



Municipality of Middlesex Centre Council

Meeting Date: May 3, 2023
Submitted by: Sarah Savoie, County Accessibility Coordinator
Subject: Accessibility Roles and Responsibilities

Background:

The purpose of this report is to provide the Municipality of Middlesex Centre Council members with a detailed description of the following:

- Accessibility Legislation and Requirements
 - Accessibility Policies, Procedures, Plans & Guides
- Role of the Accessibility Coordinator
- Role of the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Upcoming Accessibility Initiatives

The information provided in the report is intended to provide a comprehensive overview of the role and responsibilities the County and its Local Municipal Partners (LMPs) have regarding accessibility. The County and its LMPs are committed to the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that inhibit the full and equal participation of people with disabilities. The County works closely with LMPs to ensure it is compliant with and meeting the requirements set out by the Province regarding accessibility.

Analysis:

Accessibility Legislation and Requirements

The following legislation governs accessibility requirements in the province of Ontario:

[Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, S.O. 2005, c. 11](#)

The AODA was implemented to create accessibility standards that organizations in Ontario must follow to make the province accessible for all. Its purpose is to address and prevent discrimination in Ontario against people with disabilities, and to enforce accessibility standards relating to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises. It ensures the involvement of people

with disabilities in the development of the standards, and takes into account their unique perspectives and experiences.

[Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation \(O. Reg 191/11\)](#)

The *IASR* focuses on the implementation and compliance requirements regarding the various standards including: General Requirements, Information and Communication, Employment, Transportation, the Design of Public Spaces, and Customer Service. The *IASR* sets out the standards that the municipality must adhere to in order to achieve accessibility for all. This legislation includes consultation requirements for Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committees.

[Ontario Human Rights Code, R.S.O. 1990, c. H. 19](#)

The *Code* emphasizes the right to freedom from discrimination based on disability, and it recognizes the dignity of every person in Ontario. It applies to social areas such as employment, housing, goods, facilities and services, contracts, and membership in unions, trades or professional associations. It further details the duty to accommodate which reinforces the key principles: respect for dignity, individualization and integration and full participation.

[O.REG. 332/12 Ontario Building Code Act](#)

The Building Code adds to the standards set out in the *IASR* as it relates to the built environment, and details the accessibility requirements for most new construction and extensive renovations to buildings, including: barrier free paths of travel, fire safety, washrooms, access to pool sand saunas, and seating in public spaces.

[Accessible Canada Act, 2019](#)

The *ACA* is a new piece of legislation that was introduced in 2019 that builds off of the *Canadian Human Rights Act* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* by ensuring Canada takes appropriate measure to make the country accessible for people with disabilities to ensure their full and equal participation in society. It further aligns with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Accessibility Policies, Procedures, Plans & Guides

The following policies and procedures have been established in accordance with the AODA and *IASR* requirements:

Policies

- HR 5.01 County Accessibility Policy
- HR 5.02 Accommodations Policy

Procedures

- Accessibility Feedback Procedure
- Accessible Maintenance Procedure
- Accessibility Training Procedure
- Request for Accessible Formats and Communication Supports Procedure
- Service Animals in the Workplace Procedure
- Support Persons Procedure
- Temporary Service Disruptions Procedure

Plans and Reports

- Return to Work Plan
- Return to Work Process
- Middlesex County and its Local Municipal Partners Joint Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2022-2027
- Joint Annual Accessibility Status Reports

Guides

- Middlesex County Creating Accessible Documents Guide
- Middlesex County Accessibility Content Style and Design Guide

HR Policy 5.01 Accessibility Policy (County of Middlesex)

The purpose of this policy is to provide for the overarching framework to guide the review and development of other Middlesex County goods, services, programs and facilities in an inclusive manner that takes into account the needs of people with disabilities.

In addition, this policy will act as the main accessibility policy for Middlesex County and meet the requirements of Ontario Regulation 191/11 – *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation*.

Middlesex County is committed to being responsive to the needs of all its residents and employees. In order to meet the needs of people with disabilities the County will:

- Ensure policies, practices and procedures address dignity, independence, integration and provide for equal opportunity for people with disabilities.
- Allow people with disabilities to use their own personal assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from the services offered by the County.

- Accommodate the accessibility needs of people with disabilities to ensure they can obtain, use or benefit from the County's goods, services, programs and facilities.
- Communicate with people with disabilities in a manner that takes into account the person's disability.

HR Policy 5.02 Accommodations Policy (County of Middlesex)

Middlesex County is committed to an inclusive workplace. To do this, we will ensure that accommodations are provided to current and potential employees with disabilities.

The County's commitment extends to all employment activities including recruitment, selection, orientation, working conditions, career development/advancement and performance management.

Middlesex County will ensure that accommodations are provided to current and potential employees with disabilities.

Middlesex County and its Local Municipal Partners Joint Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2022-2027

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the County of Middlesex and its Local Municipal Partners (LMP) have created a Joint Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, which builds on the accomplishments of the previous MYAP.

