



TOWNSHIP OF Blandford-Blenheim ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

December 1, 2004

1. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

This is the first formal report of the Township of Blandford-Blenheim on accessibility issues related to barriers for persons with disabilities. The Township of Blandford-Blenheim is committed to promoting a barrier-free Township for employees, citizens and all who live, work, visit, and invest in the Township of Blandford-Blenheim. With this report, the Township of Blandford-Blenheim is proud to present its findings and report on the development of innovative strategies to remove and prevent future barriers for people with disabilities and our maturing population.

In keeping with this vision, the Township of Blandford-Blenheim understands that people with disabilities:

- Represent a growing and diverse community that is dramatically increasing due to the demographic trends of a maturing population.
- Form part of the work force, and include our families, our friends, our customers and the members of the community at large.
- Purchase goods and services and make important financial decisions on where they do business, enjoy recreation or choose to live.
- Understand that accessible features can be of benefit to others, such as automatic doors that assist parents with children in strollers.
- Are aware that their full participation in Canadian society has been long awaited and anxiously anticipated.
- Understand that inclusion and full participation of people with disabilities requires well-considered commitment from all levels of government.

The Township of Blandford-Blenheim is committed to ensuring that people with disabilities enjoy the same opportunities as all others who live, work, visit and invest in the Township of Blandford-Blenheim.

2. ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, S.O. 2001, C.32

The Province enacted the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* in 2001. It defines a disability as:

- (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 Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

It defines a barrier as meaning:

“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.”

The Act also imposes obligations on the Province and municipalities concerning accessibility issues.

2.1 Obligations of the Province of Ontario:

The Provincial Government is required to develop barrier-free design guidelines to promote accessibility to buildings and other premises that the Government either purchases, enters into a lease for, constructs or significantly renovates. These guidelines must meet or exceed the levels of accessibility set out in the *Building Code Act* (this applies to municipalities as well). Each government ministry must prepare an accessibility plan. Other obligations of the Province include:

1. regard for persons with disabilities when purchasing goods and services;
2. the provision of internet sites in a format that is accessible to persons with disabilities unless it is not technically feasible to do so;

3. making any Ontario Government publication accessible to a person with a disability who requests it unless it is not technically feasible to do so;
4. accommodating the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities in accordance with the *Human Rights Code* to the extent that the needs relate to their employment; and
5. accommodating the accessibility needs of job applicants with disabilities who are invited to participate in the selection process in accordance with the *Human Rights Code* to the extent the needs relate to the selection process.

2.2 Obligations of the Township of Blandford-Blenheim:

Besides simply requiring the Township to have regard to the accessibility of persons with disabilities when purchasing goods and services, the Act requires that the Township consult with persons with disabilities and others. The Township is also required to monitor and report on the preparation, implementation and effectiveness of its accessibility plan. The annual accessibility plan is a public document approved by Council, which must address the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to persons with disabilities in policies, by-laws, programs, practices, and services. In addition to following provincial guidelines, the Township of Blandford-Blenheim Accessibility Plan must include:

1. A report on the measures taken by the Township to identify, remove and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities;
2. The measures in place to ensure that the Township assesses its by-laws, programs, practices and services to determine their effect on accessibility for persons with disabilities;
3. A list of the by-laws, policies, programs, practices and services that the Township will review in the coming year to identify, prevent and remove barriers to persons with disabilities; and
4. The measures that the Township intends to take in the coming year to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities.

As of the end of October 2004, there have been no Ontario Regulations to the Act published. The Ministry of Citizenship has indicated that although it has started working on these, the need for consultation with interested parties may delay their production and ultimate enactment.

3. TOWNSHIP PERSPECTIVE

The Township of Blandford-Blenheim recognizes that:

- There are 1.9 million consumers and decision-makers in Ontario with disabilities and over 45 million in North America. Coupled with the unprecedented demographics of our maturing population, the population of people with disabilities will increase from 20% in 2004 to 40% by 2024.

