



2019
Accessibility Annual Status Report





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Introduction

The County of Simcoe is pleased to present its 2019 annual status report that demonstrates the progress taken to implement the 2019-2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, as required by the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA).

The County of Simcoe's 2019 – 2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan was prepared in consultation with person with disabilities and the County of Simcoe's Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee and received County Council's approval in May 2018. The Plan outlines the County of Simcoe's strategy to identify, remove and prevent barriers faced by persons with disabilities and outlines how the County will continue to comply with accessibility legislation.

The Accessibility Annual Status Report for 2019 highlights the County of Simcoe's accomplishments over the past year (September 2018 to September 2019), which have improved accessibility and removed or prevented barriers within the County of Simcoe's facilities, programs and services. The report also demonstrates the County's continued commitment to accessibility and awareness as well as meet its legislative requirements. This report and other accessibility information related to the County's programs and services will be made available in alternate formats upon request and will be posted on the County of Simcoe's website.

Statement of Organizational Commitment

The County of Simcoe is committed to providing people with disabilities consistent opportunity and access to County of Simcoe goods, services, and facilities. The County will ensure that policies, procedures, and practices are provided in a manner that is timely and addresses integration, independence, dignity, and equal opportunity. The County will endeavor to follow the compliance schedule of the legislation when implementing each of the requirements addressed in this policy.

Source: County of Simcoe Accessibility Standards Policy





Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee

In 2019, the Township of Oro-Medonte and Township of Adjala-Tosorontio joined the already established Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee with the County of Simcoe, Township of Springwater and Township of Tay. The Committee advises the Councils of the participating municipalities on matters regarding the accessibility of County and Township owned and operated facilities as well as programs and services offered by the municipalities. Following the October 2018 municipal elections a new Committee was

recruited and appointed by the participating municipalities. The members of the 2018-2022 Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee are listed below.

It should be noted that although the County of Simcoe, Township of Springwater, Township of Tay, Township of Oro-Medonte and Township of Adjala-Tosorontio have a Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee, the five participating municipalities continue to maintain and implement separate multi-year accessibility plans and prepare separate annual status reports.

Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee Members

- Doug Mein, Chair (Citizen Appointee)
- Susan Hamer, Vice-Chair (Citizen Appointee)
- Liz Grummett (Citizen Appointee)
- Fred Heyduk (Citizen Appointee)
- Jan Dobson-Rose (Citizen Appointee)
- Deputy Warden Barry Burton (County of Simcoe)
- Councillor Sandy Talbot (Township of Tay)
- Councillor Shawn Scott (Township of Oro-Medonte)
- Councillor Ron O'Leary (Township of Adjala-Tosorontio)
- Councillor Anita Moore (Township of Springwater)



General

Community Accessibility Partnerships

- The County of Simcoe continued to participate as a member of the Simcoe County Accessibility Group. This group consists of staff from the County of Simcoe, 16 member municipalities, the separated cities of Barrie and Orillia, and neighbouring municipalities who are responsible for accessibility activities and legislative compliance at their respective organizations. The Legislative Coordinator attended a meeting hosted by the City of Barrie on March 6, 2019. Members continued to share information via email and telephone, as required.
- The Clerk's Department maintained membership in the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals (ONAP), which is comprised of staff at municipalities and other broader public sector organizations across Ontario. The Clerk's Department maintained regular contact with the group via telephone and email in order to share information and resources and discuss accessibility questions and concerns.
- The Clerk's Department continued membership in the South Western Ontario Accessibility Group, which is a sub-group of ONAP, consisting primarily of accessibility staff in South Western Ontario. Additionally the Clerk's Department maintained email contact with the group. Various accessibility topics were discussed and resources shared to assist staff in the implementation of accessibility initiatives.

Council proclamations to promote accessibility and disability awareness

On behalf of County Council, the Warden



continued his annual proclamation of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (December 3, 2018) and National AccessAbility Week (May 27 to June 2, 2019). By observing these events, County Council acknowledges the importance of accessibility and disability awareness. Media releases and social media posts followed these proclamations.

The County posted signage at the front entrance to the Administration Centre to promote National AccessAbility Week.

