



*Hastings Highlands*

*Beautiful By Nature*



2023-2027

# Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Municipality of Hastings Highlands

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# Introduction

## 2023-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

The 2023-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) outlines goals and initiatives that reaffirm the Municipality's commitment to creating and supporting an accessible community and advancing efforts in building an equitable and inclusive society that values the contributions of people with disabilities.

### Statement of Commitment

The Municipality is committed to the identification, removal and prevention of accessibility barriers<sup>1</sup>. By doing so, will provide an accessible environment in which employees, residents and visitors with disabilities can access the Municipality's goods, services and facilities, including buildings, public spaces, information and communications, in a way that meets their individual needs.

The Municipality is equally committed to supporting Municipal employees through advice, policies, tools, resources and governance structures that promote an inclusive workplace and support employees in delivering accessible goods, services and facilities.

### Background

Under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) municipalities are required to develop a multi-year accessibility plan. The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) under the AODA sets standards in the following five areas:

- General Accessibility
- Information and Communication
- Customer Service
- Employment
- Transportation
- Built Environment and Design of Public Spaces

The Municipality of Hastings Highlands' 2023-2027 MYAP outlines how the Municipality will advance accessibility in each of these areas. The 2023-2027 MYAP was informed in consultation with the public via an online/print/call-in survey and Municipal Departments. The MYAP will be reviewed and updated every 5 years with annual status reports posted and made available to the public.

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<sup>1</sup>Accessibility barriers can include any of the following types of barriers:

- *Attitudinal barriers* include negative attitudes and assumptions about persons with disabilities.
- *Systemic barriers* include policies and procedures that create barriers to full inclusion.
- *Information, communication and technology barriers* include communication formats that are not available in accessible formats (e.g., screen reader compatible, braille, plain language, etc.)
- *Built and physical barriers* include elements in the physical environment that create barriers for persons with disabilities (e.g., lack of a ramp or elevator to access different levels, door widths that prohibit access for users of mobility devices).

# Accessibility Achievements

## 2018-2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

The 2023-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan builds on the past efforts and accomplishments made to improve accessibility.

- Audiovisual equipment was installed in the Municipality's Council Chambers and included:
  - Microphones for Members of Council, Staff and Delegates.
  - Two large television monitors with audio equipment to feature communication items and presentations, viewable from all positions in Council Chambers.
- Redesign of Council Chambers entrance for a more direct, barrier free route to gallery seating.
- Bangor Community Centre was closed to the public, Musclow Community Centre was sold, and Maynooth Community Centre was demolished. These centres were named in the 2018-2022 Accessibility Report as having numerous barriers in place for residents and visitors with disabilities.
- Both the 2018 and 2022 Municipal Elections were executed in an accessible manner that included internet and telephone voting. Accessibility Plans were prepared for both elections.
- The Municipality installed a barrier-free, fully accessible reception area at the Municipal Office. This upgrade included the installation of a plexiglass barrier equipped with microphone and speaker to assist those who may have a hearing impairment.
- Accessible meeting space/board room was created adjacent to front reception area in Municipal Office to allow members of the public to meet with staff.
- A wheelchair accessible door was installed between the office/administration staff and the Council Chambers section of the office.
- Reconstruction of Hastings Highlands' downtown core in 2020-2021 included:
  - New sidewalks and ramps built to modern standards.
  - Retaining walls and railings where sidewalks must be elevated from the roadway.
  - Garbage receptacles, benches and an accessible picnic table and chess table.
- Addition of web-based, electronic meeting platform (Zoom) for Council and Committee Meetings to allow greater participation by the public regardless of ability.
- Telephone (call-in) option made available to participate in Council and Committee Meetings in addition to in-person attendance and written correspondence.
- Council and Committee Meetings are now streamed live and archived to the Municipality's YouTube Channel to allow the public viewing access regardless of ability.
- New website provider was procured in 2023 to ensure that the Municipality's website continues to meet or exceed accessibility compliance requirements by providing the Municipality with the appropriate framework, tools, guidelines and ongoing training.
- Standardized Job Advertisements and Job Descriptions throughout the various departments of the Municipality to ensure consistent language that included the Municipality's commitment to providing a 'barrier-free' accessible recruitment and selection process.
- Renewed parking lot lines at the Municipal Building/Library which includes the accessible parking spaces located at the front of the building.
- Hastings Highlands' website added additional webpages that are dedicated to providing the public with information on 'How to Communicate with Council and Committees of Council' and to 'Have Your Say Hastings Highlands' which features a list of alternative ways in which members of the public can send their comments/feedback to members of Council/Staff on important issues.

