



## **REPORT ADM-2023-064**

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TO: Mayor and Members of Council

PREPARED BY: Sarah Huether, Acting Deputy Clerk

PRESENTED BY: Sarah Huether, Acting Deputy Clerk

MEETING DATE: November 29, 2023

SUBJECT: Township of Puslinch Annual Accessibility Status Report  
File: A22

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

**That Report ADM-2023-064 entitled Township of Puslinch Annual Accessibility Status Report be received.**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an annual status update on the progress of measures taken to implement the Township 2022-2026 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (Attachment 1).

The Township of Puslinch has established a multi-year accessibility plan to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility and to meet requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards.

This Annual Status Report details the required annual update for 2022-2026 on the progress of measures taken to improve accessibility within the Township. The purpose of this report is to track the organization's progress and make the public aware of our initiatives, through collaboration with all Township departments including Public Works Parks & Facilities, Finance, Fire, Building and Administration.

This report will be available online at [www.puslinch.ca/accessibility](http://www.puslinch.ca/accessibility).

#### **Background**

The *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (ODA), 2001, mandates public organizations have an accessibility plan that integrates accessibility planning into their operations and facilities.

In 2015, the Ontario Government introduced the AODA, which provided a foundation of how to achieve a fully-accessible province for all citizens by 2025.

The AODA sets out the roadmap for an accessible Ontario by 2025, and contains standards in the following five areas:

1. Customer Service;
2. Information and Communication;
3. Employment;
4. Transportation; and,
5. Design of Public Spaces.

The Township's 2022-2026 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan is based upon the legislative requirements of the ODA and AODA.

In addition to addressing the specific goals and priorities identified in the 2022-2026 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, Township staff have consulted with the County of Wellington and Member Municipalities' Accessibility Advisory Committee on various policies and procedures in preparation for the 2022 Municipal Election.

\*Projects identified on the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan that are marked with an asterisk "\*" are contingent upon available grant funding opportunities.

## 2023 Status Update

### Customer Service

- (Ongoing) Continued to provide Accessible Customer Service Training to all staff, new employees and volunteers
- (Ongoing) Continued to review and improve current process to receive feedback from the public, where possible
- (Ongoing) Continued to review and improve current processes and standard operating procedures on how the public can request alternative formats, where possible
- (Ongoing) Continue to support corporate efforts to ensure compliance with AODA and the Integrated Accessibility Standards
- In the Fall of 2022, Township staff approved the *Accessible Election Corporate Procedure*, to ensure that all reasonable efforts are made to provide accessible options to election information and services (Attachment 2)

**Information and Communications**

- (Ongoing) The Township website software performs continuous 'Accessibility Checks', to identify accessibility issues with website content, and provide tips and steps on how to update the content to make it accessible, that staff review and action
- (Completed) Fall of 2023, the Township in partnership with Aubs and Mugg (Township's website support provider) performed a comprehensive Accessibility audit of the Township's website, to further identify areas for improvement.
- (Ongoing) Staff actively monitor the Townships website to improve accessibility.
- (Completed) Fall of 2023, the Township confirmed that its partner DocuPet had completed an internal audit, confirming it's website is meeting accessibility standards.
- (Ongoing) Website content written in plain language, appropriate heading tags for content, alternative text tags for images and documents that are friendly to those using assistive devices
- (Ongoing) Created online accessible fillable forms and converted existing forms to PDF forms for easier use
- (Ongoing) Documents offered in accessible formats when requested
- (Ongoing) Reviewed information and communications processes and products to improve accessibility

**Employment**

- (Ongoing) Provided accommodation measures as required during recruitment processes upon request
- (Ongoing) Provided job postings and descriptions in alternative formats upon request
- (Ongoing) Ensured job postings were advertised in a variety of websites and the local County newspaper
- (Ongoing) Provided accessibility training to all new staff as part of new employee onboarding program

**Transportation**

- In 2019, Wellington County, in partnership with the Province of Ontario, launched *Ride Well*, an on demand public transit service available to all residents and visitors in Puslinch Township. Service can be arranged by using the RIDE WELL app or by phone. The Township, in partnership

with the County, continues to identify opportunities to advertise and promote this program through local mediums.