The County ran a week long social media campaign during National AccessAbility Week. Facts around accessibility were tweeted out to raise awareness and promote

inclusion. Some examples of the tweets include:

- National AccessAbility Week encourages everyone to find ways to remove barriers faced by people with disabilities.
- Did You Know...Accessibility simply means giving people of all abilities opportunities to participate fully in everyday life.
- Did You Know...The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act's goal is to make Ontario accessible for people with disabilities by



1 in 7 people in Ontario has a disability – that's 1.85 million people. That number rises as the population ages.









Tradeshow Event and Social Media Campaign during National AccessAbility Week

The County hosted a tradeshow event on May 28, 2019 at the Administration Centre to celebrate National AccessAbility Week. This event brought together County departments, community service agencies and Accessibility Advisory Committee's from the lower tier municipalities to promote and raise awareness of available accessible programs and services throughout the County. During the month of May, social media was used to promote the event as well as during the event.

The following County departments participated in the event:

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- Planning Simcoe County
 Trails
- Age-Friendly Initiative -Positive Aging Strategy
- Simcoe County Museum
- Social Housing Secondary Suites and Ontario Renovates Programs
- Transit Department Simcoe County LINX and LINX PLUS+
- Solid Waste Management new Simcoe County Collects app

The following service agencies participated in the event:

- Independent Living Services Assistive Device Exchange Program
- Canadian Mental Health Association, Simcoe County Branch
- 211 Community Connection
- DeafBlind Ontario Services
- Lakehead University
- Ontario Federation for Cerebral Palsy

The following Lower Tier Accessibility Advisory Committee's participated in the event:

- Township of Tiny Accessibility Advisory Committee
- · Town of Innisfil Accessibility Advisory Committee





Accessibility Planning and Reporting

This annual status report outlines the County of Simcoe's accessibility activities and accomplishments over the past year. This report meets the annual status reporting that is required by the IASR under the AODA and will be posted on the County's website.

The County's 2019 – 2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan was approved by County Council on May 22, 2018. The final plan is posted on the County's website and internal intranet and is made available in alternate formats as requested.

A 2019 Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee Work Plan was prepared by County of Simcoe and participating municipality's staff. The work plan outlined projects and tasks for the joint Accessibility Advisory Committee for 2019. An annual work plan will continue to be developed for the Committee.

Procurement

Language within the County's bid documents and the Accessibility Compliance Form that bidders sign off on were updated to reflect legislative changes as it pertains to the AODA.

Training

The County continued to provide training on the AODA and its Regulations, the Ontario Human Rights Code, and general accessibility and disability awareness to new County of Simcoe employees. Records are kept on the completion of the training as per the legislative requirements. During the period of this annual status report, approximately 330 new employees received the training.





2019 Age-Friendly Recognition Event. From left to right, Christina Strong, Lisa O'Driscoll, Councillor Anita Dubeau, and Christy Tosh.

Age-Friendly Initiatives

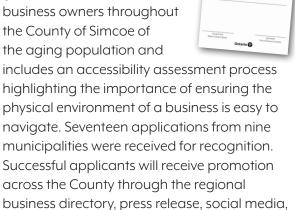


It is recognized that there are natural synergies between the County's 2018-2023 Positive Aging Strategy and the requirements under the AODA. With an aging population, the agefriendly initiative works towards providing enhanced opportunities for older adults and/or persons with disabilities throughout the County. Age-Friendly Initiatives that launched during the period of this annual status report that most benefit persons with

disabilities are highlighted below:

- On September 5, 2018 the County launched a new Age-Friendly Seniors Housing Grant Program that provides \$500,000 in annual funding to support the development of age-friendly housing. This annual program supports the development of age-friendly housing by including accessible, adaptable and inclusive designs and/or incorporating a range of support services that would allow older adults to continue to live independently in their homes and participate in their community for as long as possible.
 - o In 2018, thirty applications were approved in fourteen municipalities.
 - o In 2019, fifty-eight applications were approved in fifteen municipalities.
 - o The majority of accessibility projects applied for by individuals were to convert bathrooms, walkways and to add stair lifts and grab bars.

