



Meeting Date: March 11, 2026

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Report No: CPS-18-2026

Subject: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion 2025 Report

Recommendation:

THAT Report CPS-18-2026 re: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion 2025 Report be received for information.

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to bring forward the 2025 update on actions completed with respect to the Municipality's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy.

Background:

The Municipality of Middlesex Centre supports diversity, equity, and inclusion in all its forms, and rejects discrimination based on age, disability, economic circumstance, marital and family status, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and gender expression, race, religion, and sexual orientation, among others.

Inclusion, equity, and diversity are shared responsibilities. Achieving diversity requires a commitment to human dignity, equity, and inclusion that must find full expression in the Municipality's organizational culture, values, norms and behaviours.

Middlesex Centre developed its first Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy and supporting strategy in 2022. In 2023, the Municipality updated the policy. As the Municipality continues through this journey, the team will continue to learn, grow and improve along the way. The goal is to have diversity, equity and inclusion embedded into everything the Municipality does.

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy adheres to the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Canadian Human Rights Act, the Employment Equity Act, and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. The policy was implemented according to the following principles:

- 1) All employees, customers, and volunteers of the Municipality of Middlesex Centre will be treated with dignity and respect.
- 2) The Municipality of Middlesex Centre will identify, prevent, and remove barriers to services, programs, and opportunities.
- 3) Discrimination is prohibited in the workplace, in the provision of goods, services, and facilities to the public, and in the administration of contracts as defined by human rights legislation.
- 4) Municipality of Middlesex Centre facilities will strive to be safe, welcoming and inclusive for diverse staff and members of the community.
- 5) The Municipality of Middlesex Centre will create an inclusive organizational culture where diverse employees feel valued for their knowledge and skills.
- 6) The Municipality of Middlesex Centre will make all reasonable efforts to accommodate employees in the workplace as stipulated under the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, the Employment Standards Act, and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.
- 7) The Municipality of Middlesex Centre will strive to create an environment where personal accountability and self-awareness are expected, and harassment and discrimination are not tolerated.
- 8) Principles of equity and inclusion will be embedded in the Municipality of Middlesex Centre's education, training, and professional development for staff, local board volunteers, and Council.
- 9) Public feedback processes will identify, prevent, and remove barriers to participation to ensure that diverse communities and individuals have opportunities to be meaningfully engaged.
- 10) The Municipality of Middlesex Centre will report on progress annually.

Specifically, each year the Manager of Human Resources will prepare a brief report to Council outlining:

- training provided to staff under this policy;
- high-level accomplishments towards initiatives in support of this policy;
- any concerns raised under this policy; and
- any new legislation, programs or initiatives related to diversity, equity, and inclusion of which Council should be aware.

Analysis:

The following outlines the strategic initiatives that Middlesex Centre completed in 2025 toward achieving the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy goals.

Strategic Area: Inclusive Culture

Aims:

- Ensure all Members of Council, local volunteer boards, and staff are aware of their responsibilities to protect human rights and remove discrimination and racism.
- Promote respect, understanding, and appreciation of diversity and inclusion.
- Communicate about the values of community inclusion.

Initiatives	Responsibility	Measure(s) of Success
Provide training to staff on the importance of growing a diverse and inclusive community through online training module.	Human Resources	<p>In 2025, all new team members completed training courses through the municipality's learning management software, specifically:</p> <p>Workplace Diversity and Including Training</p> <p>Gender and Sexual Diversity Training</p> <p><i>All existing staff would have completed the training in 2023 and 2024.</i></p> <p>Middlesex Centre trained more than 75% of front-facing staff on dementia and supporting those living with dementia and their caregivers in preparation for being recognized as Dementia Friendly Community Supporter in 2025.</p>
As they come up for review or as new programs are added, review all municipal policies, programs, services, staffing and other actions with an equity and inclusion lens.	Senior Management Team Human Resources	Supported the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP) in 2025 to help attract and retain skilled foreign workers who are working toward permanent residency, while strengthening inclusive hiring practices through a DEI lens.