- As the Township of Puslinch does not have a public transit system, the majority of the Transportation standard does not apply
- In 2009 the Township entered into an agreement with the County of Wellington to delegate authority for licensing taxicabs within the Township of Puslinch. In 2011, the County of Wellington ensured Taxi By-law 5266-11 met the requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Regulations as they relate to the Transportation standard

### **Design of Public Spaces**

- \*Space needs analysis was completed (2021-2022) regarding the re-design of municipal office in accordance with public space accessibility requirements of the Ontario Building Code, and the County of Wellington's Facility Accessibility Design Manual. The next steps for this project is to obtain detailed design options to determine budgetary cost estimates.
- (Ongoing) 2023 Playground upgrades at the Puslinch Community Center Park. Project is nearing completion with the addition of a fully accessible playground, shade structure with accessible seating and accessible walking paths throughout the Puslinch Community Centre Park. As well, additional accessible parking spaces have been added to the renovated rear parking lot at the Puslinch Community Centre Park.
- (Completed) 2023 Installation of a new accessible playground and accessible shade structure a Boreham Park.

### **Financial Implications**

None.

### **Applicable Legislation and Requirements**

Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA), 2001

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

### **Attachments**

Attachment 1 – 2022-2026 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Attachment 2 – 2022 Accessible Election Corporate Procedure

Respectfully submitted,

Reviewed by:

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Sarah Huether, Acting Deputy Clerk

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Justine Brotherston, Municipal Clerk



TOWNSHIP OF

**PUSLINCH**

EST. 1850

**2022-2026**

**Multi-Year Accessibility Plan**



## 2022-2026 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

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## 2022-2026 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

# Township of Puslinch Accessibility Commitment

The Township of Puslinch is committed to being responsive to the needs of its residents and to recognize the diverse needs of all residents. The Township of Puslinch strives to provide services and facilities that are accessible to all citizens.

In 2021, the Township reaffirmed its commitment to equal access and participation for people with disabilities, by enacting a Corporate Accessibility Policy which supports treating people with disabilities in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence, by enacting a Corporate Accessibility Policy.

The 2022-2026 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan builds on a foundation set by the 2011-2017 and 2017-2021 Multi-Year Plans and outlines the Township's approach to ensuring an inclusive workplace and ensuring that our services are accessible to the public.

The Township's goal is to ensure accessibility within the organization for the public and employees in services and facilities.

## Legislation and Responsibilities

The Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA), 2001, mandates public organizations have an accessibility plan that integrates accessibility planning into their operations and facilities.

In 2015, the Ontario Government introduced the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), which provided a foundation of how to achieve a fully-accessible province for all citizens by 2025. The AODA sets out the roadmap for an accessible Ontario by 2025, and contains standards in the following five areas:

1. Customer Service;
2. Information and Communication;
3. Employment;
4. Transportation; and,
5. Design of Public Spaces.

The Township's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan is based upon the legislative requirements of the ODA and AODA.





2022-2026 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

2022-2026 Goals and Priorities

Accessibility Standard	Goals and Priorities	Timeline
<b>Customer Service</b>	Review best municipal practices and improve (if necessary) current processes on how the public can request alternative formats, where possible	Ongoing
	Support corporate efforts to ensure compliance with AODA and the Integrated Accessibility Standards	Ongoing
	Review and update (if necessary) Township of Puslinch Policy regarding Accessible Standards for Customer Service & Use of Assistive Devices	2022
<b>Information and Communications</b>	Ensure public documents are provided in accessible formats when requested	Ongoing
	Conduct accessibility audit of Township website to ensure content meets internationally-recognized Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA website requirements in accordance with Ontario’s accessibility laws. In addition to an automated scan, include a real human test/review of the website.	2023
	Conduct Website Redesign in accordance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA website requirements, AODA standards, and municipal best practices*	2026 & 2031
<b>Employment</b>	Provide Accessible Customer Service Training to all staff, new employees and volunteers	Ongoing
	Provide accessibility training to all new staff as part of new employee onboarding program	Ongoing
	Provided accommodation measures as required during recruitment processes upon request	Ongoing

