



TOWNSHIP OF WOOLWICH

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

2010

**Reviewed by Grand River Accessibility Advisory
Committee on: November 26, 2009**

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2010 ACCESSIBILITY PLAN OF THE TOWNSHIP OF WOOLWICH

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report was prepared to meet the obligations of Provincial accessibility legislation. It is the 2010 Accessibility Plan of the Township of Woolwich.

INTRODUCTION

The Township of Woolwich Accessibility Plan describes accessibility initiatives that were undertaken in 2009 and initiatives that are proposed for 2010. The goal of the Plan is to identify by-laws, policies, practices and services that were or will be reviewed for compliance with Provincial legislation.

PROVINCIAL LEGISLATION

Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001, S.O. 2001, c. 32

The Ontarians with Disabilities Act is commonly known as the “ODA”. This Act was passed into law by the Ontario Legislature on December 4, 2001. The goal of the Act is “to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities and to provide for their involvement in the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to their full participation in the life of the Province”. The ODA applies to all municipalities, hospitals, district school boards, colleges, universities, public transportation organizations, the Ontario Government, ministries and agencies.

The ODA requires municipalities to prepare annual accessibility plans and to get advice from an accessibility advisory committee on the contents of the plan. It is anticipated that the ODA will eventually be repealed when all accessibility standards of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act are in place.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, S.O. 2005, c. 11

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act is known as the “AODA”. It received Royal Assent in the Ontario Legislature in June 2005. The AODA focuses on improving accessibility in areas such as buildings and spaces, employment, customer service, communications and transportation in the private, government and broader public sector.

The goal of the AODA is:

- To achieve an accessible Ontario on or before January 1, 2025;
- To establish and implement mandatory and enforceable accessibility standards to be achieved within five years or less; and
- To maintain municipal accessibility advisory committees.

BOUNDARIES OF THE TOWNSHIP OF WOOLWICH

The Township of Woolwich consists of rural areas plus a variety of small villages including Elmira, St. Jacobs and the Farmers Market District, Conestogo, West Montrose, Breslau, Bloomingdale, Heidelberg, Maryhill, Floradale, and Winterbourne. The municipal offices are located in the downtown core of Elmira. The Township of Woolwich was incorporated in 1973 and consists of the former Township of Woolwich, Township of Waterloo and Town of Elmira. The population of the Township of Woolwich is approximately 21,500. The Council of the Township of Woolwich is governed by a Mayor and 4 Ward Councillors.

JOINT EFFORT WITH OTHER MUNICIPALITIES

Since 2003, the Township of Woolwich has prepared an accessibility plan in co-operation and consultation with the Cities of Kitchener and Waterloo, and the Townships of North Dumfries and Wellesley.

GRAND RIVER ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (GRAAC)

The Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee (GRAAC) is an advisory committee serving the Councils of the Cities of Kitchener and Waterloo and the Townships of North Dumfries, Wellesley and Woolwich. Staff representatives of each municipality participate in a joint recruitment process annually to fill GRAAC vacancies and each Council passes a resolution to appoint new members. GRAAC is made up of between 12 and 15 volunteers and advises the councils on accessibility issues including their annual accessibility plans.

GRAAC members reviewed the draft 2010 Woolwich Accessibility Plan and provided input into its development before the Plan was presented to Council for final adoption.

PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE TOWNSHIP OF WOOLWICH ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

Legislation requires that accessibility plans be made available to the public. The 2010 Accessibility Plan will be made available on the Township's website at www.woolwich.ca. It will also will be provided to anyone upon request, and copies will be set out at the service counter for the Council and Information Services department at 24 Church Street West, Elmira.

STAFF CONTACTS

The following Township of Woolwich staff members co-ordinate and oversee the Township's accessibility efforts and may be contacted for additional information relating to the Township of Woolwich Accessibility Plan, the Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee and accessibility in general.

Accessibility Co-ordinator:

Valrie Hummel, Deputy Clerk
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Township of Woolwich
P.O. Box 158, 24 Church Street West, Elmira N3B 2Z6
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www.woolwich.ca



REPORT ON 2009 ACTIVITIES

1. COMPLIANCE WORK REQUIRED BY PROVINCIAL LEGISLATION

Township staff have put considerable effort into ensuring that the Township is in full compliance with the Customer Service Standard of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*. Accessible customer service training for 16 frontline staff members was completed on November 19, 2009. All other staff members as well as third-party contractors and volunteers have received training materials. Staff has monitored the progress of the other three draft Standards that will affect the Township.

2. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

ASL: The policy of providing American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreters at large public forums of Township-wide interest was developed in 2006 and continues. The Township budgets \$500 annually for this service. To date, there have been a limited number of public forums and no request for ASL interpretation. Information about the service is available on the Township of Woolwich Accessibility page and in public forum advertising. The Deputy Clerk responds to requests.

Alternate Formats: The Township developed a policy in 2006 for responding to requests for information in plain language or alternate formats. The current policy is available on the Accessibility Page of the Township of Woolwich website and is attached as [Schedule "A"](#). This policy will be revised when the Accessible Information and Communication Standard of the AODA becomes law.

TTY: The Township will consider TextNet software when preparing the 2011 Operating Budget.

3. TECHNOLOGY

Website Accessibility:

The Township's website address is www.woolwich.ca. A consultant monitors the website monthly to ensure it complies with W3C standards. Council and Information Services staff is responsible for overseeing the maintenance of the website.

The Accessibility Page on the Township of Woolwich website has been expanded as outlined in the 2008 Accessibility Plan.

4. POLICY/PRACTICES

Grants and Services to Community Groups:

Woolwich Township has a grant program where community groups can apply for capital grants, operating grants, special event grants or travel assistance grants. The application form includes a question asking agencies to describe how they accommodate accessibility in their practices and policies. Information about the grants program is available on the Township's website.

Recreation Initiatives:

Woolwich Township offers a Personal Attendant for Leisure (PAL) Card program. The Deputy Clerk receives and processes the applications. PAL cards are mainly used at the Woolwich Memorial Centre. Thirteen PAL Cards have been issued in 2009. The PAL Card program is run on a reciprocal basis with the Cities of Kitchener, Guelph, Waterloo and Cambridge. Woolwich residents that obtain PAL Cards are made aware of that the cards can be used in other municipalities. The PAL Card program is advertised in the Community Page and Woolwich Memorial Centre staff has been helpful in raising awareness of the program.

Special Events:

The Township of Woolwich's Recreation and Facilities Services staff organize an annual Canada Day celebration at Gore Park in downtown Elmira. An accessible public washroom is available at the event.

Employment:

Township of Woolwich staff reviewed the draft Employment Standard of the AODA and are working on policy development. The Municipal Office is accessible and features an elevator, automatic door openers, accessible counters and an accessible family washroom.

Snow Clearance:

The Township has an independent contractor plow all sidewalks in Elmira. Other settlements are subject to a sidewalk snow-clearing by-law. Engineering Services and Enforcement staff cooperatively respond to public commentary and complaints as received. If any issues arise that staff cannot address, they will be forwarded to GRAAC for advice. The snow clearing by-law was updated in the Spring of 2009. The snow clearing contract for Elmira specifically addressed the importance of clearing of winrows of snow left in accessible parking spots and at intersection corners.

Accessible Parking: The Township's Zoning By-law includes standards for accessible parking spaces. The standards were taken from the City of Kitchener Barrier-Free Design Standards document. A new accessible parking space was installed in front of the Elmira Library by the Region of Waterloo in 2008 and another one is expected shortly adjacent to the Shoppers Drug Mart store located in the downtown core. An accessible parking space outside of the Elmira Medical Clinic on Park Avenue West was accommodated in 2009. The new Woolwich Memorial Centre in Elmira features 10 accessible parking spaces. The Municipal Office at 24 Church Street West in Elmira also features a large accessible parking space close to the main entrance.

Building Design: The Township of Woolwich has site plans for new municipal buildings or building additions reviewed by the Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee's Built Environment Sub-Committee as well as by The Herrington Group, an accessibility consultant.

Emergency Evacuation:

The Red Cross audited emergency evacuation centres for accessibility in 2007. The Township's Fire Chief and the Deputy Clerk were involved in follow-up work relating to the audits. The facilities that were audited were: Elmira District Secondary School, Woolwich Township (St. Jacobs) Arena, Koinonia Christian Fellowship in Bloomingdale, Breslau Mennonite Church, Breslau Public School and the new Woolwich Memorial Centre in Elmira.

