

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

2016 – 2020



Introduction:

Municipal governments play an important role in the planning and development of communities: in our streets, parks, libraries, meeting places, programs, services, public buildings and elections. The Province of Ontario recognized that accessibility is a shared responsibility and passed the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA) on December 14, 2001 to require provincial and municipal governments and key broader public sector organizations to review their policies, programs and services.

In June 2005, the Province of Ontario furthered its commitment to accessibility by expanding previous legislation to include the private sector with the goal to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2025. The purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 is to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities in five important areas of their lives within specified time limits:

- customer service
- transportation
- information and communications
- design of public places
- employment

The multi-year plan sets out strategies to identify and remove barriers to accessibility as required by the AODA.

Council commitment to accessibility planning

The Council of the Town of Espanola is committed to:

- a) the continual improvement of access to all municipally owned facilities, premises and services for all those with disabilities;
- b) the provision of quality services to all members of the community with disabilities.

The Council has authorized the CAO/Treasurer to prepare an accessibility plan that will enable the Council to meet these commitments.

2016-2020

Strategy

The Municipality is committed to remove and prevent barriers that limit individuals with disabilities accessing services. The municipality will continue to identify any opportunities to enhance accessibility needs within the community and implement as permitted. We will work to create an inclusive community that will allow everyone equal opportunity to access services, programs and facilities, helping to meet the goal of a fully accessible Ontario by the year 2025.

All suggestions and comments to improve accessibility within Espanola are welcomed. By working with all stakeholders, the Town of Espanola will meet these goals by focusing on improvements that can be made within our existing services and infrastructure as well as ensuring any new facilities, programs and services are AODA compliant.

Key Accomplishments

2016

Development and completion of the outdoor active living park and accessible trail at Clear Lake. This was made possible through the Ontario Sport and Recreation Communities fund.

2017

The municipality purchased a new special transit bus under the Public Transit Infrastructure Fund. With the increasing need for the Care Van Transit service in Espanola the new bus can accommodate an 8 passenger maximum with 4 of those being wheelchair passengers.

A Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan was adopted by Council. This Plan is the first of its kind for Espanola. It was developed in consultation with the public, stakeholders, town staff and Council. It was identified that the existing Park at the Red McCarthy Memorial Ball Field could potentially be relocated or re-configured, it was recommended that this would be an ideal opportunity to invest in accessible playground equipment at this site.

The Recreation Complex unveiled a publicly-accessible recreation program registration and facility booking tool on the municipal website, allowing for a more accessible and easy way to register for programs.

A customer service monitoring system was developed for the Recreation Centre to assess resident and user needs and requests for improvements to service delivery.

The Espanola Public Library and Recreation Complex have developed programs and day camps to ensure every child can access these programs on all physical and cognitive levels.

Pool staff and Espanola Regional Health have worked together to identify pool programs that will assist in mobility fitness through stretching and aqua therapy.

2018

A new Fire Hall was built meeting requirements of the AODA as they apply to the Ontario Building Code.

Under the Enabling Accessibilities in Communities grant the Municipality was able to extend our accessible trail which included leveling, grading and paving the trail as well as levelling and grading a path to the beach for the installation of mobi matting to create safe and accessible passage to the Clear Lake Park outdoor fitness park and beach area.

2018 Municipal Elections were conducted using the Vote by Mail alternate voting method to ensure all residents eligible to vote had access to do so. On voting day the Recreation Complex was used for those who chose to cast their ballot personally, The Complex is considered to be the barrier free facility of choice within the community.

2019

The Municipality entered into an Agreement with Sandbox Solutions for website redevelopment which includes AODA compliance. This project is to be completed in 2020.

2020

The Town of Espanola is now using eScribe software, which allows anyone to watch live streamed or recorded meetings at home. In addition to this, agendas and meeting minutes are also online, which allows anyone access to them regardless of any physical limitations.

The Municipality was successful in their application to the Ministry of Transportation for Connecting Link Funding. During this construction, upgrades to sidewalks and curbs were completed, making them fully accessible. Traffic lights were updated on Hwy 6 and now include accessible push buttons that emit a chirping sound when activated.

The municipality launched the newly designed website which conforms to the W3C's WCAG 2.0 standards. Accessibility requirements and best practices were included in training.

The global pandemic has caused Council for the Town of Espanola to conduct their Regular and Special Meetings electronically. Zoom was the method of choice to accommodate this necessity. Zoom allows participants and viewers to access meetings without having to leave their homes and adjust the volume of the meeting to meet their requirements.

Review and monitoring the process

This plan will be reviewed not less than once every five years, allowing Council, staff and the public to monitor the barriers identified and the direction to which the Municipality is moving to remove all barriers under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

Communication of the Plan

This plan is available on the municipal website, as well as at the municipal office and will be available in an accessible format upon request.

This is a living document that can be changed and modified as accessibility issues arise and progress is made.