



**Report** COR2024-53 – 2024 – Annual Accessibility Update - 2024-2028  
Multi-Year Accessibility Plan Update

**Date** Wednesday, December 11, 2024

**From** Rayburn Murray, Deputy Clerk

## **Memo Report**

This document and its attachments are public and available in an accessible format upon request.

### **Background**

On November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Council adopted By-law 2023-073, being a By-law to adopt the 2024-2028 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, which came into effect on January 1, 2024. The plan contains the four areas within the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)*: customer service, information and communications, employment, training, and design of public spaces.

The Township is required to report on the progress of its Multi-Year Accessibility Plan on an annual basis under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. Council received the most recent annual report in December 2023, reporting on progress from the previous plan. Since this time and following the adoption of the updated plan, the following progress has been observed in 2024:

### **Analysis**

Standards Area #1 – Customer Service

*Goal: To ensure people of all abilities have access to Township services and facilities.*

In 2023, Council adopted the Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy and Accessible Customer Service Policy. To support these policies, throughout 2024, an internal Customer Service Working Group comprised of front-line staff was created. This has provided a platform for staff to discuss and provide feedback from in-person, website, phone, and virtual experiences. As a result, staff continue to identify ways to improve customer service across the organization. Improvements have included updated phone queues, written materials for residents, and website improvements, among other achievements.

Standards Area #2 – Information and Communications



*Goal: To ensure all communications and information published by the Township are created and available in a manner that is accessible to people of all abilities.*

As approved by Council through Budget 2024, a new Township website is being onboarded and will go live on December 9, 2024. The new website achieves Web Content Accessibility Guidelines – Level AA compliance, and possesses a scanning tool to identify accessibility barriers alongside broken links, and misspellings. The new website also contains a re-imagined and accessible Township logo to support branding.

As approved by Council through Budget 2024, staff are currently engaged in an informal request for quotation process for the purchase of cemetery software. The software will contain interactive maps to enhance the availability and accessibility of cemetery information. This will allow individuals to access cemetery information via the Township's website and in person.

Council and Committee meetings continue to be livestreamed in a hybrid format (in-person and virtual attendance) for all meetings. Improvements to audio-visual systems in Council Chambers through Budget 2024 upgrades have occurred and are ongoing. This has improved both online and virtual experiences. Staff continue to make improvements where necessary and intend for improved closed captioning and timestamping of agenda items to be made available in 2025.

Finally, an audit of signage on the Georgian Bluffs Rail Trail throughout the Township has been completed throughout 2024 which will be used to inform improvements, including accessibility improvements, in 2025, subject to budget approval.

### Standards Area #3 – Employment

*Goal: To create an inclusive workplace that actively prevents barriers for employees of all abilities.*

Throughout 2024 and continuing into 2025, Human Resources Policy updates are underway. This builds on the updates identified in the 2023 audit ensuring the Township moves beyond basic compliance with the AODA and associated regulations.

Furthermore, staff are currently working on development for a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a Facilities Review and Master Plan. This work will include an audit of the accessibility of Township buildings and facilities. It is anticipated that the review and plan will provide guidance for the Township in making decisions for future upgrades to facilities, including improvements to accessibility. Staff intend to circulate the draft plan the Joint Grey County Accessibility Advisory for review and comment.

### Standards Area #4 – Training



*Goal: To ensure all staff, volunteers, and members of Council are equipped with the tools and knowledge to provide accessible customer and public service.*

Ongoing training will be delivered to staff to support the onboarding of the Township's new website. This will support staff when making updates to website content by ensuring changes are accessible and in line with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

#### Standards Area #5 – Design of Public Spaces

*Goal: To ensure the Township's public spaces are accessible, and serve as a place where community members of all abilities can enjoy.*

Throughout 2024, numerous improvements have been made at the Township's public spaces. Enhanced paths of travel at Sarawak Family Park to and from parking spaces, picnic areas, and the beach have occurred. Specifically, new access paths have been completed and a Mobi-mat has been installed to enhance waterfront accessibility.

In addition, improvements to Kilsyth Park have included an accessible link trail to the Kilsyth Community Centre and landscaping to include seating.

To date, work has commenced to create a more accessible washroom at the Shallow Lake Arena. Fixtures have been installed and a new door with power operations is being installed by the end of 2024.

Furthermore, the old vault-style toilets have been decommissioned at Cedar Hill Park and Centennial Park. A contract is in place with a service provider to supply accessible portable toilets.

Staff are currently working on generating an RFP for washroom facility upgrades at the Shallow Lake Ball Diamond (Shouldice Park).

Finally, phase 1 of sidewalk improvements in Shallow Lake have been completed. Phase 2 of sidewalk improvements in Shallow Lake and Sarawak Family Park playground enhancements have been included within the 2025 budget and it is hoped that if budget is supported, staff can continue to improve the accessibility of Township sidewalks

#### **Self Serve Kiosk**

A self-serve kiosk (iPad) is available, with support from staff with accessibility features enabled. The iPad is connected to the internet and individuals can access the Township's website, Council agendas, minutes, and can access Cloud Permit with help from staff for submitting permitting and licencing applications. more.



## **Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee**

The Township of Georgian Bluffs continues to work with the Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee. The Committee's goal is to identify, prevent, and remove barriers from municipal services, by-laws, policies, programs, and facilities. As per legislated requirements, the committee is comprised of 50% plus one (1) persons with disabilities, political representatives, staff, and interested members of the public.

The Township will continue to engage in the consultation of the Committee on various projects throughout the 2024-2028 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

## **Financial Impact**

N/A

## **Strategic Priorities**

The Township will strive to be a leader in municipal and customer service excellence. We will continue to offer remarkable service to those we serve. This includes goal 5.2 to create more accessible meetings to encourage citizen engagement.

The Township of Georgian Bluffs is committed to building community through investment in recreation and community centres, and flexible use of community centres and playgrounds.

## **Respectfully Submitted:**

Rayburn Murray, Deputy Clerk