



MUNICIPALITY OF NORTH MIDDLESEX

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

2023-2028

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Introduction

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

In June 2005, the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005* (AODA) was enacted into law. The AODA is more comprehensive and prescriptive than the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* from 2001 and applies to the public sector, as well as private and non-profit organizations. The AODA requires the development of accessibility standards, compliance deadlines, and administrative penalties for non-compliance.

The fundamental purpose of the AODA is to ensure that Ontario is accessible by 2025. Ontario is the first and only Canadian jurisdiction to regulate accessibility standards.

Standards Development Committees were established in the following areas:

- Customer Service
- Information and Communications
- Employment
- Transportation
- Built Environment

Each standard has established implementation targets and compliance requirements for obligated organizations.

The AODA requires accessibility of goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment as well as information and communications.

Implementation Strategy

North Middlesex supports the spirit and goals of the AODA to make the Province of Ontario accessible by 2025. The municipality is striving to become more accessible and inclusive to people with disabilities by ensuring accessibility is a reality throughout all facilities and business operations. Ensuring accessibility is integrated into all municipal initiatives, business practices, boards, committees departments and divisions. The County of Middlesex and all participating municipalities are committed to fulfilling the requirements.

Participating Municipalities

This multi-year accessibility plan is prepared jointly between the County and the following participating municipalities:

- Township of Adelaide Metcalfe
- Township of Lucan Biddulph
- Municipality of Middlesex Centre
- Municipality of North Middlesex
- Municipality of Southwest Middlesex
- Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc

- Municipality of Thames Centre
- Village of Newbury

Statement of Commitment

The Municipality of North Middlesex is committed to eliminating barriers and improving accessibility for people with disabilities in a manner that respects dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity.

North Middlesex 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. North Middlesex 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 under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*.

Middlesex Accessibility Advisory Committee

The AODA requires municipalities to establish an Accessibility Advisory Committee, where the population exceeds 10,000.

The Middlesex Accessibility Advisory Committee is a public committee that is comprised of people with disabilities and staff members from the County and local municipalities. The purpose of the committee is to provide advice to Councils on the removal and prevention of barriers.

Monitor and Review

This 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 North Middlesex's strategy and meet the requirements under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation.

Plan Coordination

The County's Accessibility Coordinator is responsible for the development of this plan, in consultation with the participating municipalities and the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Municipal Contact Information

Municipality	Contact
County of Middlesex 399 Ridout Street North London ON N6A 2P1	Jennifer Cowan, Accessibility Coordinator Kathy Bunting, County Clerk
Township of Adelaide Metcalfe 2340 Egremont Drive, R.R.#5 Strathroy, ON N7G 3H6	Mike Barnier, Clerk
Township of Lucan Biddulph 33351 Richmond St., P.O. Box 190 Lucan, ON N0M 2J0	Ron Reymer, CAO Lisa deBoer, Clerk
Municipality of Middlesex Centre 10227 Ilderton Road, R.R. #2 Ilderton, ON N0M 2A0	Michael DiLullio, CAO James Hutson, Clerk
Municipality of North Middlesex 229 Main Street, P.O. Box 9 Parkhill ON N0M 2K0	Carolyn Tripp, CAO Ashley Cook, Clerk
Municipality of Southwest Middlesex 153 McKellar Street, P.O. Box 218 Glencoe, ON N0L 1M0	Alan Bushell, Administrator-Clerk
Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc 52 Frank Street Strathroy, ON N7G 2R4	Trisha McKibbin, CAO Brianna Hammer-Keidel Deputy Clerk
Municipality of Thames Centre 4305 Hamilton Road, Dorchester ON N0L 1G3	Sara Henshaw, Clerk David Barrick, CAO
Village of Newbury 22910 Hagerty Road, Newbury, ON N0L 1Z0	Cathy Case, Clerk-Treasurer

Timelines and Deliverables

Outcomes

- People with disabilities will have access to accessible services
- People with disabilities will have access to alternate formats and communication supports for any information that the Municipality produces
- A barrier-free recruitment process
- Greater accessibility in Municipal-owned facilities
- Municipal staff able to identify barriers to accessibility and actively seek solutions to prevent and remove barriers

Approach

- Develop policies and procedures
- Incorporate accessibility into planning processes
- Train staff
- Engage the public in feedback
- Work to remove barriers to employment
- Continue to make facilities accessible
- Ensure there is access to information and communications

Timelines

2012-2013:

- The development of policies
- Developing a multi-year accessibility plan
- Purchasing requirements
- Emergency and public safety information
- Report to the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario (2013)

2014-2021:

- In 2014, The Municipality of North Middlesex completed construction of a fully accessible Shared Services Centre in North Middlesex that contains the Administration Offices/Council Chambers/Service Ontario and Parkhill Library Branch.
- Municipal sidewalk replacement program is ongoing and takes into account accessibility needs.
- Employment
- Training
- Feedback process
- Accessible formats and communication supports
- Accessible Websites and web content
- Report to the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario (2015, 2017, 2019, 2021,2022)

