

CORPORATION OF THE UNITED TOWNSHIPS OF HEAD, CLARA & MARIA



MULTI-YEAR ACCESSIBILITY PLAN 2023-2027

Corporation of the United Townships of Head, Clara and Maria
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Introduction

The United Townships of Head, Clara and Maria (the “Municipality”) is pleased to present its 2023-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. This plan was developed in consultation with persons with disabilities and was made available on the Municipality’s website for public comment. The 2023-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan supports and strengthens the Municipality’s commitment to the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to ensure that people of all ages and abilities enjoy the same opportunities as they live, work and visit our community. The Plan was developed to align with the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and other applicable accessibility legislation.

Statement of Organizational Commitment

The United Townships of Head, Clara and Mana is committed to ensuring equal access and participation for people with disabilities and are committed to treating people with disabilities in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. The Municipality believes in integration, is committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner and will do so by removing and preventing barriers to accessibility and meeting our accessibility requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and Ontario's accessibility laws.

Governing Legislation

Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA)

The Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA), was enacted in 2001 to improve opportunities and access for persons with disabilities. This Act applies to all provincial and municipal governments, school boards, colleges and universities, and hospitals.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, S.O. 2005, C.11 (AODA)

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) was enacted in 2005 and builds on the progress made under the ODA. The overall goal of the AODA is to provide for the development of minimum standards to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities by January 1, 2025.

Customer Service – Ontario Regulation 429/07

This standard was the first under the AODA to become law. It ensures that people with disabilities can receive goods and services in a manner that considers their disability. All municipal staff are trained on Accessible Customer Services when hired and will be trained again if major changes occur to the legislations that require additional training.

Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)

The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR), under the AODA, came into effect in 2011 and provides the standards that businesses and organizations in Ontario must follow to identify, remove and prevent barriers.

In addition to the general requirements, the IASR contains mandatory and enforceable standards in five key areas:

Information and Communications;

Employment;

Transportation;

Design of Public Spaces; and

Customer Service.

Ontario Human Rights Code

The Ontario Human Rights Code is foundational to accessibility and prohibits actions that discriminate against people based on a protected ground in a protected social area. Disability is one of the 14 protected grounds. Protected social areas are housing, contracts, employment, goods, services and facilities and memberships in unions, professional associations or other vocational associations.

The Ontario Building Code

The Ontario Building Code (OBC) regulates the minimum building standards for the construction of all new buildings and buildings that undergo an extensive renovation. The OBC includes requirements for minimum accessibility within buildings.

Barrier Identification

The intent of the Plan is to prevent, identify and remove barriers. A barrier is anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of a disability. The traditional definition of a barrier has been expanded to include obstacles beyond physical boundaries. There are several categories of barriers to consider, such as:

Physical and Architectural Barriers: Features, buildings or spaces that restrict or impede physical access. For example, a doorway that is too narrow to accommodate entry by person in a motorized scooter.

Informational and Communication Barriers: Obstacles with processing, transmitting or interpreting information. For example, print on a brochure that is too small to read or documents not available in alternative formats.

Attitudinal Barriers: Prejudgments or assumptions that directly or indirectly discriminate. For example, avoiding a person with a disability in fear of saying the wrong word or offending them.

Technological Barriers: Occur when technology cannot or is not modified to support various assistive devices and/or software. For example, a website that does not provide for increased text size or contrast options.

Systemic Barriers: Barriers within an organization's policies, practices and procedures that do not consider accessibility. For example, listing a driver's license as an employment qualification for an office position may prohibit persons with visual impairments from applying.

Strategies and Actions

Customer Service

The United Townships of Head, Clara and Maria is committed to providing accessible customer service to people with disabilities. This means that we will provide goods, services and facilities to people with disabilities with the same high quality and timeliness as others.

Actions Taken:

- All employees have received training on Accessible Customer Service and documentation thereof has been maintained.
- Customer specific accommodations are made by municipal staff upon receiving requests.
- The Clerk conducts, reviews and plans for fully accessible municipal elections and provides a post-election accessibility report to Council and the public.

Actions Planned:

- Solicit feedback from the public, including specifically those with disabilities, in updating accessibility policies and plans.
- Complete training on the requirements on the IASR and the Ontario Human Rights Code as it pertains to persons with disabilities.
- Continue to provide customer specific accommodations upon receiving requests.
- Review the Municipality's Policy and Guidelines on Accessible Customer Service periodically during the term of this Plan.
- Create a process for receiving and responding to feedback in regards to accessibility.

Information and Communications

The United Townships of Head, Clara and Maria is committed to making our information and communications accessible to people with disabilities. The Municipality will, upon request, provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities in a timely manner and at a cost that is no more than the regular cost charged to other persons.

Actions Taken:

- Advertising that accessible formats of information and communication are available upon request.

Actions Planned:

- Develop a mechanism for providing materials in an alternative format or with communication supports when requested.

- Have municipal staff that create documents complete training on creating accessible documents.
- Establish a process to ensure compliance with WCAG 2.0 Level AA for website content.
- Provide emergency procedures, plans or public safety information to the public in an accessible format or with appropriate communication supports, as soon as practicable, upon request.
- Ensure that audio and visual equipment is properly functioning at Council meetings and other community events.

Employment

The United Townships of Head, Clara and Maria is committed to fair and accessible employment practices and to ensuring that accessibility is included throughout the employment life cycle.

Actions Taken:

- Adoption of a procedure for accommodating workers with disabilities.
- Update of job postings and offers of employment to include notice regarding availability of accommodation for applicants with disabilities and policies regarding availability.

Actions Planned:

- Review the procedure for accommodating workers with disabilities.
- Continue to provide information on accommodation in the recruitment process on all job postings.
- Continue to ensure that employees' individualized emergency protocols and individualized accommodation plans are reviewed on a regular basis.

Transportation

The transportation standard is sector specific to public organizations that provide either specialized or conventional transit services, which does not apply to the United Townships of Head, Clara and Maria. In the event that the organization does provide transit services, the policy and this standard would require review.

Design of Public Spaces

The Design of Public Spaces Standard under the IASR requires the Municipality to ensure that newly constructed or significantly renovated public spaces are accessible. It focuses on removing barriers in areas not covered by the Ontario Building Code such as exterior paths of travel, on- and off-street parking, recreational trails, pedestrian crossings and service counters. The United Townships of Head, Clara and Maria will comply with accessibility legislation when building or making major changes to public spaces.

Actions Taken:

- Accessible parking has been designated at the municipal office and library entrances.

- Entrances to the municipal building, community centre, library and public washrooms are accessible.
- Accessible ramps were installed leading to the municipal offices.
- Washroom renovations were completed to meet Integrated Accessibility Standards.
- Fluorescent lighting has been upgraded to LED lighting in order to improve visibility in the Library and Community Centre.

Actions Planned:

- Continue to work on improving the accessibility of public spaces on an ongoing basis.
- Promote funding opportunities that support building owners and businesses to undertake accessibility upgrades.
- Review accessibility legislation and this Plan when creating new public spaces, making renovations to Municipal property and when designing and building new infrastructure and seek opportunities to enhance accessibility and remove barriers.
- Create a designated accessible drop-off zone at the entrance to the Community Centre.

Feedback and Contact Information

The United Townships of Head, Clara and Maria encourages public feedback on the municipality's Accessibility Plan, Policy and programs, including suggestions of new initiatives and how we can improve our services.

Feedback can be provided by contacting the Clerk by telephone at 613-586-2526 or email at clerk@headclaramaria.ca.

Alternate formats of this document are available upon request.