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PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to function as an overarching policy to facilitate compliance for requirements as per the regulations developed under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (the "AODA"). The purpose of the AODA is to develop, implement and enforce accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises by 2025.

Under the AODA, the **Accessibility Standards for Customer Service** (Ontario Regulation 429/07) came into effect for Municipalities on January 1, 2012. The **Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)** (Ontario Regulation 191/11) came into effect July 1, 2011 and is being phased in between 2012 and 2021. The IASR consists of four standards:

- Employment Standard
- Information and Communication Standard
- Transportation Standard
- Accessible Built Environment (Design of Public Spaces)
(Built Environment standard specifically for buildings is currently in development)


POLICY STATEMENT

Clearview Township is committed to ensuring that our policies, practices and procedures are consistent with equality of opportunity of all we serve and employ. This policy outlines the overall strategic direction that Clearview Township will follow in the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to persons with disabilities to ensure equal opportunity in accessing the township's goods, services, facilities and employment with the following guiding principles:

- o Ensuring freedom from discrimination;
- o Providing opportunities equitable in relation to the broader public with respect to the use and benefit of goods, services, programs, facilities and employment;
- o Protecting the dignity and independence of all people, and;
- o Striving to provide responsive and integrated services.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees, members of council and volunteers at the Corporation of the Township of Clearview.

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DEFINITIONS

“**Disability**” means:

- Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes, mellitus, epilepsy, brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal, or on a wheelchair, or other remedial appliance or device;
- A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- A learning disability or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- A mental disorder; or
- Any injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

“**Barrier**” means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability. This includes physical, architectural, information or communication, attitudinal or technological barrier; as well as a policy or a practise.


OPERATING PRINCIPLES

Accessibility Planning

The Township will establish, implement and maintain a multi-year accessibility plan in accordance with the AODA. This shall be coordinated by the Human Resources Manager. The multi-year accessibility plan will outline strategies whereby the Township will identify, prevent and remove barriers and meet the requirements of the standards developed under the AODA.

The multi-year plan will be:

- Reviewed and updated at least once every five years; and
- Establish, reviewed and updated in consultation with persons with disabilities and the municipal accessibility advisory committee.

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An annual status update report on the progress of the multi-year accessibility plan will be prepared by the Human Resources Manager in consultation with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) and management. The multi-year accessibility plan and accompanying status update reports will be posted to the Township's website and provided in accessible formats upon request.


Barrier-Free Buildings, Infrastructure and Public Spaces

In compliance with the AODA, the Township will ensure barrier-free design within all facets of municipal life for all new construction and extensive renovations to promote equal opportunity and participation by residents and visitors with disabilities. The provincial accessible built environment standards as incorporated into the *Ontario Building Code*, will be monitored by Clearview's management team responsible for planning, building, renovating and maintaining buildings, infrastructure and public spaces regarding implications for future building and development.

The Built Environment Standards include standards for all public and private sector:

- **Buildings** (including all features that would impede persons with disabilities from fully accessing or using the building or its facilities or circulating within it)
- **Site development** (built elements, external parcels of land bounded by property lines);
- **Public ways** (portions of land such as street, road, highway, public square or other built area not designated as of a private nature);
- **Public parks**
- **Public Spaces**
 - Trails
 - Beach access routes
 - Boardwalks and ramps
 - Outdoor public use eating areas
 - Outdoor play spaces
 - Exterior paths of travel (e.g. sidewalks, walkways, ramps, stairs, etc)
 - Parking
 - Obtaining services – service counters, queuing guides, waiting areas

The Building Code's requirements for barrier-free design apply to most uses of buildings. There are a few exceptions:

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- Houses, including semi-detached houses, duplexes, triplexes, town houses, row houses and boarding or rooming houses with fewer than 8 boarders or roomers
- High-hazard industrial buildings
- Buildings that are not intended to be occupied on a daily or full-time basis

Ongoing Accessibility Improvements


Accessibility improvements to existing buildings, infrastructure and public spaces may be identified by the Accessibility Advisory Committee or by any staff or Council member at any time. Prioritized, reasonable suggested improvements will be considered and planned annually within the budget and resources available. This will be the responsibility of the manager who is responsible for that specific building /property/public space in consultation with the Accessibility Advisory Committee and Senior Management.

Clearview Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC)

Clearview Township management will liaise diligently with the Clearview AAC pertaining to the implementation of all accessibility standards and will ensure that the AAC is consulted with all planning/building/renovating/maintenance activities (where practicable), providing opportunities to review all site plans and drawings for buildings, site development and public spaces.

The AAC's role is to advise and assist Council to carry out its responsibilities under the AODA, specifically:

- Working with Township staff in the development and maintenance of the Clearview Accessibility Plans.
- Making recommendations to Council on strategies and policies to ensure that existing barriers are eliminated, and that no new barriers will be created.
- Reviewing site plans and drawings for :
 - **Buildings** (including all features that would impede persons with disabilities from fully accessing or using the building or its facilities or circulating within it)
 - **Site development** (built elements, external parcels of land bounded by property lines);
 - **Public ways** (portions of land such as street, road, highway, public square or other built area not designated as of a private nature);

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- **Public parks**
- **Public Spaces**

- Advocating on behalf of persons with disabilities through the promotion of public awareness and understanding the needs of disabled persons.
- Supporting the development and implementation of programs, policies and by-laws which promote and create a barrier-free community.
- Identifying any potential funding opportunities to assist Clearview in becoming barrier-free.
- Assessing the status of Township owned and/or operated building, facilities and public areas and make recommendations that would enhance the needs of disabled persons.
- Responding to relevant accessibility issues as raised by individuals or community groups.
- Providing a forum for discussion and coordination of accessibility issues with other community groups and agencies.