	Ensure job postings and descriptions in alternative formats upon request	Ongoing
	Advertise job postings in a variety of newspapers and websites	Ongoing
<b>Transportation</b>	The Township of Puslinch does not have a public transit system, the majority of the Transportation standard does not apply	
	In 2009 the Township entered into an agreement with the County of Wellington to delegate authority for licensing taxicabs within the Township of Puslinch. In 2011, the County of Wellington ensured Taxi By-law 5266-11 met the requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Regulations as they relate to the Transportation standard	
	As a municipality in the County of Wellington, residents of the Township of Puslinch can access RIDE WELL, a demand based, accessible public transit service	
<b>Design of Public Spaces</b>	Playground upgrades at the Puslinch Community Centre Park*	2022-2023
	Parking lot and associated enhancements (curbing, entrance, and additional lighting) at the Puslinch Community Centre*	2023
	Incorporate accessible design features in accordance with public space accessibility requirements of the Ontario Building Code, and the County of Wellington's Facility Accessibility Design Manual, into future renovations/additions to the Municipal Office*	2022-2026
	Playground upgrades at Boreham Park (also known as Arkell Park)*	2024
	Bar Counter, Bar Door, Cosmetic Upgrades at the Puslinch Community Centre	2025

\*Projects identified on the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan that are marked with an asterisk "\*" are contingent upon available grant funding opportunities.

## **Monitoring and Annual Reporting**

The 2022-2026 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will be reviewed and updated every five years. The next update will occur in 2026.

Township Staff will prepare for Municipal Council an annual status report to document and highlight the progress and measures taken to implement the Multi-Year Plan and meet the requirements of the AODA and Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation.

## **Feedback and Contact Information**

The Township of Puslinch welcomes feedback on the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, and on the accessibility of our services and facilities. If you have any ideas or suggestions in the spirit of continuous improvement, please contact us.

Telephone: 519-763-1226  
Mail: Clerk's Office Attention: Deputy Clerk  
7404 Wellington Road 34  
Puslinch, ON  
N0B 2J0  
Email: [admin@puslinch.ca](mailto:admin@puslinch.ca)

The Multi-Year Accessibility Policy is available on the Township's website at [puslinch.ca/accessibility](http://puslinch.ca/accessibility).

Alternative formats, including paper copies of the Accessibility Plan are available upon request.

**Subject:                   ACCESSIBLE ELECTION**

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**Purpose Statement:**

The procedures describe all the accessibility requirements outlined under the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

Election staff will ensure reasonable efforts are made to provide election information and services in a manner that respects the independence and dignity of persons with disabilities. Equal opportunity shall be given to all persons to use, benefit and obtain election information and services.

The delivery of election information and services to persons with disabilities shall be:

- emphasized through mandatory election training
- made accessible by the use of service animals, support persons, assistive devices, unless otherwise prohibited by law
- a component of the standard Election practice

**Scope:**

These procedures are applicable to all Election Staff performing works on behalf of the Township Clerk.

**Definitions:**

**Barrier** is defined by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, and means 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, information or communication barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice.

**Disability** is defined by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, and means:

- (a) 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, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, 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,
- (b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,

- (c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- (d) a mental disorder, or
- (e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace and Insurance Act, 1997*.

**Service Animal** as outlined in Ontario Regulation 429/07 is a service animal for a person with a disability if it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability; or if the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

**Support Persons** as outlined in Ontario Regulation 429/07 means a support person in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies him or her in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services.

## **Procedures:**

### **1. Staff Training**

All staff carrying out election duties will be trained to recognize and ensure that persons with disabilities are served in a manner that accommodates their needs.

Training will include:

1. How to interact and communicate with persons with various disabilities.
2. How to interact with persons with disabilities who use assistive devices or require the assistance of a service animal or support person.
3. How to use voting equipment and assistive devices to deliver election services.
4. What to do if a person is having difficulty accessing election information or services.

