



**TOWNSHIP OF
EAST
GARAFRAXA**

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2026-2031



Contents

Statement of Commitment	3
Message from CAO	3
Introduction	3
Township of East Garafraxa	3
Legislation	4
Definitions	4
Past Achievements to Remove and Prevent Barriers	5
1. Customer Service	5
2. Information and Communications	5
3. Employment	6
4. Procurement	6
5. Training.....	6
6. Design of Public Spaces	6
7. Other – General Accomplishments	7
Strategies and Actions	7
1. Customer Service	7
2. Information and Communications	7
3. Employment	7
4. Procurement	8
5. Training.....	8
6. Design of Public Spaces	8
7. Other.....	8
Public Engagement and Feedback	9
Communication of the Accessibility Plan	9
Contact Us	9

Statement of Commitment

The Township of East Garafraxa is committed to providing an inclusive and accessible environment that ensures equal access and participation for all individuals, including people with disabilities. We believe that accessibility and inclusion are fundamental in creating an equitable and sustainable community.

The Township recognizes that barriers can exist in many forms, and we are dedicated to identifying, removing and preventing these barriers whenever possible. Through accessibility planning, collaboration and the ongoing implementation of the Township's goals and commitments, we will work together to integrate accessibility into all aspects of our services.

Through this plan and the Township's accessibility policies, the Township of East Garafraxa remains dedicated to meeting legislative requirements while upholding the principles of dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity. This plan demonstrates our ongoing commitment to providing an accessible and inclusive environment for all members of the community.

Message from CAO

As Chief Administrative Officer, I want to reaffirm the Township's commitment to upholding accessibility standards for the community we serve. It is essential that our staff, Council, Board, and Committee Members have the tools and supports they need to perform their work effectively, and that residents are able to access timely, high-quality services in a manner that meets their individual needs. Our goal is to provide inclusive, accessible services, products, and facilities for everyone to the best of our ability.

Introduction

Based on the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) under *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act, 2005* (AODA), the Township of East Garafraxa is required to develop a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and to complete a review of the plan every five years.

Providing an accessibility plan helps the Township determine what measures need to be taken to ensure that we are recognizing, preventing and removing barriers for those with accessibility needs.

Township of East Garafraxa

The Township of East Garafraxa is a lower-tier municipality within the County of Dufferin located in south-central Ontario. With a population of 2,794 (2021 census), East Garafraxa is predominantly a rural community characterized by its agricultural lands and close commuting distance to urban centres such as Toronto, Brampton, Guelph and Kitchener.

Legislation

In 2005, the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) was passed by the Government of Ontario to help advance the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA). The purpose of these Acts are to assist public, private and non-profit organizations to identify and remove barriers, while implementing and enforcing accessibility standards to build an inclusive space for individuals with disabilities. Through the AODA and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) (Ontario Regulation 191/11) key areas for development of accessibility have been identified:

- Customer Service
- Information and Communication
- Employment
- Transportation
- Design of Public Spaces

By following these guidelines laid out in the AODA, the Township is helping to create independence and equal opportunities for all individuals in Ontario.

Definitions

As per the AODA standards, the Township of East Garafraxa strives to ensure that the definitions are understood by all individuals and are as follows:

“Disability” means,

- (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 on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
- (b) A condition of mental impairment or a 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, or
- (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*

“Barrier” means, anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, and/or a policy or practice.

Barrier Identification

Barriers can include:

Physical Barriers: A physical barrier is an obstacle that hinders one’s access, including environmental, structural or geographical challenges.

Communications Barriers: Obstacles for processing, interpreting or transmitting information.

Attitudinal Barriers: An attitudinal barrier is an obstacle from pre-conceived judgements that directly or indirectly discriminate against a person or group.

Technological Barriers: A technological barrier is when technology cannot be modified to support a person’s needs such as assistive devices and/or software.

Systemic Barriers: A systemic barrier occurs within organizations, policies, practices and procedures which do not consider or incorporate accessibility needs/requirements.

Past Achievements to Remove and Prevent Barriers

The Township of East Garafraxa has undertaken the following accessibility initiatives, including the development and implementation of accessibility policies:

1. Customer Service

The following initiatives have been implemented and maintained related to Customer Service Accomplishments:

- Continued to review and encourage customer feedback and take appropriate action if necessary.
- Continued to permit individuals to use their own personal assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from the services offered by the Township.
- Continued to accommodate the accessibility needs of people with disabilities to ensure equitable access to goods, services, programs, and facilities.
- Continued to communicate with individuals in a manner that considers their disability.

2. Information and Communications

The following initiatives have been implemented and maintained related to Information and Communications Accomplishments:

- Continued implementation of services offered online/electronically.
- Introduced online payment options for various bill payments.
- Increased delivery of online services available to the public through website upgrades including integrated forms.
- Completed a website migration project that provides improved functionality, navigation, and accessibility features and meets WCAG 2.1 Level AA.
- Introduced hybrid Council, Committee and Board Meetings providing an in-person and/or remote/electronic participation for members, staff and the public.

