



Accessibility Plan

The District Municipality of Muskoka's
Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

2020-2022

Approved by Accessibility Advisory Committee: January 27, 2020

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Resolution: P36/2020

Disclaimer: This draft of The District Municipality of Muskoka's 2020-2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan has been drafted for use by most screen readers. If you experience difficulty accessing this document, or you would like this document in an alternate format, please contact:

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Municipality Participating In This Plan

Municipality

This plan has been prepared for The District Municipality of Muskoka.

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Population

60,599 Permanent Residents
81,000+ Seasonal Residents

Municipal Highlights – The District Municipality of Muskoka’s History

The District Municipality of Muskoka (District) was established by Provincial legislation and commenced operations on October 19, 1970. It covers an area of approximately 4800 square kilometers, containing over 650 lakes. Due to this, Muskoka has been Ontario’s premiere summer vacation destination for many years and is known affectionately as “Cottage Country”. Every summer, Muskoka’s population more than doubles with the influx of cottagers, then recedes again when the seasons begin to change into fall and winter.

Muskoka is governed by a two-tier municipal system. The District forms the upper-tier, working closely with six lower-tier municipalities; Town of Bracebridge, Town of Huntsville, Town of Gravenhurst, Township of Muskoka Lakes, Township of Georgian Bay, and Township of Lake of Bays, who make up the lower-tier. Both levels collaborate and align services to achieve cost efficiencies and best serve residents and visitors to Muskoka.

Organization of The District Municipality of Muskoka

The District is organized into six main departments, each reporting to the Chief Administrative Officer.

- Administration
- Community and Planning Services
- Engineering and Public Works
- Finance and Corporate Services
- Health Services
- Legislative Services

These departments administer the programs and services assigned by District Council, in accordance with the relevant statutes, regulations and corporate policies.

Administration

The Administration department provides a link between all departments and District Council to support and facilitate the execution of Council decisions - working collaboratively with lower-tier municipalities.

The District's Administration Department reports mainly through the Finance and Corporate Services Committee. This committee sets direction and oversees the functions of the department's corporate responsibilities. The Administration department is organized into service divisions:

- **Chief Administrative Officer:** Provides advice to District Council and leadership to senior staff and Corporate Communications; ensures that policies and direction of Council are implemented efficiently and effectively; Chair of the District Strategic Leadership Team (DSLTT) which includes all department Commissioners, District Solicitor, and Director of Human Resources.
- **Human Resources:** Recruitment; employee and labour relations; health, wellness and safety; talent management and development; compensation and benefits - job evaluations and policy development and implementation.
- **Muskoka Airport:** Operates safe and efficient air transportation facilities that serve the needs of Muskoka residents, businesses and tourists and is governed by an Airport Board that reports to District Council.
- **Communications:** Develops and implements a comprehensive communication strategy in order to provide maximum impact for internal District staff, as well as residents (year-round and seasonal) and visitors to Muskoka.

Community and Planning Services

The District's Community and Planning Services department (CAPS) is dedicated to improving the quality of life for all residents in Muskoka by addressing the holistic needs of our communities. The CAPS department works collaboratively with the lower-tier

municipalities and community partners on matters related to community growth and development, while working to protect our environment, deliver programs and services to our most vulnerable population and to promote thriving, caring communities that are based on inclusion, hope and opportunity.

The District's Community and Planning Services sets direction and oversees the functions of the department's corporate responsibilities. The department is organized into service divisions:

- Assistance – Financial and Employment Support: Addictions and Mental Health Support, Financial Supports (Ontario Works), Emergency Shelter Fund, Employment Supports, Income Tax Clinics, etc.
- Children and Youth Services: Child Care Fee Subsidy, Funding and Other Services for Children and Youth, Licensed Child Care, Muskoka Best Start Network, Muskoka Child Care Advisory Group, Muskoka Home Child Care Agency, Quality Child Care in Muskoka, Summer Camp Fund Program, The Nest and Wage Enhancement for Early Childhood Educators.
- Community Programs: Food Programs, Impact You!, Impact Café, Pay it Forward Grant Program, the Community Service Recognition Program and The Nest.
- Community Transportation: Corridor 11 Bus.
- Housing: Social Housing, Affordable Home Ownership Programs, Below Market Rent Units, Rent Assistance Programs, Capital Incentives for Developments and Builders, Funding for Home Repairs, Muskoka Affordable Housing Incentives Program, Muskoka Housing Task Force and Muskoka Homelessness Planning Table.
- Planning and Service Coordination Tables: The District coordinates and/or participates in a number of regional planning and services coordination tables. The focus area of each table is unique, but all share common objectives to better align human and health services in Muskoka to ensure that we meet the needs of our most vulnerable community members.
- Seniors Programs and Services: Seniors Affordable Housing, Seniors Healthy Aging Promotions, Community Connect, Workshops, Fitness Programs, Happy Day Living Fairs, Seniors Intergenerational Mentorship Program, Muskoka Seniors Services Planning Table, Seniors Community Advisor Program and W.I.S.E. Clubhouses.
- Planning: The District is responsible for a range of planning functions including the drafting of The Muskoka Official Plan, other Policy reviews and special projects, development reviews and approvals, and economic development.
- Environment, Watershed and Geomatics: Provide support to the Muskoka Watershed council; monitor water quality and provide support for environmental stewardship programs; develop and implement a Climate Action Plan; utilize geographic information systems (GIS) tools to engage the community and deliver programs.