The County and its LMPs continue to maintain compliance with the requirements under the AODA and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations (IASR).

This plan acts as an accessibility road map, detailing key initiatives and progress made, as well as goals and timelines to be achieved over the next 5 years. It demonstrates the commitment made to identifying, removing and preventing barriers for people with disabilities. It is designed to create a more accessible and inclusive community.

The plan is available online at the County of Middlesex's website, as well as on all of the Local Municipal Partner websites, and it is made available in an alternative format and/or with communication supports, upon request.

The structure of the Joint Multi-Year Accessibility Plan is based upon requirements outlined under the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#) (AODA). The AODA came into effect in 2005 with a goal to make the Province of Ontario fully accessible to all by 2025. The AODA is a law that sets out a process for developing and enforcing accessibility standards.

Ontario is the first province and one of the first jurisdictions in the world to enact specific legislation establishing a goal and period for accessibility. It is also the first authority to

legislate accessibility reporting and to establish standards in areas like employment, transportation and the design of public spaces.

These standards fall under the [Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation O. Reg 191/11](#) (IASR). The IASR are laws that government, businesses non-profits and public sector organizations must follow to become more accessible and provide barrier-free service delivery.

Joint Annual Accessibility Status Report (County and LMPs)

The purpose of this Status Report is to make the public aware of Middlesex County and its Local Municipal Partners progress with implementing accessibility goals and initiatives as outlined in the Joint Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, and to prevent and remove barriers and meet requirements under the AODA and IASR.

In 2021, the County released its Joint Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP), which includes the County of Middlesex and its eight Local Municipal Partners' accessibility progress, goals and timelines for the next five years. As a result of the MYAP becoming a joint effort, it allowed the Annual Accessibility Status Reports to become streamlined and collaborative rather than requiring each LMP to create their own.

The Joint Annual Accessibility Status Report details continuous achievements and accessibility highlights in each calendar year. The plan is taken to the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee for approval prior to being presented to County Council.

The Joint Annual Accessibility Status Report must be posted online for the public to access and be updated annually, per the IASR requirements.

Accessibility Compliance Reports (County and LMPs)

On a bi-annual basis, the County of Middlesex and its Local Municipal Partners must complete an [Accessibility Compliance Report](#). The purpose of the report is to confirm that the municipality has met the current accessibility requirements under the AODA. Not completing the report can result in the municipality facing enforcement measures that can include financial penalties. 2023 is an accessibility compliance reporting year.

Accessible Election Plan – Local Municipal Partners

In accordance to the [Municipal Elections Act, 1996](#) the Clerk conducting an election must have regard for the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities. As a result, the Clerk must establish locations of accessible voting locations and prepare a plan that identifies, removes and prevents barriers the impact electors and candidates with disabilities. Within 90 days after voting day in a regular election, the Clerk shall prepare a report to Council on the identification, removal and prevention of barriers.

Middlesex County Accessibility Content Style and Design Guide

The Accessibility Content Style and Design Guide is focused on outlining rules when creating web content that is posted online and is intended to be easily found, understood, and accessed by the public. The rules are based on writing principles and techniques that are aimed at making content more accessible, clearer, and considers the needs of people with disabilities.

This Guide was created to provide information on accessibility content style and design rules that must be applied to all County correspondence, documents, and media postings. The Guide outlines information relating to:

- The creation of accessible document templates
- How to use the accessibility checker in Microsoft and Adobe
- Style guidelines for documents
- Colour contrast requirements
- Accessible language and formatting
- Image and video accessibility
- Language and content readability

Middlesex County Creating Accessible Documents Guide

The purpose of this guide is to provide step-by-step instructions on how to create accessible documents and posts in:

- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft PowerPoint
- Microsoft Excel
- Adobe PDF
- Adobe InDesign
- Canva
- Social Media

Role of the Accessibility Coordinator

The Accessibility Coordinator looks after accessibility in Middlesex County, and collaborates with its Local Municipal Partners on accessibility initiatives. The Accessibility Coordinator provides consultation on accessibility related projects, and is responsible for overseeing the implementation of accessibility standards for the corporation as well as providing ongoing training. Further, the Accessibility Coordinator works to identify accessibility issues, needs, resources and opportunities for integrated accessibility planning to ensure best practices are being implemented.

The Accessibility Coordinator acts as the main point of contact for accessibility related concerns or questions, and can be reached by phone or email.

The Accessibility Coordinator connects with Local Municipal Partners on various accessibility related initiatives. These initiatives may relate to the standards set out in the *IASR* or may be assisting with questions relating to accessibility legislation and application, identifying, removing and preventing barriers, or working collaboratively with the public to enhance accessibility of all LMP and County goods, services, and facilities.

The Accessibility Coordinator is also responsible for responding to accessibility feedback form submissions and requests for accessible formats and communication supports. The Accessibility Feedback Form and the Request for Accessible Formats and/or Communication supports can be found on the County of Middlesex's website on the [County Accessibility Page](#).