- Long-term planning is imperative to meet the challenges and opportunities of the significantly maturing population as well as people with disabilities.
- That the Township must continue, as an employer, to provide equal employment opportunities that encourage the full participation of people with disabilities.
- That well planned buildings use universal design concepts that provide access for all including families with children, injured or ill people and the elderly as well as persons who rely on a wheelchair or other remedial devices and persons who have a visual, hearing, mental or developmental impairment.
- That education is the cornerstone to effective change, good management, and integrated services. The Township of Blandford-Blenheim is committed to educating its staff and the community on disability issues and accessibility opportunities.
- That a commitment to research and development of products, services and educational material is necessary.
- That visitor and tourism operators also depend upon accessible municipal services and facilities. The Township of Blandford-Blenheim is committed to encourage accessible visitor and tourism facilities.
- That we must prevent introducing new barriers by ensuring heightened awareness of accessibility considerations in the Township planning and inspection processes.
- That existing facilities will take time and resources to make them accessible.
- That the process of municipal government has to be accessible and the Township of Blandford-Blenheim is committed to making public meetings and materials accessible and available to all.

4. TOWNSHIP STRUCTURE

Blandford-Blenheim Township is comprised of six departments: Clerk Administrator's Office, Treasury, Public Works, Building and Drainage, Recreation and Protective Services. Within each section the following services are provided:

<p>CLERK ADMINISTRATOR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Matters • Municipal Administration • Zoning By-Laws • Election Process 	<p>TREASURY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance/Budgets • Human Resources • Taxes • Records Management
<p>PUBLIC WORKS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Township Road System • Township Lands 	<p>BUILDING AND DRAINAGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official Plan • Building Permits • Drainage
<p>RECREATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Township Arenas and Facilities • Administration • Budget 	<p>PROTECTIVE SERVICES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour Relations • Recruitment • Health and Safety • Emergency Planning

5. OTHER ORGANIZATIONS & AGENCIES PARTICIPATING:

The Township of Blandford-Blenheim, together with the County of Oxford and the municipalities of the Township of Norwich, the Township of East-Zorra Tavistock, the Township of Zorra, Town of Ingersoll, the Town of Tillsonburg and the City of Woodstock formed a Steering Committee to ensure common elements in developing a first year accessibility plan were addressed. The Township also received input from Accessibility Advisory Committees (AACs) established in larger municipalities, including the Oxford County and City of Woodstock AACs.

It is recognized that input from agencies and associations supportive of persons with disabilities needs to be obtained as the accessibility plan is further developed. Such agencies will include, but will not be limited to, the CNIB, Canadian Hearing Society and the MS Society.

6. ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

The Township of Blandford-Blenheim has been pro-actively developing innovative approaches to addressing accessibility issues, including:

- a) The construction of the barrier-free fire hall in Drumbo in 2004.
- b) New sidewalks were designed to be barrier free when installed in Drumbo as part of the water and sewer and storm drainage project.
- c) Paved and concrete accessible walkways were implemented in the Princeton Park reconstruction project, which assist wheelchairs in gaining access to the baseball facilities.

- d) When alterations were performed on the front of the Princeton Centennial Hall the entrance was designed to assist wheelchairs in gaining access to the Hall.
- e) When the front entrance of the Plattsville Arena was altered, accessibility for wheelchairs was implemented into the project.

7. METHODOLOGY

7.1 Identification

The types of methodologies that will be used in identifying barriers:

- Department audits
- Site audits
- Consultation with staff
- Consultation with community organizations

7.2 Review Process

A review of current policies and procedures will be initiated with the goal of preventing future barriers from being created and viewing the identified ones as opportunities for improvement. The following information will be required:

- a. Type of barrier with description
- b. Review date – e.g. date review took place, date of planned review, and completion date
- c. Description of the review methodology – e.g. office sites reviewed, building plans reviewed, client questionnaire, etc.
- d. Strategy for removal or prevention
- e. Status of review – e.g. completed, ongoing; planned

8. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The Township of Blandford-Blenheim is committed to improving accessibility and promoting opportunities for persons with disabilities to fully participate in the community. This implementation plan described in Appendices 1 and 2 attempts to balance the needs of persons with disabilities against the need to balance available budget funds. The plan also attempts to set a sound foundation for initiatives proposed by initially formulating good inclusion policies and standardizing design, construction and retrofit guidelines.

Appendix 1 outlines the initial steps to be taken by the Township.

Appendix 2 details actions to be considered for implementation over the longer term, as budget funds permit.

