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## Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2023-2027

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### Message from the Chief Administrative Officer

Champlain Township is committed to providing quality services and facilities that are accessible to all persons the Township serves. The Township will continue to work with the community and allocate appropriate resources toward the elimination of accessibility barriers in customer service, information and communication, employment, and the design of public spaces and is committed to meeting the requirements of applicable legislation, including the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Champlain is committed to eliminating barriers and improving accessibility for persons with disabilities in a manner that respects dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity.

Kevin Tessier, Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA)

Chief Administrative Officer

### Introduction

The Integrated Accessibility Standards (Ontario Regulation 191/11 under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act, 2005 (AODA)) requires the Township of Champlain to develop a multi-year accessibility plan and to review it at least once every five years. An accessibility plan outlines what steps a municipality will take to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility.

Champlain Township's 2023-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan outlines the policies, achievements and actions that Champlain Township has put in place to remove barriers and improve opportunities for persons with disabilities. The Plan details the Township's approach to building an inclusive organisation for all who live, work in and visit Champlain Township.

Champlain's 2023-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan aligns with the objectives of the Township's long-term vision while continuing to meet the Province's requirements for full development, implementation and enforcement by January 1, 2025. As such, the Township will

continue to align the 2023–2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan with the Township’s 2022–2026 Corporate Strategic Plan priorities and objectives.

## **Legislative Background**

### **Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001**

The Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA) was enacted in 2001. This regulation was intended to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities. The Act required all municipalities to assist in the identification, removal and prevention of accessibility barriers.

### **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005**

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 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 goods, services, facilities, accommodations, employment, structures and premises on or before January 1, 2025.

### **Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (O.Reg.191/11)**

The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation establishes accessibility standards and introduces requirements for:

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

As a large designated public sector organization having more than 50 employees, the Township shall comply with the dates specific to this classification.

### **Ontario Building Code**

The Ontario Building Code outlines accessibility and barrier free design requirements in newly constructed buildings and existing buildings that are to be extensively renovated.

The Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs outlines a new edition of the Building Code proposed in effect date of January 2019 with proposals to include accessibility updates.

## 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.

## Objectives of the Accessibility Plan

The objectives of the Accessibility Plan are to:

1. Review previous efforts to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities.
2. Describe the process that the Township will use to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities in the future.
3. List the Township facilities, policies, procedures, practices, and services that the Township will review in the coming years to identify barriers to people with disabilities.
4. Identify the measures that the Township will take in the coming years to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to people with disabilities.

## Accessibility Working Group

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act, 2005 states that every municipality having a population of at least 10,000 shall establish an Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) and that the majority of the members of the committee shall be persons with disabilities. Given that the population of Champlain Township is less than 10,000, Champlain Township has established an Accessibility Working Group that shall be comprised of: the Chief Administrative Officer, Chief Building Official, Communications Specialist, Director of Parks and Recreation, Director of Public Works, Senior Planner and Treasurer.

The Champlain Accessibility Working Group's (CAWG) key responsibilities and activities will be those defined for an Accessibility Advisory Committee under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 and are replicated in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 as:

- Identifying barriers;
- Providing Council and staff with recommendations for remediation of barriers;
- Providing comments on site plans they select for review; and
- Providing recommendations to the Township concerning public education associated with municipal accessibility.

## Barriers

A barrier is anything that stops, impedes, prevents or causes difficulty for a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society.

There are many kinds of barriers:

- Architectural barriers may result from the design of the building, shape of rooms, size of doorways, or width of hallways, for example.
- Physical barriers refer to objects added to the environment, such as doors, windows, elevators, furniture, bathroom hardware, etc.
- Information or communication barriers make it difficult for people to receive or send information. For example, a person with a visual disability may not be able to read printed materials, read signs, locate landmarks, or see a hazard. A person with an intellectual disability may not understand information that is not expressed in plain language.
- Attitudinal barriers refer to persons who do not know how to communicate with people with disabilities, or persons who display discriminatory behaviours.
- Technology barriers refer to devices such as computers, telephones, or inadequate or inappropriate assistive technologies.
- Systemic barriers can result from an organization's policies, practices and protocols if they restrict persons with disabilities.

## Barrier Identification Methodology

The Township Administration conducts condition audits on Township owned facilities prior to commencing renovations and provides recommendations, cost estimates for enhanced accessibility to these facilities. These recommendations form the basis for our Accessibility Plan as they pertain to physical and architectural barriers.

In addition to physical and architectural barriers, recommendations to remove other barriers identified in the Communication and Information Standard and the Employment standards are also included.

The Champlain Accessibility Working Group continues to make recommendations and decisions aligned with policies from international, national and local accessibility experts. It strives to identify the barriers, the priority of the removal of the barrier and recommend to

Council the projects that the Champlain Accessibility Working Group agrees are of the utmost importance to complete.

## **Consultation Activities**

The Township will consult on an on-going basis with local accessibility advisors.

## **Review and Monitoring Process**

Following the approval of the Accessibility Plan, staff will monitor the progress on the actions required in the plan and will be reviewed as a reoccurring agenda item for the Champlain Accessibility Working Group.