3. Employment

The following initiatives have been implemented and maintained related to Employment Accomplishments:

- Include wording on job postings and notify candidates that accommodations are available upon request during the recruitment and interview process.
- Inform employees of available accommodation support throughout the employment life cycle.
- Provide accessible formats or communication supports upon request.

4. Procurement

The following initiatives have been implemented and maintained related to Procurement Accomplishments:

- Embedded accessibility requirements into the procurement process.
- Implemented Bids and Tenders online platform.

5. Training

The following initiatives have been implemented and maintained related to Training Accomplishments:

- New staff and volunteers receive onboarding accessibility training and existing staff receive refresher training to ensure continued understanding and compliance.

6. Design of Public Spaces

The following initiative has been implemented and maintained that are related to the Design of Public Spaces Accomplishments:

- The Township of East Garafraxa participates in a joint Accessibility Program with the County of Dufferin. The Township has access to the County of Dufferin Accessibility Program Advisory Committee and has consulted with the Committee on major developments including parks.

7. Other – General Accomplishments

The following initiatives have been implemented and maintained related to General Accomplishments:

- Continued to ensure policies, practices and procedures address dignity, independence, integration and provided equal opportunity for people with disabilities.
- Partnerships with Community Living Dufferin, a non-for-profit organization that provides support and opportunities for adults with intellectual disabilities.
- Continued to provide accessibility training for new employees.
- Providing accessible Municipal Elections offering alternative voting and reporting on addressing accessibility barriers.
- Official Plan Review incorporating accessibility terminology into the Township's long term planning document.

Strategies and Actions

The Township is committed to meeting legislative requirements while upholding the principles of dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity and will strive to provide ensure the following strategies and actions are taken.

1. Customer Service

The Township is committed to providing accessible customer service to people with disabilities. This means that we will continue to provide goods, services and facilities to people with disabilities with the same high quality and timeliness as others.

Notice will be provided in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption to the facilities or service usually used by people with disabilities.

2. Information and Communications

The Township is committed to making our information and communications accessible to people with disabilities, and we will continue our duty in providing accessible formats to members of the community upon request.

Additionally, the Township will continue to release the Annual Status Report in accordance with the Ontarian Regulation 191/11, *Integrated Accessibility Standards* under the AODA. This report aids in outlining the progress made each year by implementing the initiatives and actions that are identified in the Multi-Year Accessibility Report.

3. Employment

The Township will continue with its recruitment practices, ensuring the public is made aware that the Township will provide accommodation for applicants with disabilities in its recruitment, assessment, and selection process including:

- Ensure applicants are made aware that upon request, they will have access to accommodation and support.
- Provide support for employees with disabilities and procedures that provide job accommodation.

4. Procurement

The Township is committed to fair and accessible procurement practices by utilizing the Bids and Tenders platform to provide a more transparent and accessible tool for purchasers and suppliers. While continuing to ensure that we are doing our duty to have practicable, accessibility criteria feature when needed.

5. Training

The Township is committed to providing training on the requirements of Ontario's accessibility laws, Ontario Human Rights Code and Township Accessibility Policies as it applies to people with disabilities. Staff and volunteers will receive initial accessibility training as well as refresher training to ensure continued understanding and compliance.

6. Design of Public Spaces

The Township will continue to collaborate and engage with the County of Dufferin Accessibility Advisory Committee when developing new initiatives and/or projects.

7. Other

- The Township will strive to Recognize Accessibility Awareness Week.
- The Township is committed to ensuring that Municipal Elections are accessible to all residents and candidates. Accessibility is a key consideration throughout the election process to ensure that barriers are removed to provide equal opportunities for participation.

The Township will implement various objectives to ensure equal opportunity for all electors and candidates.

These objectives include:

- That persons with disabilities can fully participate in the Municipal Election as an elector, candidate, or election official.
- That persons with disabilities are able to independently cast their vote and verify their selection.
- That persons with disabilities have full and equal access to all information on where and when to vote and on eligible candidates.
- That persons with disabilities can fully participate in the Municipal Election as an elector, candidate, or election official.

- That efforts are made to ensure that electors with disabilities are aware of the accessibility measures available via channels such as the newspaper, media launches, the Township website and social media.
- That the Voter Help Centre is held at an accessible facility.

Public Engagement and Feedback

The Township welcomes feedback from residents, voters, and candidates on ways to improve accessibility during elections. Feedback can be submitted through the Township's website, by email, or contacting the Clerk's Department directly.

Communication of the Accessibility Plan

The approved Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will be posted on the Township's website and will be provided in an alternative format if requested.

Contact Us

For more information on this accessibility plan please contact the Township of East Garafraxa Clerk's Department.

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