Strategic Area: Communication

Aim:

- Ensure open and accessible communication among employees and between the municipality, residents and other stakeholders.

Initiatives	Responsibility	Measure(s) of Success
Use simplified English, symbology, and action-oriented visuals in official municipal communications and meeting materials.	Communications Administrative Services	Updated and new materials are reviewed against this lens, with an understanding that some items (public meeting notices, for instance) may have legislative or technical limitations to being in simplified English.
Ensure all municipal website information is accessible, easy-to-navigate, and up to date.	Communications	Website content and navigation are reviewed regularly for ease-of-use and readability. Middlesex Centre documents added to the site meet AODA accessibility requirements.
Ensuring diversity and inclusiveness is reflected in municipal publications (both written and visual elements).	Communications	Where images of people are used in a campaign, multiple images are used to reflect diversity in the target audience.
Continue to learn from and share with other municipalities.	Senior Management Team Human Resources Communications	Diversity, equity, and inclusion is a discussion point at a Senior Management Team meeting at least once a year.

Strategic Area: Accessibility

Aims:

- Ensure that all residents are treated respectfully and have access to all facilities and services in the municipality.
- Recognize and identify special needs of all residents, including but not limited to, the areas of planning and development, housing, recreation, public works and utilities.
- Identify incidents of racism, discrimination and exclusion in the community and take action to address these incidents.

Initiatives	Responsibility	Measure(s) of Success
<p>Continue to encourage housing development that enables people with different physical, social, economic, and cultural characteristics be able to obtain housing in the Municipality of that meets their needs.</p>	<p>Council Senior Management Team</p>	<p>Through the Municipality's Official Plan Review, policies have been updated to enable accessory residential units (for example, granny flats) to allow residents the option to age-in-place.</p> <p>Additionally, staff are engaging with the development community about creating a variety of housing to provide opportunities for all people to live in the community.</p>
<p>Continue to build parks, sports centers and recreational areas to barrier free design and use universal design.</p>	<p>Community Services</p>	<p>Accessibility criteria are incorporated into new designs as required under AODA (or higher).</p> <p>Specific projects in 2025 included:</p> <p>Poplar Hill Park – In partnership with Poplar Hill Lions Club, installed an accessible wheelchair swing set and added two dedicated, van accessible parking spaces.</p> <p>Westbrook Park – Added two dedicated accessible van parking spaces.</p> <p>Kilworth Heights – Added two accessible van parking spaces.</p> <p>Denfield Park – Added three dedicated accessible van parking spaces.</p> <p>Ilderton arena – washrooms were upgraded to be fully barrier-free to enhance accessibility. They now meet the standards for official universal washrooms.</p> <p>Komoka Community Centre – a full universal washroom with an adult change table was added. Enhancements were also made to the existing washrooms to improve barrier-free accessibility.</p>

Initiatives	Responsibility	Measure(s) of Success
Continue to work with the County of Middlesex to review and develop accessibility plans for municipal facilities, services, and procedures to address existing barriers and gaps, including providing input on the development of Multi-Year Accessibility Plans.	Manager of Legislative Services/Municipal Clerk	Attendance at County meetings and completion of assigned tasks.
Provide annual reporting in accordance with AODA legislation to demonstrate ongoing accessibility related achievements. Provide annual report on these strategies to Council.	Manager of Legislative Services/Municipal Clerk CAO	Completion of Accessibility Compliance Reports within timelines established by the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility.
Continue to remove barriers for residents to access recreational programming in the Municipality.	Community Services	The Affordable Access to Recreation Program assists residents whose financial situations limit them from participating in recreation programs offered by the Municipality of Middlesex Centre. The program provides successful applicants with a recreation program credit of \$300, which is valid for one year. Residents may apply for and receive the credit once per year.

Strategic Area: Hiring and Employee Retention

Aims:

- Continue to employ based on job requirements and in keeping with Human Rights legislation, selecting people to roles based on their qualifications, skills and experience.
- Ensure municipal recruitment, deployment, reward and development practices, and approach to working arrangements, are designed to attract and retain diverse talent and to accommodate individual needs at different career development and life stages.