The plan will be updated at least once every five years in consultation with the Champlain Accessibility Working Group and presented to Council for approval.

## **Communication of the Plan**

Copies of this plan will be made available upon request from the Clerk's Office and on the Township's website.

The Plan will be made available in alternate formats upon request.

## **Past Achievements to Remove and Prevent Barriers**

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act, 2005's accessibility standards establish rules and timelines that businesses and organizations in Ontario must follow to effectively identify, remove and prevent barriers for persons with disabilities.

Champlain Township's first Accessibility Plan was approved by Council and introduced in 2012 and laid the groundwork for how Champlain would meet the obligations set out in the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR).

Extensive work has been carried out to ensure that the Township was in compliance with the General Requirements and each of the Five Standards. The following are milestones that have been achieved up to the end of 2022:

## 1. General Requirement Successes:

- Accessibility policies have been established to reflect the Township’s commitment in achieving the Accessible Customer Service Standard and Integrated Standards Regulation;
- A plan was established to identify, remove and prevent existing barriers for people with disabilities and indicates progress being made in accomplishing future legislative requirements;
- Accessibility features, services, and facilities are more inclusive to people with disabilities;
- All Township employees, including contracts and summer students, are trained on the requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation and the relevant portions of the Ontario Human Rights Code. This requirement is ongoing and forms part of the list of mandated training that must be completed when starting work for Champlain Township.

## Customer Service Standard Successes:

- Continued awareness of the Accessible Customer Service Standard ensuring that all residents and visitors with disabilities are treated with respect, dignity, inclusion and independence and are welcome at all of our facilities and municipal programs;
- In addition to the Accessible Customer Service Policy, there are several improvements in day-to-day procedures incorporating accessibility in various departments. Staff is better equipped to assist customers with disabilities with resources that are available to them;
- The Township has established processes for feedback and Notice of Service Disruptions;
- Emergency procedures, plans and public safety information is provided in an accessible format or with communication supports upon request;
- The Township distinguishes pets from service animals allowing access into Township facilities, property and programs;
- The Township continues its committed focus on diversity and inclusion in its hiring practices.

## **Information and Communications Standard Successes:**

- Champlain staff have been provided accessible formats and communication supports for regular use. Training on creating accessible documents was provided;
- Champlain Township holds Council meetings that are both physically accessible to the public, as well as virtually accessible via livestream.
- Champlain Township has introduced staff to the use of plain language in their writing whenever possible, so as to limit potential barriers in information sharing;
- Champlain Township has committed to ensure website accessibility for persons with disabilities. The 2017 Champlain website update incorporated Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, Level AA.

## **Employment Standard Successes:**

Champlain Township continues to focus on making employment practices more accessible through recruitment, return to work programs, employee accommodation, communication supports, performance management, career development and redeployment.

## **Design of Public Spaces Standard Successes:**

- The Chief Building Official ensures compliance with the Design of Public Spaces Standard and also all accessibility requirements in the Building Code Act, 1992;
- Accessible elements including trails, signage, playgrounds, furniture, etc. are inspected monthly as per CSA Group (Canadian Standards Association) guidelines. Accessible elements are addressed immediately or closure with service disruption is posted until it is in working order;
- A new fully inclusive playground was built in L'Original (2016) with rubber flooring, various accessible structures and swings, sensory play features and learning panels. Sacha's Park is one of few fully accessible parks for children and is an innovative project for the region;
- The Electronic public information sign was relocated to a more visible location (at the Community Centre) and provides an accessible way to get information to users with high contrast lettering;
- A new gazebo was installed at Sachas Park in L'Original (2018) that features wheelchair friendly picnic tables.
- A new splash pad was installed at Sacha's Park in L'Original (2019) as Phase 2 of the fully accessible park.

- Extra changeroom and shower are built at the Vankleek Hill arena (2019) to aid with inclusivity in sport.
- New park signs were installed (2020) in every park that are high contrast colors and easy to understand.
- A new accessible water fountain was installed at Sachas Park in L'Original (2021).
- A new play structure Miner Park that includes accessible swings, accessible play features and plastic boarders and a plastic ramp with mulch bedding (2022).

## Looking Forward – Strategies and Actions 2023–2027

### Champlain Township's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Champlain Township continues to be proactive in identifying, removing and preventing barriers to ensure that everyone can participate fully in a diverse and growing community.

By addressing barriers, people with disabilities will be able to maintain their dignity and live more independently in a community that supports them. The Champlain Township 2023–2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan aims to create a more inclusive community that people with all abilities can participate in.

#### General Requirements Goals:

- Monitor and update accessibility policies, as necessary;
- Monitor and update Champlain's accessibility plan, as required;
- Incorporate accessible design, criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services and facilities, unless it is not practical to do so;
- Train new employees on the requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation and Human Rights Code, as it relates to people with disabilities;
- File an accessibility compliance report every two years.

