



2024 -  
2027

# Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

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## Introduction

According to the 2006 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS), approximately 4.4 million Canadians have a disability. Between 2001 and 2006 the number of people who reported having a disability increased by three-quarters of a million people. In Ontario there are approximately 1.85 million people with a disability. This represents approximately 15.5 per cent of Ontario's population and this number will continue to grow as the population ages. By 2025, it is expected that the number of Ontarians with disabilities will increase to three million people, or 20 per cent of Ontario's population.

The Council and staff at the Township of Woolwich (the Township) are committed to developing and planning for an inclusive community by identifying and removing barriers faced by persons with disabilities that access Township facilities, programs and services. This Multi-Year Accessibility Plan outlines the initiatives the Township is planning to deliver to identify and remove barriers for persons with disabilities.

The Township is working hard to preserve, protect and grow the lifestyle elements and amenities that make Woolwich a desirable community to live in. With a dedication to providing for inclusive and accessible communities, the Township will continue to implement the legislated requirements in accordance with the AODA with the goal of improving and expanding opportunities for persons with disabilities, and identifying, removing and preventing barriers for their full participation in the life of the community.

By removing barriers for persons with disabilities, we are removing barriers for everyone!

## Provincial Legislation

### Accessibility for Ontarians With Disabilities Act, 2005

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, S.O. 2005, c.11 (the "AODA") became law on June 13, 2005. Under this legislation, the government of Ontario has developed mandatory accessibility standards to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities in key areas of daily living. The standards will apply to private and public sector organizations across Ontario.

As required, the Township will make this Multi-year Accessibility Plan available on the Township website at [www.woolwich.ca](http://www.woolwich.ca). Upon request, a paper copy or an alternate format which meets the needs of the requester will be made available.

### Integrated Accessibility Standards

The Integrated Accessibility Standards, Ontario Regulation 191/11, apply to all public, private and not-for-profit organizations with at least one employee. The requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards are being phased-in between 2011 and 2025. Accessibility Standards focus on five key areas:

1. The Accessible Customer Service standard states the requirements regarding providing customer service to persons with disabilities. The Township is required to ensure that all staff, including third party contractors, are trained in providing accessible customer service.
2. Accessible Information and Communication standards address the removal of barriers with respect to access to information. These standards could include information being provided in person, through alternate print format, a website or other means which meet the needs of an individual.
3. The goal of the accessibility standards for the design of public spaces and the built environment is to remove barriers in public spaces and buildings. The Design of Public Spaces standards have been incorporated under the Ontario Building Code and will only apply to new construction and renovation in buildings. The design of public spaces addresses outdoor public spaces such as accessible parking, paths of travel such as sidewalks, ramps, stairs, playground equipment and picnics areas.
4. Employment accessibility standards address employment practices relating to employee-employer relationships including matters such as recruitment, hiring and retention policies and practices.
5. Accessible transportation standards have been identified as essential for people with disabilities. Access to transportation is needed for going to work, school, shopping and other aspects of daily life. This standard applies to accessible public transportation.

## Accessible Services

### Council and Committee Meetings

- Council and Committee meetings are now offered in a hybrid format. Viewers or participants can attend virtually through Zoom or watching the YouTube livestream. Viewers or participants can also attend in-person where the meetings are typically held in the Council Chambers on the Second Floor of the Administration Office at 24 Church Street West in Elmira.
- Agendas are available online and cover sheets are available in paper outside the meeting. Alternate formats including large print are available upon request.
- Council uses microphones during meetings. Assistive listening devices are available for use in the Council Chambers for persons who are hearing impaired or who use hearing aids, free of charge.
- Upon advanced request, the Township will schedule an American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreters for Council and Committee meetings. All requests are subject to the availability of Interpreters. Each meeting typically requires two Interpreters.

## Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee (GRAAC)

The Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee (GRAAC) is an advisory committee made up of 15 volunteers and advises the Councils of the Region of Waterloo, the Cities of Kitchener and Waterloo and the Townships of Woolwich, Wilmot, Wellesley and North Dumfries. Staff representatives from each municipality participate in an annual joint recruitment process to recommend members be appointed to fill GRAAC vacancies by each municipal Council.

GRAAC may provide advice and guidance to Council by reviewing the following:

- site plans for new and major renovations of municipal buildings;
- plans for parks and trails;
- accessibility policies and procedures including annual accessibility plans

## Employment

- Woolwich Township is committed to diversity and inclusion and offers an accessible workplace. The Township is an equal opportunity employer, committed to meeting the needs of applicants during all phases of the hiring process.
- The Township values diversity in our workforce and focuses on attracting and retaining employees who can work together effectively to meet the needs of our great community. New employees receive accessibility training as required for their position and accommodations are provided where needed.

