

# Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

2013 to 2017

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The Corporation of the Town of Essex

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## **Message from the Town of Essex Accessibility Advisory Committee**

I am proud to lead the Town's Accessibility Advisory Committee. The members of this Committee are committed to applying the principles of inclusiveness and integration in reviewing projects undertaken within the Town and supporting various initiatives that will improve accessibility in services, programs and facilities provided by the Town.

Over the years the Accessibility Advisory Committee has supported various accessibility initiatives aimed at creating a welcoming and accessible community that allows all members to be engaged and participate, and has assisted the Town in meeting its legislative requirements.

We have, and will continue to work together with the Council and Administration of the Town of Essex to identify, remove and prevent barriers. We continue to build on past successes by looking for new ways to better meet the needs of people with disabilities, whether they are employees, residents or visitors to the Town.

On behalf of the Essex Accessibility Advisory Committee, I would like to extend our appreciation to Council and Administration for supporting our work and collaborating with us to address the areas that impact persons with disabilities and their families.

Peter Timmins

Chair, Essex Accessibility Advisory Committee (2013)

## Background

Persons with disabilities represent a large and growing part of our population. One in seven people in Ontario have a disability—that translates into \$1.85 million Ontarians. When these statistics are applied to the Town of Essex, potentially 2,800 of our 19,600 residents live with a disability. As our population ages, it is anticipated that the percentage of people with disabilities will increase significantly reaching an astounding 1 in 5 by 2036.

Currently there are two pieces of accessibility legislation in Ontario that strive to recognize the importance of the statistics related to persons with disabilities—the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA).

The AODA provides the framework for the development of province-wide mandatory standards on accessibility which relate to both the private and public sector, and includes non-profit organizations.

Ontario now has accessibility standards in five areas, namely:

### **1. Customer service**

- providing goods and services in an accessible manner;

### **2. Employment**

- accommodating and supporting individuals with disabilities throughout the recruitment and employment process;

### **3. Information and communications;**

- creating, providing and receiving information and communications in ways that are accessible for people with disabilities;

### **4. Transportation**

- Preventing and removing barriers in transportation, making it easier for everyone to travel in Ontario; and

#### **5. Design of public spaces (built environment)**

- Removing barriers in public spaces and buildings.

### **About the Town of Essex Multi-Year Accessibility Plan**

Under the AODA accessibility planning requirements, municipalities are required to prepare Multi-Year Accessibility Plans, rather than annual plans. The Town of Essex Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (the "Plan") outlines the Town's strategy to remove and prevent accessibility barriers over the period from 2013 to 2017.

The Plan for the Town of Essex was prepared by Town administration in conjunction with the Essex Accessibility Advisory Committee. As part of a public consultation process, this plan will be available for public input for a three week period prior to the Plan being presented to Town of Essex Council for adoption.

### **Essex Accessibility Advisory Committee**

The Essex Accessibility Advisory Committee (EAAC) was established by Council resolution in 2002. Committee members are appointed by resolution of Council and must be comprised of the following:

- Six to twelve members, with representation from people with various disabilities;
- One member of Council; and
- Mayor of the Town of Essex, ex officio.

For the term 2014 to 2018, the following individuals have been appointed by Council to serve on the EAAC:

- Earl Brownell, Chair
- Claudette Gauthier, Vice-Chair
- Councillor Sherry Bondy
- Brandon Chartier
- Geraldine Dozois
- Darlene Edwards
- Richard Kokovai
- Rob McLean
- Councillor Randy Voakes (alternate)
- Lisa Wallace
- Julia Welch

Lynn Moroz, an Administrative Assistant with the Town of Essex, serves as the Committee's Secretary. As well, various members of the Town's administrative staff are available to provide technical support to the Committee as required. Donna Hunter, Director of Corporate Services, who regularly attends EAAC meetings, was appointed by Council to provide support to the Committee and act as liaison between the Town and the Committee.

A Terms of Reference, as amended from time to time, outlines the Committee's mandate, which includes the following:

- Consult with and provide advice to Council on the annual municipal accessibility plan for the Town;
- Review and advise Council on accessibility issues, including:
  - Site plans of new and existing municipal buildings where approval is required by the Town of Essex;
  - New and existing by-laws of the Town;
  - Purchasing goods and services for the Town;
  - Significant renovations of structures designated for municipal use;
  - Leased facilities or any other facility used as a municipal building;
  - Municipal capital facilities under the Municipal Act, 2001;
  - Goods and services provided by the Town or agents providing services under contract with the Town.

Members, both current and past, of the Essex Accessibility Advisory Committee have been instrumental in identifying barriers that they believe need to be addressed in the Town of Essex. Appendix A provides details of some of the activities which the Committee has been involved in during the four year period 2010 to 2013.