Role of the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee

The Middlesex Accessibility Advisory Committee (MAAC) is a public committee that is comprised of people with disabilities, members of the community who are actively involved in a disability related profession or are caregiver for a person with a disability, and staff members from the County of Middlesex and several Local Municipal Partners. The Middlesex Accessibility Advisory Committee was created with the intent to advise members of Council on the implementation of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* along with the affiliated *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)*.

Municipalities with a population of 10,000 or more are required to establish an accessibility advisory committee – two or more municipalities may, instead of each establishing their own committee, establish a joint accessibility advisory committee. Other local municipal partners do not meet the population threshold of 10,000 and thus the joint Middlesex Accessibility Advisory Committee was formed.

Participating Municipalities includes:

- County of Middlesex
- Township of Adelaide Metcalfe
- Township of Lucan Biddulph
- Municipality of Middlesex Centre
- Municipality of North Middlesex
- Municipality of Southwest Middlesex
- Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc
- Municipality of Thames Centre
- Village of Newbury

According to the Committee's Terms of Reference, the Committee consists of five (5) members and is comprised of:

- Persons with disabilities
- Representative of an organization representing persons with disabilities
- Caregiver for persons with disabilities
- The Warden
- Two members of County Council

A majority of members must have a disability as defined by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*.

Current Committee Members:

- John Brennan - County Councillor, Middlesex Centre, and Chair of MAAC
- Cathy Burghardt-Jesson - Warden, Middlesex County
- Allan Mayhew - County Councillor, Southwest Middlesex
- Nancy Wickerson-Harmer - Citizen Member
- Leslie-Anne Steeper-Doxtator - Citizen Member
- Michele Ivanouski - Citizen Member
- Jerrica Gilbert - Citizen Member

Staff Liaison

- Sarah Savoie - Accessibility Coordinator
- Paul Shipway - Clerk, Middlesex County

Committee Mandate:

The MAAC assists Middlesex County Council and Local Municipal Councils in improving opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate in County programs and services. The goal is to advise on the development and implementation of the Joint Multi-Year Accessibility Plan as required by the *AODA*, and identify and remove barriers for people with disabilities.

The County of Middlesex Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee shall:

- Work with County staff in the preparation of the Joint Multi Year Accessibility Plan in consultation with local municipalities for consideration by Middlesex County Council and local municipal councils.
- Review municipal site plans described in Section 41 of the Planning Act.
- Advise councils about the requirements and implementation of accessibility standards and the preparation of accessibility reports and such other matters for which the participating councils may seek its advice.

- Perform other functions that are specified in the Regulations of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.
- Advise Councils on the accessibility for people with disabilities to a building, structure or premise that the council purchases, constructs or significantly renovates, or for which the council enters into a new lease.

In addition, the Committee is required, by law, to consult on the following:

- When establishing, reviewing and updating your multi-year accessibility plans
- When developing accessible design criteria in the construction, renovation or placement of bus stops and shelters
- When determining the proportion of on-demand accessible taxicabs needed in your community
- On the need, location and design of accessible on-street parking spaces when building new or making major changes to existing on-street parking spaces
- Before building new or making major changes to existing recreational trails to help determine particular trail features
- On the needs of children and caregivers with various disabilities in their community when building new or making major changes to existing outdoor play spaces
- On the design and placement of rest areas along the exterior path of travel when building new or making major changes to existing exterior paths of travel

For more information on consultation requirements for the MAAC, visit the following:

[Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committees](#)

Previous Committee Accomplishments (2020-2022)

The following accomplishments are examples of what the MAAC has achieved over the last several years:

Middlesex Accessibility Advisory Committee consultation and review of the following projects in 2020:

- Strathroy Public Library Renovation
- Douglas B. Weldon Park lighting & asphalt project
- Caverhill Park swing bays
- Denfield Park play structure replacement
- Kilworth Heights West Park
- Poplar Hill Park project
- Ilderton Library addition

Middlesex Accessibility Advisory Committee provided consultation on and/or reviewed the following accessibility projects in 2021:

- Ilderton Library Outdoor Play Space

- Thorndale Library Outdoor Play Space
- Dorchester Accessible and Inclusive Playground and RFI
- Ailsa Craig Community Centre accessibility upgrades
- Middlesex Centre Age Friendly Community Action Plan

Middlesex County Accessibility Advisory Committee provided consultation on and/or reviewed the following accessibility projects in 2022:

- Reviewed the County of Middlesex Accessibility Policy to ensure it meets industry best practice
- Approved the drafts of the Accessibility Content Style and Design Guide and Creating Accessible Documents Guide
- Consulted on the design of the Accessible and Inclusive playground in Dorchester Park
- Made recommendations for accessible on-street parking projects
- Consulted on the Lucan Biddulph Community Memorial Center renovation plans and addition
- Reviewed LMPs Accessible Election Plan to ensure it meets all legislative requirements

Recommendation:

THAT the report titled “Accessibility Role and Responsibilities” dated May 3, 2023 be received for information and filed.