Initiatives	Responsibility	Measure(s) of Success
Continue to develop policies that support staff through different life stages (for example, allowing for flexible hours, work from home were possible to support employees with family members requiring support).	Senior Management Team Human Resources	No new policies were implemented in 2025. Council approved updated and new human resources policies in 2023. New policies included: Volunteer Policy Human Rights Policy Protected Leaves Policy Compensation Administration Policy Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy
Actively encourage the use of inclusive language among staff.	Managers All Staff	Managers presented and discussed this topic at meetings in 2025 to identify staff training needs.
To undertake a review of the compensation program to ensure that it is internally equitable and pay equity compliant.	CAO Human Resources	Middlesex Centre hired Pesce & Associates Human Resource Consultants to complete this review in 2023. The final project was approved by Council on July 5, 2023. These pay equity standards have been upheld in 2024 and 2025.
To undertake a review of the employee benefits program to ensure that it is internally equitable and reviewed with a DEI lens.	CAO Human Resources	Middlesex Centre worked with SelectPath to complete this review in 2024. The final project was approved by Council on June 5, 2024. Pre-approved changes within the plan continue to be phased in.

Strategic Area: Leadership in the Community

Aim:

- Provide support for cultural projects, programs, events, and organizations so that the cultural diversity and heritage is represented in a fair, inclusive and equitable manner.

Initiatives	Responsibility	Measure(s) of Success
Encourage and welcome groups celebrating cultural events and inclusivity.	Council Senior Management Team Community Services	Support of Mayor and Council at events when invited (and as appropriate). Groups directed to existing funding supports (e.g., Council Grants, etc.) to offset event costs. Implementation of the Arts and Culture Policy to guide the planning, provision, and support of arts and culture based recreational programs within the municipality. Implementation of an Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility category Community Spirit Award to honour those who make the municipality more a welcoming, inclusive, and accessible community.
Explore opportunities to add elements of diversity and inclusivity at municipal buildings and properties (e.g., flags of various cultural groups, rainbow crosswalks, etc.).	Senior Management Team	No new action.

Concerns and Legislative Changes

There were no concerns raised by staff in 2025. There was no change in legislation impacting municipal policy.

Activities in 2026

Staff will continue with accomplishing strategic initiatives related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and will continue to update the strategy document in 2026.

Staff will be exploring the following initiatives in 2026 for implementation in 2026:

- Staff are looking into introducing new technology (chat bot) that will augment our customer service options for those that wish to use it.
- Installation of a barrier-free washroom at the Ilderton Curling Club.
- Accessible universal washroom and exterior ramps at the Delaware Library to create accessible facilities across Middlesex Centre.
- Public Accessible Spaces Simplified (PASS) training for Community Services staff which demonstrates best practices for accessible design, construction, and maintenance of public spaces.

Staff will be exploring the following initiatives in 2026 for implementation in 2027:

- DEI training opportunities.
- Establishing a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Working Group to support ongoing organizational initiatives.
- Evaluate the benefits and requirements of joining the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities.
- Identify options to improve senior program registration, including access to electronic devices.

Financial Implications:

N/A

Strategic Plan:

This matter aligns with the following strategic priorities:

- Responsive Municipal Government

The process of reporting on this policy and the actions within responds to:

- Responsive Government - Objective 5.1 – Enhance Customer Service
- Responsive Government - Objective 5.2 – Foster a culture of mutual trust and respect within Council and between Council and staff
 - By reinforcing a common purpose among Council members and promoting teamwork between Council and staff.
 - By encouraging training and professional development for Council members and staff.
- Responsive Government - Objective 5.3 – Foster a culture of innovation, continuous improvement, and cost-effective service delivery.

- By sharing information and gathering input, continuing our timely and effective communication to the public.
 - By reviewing and enhancing our processes
- Responsive Government - Objective 5.5 – Work with other levels of government, health organizations, and community groups to address complex societal problems.

Attachments:

N/A