## **About the Town of Essex**

The Town of Essex is located in southwestern Ontario, approximately 28 kilometres southeast of the City of Windsor and is one of seven lower-tier municipalities in the County of Essex. Its rich agricultural lands are some of the most productive in the province and its numerous wineries have a well-deserved national reputation.

The Town of Essex with a population 19,600 is comprised of four distinct and unique communities – Essex Centre, Harrow Centre, Colchester Centre and McGregor Centre.

Council for the Town of Essex is comprised of seven members with each representing the four centres within the Town as follows:

- Essex Centre – two members
- Harrow Centre – one member
- Colchester Centre – two members
- McGregor Centre – one member

The Mayor of the Town of Essex is elected at large while the deputy-mayor is elected by Council from the members representing the four centres.

The Town provides a host of services, including all aspects of transportation, both vehicular and active transportation, community facilities and programs, protection to persons and property, including fire, police and animal control, health services such as cemeteries, parks, environmental services including water, wastewater and garbage collection and disposal and planning and development.

## **Commitment to Accessibility**

The Town is committed to building an inclusive community. Accessibility means much more than people getting through the front door or receiving special services. The Town remains committed to providing inclusive and integrated services and ensuring that all customers have a positive customer service experience in a manner that:

- respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities and is sensitive to their individual needs;
- ensures reasonable efforts are made to ensure that service outcomes are the same for persons with disabilities as they are for persons without disabilities; and
- allows persons with disabilities to benefit from the same services as those without disabilities, in the same location and in a timely and similar manner considering the nature of the service and accommodations required.

The Town continues to improve accessibility of facilities, programs and services. The Town believes that navigating easily in and around buildings and offices, accessing services and information in an appropriate format, and working in an accommodating environment are important parts of accessibility for everyone, including people with disabilities.

## **Accessibility Initiatives Contained in the Multi-Year Plan**

Schedule B of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan outlines the strategies and actions to be taken by the Town to prevent and remove barriers for people with disabilities over the next five years. This schedule also includes the Town's strategy for meeting the timelines established in regulations enacted under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

## **Process for Reviewing and Monitoring Progress on the Multi-Year Plan**

The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will be updated at least once every five years. The Essex Accessibility Advisory Committee will review progress towards achieving initiatives identified in the plan on an on-going basis. Through the Director of Corporate Services, feedback will

also be provided to the Committee on actions taken towards achieving initiatives contained in the Plan.

On an annual basis, the Director of Corporate Services, in conjunction with the Essex Accessibility Advisory Committee will provide Council with an update on the status of accessibility initiatives identified in the Multi-Year Plan that were undertaken in the current year as well as a report on the current year's accomplishments of the Essex Accessibility Advisory Committee over and above those initiatives identified in the Plan.

## **Feedback**

The Town of Essex welcomes feedback, comments or suggestions from the public on how the Town can improve accessibility in our facilities and in the manner in which it provides goods and services. Any feedback, comments or suggestions may be submitted using the Customer Service Initial Complaint and Feedback Form which is available on the Town of Essex website [www.essex.ca](http://www.essex.ca) on the "Accessible Essex" page.

<b>Schedule A</b>	
<b>Activities of Essex Accessibility Advisory Committee</b>	
<b>2010 to 2013</b>	
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Details</b>
<b>Review of Site Plans and Rezoning Applications</b>	Various site plans and rezoning applications were reviewed by the Committee, including Dave Hitchcock Chevrolet, Milton Dzodin, Dr. Gregory Hanaka Dentistry Assoc., Essex District High School, Enerquest, Harrow Home Hardware, etc.
<b>Review Plans for New Municipal Facilities</b>	Plans for new municipal facilities were reviewed prior to construction, including Fire Station 1 and Emergency Management Services, Tot Playground, etc.
<b>Accessibility Checklist</b>	Updated the checklist and arranged distribution of the checklist to businesses through the Town of Essex Fire Inspector and through the Essex Business Improvement Area.
<b>Review of Accessible Parking</b>	Sub-Committee of the EAAC performed a survey of accessible parking in Harrow and Colchester Centre which revealed there were sufficient spaces, but better signage and marking was required.
	Director of Infrastructure and Development and the Manager of Operations met with the Committee to review all accessible parking in the Town of Essex, with Committee providing comment back to the Town.
	Ongoing review of requests for accessible parking or curb cuts during the four-year period, with some resulting in recommendations to Council.
	Recommended to Council that the fine for parking in accessible parking spaces without a permit be increased to \$300.00 from \$100.00. The recommendation was approved and the Town By-Law was revised, along with the Set Fine Schedule.
<b>Requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act</b>	Reviewed and endorsed new policies including the Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy and the Employment Standards Policy.
	Reviewed and endorsed new webpages for the Essex Accessibility Advisory Committee.
	In conjunction with Town administration conducted a survey to determine the need for accessible taxicabs within the Town of Essex and made recommendation to Council that the Town provide information and a link to Essex Community Services to promote their accessible bus service.
<b>Accessibility at Municipal Facilities</b>	Toured various municipal, including Harrow Soccer Park, McGregor Community Centre and Library, Colchester Pirate Ship, Essex Sports Complex, Lion's Park, Bridlewood Park, Essex Recreation Complex, etc. and identified deficiencies as it relates to accessibility.
<b>Miscellaneous</b>	Committee member appointed to Essex Streetscape Committee.