## Recreation and Events

- An accessible portable washroom is provided annually at Letson Park in West Montrose from May through to October, funded through the Recreation and Community Services annual operating budget. Additionally, the Township provides accessible portable washrooms at major events such as the Township's annual Canada Day Celebration.
- Kate's Place is available for children with all levels of abilities to enjoy at Gibson Park in Elmira. Kate's Place has a variety of equipment including a sensory wall, zip lines, accessible swings, ramps, climbing equipment and slides. An accessible washroom is available at Kate's Place annually from May until October. Additionally, through the renewal of Township park facilities, the Township applies an accessibility lens to ensure new park playgrounds and walkways are compliant with AODA legislation for outdoor spaces. Some highlights from 2023 included replacement of accessible playground surfacing at Bolender Park, replacement of pea stone surfacing at a number of playgrounds for a more accessible option, and installation of multi-use trails through new park development.
- The Township offers a Personal Attendance for Leisure (PAL) Card program to make participating in recreation and leisure programs possible, comfortable and more enjoyable for people with disabilities. PAL cards can be used at public swims, fitness classes skates and Township run community centre programs The PAL Card program runs

on a reciprocal basis with the Cities of Kitchener, Guelph, Waterloo and Cambridge. The PAL Card program is advertised on the Township's website, the Community Guide, the Township's Community Page and social media.

### Township Website

- The Township website is maintained in accordance with the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) standards. An accessibility check of the Township website is completed regularly to ensure WCAG 2.0 Level AA requirements are being met.
- Woolwich is working towards delivering even more services to residents in a convenient and accessible way using the Township website and other online services.

### Snow Clearing and Windrows

- Each winter, the Township hires an independent contractor to remove snow from the sidewalks in Elmira, including the removal of windrows. The average cost in 2023 to an Elmira property owner for this service is \$60.31 each winter season.
- Settlements, other than Elmira, are regulated by the Sidewalk Snow Clearing By-law. Residents are required to clear sidewalks of ice and snow within 24 hours of the end of a snowfall. By-law Enforcement staff respond to complaints of sidewalks that have not been cleared.
- In 2023, Corporate Services staff began to implement daily checks of all school crossing locations for ice, snow and windrows in Woolwich through an independent contractor during the winter months.

### Accessible Parking

- The Township's Zoning By-law includes standards for accessible parking spaces. Accessible parking spaces have been installed by the Township or the Region of Waterloo in the downtown cores of Elmira and St. Jacobs.
- There are accessible parking spaces in all municipal Township lots. The Township responds to requests for additional accessible parking spaces on a case-by-case basis.

### Township Emergency Plan/Emergency Evacuation Plans

- Emergency Evacuation Plans are available for the Township Administration Office. Fire Safety Plans are available for the Woolwich Memorial Centre, Breslau Community Centre and Maryhill Heritage Community Centre. These plans are available in alternate formats upon request.
- All designated reception areas in the Township's Emergency Plan are accessible.
- Township volunteer firefighters receive specified training on assisting and helping move persons with disabilities during an emergency. The Township's Administration Office Emergency Procedures include guidance to those assisting a person with a disability during an emergency.

- In the event of an emergency evacuation at any facility, designated staff check all areas of a building before exiting. Upon exit, they alert emergency response personnel of any situations which require attention.
- As part of the Township's Emergency Preparedness Education Week, the Township provides information on emergency preparedness for all members of the public, including persons with disabilities.

## Township Facilities

In 2007 an Accessibility Audit of all Township facilities was completed to highlight areas for accessible facility improvements. Facility upgrades are made within approved operating and capital budgets each year and staff will begin working to update the 2007 audit in 2024.

### Administration Office

- The Township's Administration Office has an elevator, automated door paddles and a public accessible family washroom on the main floor.

### Community Centres

- Woolwich Memorial Centre (WMC): This facility has two ice pads, a swimming pool, therapy pool, fitness centre, walking track, senior's centre and youth centre and accommodates sledge hockey, fitness classes and other community and sports-tourism events. It has 12 accessible parking spaces; accessible pool, accessible entrances, change rooms and washrooms; and an elevator.
- Breslau Community Centre (BCC): This facility has accessible entrances, washrooms, lift device, parking and interior automatic door paddles.
- Bloomingdale Community Centre: This facility has an accessible entrance, washroom, and parking.
- Maryhill Heritage Community Centre: This facility has accessible entrances, washrooms and parking.
- Heidelberg Community Centre: This facility has accessible entrances and washrooms.
- St. Jacobs Arena: This single pad arena has accessible entrances, washrooms and parking.