5. ATTITUDINAL

Accessible Customer Service Training:

Front line staff received accessible customer service training from the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario in November, 2009. All other full-time, part-time and contract staff as well as members of the Township of Woolwich Volunteer Fire Brigade, received in-depth booklets that were developed based on a template from the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario. Third-party contractors and other volunteers received pamphlets on providing accessible customer service with information on informative websites. The Township of Woolwich will continue to provide accessible customer service training to new staff members in coming years. The Township is in full compliance with the Accessible Customer Service Standard of the AODA.

6. PHYSICAL/ARCHITECTURAL

Municipal Facilities:

In 2009, the Township of Woolwich completed construction of the Woolwich Memorial Centre (WMC) in Elmira and it is now in use. The WMC has two ice pads, a swimming pool and therapy pool, a gym, walking track and space for seniors and youth functions. The WMC is an accessible facility although some pieces of equipment are on order and have not been installed yet. The swimming pool and therapy pool both have ramps for access. The arenas have been designed to accommodate sledge hockey.

Four new accessible change rooms were installed at the Woolwich Township Arena in St. Jacobs. The change rooms accommodate mixed gender programs as well. Modifications to the facility entrance enhanced accessibility to the facility.

Woolwich Township renovated and moved into a new municipal office in November of 2008. The building is accessible.

A new accessible fire hall was constructed in Floradale.

Woolwich Township has had other existing municipalities reviewed for physical barriers. The results are with Facilities Services staff for implementation. A list of facilities owned by Woolwich Township is attached as [Schedule "B"](#).

Work on emergency evacuation plans continues.

INITIATIVES PLANNED FOR 2010

1. Continued work to ensure compliance with all Standards of the AODA. This initiative will require assistance from all departments.
2. Continued accessible customer service training for new staff.
3. Review of Text Net as a component of the 2011 Budget.
4. Staff to review the need to purchase a spare wheelchair for the municipal office.
5. Large-print agendas will continue to be provided at Council and Committee of the Whole meetings. Staff has assistive listening devices for the Council Chambers and is developing a procedure for use.
6. Council and Information Services will look at ordering large-print Recreation Brochures and making them available to the public.

SCHEDULE "A"

ALTERNATE FORMATS POLICY

The Township of Woolwich will respond to requests for documents in alternate format or plain text on a case-by-case basis.

The Township of Woolwich Council and Information Services Division will manage and guide all requests for documents in plain language or other format.

The fee to obtain a document in plain language or alternate format shall be the same as the fee the resident would pay for the unaltered document.

The Township will use a cost effective approach in the generation of documents in plain language or alternate format. The Township will produce information in Braille, on computer diskette and in large print but the Township will not produce information in audio or video format.

The Township will endeavour to ensure its website is W3C compliant and compatible with screen-reading technology used by persons with low vision.

The Township will produce information in plain language upon request from a person who has a disability or low literacy level.

All requests for information in alternate formats or plain text received by the Township shall be treated in a confidential manner.

SCHEDULE "B"

FACILITIES OWNED BY THE TOWNSHIP OF WOOLWICH

Township Administration Office at 24 Church Street West, Elmira

Old Municipal Office at 69 Arthur Street South, Elmira

Woolwich Memorial Centre, Elmira

Elmira Library

Elmira Visitors Information Centre (leased)

Elmira Lions Hall (managed by the Elmira Lions)

Elmira Bolender Park

Elmira Lions Park

Elmira Gibson Park

Elmira Fire Station

Elmira Works Yard

Elmira Lawn Bowling Centre

Maryhill Heritage Community Centre

Maryhill Fire Station

Floradale Fire Station

St. Jacobs Arena (new dressing rooms)

St. Jacobs Snyder Park

St. Jacobs Lions Hall/Community Centre

St. Jacobs Public Library

St. Jacobs Fire Station/Warehouse

Heidelberg Park

Breslau Park and Community Centre

Bloomingtondale Community Centre

Conestogo Community Centre

Conestogo Fire Station

Conestogo Works Yard