On April 3, 2019 the County launched its Age-Friendly Business/
Organization Guide and
Recognition Program. The guide was developed to inform business owners throughout the County of Simcoe of the aging population and



• In February 2019, the County of Simcoe's Adult Day Program (ADP) received one-time funding as well as an increase to base funding from the North Simcoe Muskoka Local Health Integration Network. This funding helped to expand the ADP in Elmvale to include a weekly bathing program and an addition full day of programming. The ADP provides various programs and services for seniors and/or persons with disabilities living in small rural communities who might not have access to the programming services otherwise.

website, interactive map and an Age-Friendly

Recognition Certificate and "Becoming Age-

Friendly" decal to display their commitment.





Customer Service

Compliance with the Customer Service Standards

- The County of Simcoe maintained its compliance with the Customer Service Standards, including the legislative requirements for use of service animals, support persons, and assistive devices.
- The County notified the public when there was a service disruption to facilities, programs and services that are used by persons with disabilities.
- Training on accessible customer service is provided to all new employees, as noted earlier, as part of the County's "Disability, Accessibility and the Law" training program on the Learning Management System.

Response and tracking of resident feedback and accommodation requests

Service Simcoe continued to track and respond to all feedback, concerns and requests from residents. Responses were provided in a timely manner that took into account each person's needs and the County's ability to meet those needs and requests. During the period of this annual status report, the Service Simcoe Team logged sixteen accessibility-related feedback and inquiries. These requests for information were regarding the new LINX transit service.



Information and Communication

Accessible formats and communication supports

- The County of Simcoe continued to incorporate accessibility features into both internal and external documents created by its many departments. Considerations include font size and style, colour contrast, spacing, use of white space, and use of formatting techniques such as bold, italics, underlining and capital letters. In addition, the County provided documents in alternative format and/or with communication support, upon request.
- The Legislative Coordinator engaged with departments to review five public facing forms and applications from the Transit, Engineering, and Children and Community Services Departments. Suggestions were given to make the forms and applications easier to use and more accessible.
- December 2018, the County of Simcoe began live streaming all Council and Committee of the Whole meetings. Live streaming provides the opportunity for anyone to watch and listen to Council meetings as they are happening without being physically present.
- The County of Simcoe continued to utilize a software application regularly checks the accessibility features of the public website, based on criteria set out in the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). The County of Simcoe's Information Technology Department and web content contributors receive regular reports on the accessibility of their department's webpage.
- The Legislative Coordinator engaged with the Children and Community Service Department to provide guidance on their Early Intervention webpage. Suggestions were given on providing accessible formats, upon request and ensuring the information is posted in an accessible format.





Accessible employment policies and procedures

The County of Simcoe maintained its compliance with the employment standard by monitoring and documenting employment policies and procedures, where required, to provide accommodations in all stages of employment, accessible formats and communications supports to employees, workplace emergency response information, and return to work and related accommodation plans.

Accessible employent policies and procedures

Transportation

Accessible vehicles at long-term care facilities

The County continued to operate para-transit vehicles at the long-term care facilities for resident transport. Inspection occurred regularly to ensure accessible and safe transport and to meet requirements of applicable legislation such as the Highway Traffic Act. Equivalent services are available upon request should the long-term care vehicles not be accessible to all residents.

Simcoe County LINX and LINX+ Transit **Service**

The County continued to expand the conventional public transit system that links major urban hubs and local transit services in the County of Simcoe. This also includes the operation of a specialized public transit system.

Ridership numbers have continued to rise for both conventional and specialized transit.

- From August 5, 2018 to August 6, 2019 there were 32,615 riders using the LINX (conventional transit).
- From September 4, 2018 to September 3, 2019 there were 138 riders using the LINX+ (specialized transit).
- On July 18, 2019, the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee toured the LINX and LINX PLUS+ transit buses and learned about their accessible features.
- August 6, 2019, three new routes launched as part of the Simcoe County LINX transit system.
 - o Route 2 serving Wasaga Beach, Stayner, Brentwood and Angus to Barrie.