- Design of Public Spaces Regulation
- Accessible Customer Service update

North Middlesex Accessibility Achievements

Training

- Trained staff on accessibility regulations in 2013. This training is provided on an ongoing basis when new employees are hired. The training includes:
 - A review of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and its regulations (including the Accessible Customer Service Standard and the Integrated Accessibility Standard) On-Line Training and Quiz
 - An overview of the Ontario Human Rights Code
 - How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disability.
 - How to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a guide dog or other service animal or the assistance of a support person.
 - How to use equipment or devices available on the provider's premises or otherwise provided by the provider that may help with the provision of goods or services to a person with a disability.
 - What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing the provider's goods or services.
- Developed training document for volunteers. This training is provided on an ongoing basis when new volunteers come on board.
- Ongoing Training of staff on "creating accessible documents". The training includes:
 - The basics of how to build an accessible Word document
 - Tips and best practices
 - How to test for accessibility within a document
 - Plain language and colour contrast
 - A review of making Excel spreadsheets and PowerPoint presentations accessible (this is provided to staff based on job duties)
 - Reviewing an accessible PDF

Accessible Websites and Web Content

- Templates
 - Created templates to assist in making documents accessible. This includes Council reports, bylaws and minutes on an ongoing basis as time permits for staff with ongoing daily workload
- Websites updated in 2014, 2016, 2021
 - In 2014, the Municipality launched a new website. The website has been made accessible in accordance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0. In 2016, the Municipality is undergoing an update to the website and will ensure compliance with the regulations are met in consultation with the web designer. 2021 new website was launched. Continuous improvements made to increase accessibility.
- 2022 Municipal Election – Alternative Voting Method (Telephone/Internet)

- Accessible Emergency Plan
 - Community Emergency Management Plan is currently available on the municipal website and in hard copy at the administration office front counter. Alternate formats can be obtained by contacting the Clerk's office.

Policies

- Accessible Customer Service policy developed in 2009, reviewed 2017, 2021
- Developed Corporate Accessibility policy which includes the requirements under the Accessible Customer Service Standard and the Integrated Accessibility Standard.
- Developed Accommodations in the Workplace policy which outlines the process that staff must follow when requesting an accommodation. The policy also outlines the process for accommodations being provided during the recruitment process.

Purchasing

- Amended purchasing policy in 2017.

Feedback Process

- Members of the public can submit their feedback using the form printed from the municipal website or in person through the municipal office. The Municipality welcomes feedback regarding accessibility.
 - When the Municipality receives feedback, the Clerk will notify the CAO and appropriate department and make arrangements for the feedback to be followed up with.
- When seeking feedback from the public, the Municipality will provide accessible formats and/or communication supports to members of the public upon request.

Communication Supports and Accessible Formats

- Through training, the Municipality attempts to ensure that documents found on the Municipality's website (through which the Municipality has control) are accessible per the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. This is an ongoing process and documents are being updated. Members of the public can request documents in accessible formats or communication supports needed to attend meetings. Members of the public should contact the Clerk to determine the appropriate format.

Employment Requirements

- Developed Accommodations in the Workplace policy which outlines the process that staff must follow when requesting an accommodation. The policy also outlines the process for accommodations being provided during the recruitment process.
- Provided Department Heads with information on how to remove barriers to accessibility throughout the recruitment process.

- Developed accommodations procedure to ensure that accommodation requests are documented.

North Middlesex Accessibility Future Goals

Training

- Develop comprehensive purchasing training and deliver to staff responsible for making purchases.
- Develop training resources to help staff create accessible documents. (Training is currently provided in class)

Design of Public Spaces Regulation

- The Municipality will ensure compliance with the Design of Public Spaces regulation as it applies to municipal owned public spaces. The municipal staff will advise developers of these regulations to be considered during consultation meetings.

Accessible Customer Standard update

- Review the updated Accessible Customer Service standard in 2024 and implement as required.

Websites and Web Content

- Continue to monitor and update websites to ensure WCAG compliance
- Develop strategy to ensure web document compliance for documents dating back to 2012.

Policies

- Continue to review policies to ensure they are consistent with the four principles of accessibility.

Repeal of *Ontarians with Disabilities Act*

The *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (ODA) established the foundation for accessibility in the public sector by requiring municipalities to establish Accessibility Advisory Committees and develop accessibility plans. These have been municipal requirements since the legislation was enacted in 2001.

In 2005, the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) was established. The AODA allowed for the development of accessibility standards to be developed by the Province of Ontario. The Ontario government has removed sections of the ODA which are comparable to those addressed by the AODA or its regulations.

Effective December 1, 2015, twelve sections of the ODA have been repealed. These sections are largely duplicated or addressed in a comparable manner by the AODA or its regulations. This change will positively reduce the administrative burden on municipalities.

In particular, three sections of the ODA that directly impact municipalities were repealed as follows:

- Section 11 - Municipal Accessibility Plans
 - the ODA Requirement to Develop Annual Accessibility Plans
 - the AODA requires municipalities to develop multi-year accessibility plans.

- Section 12 - Accessibility Advisory Committees
 - the ODA Requirement for Municipalities to Develop Accessibility Advisory Committees (AACs)
 - the AODA requires that the majority of AAC members be persons with disabilities and provides for an expanded scope of the committee when compared with ODA-related requirements.

- Section 13 - Municipal Goods and Services
 - the ODA Requirement for Municipalities to Ensure Accessible Procurement of Goods and Services
 - the AODA requires all broader public sector organizations to incorporate accessibility into procurements of goods, services and facilities, including kiosks.

All other ODA requirements continue to be in effect. The AODA remains Ontario's primary accessibility law and municipalities will continue to be required to comply with applicable requirements in that statute and its regulations.

Accessibility committees and plan requirements from the ODA are duplicated in the AODA and therefore are unchanged.