### **2. Staff Assistance**

#### **Election Information**

Candidates and electors with disabilities will be able to receive information and copies of election documents in a format that takes into account their disability. The format may be agreed upon between the requester and the Township Clerk. Notice of this provision is located on the Township's Accessibility Webpage at [www.puslinch.ca](http://www.puslinch.ca) and is included in election notices placed in the local media.

#### **Notice of Temporary Service Disruption**

If there is a temporary disruption in the delivery of election information or services, Township Staff shall provide public notice on the Township's Election Webpage, at the

physical site of the disruption and when possible in the local media. The notice shall include the following information:

- reason for the disruption,
- expected duration of the disruption,
- if available, an alternative means of obtaining the service.

Every effort shall be made to provide alternative methods of providing the information or service to persons with disabilities.

Township Staff are available to assist with any issues that may arise with respect to providing a barrier-free election and can be reached by way of the following contact information:

Telephone: 519-763-1226

In Person: Municipal Offices  
7404 Wellington Road 34  
Puslinch, ON N0B 2J0

Email: [elections@puslinch.ca](mailto:elections@puslinch.ca)

Mail: Township of Puslinch  
7404 Wellington Road 34  
Puslinch, ON N0B 2J0

### **3. Assistance to Candidates**

#### **Service Animals**

Candidates and scrutineers are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at all Voting Locations and other designated election locations.

#### **Campaign Expenses**

Expenses that are incurred by a candidate with a disability are directly related to the disability, and would not have been incurred but for the election to which the expenses relate, are excluded from the permitted spending limit for the candidate.

### **4. Assistance to Electors**

#### **Voting by Proxy**

A person with a disability that is homebound or otherwise unable to go to a Voting Location may appoint another person to act as a voting proxy to cast a ballot on his or

her behalf. The appointment must be made on the prescribed form available at Township Municipal Offices. The person being appointed as a proxy will be required to take a statutory declaration before a Commissioner of Oaths. Township Staff can administer this oath (Municipal Offices, 7404 Wellington Rd 34, Puslinch, ON N0B 2J0). Once completed, the voting proxy may be exercised at any advance voting location or on Election Day. On Election Day the proxy must be exercised at a Location for whom the proxy is voting. The Voting Proxy Form will be available August 1, 2018.

### **Voting Locations**

Information regarding Advance Voting opportunities and Election Day voting information will be available on the Township's election webpage at [www.puslinch.ca](http://www.puslinch.ca).

### **Parking**

Accessible parking spaces will be clearly marked and in full compliance with the Township's Parking By-law 5000-05. Routine checks will be made to ensure all entrances remain barrier free through the course of the day.

### **Entrance to the Voting Locations**

All entrances to the Voting Location will be easy to access and barrier free. Every effort shall be made to ensure that the door into the Voting Location is wide enough for a wheelchair or scooter to pass through easily. The door hardware is to be accessible and operated by a person using a closed fist. If the doors are heavy, awkward to open or have handles that are in close reach, where possible they will be propped open in a safe manner, an alternative entrance will be provided, or election staff will be available to assist.

### **Interior Voting Area**

Access to the interior voting area and voting booth shall be level and easily traversed. Any doormats or carpeting shall be level with the floor to prevent potential tripping hazards. All voting areas are to be well lit and seating made available.

### **Accessible Voting Booths**

Accessible voting booths will be available at each Voting Location. Voting booths will be low in height and have a wide area to allow for individuals who use a wheelchair or scooter to vote independently and secretively. Magnifying sheets will be made available to assist an individual with low vision.

### **Accessible Voting Technologies – Advance Voting**

The Advance Voting Location will be equipped with a ballot marking device for a voter with a disability. The Ballot Marker Device produces a human and machine readable marked paper ballot from a blank sheet of paper, completely indistinguishable from a paper ballot marked by hand. The voter uses headphones to hear a ballot presentation and a handheld controller can also be operated by assistive devices such as a sip and puff or hand and foot paddles, for voters who are unable to use their hands to press the selection buttons.

