ensure that existing feedback processes are provided to people with disabilities in an accessible format upon request.

The Town of Blind River will continue to ensure that all information available to the public is also available to people with disabilities in an accessible format upon request.

Employment

The Town of Blind River is committed to fair and accessible employment practices. During the hiring process, the Town of Blind River will make every effort possible to accommodate people with disabilities during the recruitment and assessment stages.

The Town of Blind River will develop and implement a process for the creation of individualized accommodation plans and return-to-work policies for its employees who have been absent from work due to a disability.

The Town of Blind River will take into account the accessibility requirements of employees with disabilities during the performance management, career development and redeployment processes.

Design of Public Spaces

The Town of Blind River will meet the Accessibility Standards for the Design of Public Spaces when it undertakes major modifications of its public spaces or when it builds new public spaces. Public spaces include the following:

- Recreational trails and beach access routes
- Outdoor public eating areas, such as rest stops and picnic areas
- Outdoor play spaces, such as children's playgrounds in municipal parks
- Outdoor paths of travel, such as sidewalks, ramps, stairs, curb ramps, rest areas and accessible pedestrian signals
- Accessible off-street parking
- Service-related elements, such as service counters, fixed queuing lines and waiting areas

The Town of Blind River will make every effort to prevent service disruptions to the accessible areas and features of its public spaces

In the event of a service disruption, the Town of Blind River will notify the public and advise them about available alternatives.

Barrier Identification

It is the intent of the multi-year accessibility plan for the Town of Blind River to prevent, identify and remove barriers or obstacles that limit or prevent people with disabilities from engaging in day-to-day activities taken for granted by people without disabilities.

A barrier may be defined as anything that inhibits or prevents a person with a disability from full participation in all aspects of society due to his or her disability.

There are several types of barriers to be considered:

Environmental Barriers: features, buildings or spaces that restrict or impede physical access.

Communication Barriers: obstacles that restrict or impede the processing, transmission and interpretation of information

Attitudinal Barriers: prejudgments or assumptions that directly or indirectly discriminate against a person with a disability

Technological Barriers: when technology cannot be or is not modified to support various assistive devices and/or software.

Systemic Barriers: policies, practices and procedures within an organization that do not take accessibility into consideration

Report of Recent Achievements

The Town of Blind River has improved accessibility or removed barriers as follows:

- Created accessible space at the reception desk in the municipal office
- Constructed wheelchair ramp at the Blind River Public Library
- Designated accessible parking spaces in the downtown core and at municipal facilities
- Designated additional accessible parking spaces at the Blind River Community Centre
- Constructed curb cut-outs to improve wheelchair accessibility in the downtown core
- Incorporated accessibility features, including increased font size and vision-impaired audio adapter, when developing the new municipal website
- Upgraded highway traffic lights to include audible signals for pedestrians with visual disabilities

Customer Service

Accessible Customer Service Standard regulation implementation

- Accessible Customer Service Train the Trainer with Accessibility Consultant
- Accessible Customer Service Policy created and posted in the staff policy manual
- Relevant staff training in Accessible Customer Service
- Filed mandatory compliance report with Province of Ontario

Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy

Integrated Accessibility Standards regulation implementation

- Accessibility Statement of Commitment and Multi-Year Accessibility policy created
- Planning and preparation underway for upcoming standards in Employment, Information and Communication, Build

Measures Planned for 2016 and Beyond

Planned Measure	Assigned To:	Due Date:
<p>Category: Accessible Customer Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise all staff alternative formats for emergency planning available • Advise all constituents/customer alternative formats available for emergency plans/information • Create accessible reception counter at the municipal marina • Complete engineering study to identify best locations for accessible picnic tables in municipal parks and to plan construction of pathways to accessible table sites. • Install one accessible picnic table per year in municipal parks upon completion of engineering study • Create accessible parking spots at municipal parks during the program to install new accessible picnic tables • Investigate the installation of an audio induction loop system in the council chambers at the municipal office to assist ratepayers with reduced ranges of hearing • Assess Sellers Park to determine feasibility of improving access to the shoreline of Lake Huron for persons with disabilities 	<p>Staff Name or Position</p>	<p>A.S.A.P.</p> <p>A.S.A.P.</p> <p>2020</p> <p>December 2016</p> <p>2020</p> <p>2020</p> <p>2020</p> <p>2020</p>

<p>Category: Information and Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish an annual award for individuals or private-sector organizations in recognition of significant contributions to the improvement of accessibility in the community • Initiate a feasibility study to explore the possibility of streaming council meetings in order to improve access to local government for people with disabilities • Host a symposium for local private-sector businesses, with representatives from Accessibility Ontario, to promote and facilitate the continued development of Blind River as an accessible community • Utilize the local community channel and municipal website to provide accessibility “tips” and to increase awareness about available resources for residents and visitors with disabilities 		<p>2020</p> <p>2020</p> <p>2020</p> <p>2020</p>
<p>Category: Transportation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to operate the handi-lift bus to provide accessible transportation for seniors and people with disabilities 		<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Category: Employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the municipal office to plan for the elimination of 		<p>2020</p>

accessibility barriers for employees with disabilities		
<p>Category: The Built Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace wheelchair ramp at Timber Village Museum • Conduct architectural and engineering study of municipal office to determine feasibility of renovations for the elimination of barriers to accessibility • Assess Seniors Centre to determine feasibility of providing accessible access to deck at rear of the facility • Assess Berthelot Park to determine feasibility of improving accessibility for residents and disabled veterans at the cenotaph during Remembrance Day service 		<p>August 2016</p> <p>2016</p> <p>2020</p> <p>2020</p>

For more information on this accessibility plan, or for a copy in an alternative format, please contact **Kathryn Scott, Clerk Administrator:**

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This Document is Available in Alternative Formats Upon Request