



# Accessibility Plan

Township of Russell

**A collaborative, connected and sustainable community for everyone.**

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# Chief Administrative Officer's Message

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As the Chief Administrative Officer of the Township of Russell, I am thrilled to introduce this Accessibility Plan. This document is a testament to our commitment to a “collaborative, connected, and sustainable community for everyone”, ensuring inclusivity and accessibility at the core of our township's ethos.

Embracing innovation and collaboration, this plan underlines our dedication to creating an environment where every individual, regardless of their abilities, is valued and supported. By focusing on removing and preventing barriers, we are not just complying with legislative standards but actively shaping a township where diversity is celebrated and everyone has equal opportunities.

Aligned with our strategic vision, this plan reflects our commitment to developing our community in a safe, healthy, and accessible manner. It includes a range of commitments from enhancing accessible customer service to improving public spaces and transportation services, integral to the broader aim of fostering economic growth and enhancing infrastructure.

Implementation of this plan will be a collaborative effort involving our Accessibility Advisory Committee, council members, staff, and, importantly, our community. Your insights, experiences, and feedback are invaluable in making our township more accessible and inclusive.

This plan is more than a set of objectives; it's a pledge to uphold our values of empathy, trust, and equity in every aspect of township life. It's about building a future where each decision and policy is reflective of our commitment to an accessible, inclusive community.

As we move forward, let's remember that creating an accessible community goes beyond physical infrastructure; it involves nurturing an environment of understanding, respect, and inclusion for all.



Richard Godin  
Chief Administrative Officer

# Accessibility Advisory Committee's Message

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The Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) is made up of dedicated volunteers appointed by Council who believe everyone regardless of age, ability, or background should have an equal opportunity to take part in the Township's social and economic life. Making the Township accessible for residents and visitors means a better quality of life for our entire community.

The Committee provides feedback to Council and staff on municipal accessibility policies, on site plans and renovations of municipal facilities as well as on compliance with provincial accessibility standards and legislation. Committee members worked collaboratively with staff to provide input to this plan and are committed to ensuring the successful implementation of these priorities in support of making the Township a barrier-free community.

We remain committed to our core responsibility: advocacy, knowledge of accessibility standards and providing education to the municipality and key stakeholders about accessibility, equity, and inclusion from a broad lens.

The committee will continue to work with Council and staff to remove barriers, change attitudes, and create greater awareness about the importance of making the Township accessible to everyone.

As a committee, we welcome and encourage comments, input, and feedback in our continuing efforts to make our Township the most accessible community in Ontario.

Thank you,

## **AAC Committee Members**

Councillor Marc Lalonde - Chair  
Patrice Dagenais  
Russell Hogben  
Matthew Graveline  
Sheri-Lynn Mayhew  
Sonja Power  
Victoria Sarunsky

## **Staff Resources**

Sébastien Dagenais, Accessibility Coordinator  
Louis Savoie, Recording Secretary

# Legislative Background

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## Ontario with Disabilities Act, 2001

The Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA) was enacted in 2001. This regulation was intended to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities. The Act required all municipalities to assist in the identification, removal and prevention of accessibility barriers.

The *Act* defines a “barrier” as anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice.

## Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act was enacted in 2005. The purpose of the Act is to develop, implement and enforce accessibility standards in order to remove barriers for Ontarians with disabilities in relation to goods, services, facilities, accommodations, employment, structures and premises on or before January 1, 2025.

## Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (O.Reg.191/11)

The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation establishes accessibility standards and introduces requirements for:

- General Requirements and Customer Service Standard
- Information and Communication Standard
- Employment Standard
- Transportation Standard
- Design of Public Spaces Standard

As a large designated public sector organization having more than 50 employees, the Township shall comply with the dates specific to this classification.

## Ontario Building Code

The Ontario Building Code outlines accessibility and barrier-free design requirements in newly constructed buildings and existing buildings that are to be extensively renovated.

The Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs outlines a new edition of the Building Code proposed in effect date of January 2019 with proposals to include accessibility updates.

## Ontario Human Rights Code

The Ontario Human Rights Code is an individual, complaints-based legislation that addresses discrimination. The Ontario Human Rights Code requires organizations to accommodate people with disabilities to the point of undue hardship.



# Statement of Commitment

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The Township of Russell is committed to providing equal treatment to people with disabilities, in regard to the use and benefit of Township services, programs, goods and facilities, in a manner that respects their dignity and that is equitable in relation to the broader public. This commitment extends to residents, visitors and employees with visible or non-visible, and permanent or temporary disabilities.