### Libraries

- Elmira Library: The Elmira Library, owned by the Township and operated by the Region of Waterloo, has an accessible entrance, elevator and washrooms.
- St. Jacobs Library: This building is owned by the Township and operated by the Region of Waterloo. Staff is aware of the need to develop a retrofit plan for this facility to improve accessibility, considering its heritage and character.

- Breslau Library: The Breslau Library, situated in the lower level of the Breslau Community Centre, is owned by the Township and operated by the Region of Waterloo, has an accessible entrance, lift and washrooms.

### Temporary Disruptions and Maintenance

The Township will notify customers in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities, including information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available. Notice may be given by posting the information at a conspicuous place on premises owned or operated by the Township, by posting it on the Township's website or by such other method as is reasonable in the circumstances.

## Multi-Year Accessibility Initiatives 2024 - 2027

Within the general requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards, Accessibility Plans are to be reviewed at least once every five years, and municipalities are to prepare an annual status report on the progress of measures taken to implement the Accessibility Plan. This Multi-Year Accessibility Plan covers the 4-year period of 2024-2027. It represents the Township's response to the requirement and details our commitment to providing public services in an accessible manner.

Accessibility initiatives are separated into annual initiatives, to be addressed every year, and projects for individual years. Projects listed in each year may be adjusted based on Council priorities, budget and staff time. Initiatives that will be addressed every year include:

- Continue to contribute to the operation of the GRAAC, including providing staff support to GRAAC, monthly meeting attendance and up to \$500.00 financial contribution each year based on GRAAC's expenses.
- Continue to review and monitor Provincial accessibility legislation.
- Update 2007 Facility Building Accessibility Audit and implement park & sports fields accessibility upgrades with consultant and assistance from the GRAAC Built Environment Committee chair as needed.
- Provide new accessible picnic tables with the goal of at least 1 accessible picnic table in every Community Park.
- Continue to review and monitor content on the Township website in accordance with WCAG 2.0 Level AA requirements.
- Continue ongoing document and website accessibility training for all staff.
- Work to make more online services available for all residents.

### 2024 Initiatives

- In accordance with section 14(4)2. of the Integrated Accessibility Standard, ensure the Township's website meets WCAG 2.0 Level AA requirements.
- Continue to implement online payment system for more services.

- Consider implementing routine document and website accessibility training for all new staff.
- Complete an updated audit for all Township Facilities from 2007 Facility Building Accessibility Audits.
- Annual facility improvements, including:
  - Southpark Wood Park: development of a new park to include a multi-use trail, accessible multi-use pad, and accessible playground features.
  - Maryhill Park Playground Replacement to include accessible features.
  - Bolender Park: paving of the parking lot and installation of accessible parking stall.
  - Breslau Memorial Park Splashpad: installation of splashpad with accessible entranceway and splashpad features.
  - St. Jacobs Arena: accessible upgrades to the washrooms and lobby.

#### 2025 Initiatives

- Continue to meet and exceed website accessibility requirements WCAG 2.0 Level AA requirements.
- Build an accessible public washroom in St. Jacobs.
- Annual facility improvements, including:
  - Breslau Community Centre: accessible porch, entrance and exterior park washroom.
  - Sunset Hills Estate Park: playground development with accessible features.
  - Heidelberg and Hopewell Heights Parks: renovations to include accessible features.
  - Continue implementing accessibility improvements found during updated facility accessibility audit.

#### 2026 Initiatives

- Review and consider alternative voting options to increase accessibility during the 2026 Municipal Election.
- Elmira Fire Station Renovation or Replacement to implement accessible features.
- Annual facility improvements, including:
  - Riverland and Hopewell Crossing Parks: park developments to include accessible features.
  - Continue implementing accessibility improvements found during updated facility accessibility audit.



## 2027 Initiatives

- Report on accessibility features and feedback on the 2026 Municipal election.
- Begin reviewing and drafting the Township's next Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.
- Annual facility improvements, including:
  - Valleyview and Optimist Parks: playground replacements to include accessible features.
  - Hopewell Crossing Phase 2 Park: park development to include accessible features.
  - Continue implementing accessibility improvements found during updated facility accessibility audits.