# 2023-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

## 1. General Accessibility

### General Accessibility

The general requirements of the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* (IASR) under the AODA require the Municipality to have accessibility policies and a multi-year accessibility plan.

The development, implementation and maintenance of corporate policies governing how the Municipality will achieve accessibility have been established, including:

- 2018-2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Policy
- Municipal Election Accessibility Plan
- Hastings Highlands Accessible Customer Service Policy
- Hastings Highlands Corporate Customer Service Standards Policy

### Initiatives

1. Provide annual status updates on the Municipality's MYAP on the Municipality's website ([www.hastingshighlands.ca](http://www.hastingshighlands.ca)), social media, and in print.
2. Promote accessibility awareness within the organization as well as all the communities we serve through education and awareness campaigns.
3. Host employee and public meetings and events in facilities and public spaces that are accessible.
4. Continue to train staff to consider equity impacts of all new planning, projects, policies and initiatives.

### Outcomes

1. An organization which fosters a culture of equity and inclusion, that values and includes employees, residents and visitors with disabilities.
2. Municipal employees, residents and visitors are aware of resources and can easily utilize accommodation and accessibility services when accessing Municipal goods, services and facilities.
3. Municipal employees have the support and tools needed to actively identify, prevent and remove accessibility barriers.
4. Clear roles and accountabilities for advancing accessibility across the organization.

### Training

The Municipality is required, under the AODA, to provide training on the requirements of the IASR and on the *Ontario Human Rights Code* to all employees, volunteers and persons who participate in developing Municipal policies or provide services or goods on behalf of the Municipality.

## Initiatives

1. Ensure all employees and volunteers continue to complete mandatory AODA and accessibility training appropriate to the person's role as soon as possible and in a variety of formats.
2. Ensure that all training, activities, course materials and learning approaches are developed and delivered in accessible formats.
3. Enhance leadership knowledge and skills to ensure compliance with Municipal Policies, Human Rights legislation, AODA and other related legislation.

## Outcomes

1. Municipal employees understand their responsibilities to provide accessible goods, services and facilities that take into account the needs of employees, residents and visitors with disabilities.
2. Employees with disabilities have equitable access to learning, development and career growth opportunities.

## Procurement

The Municipality is required, under the IASR, to incorporate accessibility design, criteria when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities, except where it is not practicable to do so.

## Initiatives

1. Continue to ensure accessibility criteria are key requirements of the procurement process when acquiring or purchasing goods, services and/or facilities.
2. Provide tools and resources to assist Municipal employees in meeting accessibility obligations in procurement, such as training, templates, sample language and guidelines that embed accessibility considerations at all stages of procurement.
3. Ensure an accessibility analysis of all projects and purchases before funding is requested.

## Outcomes

1. Accessibility is embedded into Municipality's procurement processes to ensure public funds are not inadvertently used to create or maintain accessibility barriers.
2. The needs of employees, residents and visitors with disabilities are considered at all stages of the procurement process to ensure that Municipal goods, services and facilities are accessible.
3. People with disabilities have equitable access to goods services and facilities procured by the Municipality.
4. Leveraging the Municipality's procurement processes to promote accessibility and help build a more inclusive society.

## Maintenance of Accessible Elements

The Municipality shall establish, implement, and maintain procedures for the preventative and emergency maintenance of accessible elements in its public spaces, in accordance with the Design of Public Spaces Standard under O. Reg. 191/11. The Municipality will also maintain procedures to notify the public of any temporary disruptions affecting these accessible elements.

1. Municipal staff will regularly inspect and monitor the accessible elements within public spaces to ensure they remain in good working order.
2. Should an issue be identified, staff will report the matter promptly to the Operations Manager or the designated facility manager to initiate appropriate remedial or emergency maintenance as soon as reasonably possible.
3. In the event of a **temporary disruption** to accessible elements due to maintenance or unforeseen circumstances, the Municipality will issue public notice in accordance with the following procedures:
  - For **planned disruptions**, advance notice will be provided whenever possible. This applies to facilities or services relied upon by persons with disabilities, including accessible features that are temporarily unavailable.
  - For **unexpected disruptions**, notice will be provided as soon as reasonably possible, based on the circumstances.
4. All disruption notices will include:
  - The **reason** for the disruption;
  - The **anticipated duration**, if known;
  - A description of any **alternative facilities or services** that may be available.
5. Notices may be provided by:
  - Posting the information in a clearly visible location on the affected premises;
  - Publishing on the Municipality's website and/or social media channels;
  - Any other method deemed reasonable and appropriate under the circumstances.



## 2. Information and Communication

### Information and Communication

The Information and Communications Standard under the IASR requires the Municipality to communicate and provide information in ways that are accessible to people with disabilities.