## Schedule B

### Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

2013 to 2017

Accessibility Initiatives	Action to be Taken	Timeframe
<b>Accessible Customer Service</b> - Address barriers in the delivery of goods and services to customers	Continue to deliver Accessible Customer Service training to new elected officials, employees and volunteers.	Ongoing 2013 to 2017
	All tender documents to include a requirement that vendors must certify that they and their staff have received training in accessible customer service.	Ongoing 2013 to 2017
	Review and update Accessible Customer Service Policies as required.	Ongoing 2013 to 2017
<b>Information and Communications</b> - Address barriers to providing information and communications in accessible formats.	Prepare and adopt policy on Integrated Accessibility Standards.	January 1, 2013 (adopted February 4, 2013)
	Provide training to employees on how to create accessible documents and forms.	Ongoing 2013 to 2017 (one-off training workshops attended by several staff in 2013 and a group workshop held by website designer in 2013)
	Prepare all documents for Council and the public that are posted to the website in accessible format (including agendas, minutes, reports to Council, financial information, tender documents, etc.	Ongoing 2013 to 2017 (commenced January 1, 2013)
	Require that consultants providing reports that will become a published document provide such reports in an accessible format.	Ongoing 2013 to 2017
	Develop a new corporate website that conforms to the World Wide Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0) initially at a Level A with the ability to increase to Level AA.	2013 (in June 2013 the new Town of Essex website was launched which conforms to the WCAG 2.0, Level AA.
	Provide emergency procedures, plans and public safety information in an accessible format or with appropriate communication supports upon request.	2013

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Accessibility Initiatives	Action to be Taken	Timeframe
	Monitor process for receiving feedback and comments to ensure that response is provided in a timely manner and appropriate action is taken as required and in a timely fashion.	Ongoing 2013 to 2017
<b>Employment</b> - Address barriers to employment with the Town of Essex for people with disabilities and address accommodation requirements of existing employees with disabilities	Provide training on the Integrated Accessibility Standards policy to elected officials, employees and volunteers.	2014
	Develop a Employment Standards Policy to meet the requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards, Ontario Regulation 191/11, that addresses all stages of the employment cycle, including recruitment, assessment, selection and retention.	2014 (Adopted by Council on January 13, 2014)
	Document and put in place a written process for the development of documented individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities.	2014 (adopted by Council on January 13, 2014)
	Provide training to employees on the requirements of the Ontario Human Rights Code as it relates to the employment of persons with disabilities.	
<b>Transportation</b> - Address barriers in transportation to accommodate people with disabilities to be able to live, work and participate in the community.	Through public consultation determine the demand for accessible taxicabs in the Town.	2013 (online survey and report to EAAC completed in 2013)
	Identify manner in which need for accessible taxicabs will be met.	2013 (by report to EAAC in 2013 identified promotion of Essex Community Services as an alternative to accessible taxicabs)
	Ensure taxicabs are not charging higher fares or extra charges to persons with disabilities.	2013

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Accessibility Initiatives	Action to be Taken	Timeframe
<b>Procurement</b> - Ensure accessible goods, services and facilities are purchased when available.	Amend Town of Essex Policy number 013, "Procurement and Disposal of Goods and Services" to ensure that accessibility criteria and features are taken into consideration for all procurement.	2015
<b>Built Environment</b> - Focus on removing barriers in public spaces and buildings.	Develop and implement a public consultation process for newly constructed and redeveloped trails, outdoor eating areas, outdoor play spaces, exterior paths of travel and accessible parking.	January 1, 2016
<b>Essex Accessibility Advisory Committee Initiatives</b>	Review all accessible parking in the municipality in conjunction with Public Works and make recommendations for changes, new accessible parking spaces, curb cuts, etc.	Ongoing 2013 to 2017
	Perform site visits to all Town-owned or leased facilities that are accessed by the public to identify barriers for persons with disabilities and a communicate barriers to the Town.	Ongoing 2013 to 2017