When a voter wishes to use the accessible voting features, the election worker positions the voter behind a privacy screen near the tabulator equipped with the ballot marking device. The election worker then inserts a blank sheet of ballot paper into the printer slot of the device and provides the voter with the headphones and the handheld controller.

The voter hears the audio ballot and uses the controller to adjust volume, speed of the audio presentation, move between contests, and select votes. The audio presentation will confirm votes selected for voter verification. When the vote has been made and confirmed all their vote selections they use the handheld controller to print their actual paper ballot. The printer device will automatically process the blank sheet of paper, printing the full ballot on the sheet complete with the vote markings selected by the voter.

The printed ballot is indistinguishable from a ballot marked by hand because the unit has a library of random handmade marking images which it prints on the ballot, so that the printed markings look just like marks made by hand with a pen. This feature ensures that if the paper ballots are later reviewed by election officials, they will not be able to determine which ballots were made by the Ballot Marker Device, thereby maintaining voter privacy.

The paper ballot printed by the Ballot Marker Device will emerge from the unit into a secrecy folder. The election worker will then insert the ballot into the tabulator.

While an accessible voting session is in process, the tabulator can simultaneously process paper ballots inserted by other voters, allowing the single tabulator to handle both voting channels and maintain the flow of voters.

### **Service Animals**

Electors requiring service animals are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at all voting locations.

### **Support Persons**

Persons with disabilities may be accompanied by a support person within the Voting Location. In addition, an Election Official in each Voting Location can assist a voter. Prior to entering the voting booth, the Election Official shall, in conjunction with the person with



the disability, determine the extent to which they need assistance and the best way in which this assistance can be provided. Where a Voting Location is located in an institution or retirement home, the Election Official can attend on voters in their specific living areas or at their bedside to assist them to vote. All Election Officials are sworn to an oath of secrecy.

It is the responsibility of all Election Officials to make as many accommodations as needed to ensure an elector with a disability is able to cast a vote with comfort and ease.

## **5. Feedback Process & Additional Information**

### **Feedback Process**

Feedback regarding the manner in which the election services are provided to persons with disabilities may be submitted to Township Staff by the following methods:

Telephone: 519-763-1226

In Person: Municipal Offices  
7404 Wellington Rd. 34, Puslinch, ON N0B 2J0

Email: [elections@puslinch.ca](mailto:elections@puslinch.ca)

Mail: Municipal Offices  
7404 Wellington Rd. 34, Puslinch, ON N0B 2J0

Website: [www.puslinch.ca](http://www.puslinch.ca)

In addition, the Township does offer an Accessible Customer Service Feedback Form located on the Township's website at [www.puslinch.ca](http://www.puslinch.ca) under the Bulletin and Events Page.

Once completed this form will be forwarded to Township Staff for action. In addition, staff working in the Township offices can complete the feedback form and submit feedback on behalf of the persons with a disability. Alternatively, the form may be printed and provided to the person for manual completion. Completed forms are date stamped and forwarded to Township staff who will respond to the candidate or elector directly within three (3) business days providing an anticipated action and timeframe for a full response, where appropriate.

The feedback process provides election staff with an opportunity to take corrective measures to prevent similar recurrences, address training needs, enhance service delivery and provide alternative methods of providing election information and services.

## **Additional Information**

### **Administration Department**

The Administration Department is located at the Municipal Offices (7404 Wellington Rd. 34, Puslinch, ON N0B 2J0). Administration staff can answer any questions you may have about running for office, the election in general or specific provisions for those persons with disabilities.

### **Election Website**

The Township of Puslinch's Website is continuously updated to reflect the most recent developments and information. Visit the site for an up-to-date list of candidates and other important messages or events throughout the election year at [www.puslinch.ca](http://www.puslinch.ca).

### **Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing – Election Website**

This website contains information about municipal elections, the Province of Ontario 2018 Municipal Elections Candidates and Voters Guide and the Ministry's commitment to promote greater accessibility for voters and candidates with disabilities <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page219.aspx>

### **Service Ontario – e-Laws**

This website contains all current statutes including the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, [www.e-laws.gov.on.ca](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca).

## **Reference and Related Documents:**

Accessibility Policy