#### Initiatives

1. Continue to notify the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports.
2. Continue to ensure that any process for receiving and responding to feedback is accessible by providing or arranging for accessible formats and communication supports.
3. Continue to ensure that Municipal employees understand the accommodation request process, including the requirement to arrange for accessible formats and communication supports, and the requirement to consult with the person making the request in order to determine suitable accessible formats or communication supports.
4. Develop and implement accessible information, communication and technology guidelines and standards to ensure the Municipality is providing clear, accessible, appropriate and timely information and communication.
5. Continue to evaluate and remediate Municipal website content and ensure that it meets or exceeds accessibility compliance requirements by providing the appropriate frameworks, tools, guidelines and training for use by Municipal employees.
6. 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.

#### Outcomes

1. Municipal employees have the tools and resources to develop and provide information in accessible formats.
2. Municipal employees, residents and visitors with disabilities will have equal access to Municipal information through communication supports, alternate formats, accessible websites and digital content.
3. Providing emergency procedures, plans or public safety information to the public in an accessible format and/or with appropriate communication supports, as soon as practicable, upon request ensures all individuals, including those with disabilities, can understand and act on critical safety information during emergencies.

## 3. Employment

### Employment

The Employment Standards under the IASR requires that the Municipality support the recruitment and accommodation of employees with disabilities. The Municipality is committed to advancing accessibility, diversity and inclusion of employees with disabilities.

#### Initiatives

1. Develop and implement an employment strategy for equity-seeking groups, including people with disabilities.
2. Continue to embed an equity analysis into all recruitment processes to remove any unintended accessibility barriers (People & Equity).
3. Review people services policies and procedures to identify, prevent and remove barriers to employment and development opportunities. This review will also serve to ensure ongoing compliance with legislation.

#### Outcomes

1. Increased employment, engagement and advancement of employees with disabilities within the Municipality.
2. Equitable, clear and consistent employment and accommodation policies and procedures that seek to remove systemic barriers and ensure people with disabilities are able to participate fully as job applicants and employees of the Municipality.

## 4. Transportation

### Transportation

The Municipality does not currently provide public transit or licence taxi services. Accessible transportation in Hastings Highlands is available through community service organizations such as Bancroft Community Transit and Care North Hastings. The Municipality acknowledges the vital role these organizations play in supporting accessible transportation within our communities.

#### Initiatives

1. Leverage opportunities to work with and support local community service organizations that provide accessible transportation in Hastings Highlands.
2. Continue to review and evaluate the design standards and features of Municipal directional, street name and information signs to ensure visibility, legibility, consistency, colour contrast, surface (glare) and positioning.

## Outcomes

1. The Municipality is able to leverage conversations with local agencies and organizations who provide accessible transportation to determine how best to support them.
2. Drivers, passengers, riders, walkers, and hikers in Hastings Highlands are provided with consistent, visible, legible street signs, information signs and directionals.

# 5. Built Environment and Design of Public Spaces

## Built Environment and Design of Public Spaces

The Municipality of Hastings Highlands recognizes that built environment barriers are a form of discrimination and is committed to increasing the accessibility of public spaces. The Design of Public Spaces Standard under the IASR requires that newly-constructed or redeveloped public spaces are accessible. The Municipality strives to achieve a high level of accessibility in public spaces as well as Municipal workspaces.

## Initiatives

1. Establish a process for consultation with the public and persons with disabilities when constructing new or redeveloping existing recreational trails, outdoor play spaces, exterior paths of travel (rest areas) and on-street parking, as required under the IASR.
2. 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.

## Outcomes

1. Improved accessibility of Municipal public spaces and workplaces by incorporating accessibility into the design of new facilities as well as during renovations and redevelopments of existing facilities.

# 6. Customer Service

## Customer Service

The Customer Service Standard under the IASR requires the Municipality to provide accessible public services for people with disabilities and to ensure that policies and procedures are in place to facilitate this. It is intended to support Municipalities in improving access to goods, services and facilities by removing barriers for people with disabilities.

### Initiatives

1. Review the Municipality's Accessibility Customer Service Standard Policy during the term of this Plan.
2. Expand on process for receiving and responding to feedback in regard to accessibility to specifically include actions that will be taken if a complaint is received.
3. Explore assistive technologies that could make municipal programs and services more accessible including, but no limited to, assistive listening devices, assistive devices and charging stations for mobility devices.

### Outcomes

1. Improved, accessible public services for people with disabilities, to ensure that people of all abilities receive quality programs and services in a timely manner, supported by inclusive policies, procedures, tools and resources that promote accessible customer service.