## Purpose

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The Township's Accessibility Plan outlines the initiatives the Municipality has taken and plans to take to ensure compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) including the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR).

The AODA outlines various ways for municipalities, businesses and organizations to achieve a barrier-free community. And the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) sets requirements that an organization must meet in the areas of customer service, information and communications, employment, transportation and the design of public spaces.

This plan is a requirement under the AODA and the IASR. This plan sets out strategies to identify and remove barriers to accessibility and is also intended to position the Municipality as a leader in accessibility matters in the community. To ensure that we reach this goal, the Township of Russell will report annually on its progress in meeting the objectives set out in this plan.

The goals of the Accessibility Plan are to:

- Review and improve upon previous efforts to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities.
- Describe the process that the Municipality will use to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities in the future.
- Identify the measures that the Municipality will take in the coming years to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to people with disabilities.
- Identify the means in which the Municipality will make the Accessibility Plan available to the public.
- Identify solutions for an accessible community to all.
- Ensure that Our Commitment is followed when implementing procedures, policies, or by-laws that regulate the procurement process or when acquiring goods, services, or facilities.
- Identify accessibility training opportunities to ensure a respectful and inclusive environment.
- Identify and create solutions that embody the principle of Our Commitment as outlined in this Plan.

# Accessibility Advisory Committee

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## Mandate

The Township of Russell's Accessibility Advisory Committee for Disabled Persons is dedicated to promoting equal opportunity and access for all persons, regardless of needs, to facilitate their participation as fully as possible in all aspects of community life.

## Composition

The Committee shall be composed of a minimum of five (5) and a maximum of seven (7) Members to which a majority of the Members of the Committee shall include persons with disabilities, pursuant to the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001, and appointed as follows:

- 1) One (1) Member of Council.
- 2) Three (3) to four (4) Members who have a disability.
- 3) One (1) to two (2) citizen(s) appointed with or without a disability.
- 4) The Director of Finances/Treasurer or his/her designate, who shall serve as Staff Liaison; and
- 5) A secretary, who may be appointed at the discretion of the Staff Liaison and in accordance with section 7.4 of the Township's Committees' By-law.

## Meeting Schedule

The Committee shall meet at least four (4) times per year, preferably during the second week of the month, where possible and/or at such other time and place as the Committee Chair or Committee determines necessary.

## Terms of Reference

- 1) As it relates to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) or other Federal or Provincial legislation, and with regard to municipal infrastructure or premises, provide advice and specific recommendations to Council regarding the Township's accessibility plans, measures, policies, practices or programs.
  - a. The work of the Committee will be reported to Council by the Director of Corporate Services-Treasurer or his/her designate.
- 2) Provide a forum for persons with disabilities to raise issues and concerns relating to accessibility within the Township, and where possible, consult with other stakeholders to capture and communicate emerging issues to Township Council and Administration.
- 3) Advise Council and coordinate the dissemination of information to residents regarding the work of the Advisory Committee and support the enhancement of community awareness regarding issues affecting persons with disabilities.
- 4) Communicate, coordinate deconflict as required with other committees to ensure integration of effort across committee mandates.

- 5) Develop Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which both measure and evaluate the success of the committee's efforts as they relate to residents and the wider community.

## Objectives

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The Accessibility Plan for the Township of Russell is a living document that is designed to continually meet the requirements of the AODA and its standards regulation (IASR), and to highlight and achieve key priorities that are important to residents. This Plan was developed using input from Township staff as well as the public because their different experiences and background are valuable in creating a Plan that supports inclusive communities. Routine monitoring of the Plan will ensure that any new initiatives and opportunities are incorporated, and progress is identified.

A key part of the plan is that there is no “year” deadline associated in achieving the priorities that are outlined in the Plan. This is intentional and was done to emphasize that the identified priorities are all important over the entire duration of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and to promote continual improvement.

The Township of Russell will be working on ensuring the continual and successful implementation of the IASR. A key aspect of this Plan will focus on monitoring and improving upon standards and priorities that are already in place and looking at how to provide better services to the community through new opportunities and public engagement.

Below are the key priorities for the duration of this plan which mirror the five core standards of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR):

- |               |                             |
|---------------|-----------------------------|
| Commitment 1: | Information & Communication |
| Commitment 2: | Employment                  |
| Commitment 3: | Transportation              |
| Commitment 4: | Design of Public Spaces     |
| Commitment 5: | Customer Service            |

### Commitment 1: Information & Communication

The Information and Communication Standard sets out the requirements for organizations to create, provide, and receive information and communications that are accessible for people with disabilities. The Township of Russell is committed to providing accessible information and communication and will:

- Aim to make the Township’s website compliant with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA so that all members of the public can access information easily. The goal is that this will be completed based on the timelines outlined in the IASR.
- Ensure that documents created by the Township are in accessible formats (using proper fonts, headings and graphics).