#### Customer Service Standard Goals :

- Develop and implement a training cycle to ensure staff remain up-to-date on accessibility legislation, corporate policies and best practices for interacting with people with disabilities;
- Regularly review policies, procedures and practices to ensure accessibility;

- Enhance physical wayfinding, including improved signage through all buildings and increasing font size on posted signs;
- Increasing self-serve options, including more online options for residents to perform tasks themselves using various technologies. This includes expanding the registration process and investigation alternative payment options;
- Install a wheelchair accessible section to front counter at the Town hall (2024–2027).
- Relocate Building office to the Town hall so that Building and By-law services are available in an accessible building (2024–2027).

## **Information and Communications Standard Goals:**

- Champlain Township will continue its work to ensure that the Champlain website and web content meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Level AA;
- Remediation of public documents to comply with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA (2023).
- A brand standards style guide defining standards and general practices for digital and print media will be created in conjunction with the update to the branding guidelines. The style guide will incorporate accessibility considerations including font, style, colour, contrast and use of language (2023);
- Create a statement to be added to the Township’s website to inform the public that documents are available in an accessible format upon request;
- Ongoing conversion of departmental templates to accessible formats;
- Continue to support and educate staff on creating accessible documents;
- Ensure that documents and content posted online are in accessible formats.

## **Employment Standard Goals:**

- Champlain Township will continue to regularly review its employment policies and practices to ensure applicants and employees with disabilities receive the supports they need;
- Develop and implement a plan to ensure employees with disabilities are aware of the availability of accommodations and individual emergency response plans;
- Addressing ergonomics in the workplace. Develop a self-assessment tool to help employees adjust their workstations to address any accommodation or accessibility needs that they may have;

- Explore partnerships with community organizations that support people with disabilities with the goal of providing volunteer and/or paid employment to people with disabilities;
- Consider accessibility means when completing emergency management mock sessions.

## **Transportation Standard Goals:**

- Champlain Township will continue to collaborate with the United Counties of Prescott and Russell with respect to their on-demand accessible transportation services in our community.
- Champlain Township will monitor and regulate taxis operating in the municipality to ensure compliance with Taxi By-law 2012–78, amending 2000–18).

## **Design of Public Spaces Standard Goals:**

Champlain is committed to removing barriers and to ensuring that all our public infrastructure is accessible to persons with disabilities. This is achieved by ensuring industry best practices are met and identifying opportunities for improvement. Ongoing consultation with the public will assist staff in identifying and breaking down barriers.

Incorporate public consultations into existing processes wherever possible:

- Continue to enhance the accessibility of new and redeveloped playgrounds and all recreational facilities and ensuring safety of all users;
- Rehabilitation of the Vankleek Hill Community Centre (2023) which includes leveling flooring, installing new accessible door mechanisms, new accessible seating and viewing areas and creating a new accessible washroom on the main level.
- Purchase rubber mats for base of slides and underneath swings in 3 parks. Mill, Woodhill, Pilon (2023).
- Add plastic border with ramp around perimeter of Mill Street Park playground (2023).
- Align accessible parking requirements with Champlain Township’s zoning By-law;
- Addition of 2 new accessible parking spaces at the L’Orignal Beach and boat launch (2023).
- Adding an accessible washroom to the second floor of the arena (2024)
- Renovating the Chalet-Abri centre in L’Orignal to include accessible door mechanisms and accessible washrooms (2024–2027).
- Installing mulch underneath play structure components at Desjardins Park (2024–2027).

- Paving pathways in all parks to access the play structures (2024–2027).
- Paving Sentier Rolland to make it a fully accessible trail (2024–2027).
- Installing an accessible pathway at the L’Original Beach to reach the waterfront (2024–2027).
- Renting accessible portable washrooms at each park during high-use months (2024–2027).
- Monthly building inspections to ensure no accessibility features are compromised or in need of repair (on-going).
- Weekly park inspections and cleaning to ensure park accessibility features remain compliant and are not in need of repair (on-going).
- Searching for federal, provincial or private grants that will support the Township’s vision to create more accessible opportunities with our infrastructure (on-going).
- Ensure exterior paths of travel such as sidewalks, ramps, curb ramps and rest areas meet the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act, 2005 (AODA) technical requirements.

## Conclusion

The 2023–2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan provides a path to a barrier-free Champlain Township by reducing and eliminating barriers, making Champlain a municipality of choice, and one where everyone can actively participate and have a sense of belonging.

Council, employees, and those providing a good, service, program or facility on the Township’s behalf are responsible for adhering to the parameters of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and for ensuring that the needs of people with disabilities are addressed when accessing the Township’s goods, services, programs and facilities. Ensuring an accessible Champlain will be a team effort.

## Accessibility Plan Feedback

Champlain Township is committed to providing accessible customer service to all of our citizens. We welcome your comments and feedback regarding the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. Assistance may be provided in an alternate format or necessary communications support.

Mail to: Municipal Clerk, Champlain Township, 948 Pleasant Corner Road East, Vankleek Hill, ON K0B 1R0

Email to: [Info@champlain.ca](mailto:Info@champlain.ca)

## References and Related Documents

- By-law 2012-81 Establishing an Accessibility for Customer Service Policy
- By-laws 2000-18 & 2012-78, Taxi By-law
- By-law 2023-63 Accessibility Policy

## Revision History

- n/a