9. MONITORING PROGRESS AND AUDIT FUNCTION

Targets were established based on what is achievable within a 12-month period. Since a Municipal Accessibility Plan is required on an annual basis, reviews will occur during mid-year prior to the budget preparation cycle (September-December). Blandford-Blenheim Township will develop a monitoring process to evaluate if targets are being met and/or are being adapted to changing circumstances.

10. COMMUNICATION OF PLAN

The availability of the Township of Blandford-Blenheim Accessibility Plan will be announced publicly in the Council minutes published in a local newspaper and by posting on the Township of Blandford-Blenheim web site www.twp.bla-ble.on.ca

11. RECOMMENDATIONS TO PROVINCE OF ONTARIO

The Township of Blandford-Blenheim commends the Province for introducing legislation to replace the existing Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 with the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2004. This Bill, if enacted, should make Ontario a better Province by creating a society that is open to all, including persons with disabilities. The Bill not only sets long setting term goals for both the private and public sectors to make Ontario barrier-free by the year 2025, but also sets short and medium goals to ensure steady progress is made. This legislation requires standards to be developed in consultation in consultation with persons with disabilities and organizations that would have obligations under the Act.

The Township of Blandford-Blenheim is of the opinion that this legislation should improve accessibility in workplaces and public spaces and improve access to employment, customer service, communication and transportation. However, as the financial impact of this legislation on municipal taxpayers is significant, the Township also recommends that the province assume some financial responsibility for these requirements.

The Township of Blandford-Blenheim would like to see a Provincial template of all the specific areas that a small rural Township should have regard to in reaching compliance. This information would assist with planning the Township's capital budgets.

12. CONCLUSION

The Township of Blandford-Blenheim is committed to addressing existing barriers and preventing future barriers to allow people with disabilities full participation in our communities. The Township encourages input from all Township of Blandford-Blenheim residents.

2005 Implementation Plan

1. Designation of Accountability

Designate Township department responsible for ensuring the overall requirements of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA) and any future Ontario Regulations associated with the ODA.

Action by: Clerk-Administrator

Timing: January 1, 2005.

2. Education

Provide education sessions to Township Council and Township Staff on obligations and requirements under the ODA by municipalities.

Action by: Designated Department Head

Timing: February 2005

Funding required: Staff Time

3. Policy and Process Development

Develop accessibility policies and processes that address:

- A. Standardized access guidelines for the accessible design and construction of new Township facilities and amenities and for retrofitting existing Township facilities and amenities ;
- B. The methodology for identification and review of barriers as detailed in Appendix 2 of the Accessibility Plan;
- C. A process to review all by-laws, programs, practices and services for the removal of barriers for persons with disabilities;
- D. A system for monitoring progress and budgetary requirements of annual Accessibility Plans goals and objectives;
- E. A timely and efficient process for ensuring continued consultation with the public.

Action by: Designated Department Head (with assistance from individual staff, as required)

Timing: September 1, 2005 (prior to budget review)

Funding Required: Staff Time

4. Implementation of Identified Barriers Identified as “Short Term”

Encourage the removal of identified barriers that have little or no budgetary impact for 2005 (per **Appendix 2** attached).

Action by: Directors and/or Managers of individual Blandford-Blenheim Township Departments (reporting removals to Designated Department Head)

Timing: On-going throughout 2005

Funding Required: Minimal

5. Budget for 2005

Develop a budget process for barriers identified to be removed in subsequent years, per **Appendix 2** attached, as funds permit.

Action by: Designated Department Head (in consultation with other staff)

Timing: April 1, 2005.

Funding Required: To be Determined.

APPENDIX 2

The following buildings have been identified as requiring improvements to meet accessibility standards. The Township Council will be reviewing the facilities in the following order:

	FACILITY	YEAR of IMPROVEMENT
1.	Administration Office and Council Chamber	2005
2.	Princeton Centennial Hall (Community Centre)	2006
3.	Plattsville Arena	2008
4.	Bright Community Centre	2010
5.	East Townline Community Centre and Richwood Community Centre These buildings do not appear in the current year Township operating or capital budgets. (These buildings are owned by the Township, however are operated by two individual Community groups that are not associated with the Township Recreation structure.)	2012