Accessible Format and Communication Supports


“**Accessible Formats**” may include, but are limited to large print, plain language, recorded audio, or electronic formats such as Word, PDF, Rich Text, or HTML, Braille and other formats usable by persons with disabilities.

“**Communication Supports**” may include, but are not limited to, captioning, alternative and augmentative communication supports, plain language, sign language, and other supports that facilitate effective communication.

Upon request, the Township will provide or arrange for accessible format and communication supports to members of the public:

- In a timely manner that takes into account the person’s accessibility needs due to their specific disability;
- At a cost no more than the regular cost charged to other persons;
- By consulting with the person making the request and determining suitability of an accessible format or communications support;
- By notifying the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports.

When creating documents and communication formats, all Clearview staff shall follow accessible format procedures and guidelines as developed by the Township.

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Clearview Township’s internet website shall conform with the world wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)2.0 – level A - by January 1, 2014 and increasing to level AA by January 1, 2021.

Customer Service

► Procurement

Whenever possible, Township will take into account the accessibility features and criteria of goods, services and facilities procured, purchased or acquired. When not practicable to incorporate accessible criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities, staff shall provide an explanation upon request.

► Feedback on Township Services

The Township has established a process for receiving and responding to feedback on the manner in which the Township provides goods and services to persons with disabilities. Members of the public may provide feedback via the Feedback Form (accessible format) available on the Township’s website. Feedback may also be provided by telephone or in person.

All feedback received from the general public regarding the accessible services will be provided to all relevant Township staff members who will take appropriate action in a timely manner.


► Service Disruptions

The Township will provide customers with notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption of services or facilities. The notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternate facilities or services, if available. The notice will be placed on the Township’s website, as well as public entrances and service counters on the affected premises and the Township municipal office.

► Support Persons

The Township welcomes people with disabilities to be accompanied by a support person in all Township-owned and operated public facilities.

No fees for support persons: - Provided that the support person with a disability is a paying participant, where fees apply, then fees will not be charged for support persons for admission to any Township premises, events or programs.

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➤ **Service Animals**

The Township welcomes service animals into all township-owned or operated facilities which are open to the public. Township staff will provide information to owners of service animals pertaining to the location of fresh water for the service animal and where service animals may be walked to relieve themselves.

➤ **Use of Assistive Devices**

The Township will allow people with disabilities to use their own personal assistive devices to obtain services offered by the Township. If a person with a disability is unable to access the Township's services through the use of their own assistive devices, Township members will work with the customer to determine other alternate means for accessing services.

Training


Clearview Township will ensure that training is provided on the Accessibility Standards and on the Human Rights Code as it pertains to persons with disabilities. This will be the responsibility of the Human Resources manager. Such training will be provided to:

- All paid employees and volunteers
- All Council members

Training will be provided to all new employees within 30 days of staff commencing their duties as part of their initial orientation. Training for Council members and volunteers will be provided as soon as practicable, but no later than three (3) months from their start date. Ongoing refresher training will be provided every four (4) years, on an ongoing basis. Human Resources will maintain all training records including details of training, dates of training and names of individuals who attended training.

Training for third parties / contract agencies:

The training requirement will be met by requiring that the organization provide copies of their workplace's policy and procedures regarding Accessible Customer Service to the Township as proof of training. In addition, a copy of Clearview's corporate accessibility policy will be provided as well as a training booklet on Accessibility standards. Third parties and contract agencies shall be required to read the materials and return a signed acknowledgement indicating their understanding of the information. It will then be the responsibility of the third party or contract agency to train their staff based on the information provided by the Township.

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Accessible Workplace

The Human Resources manager is responsible for developing and implementing policies and procedures to facilitate compliance with the Employment Standards regulation under the AODA, i.e.:

- Ensuring the recruitment process is inclusive of people with disabilities;
- Informing employees of supports available for employees with disabilities;
- Accommodating employees with disabilities under the AODA in the areas of:
 - workplace emergency response information
 - information and communications needed to perform the employee's job or that is generally available to employees in the workplace; and
 - other accommodations as required;
- Taking into account employee accommodations in:
 - performance management
 - career development and advancement; and
 - redeployment; and
 - developing and implementing a return to work process for employees who have been absent from work due to a disability and require disability-related accommodations in order to return to work.

Public Libraries

The Township libraries shall comply with the AODA regulations by:

- Providing access to (or arranging for) the provision of access to accessible materials where they exist;
- Making information about the availability of accessible materials publicly available and by providing information in accessible format or with appropriate communication supports, upon request.

RESPONSIBILITIES

All Township Staff, Council Members and Volunteers are responsible for adhering to the parameters of this policy and for ensuring that the needs of people with disabilities are supported to ensure barrier-free access to goods, services, programs, facilities and employment.



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POLICY RE-ASSESSMENT

This policy shall be reviewed as required, but in any case no later than five (5) years from the date of the most recent version.