- o Route 3 serving Orillia to Barrie
- o Route 4 serving Wasaga Beach to Collingwood

Since launching public transit in August 2018, the County has ensured its compliance with the Transportation Standards Regulation. Some key achievements are:

- The creation of information pamphlets for specialized transit, conventional transit and the four routes informing the public of the routes and services available. This information is also available on the County's website.
- Through a competitive bid process, the County awarded a contract to First Student who employs all transit operators. First Student is responsible for training all operators on the general accessibility training requirements under the AODA as well as the safe use of accessibility equipment and features on the vehicles
- Fare parity has been established between conventional and specialized transportation services. The same fare structure and fare payment options are available to everyone using the County's transportation services.
- The County established a way for transit riders to pay for transit fares faster, easier and securely by making available the LINX Card, which is an electronic, reloadable transit fare card. Riders can reload their LINX card anytime online, on the bus or in person at select locations.
- Transit operators ensure that mobility aids and mobility assistive devices are stored safely within reach of the person with the disability who uses the aid at no charge.



- All conventional transit buses have priority seating for persons with disabilities clearly marked, located close to the entrance door of the vehicle and indicates that passengers other than persons with disabilities must vacate the priority seating if it's required by a person with a disability.
- Both verbal and electronic pre-boarding and onboarding announcements of the route, direction, destination or next major stop are made.
- All transit buses purchased meet the technical requirements under the Transportation Standards Regulation. The County currently owns 11 conventional transit buses and 4 specialized transit buses.
- An application process and three categories of eligibility to qualify for specialized transportation services (LINX+) were established and implemented as outlined in the Transportation Standards Regulation.
- Since launching transit, 50

 applications have been
 received for specialized transit.

 Any applications that have been refused were deemed to be incomplete or outside of the service area.
- The County has utilized existing bus stops when taking over already established routes. A process for identifying priority stops for future enhancements and improvements (poured concrete pads or shelters) has begun.





Built Environment

Barrier-free design features in County facilities

- The County continued to incorporate accessible features in renovations and upgrades to facilities. Ontario Building Code requirements are followed and consideration is given to barrier-free design features that improve accessibility for persons with disabilities.
- At its January 18, 2018 meeting, the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee reviewed designs for the new Barrie Simcoe Emergency Services Campus project as well as two new Simcoe County Housing Corporation projects in Collingwood and Wasaga Beach. The Committee provided feedback on accessibility and barrier-free design features.
- At its May 9, 2019 meeting, the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee reviewed the designs for the new Paramedic Adult Day Program Facility in Elmvale. The Committee provided feedback on accessibility and barrierfree design features of the building.
- At its June 6, 2019 meeting, the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee

- reviewed the designs for the new Simcoe County Housing Corporation project in the Township of Tay. The Committee provided feedback on accessibility and barrier-free design features.
- Two accessible automatic door openers were installed at two Adult Day Program public washrooms within Georgian Village. The installation of the two accessible automatic door openers allows easier access to the public washrooms, which are utilized consistently throughout the day by over eighty senior clients within the Adult Day Program.
- One accessible automatic door opener and locking mechanism with occupied indicator light was installed for Georgian Village's Georgian Terraces Affordable Housing spa room. Georgian Terraces Affordable Housing consists of forty apartments that presently supports forty-six residents who are sixty years of age and older. The installation of this accessible automatic door opener will allow these residents easy access to the spa room with a walk-in shower.



 An accessible sliding door was purchased and installed to the Courtyard at Trillium Manor, a long-term care home that serves one hundred and twenty-two residents. Replacing the accessible sliding door ensures residents are able to safety access the central courtyard.

Facility Reviews

• The Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee and staff developed a process, plan and checklist for the completion of accessibility facility reviews of County and Township owned and operated facilities. On June 6, 2019 the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee conducted a facility review of an affordable housing complex at 475 Second Street, Collingwood. A summary of the findings were presented to the Committee at its October 17, 2019 meeting. Additional facility reviews will be completed by the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee in the future.





Contact Information

This Accessibility Annual Status Report for 2019 will be available on the County of Simcoe's website and internal Intranet. Printed copies can be obtained from the County of Simcoe's Administration Centre.

This document will be available in alternate format or with communication support, upon request.

The County of Simcoe welcomes all questions and comments on the 2019 Annual Status Report and accessibility matters in general. Please contact the County in person, by mail, telephone, email or fax.

County of Simcoe

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