- Publicize more frequently that Township information and communications are provided in alternative formats upon request and including this statement in key documents and plans.
- Continue to provide documents requisitioned by the municipality, in an accessible format.

## **Commitment 2: Employment**

The Employment Standard requires that employers must make their workplace and employment practices accessible to potential or current employees with disabilities. The Township of Russell's employment programs and policies are developed to ensure inclusivity of people with disabilities. To continue meeting the requirements within the Employment Standard the municipality will:

- Review Township policies and procedures and make updates as needed to remove barriers in the workplace.
- Frequently review the recruitment process for improvement to ensure participation of all candidates. This includes articulating the availability of accommodation during the recruitment process and having alternative methods to propose to candidates.

## **Commitment 3: Transportation**

The Transportation Standard sets out the requirements for transportation service providers. Particularly, features and equipment on vehicles, routes, and services offered must be accessible to people with disabilities. The Township of Russell does not directly provide municipal transportation services, but is still committed to the requirements outlined in the Transportation Standard and will:

- Stay current on new initiatives of how to provide accessible transportation, and learn from experiences and programs provided by other municipalities.

## **Commitment 4: Design of Public Spaces**

The Design of Public Spaces Standard outlines the need for newly constructed or redeveloped public spaces to be accessible for people with disabilities. The Township of Russell is committed to meeting the requirements outlined in the IASR Design of Public Spaces Standard including:

- Ensure that newly constructed municipal outdoor play spaces are accessible to all members of the public and meet standards set out in the AODA and applicable regulations.
- Provide information to developers through the planning process on the construction of new recreational trails and the accessibility requirements, specifically accessible types of trails surfaces and design.
- Ensure that all municipal building plans, new construction and significant renovations, are reviewed by the Accessibility Advisory Committee for comments and feedback on accessible design features.

- Support local businesses in finding solutions to provide unimpeded access to their buildings. This can be through exploring programs and initiatives that design and construct portable ramps.
- Participate in annual accessibility reviews of municipal buildings with the Accessibility Advisory Committee. Reviews provide the opportunity for the Township to see different accessible layouts and features, such as barrier-free washrooms, and understand how people with disabilities are able to move and access the space.

## **Commitment 5: Customer Service**

The Customer Service Standard sets out the requirements for removing barriers for people with disabilities so they can access goods, services, and/or facilities. The Township of Russell will maintain compliance with the Customer Service Standard including:

- Actively encouraging public feedback about the manner in which goods, services and facilities are provided to persons with disabilities.
- Provide refresher training to employees and volunteers on requirements under the customer service standard through the AODA.
- Conduct annual reviews of accessible features within Township facilities to ensure they are working properly and to address any maintenance that needs to be undertaken, for example checking automatic doors. Reviews will also include identifying any barriers that will impede persons with disabilities in accessing goods within our facilities.
- Upon request, providing a copy of a document in an accessible format based on the needs of the requester. Ensuring that customer service staff understand that this can be as easy as reading a document to a member of the public.

# We Want to Hear From You!

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The Township of Russell is committed to improving accessibility for all residents and will continue to work with Staff, Council and Residents to identify areas that need improvement to ensure safe and easy accessibility within the municipality.

We appreciate input from our community and encourage residents to share any suggestions or concerns they may have. Feedback can be provided at [Accessibility - Township of Russell](#) or by contacting the Accessibility Coordinator:

Name : Sébastien Dagenais  
Phone number : (613) 443-3066  
Email : [SebastienDagenais@Russell.ca](mailto:SebastienDagenais@Russell.ca).

“Our goal is to develop accessibility standards. But we can't fix things unless we know they're broken. And the only people that can tell us that they're broken, is you. The lived experience of people of all abilities is the most critical thing we can possibly have.”

– Brad McCannell, Member of Accessibility Standards Canada's Board of Directors

## Related Documents

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- Accessibility Policy
- Accessibility Standards for Customer Service
- Mandate and Terms of Reference for the Accessibility Advisory Committee & Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Municipal Election Accessibility Plan

## See Also

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- Committees By-law
- Council's Procedural By-law

## Annual Reporting

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The Township of Russell will report annually on its progress in meeting the objectives set out in this plan as required by the AODA and the IASR.

These reports will be posted on the Township's website.