Engineering and Public Works

The District's Engineering and Public Works Department is responsible for maintenance and oversight of all municipal water and wastewater systems and waste management programs in Muskoka, as well as maintenance of all District roads - working collaboratively with lower-tier municipalities.

The District's Engineering and Public Works Committee sets direction and oversees the functions of the department's corporate responsibilities. The department is organized into service divisions:

- **Engineering:** Provides design support for roads and bridges and water and wastewater capital projects, construction supervision and contract administration; operation and maintenance of Port Carling Locks and James Bartleman Island Park.
- **Roads and Transportation:** Maintenance and construction of District roads, bridges and culverts; load restrictions; road permits; traffic signals and pedestrian cross-walks; signage (regulatory, warning and informational); access permitting; line painting; traffic survey; Winter maintenance program; and Off Road Vehicles (ATVs, snowmobiles, etc.).
- **Solid Waste Management:** Collection, diversion and disposal of solid waste; landfill and transfer stations; and development adjacent to landfill sites.
- **Water and Wastewater:** Purification and distribution of potable water, ensuring appropriate collection and treatment of wastewater and operation and maintenance of hauled sewage treatment facilities for disposal of septage.

Finance and Corporate Services

The Finance and Corporate Services department advises and supports District Council, Committees and all departments - working collaboratively with lower-tier municipalities.

The District's Finance and Corporate Services Committee sets direction and oversees the functions of the department's corporate responsibilities. The department is organized into service divisions:

- **Financial Services:** Corporate account and financial recording; corporate cash management; and billing and collection systems.
- **Budgets and Financial Planning:** Budget preparation; fiscal policy, business case and impact analysis; long-term fiscal plan monitoring; and procurement initiatives.
- **Fleet Services:** Centralized management of business case analysis, procurement, operations and maintenance.
- **Information Technology Services:** Provide modern, stable and secure computing; provide support for business application delivery as well as maintenance and hardware devices; and a shared services provider to two lower-tier municipalities.

- **Facilities Services:** Service, maintenance, operations and repairs on corporate facilities; capital planning and project management related to facilities; facility technical audits and condition; and energy management.
- **Accessibility:** The continual improvement of access to all municipally-owned facilities; premises and services for all those with disabilities; delivering excellent and accessible customer services and programs to all residents and visitors; providing a supportive working environment for District staff; the participation of persons with disabilities in the development and review of the annual Accessibility Plan; and providing equal access to all.
- **Continuous Improvement Unit:** Facilitate completion of projects identified from services and operational reviews; improve efficiencies and effectiveness of programs and service delivery; respond to emerging needs of District Council; and provide development opportunities as part of corporate talent management.
- **Police Services:** Police services in Muskoka are provided by the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) on a fee-for-service basis. Police services are a financial responsibility of the District, funded through property tax revenue.

Health Services

The Health Services Department is responsible for Long-Term Care Services, Community and Emergency Planning, Paramedic Services, and Health Planning Services.

The District's Health Services Committee sets direction and oversees the functions of the department's corporate responsibilities. The department is organized into service divisions:

- **Long-Term Care Services:** The Pines Long-Term Care Home is a 160-bed home owned and operated by the District and funded by the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Long-Term Care.
- **Paramedic Services:** Includes emergency response and non-emergency medical transportation services.
- **Health Planning Services:** To deliver and initiate community-based services that support the health and wellbeing of residents through Muskoka Health Link, Public Health, Hospital Funding and Long-Term Care Redevelopment.

Legislative Services

The Legislative Services Department is responsible for the office of the District Clerk, legal services to all departments and the Provincial Offences Office.

The department is organized into service divisions:

- **District Clerk:** Custodian of all corporate records including minutes, by-laws and reports; provides administrative, procedural and clerical support to District

Council, its Standing Committees and various other Ad Hoc Committees; responsible for Freedom of Information requests.

- Legal Services: Legal services to all departments related to general municipal law and by-laws; contracts, leases and agreements; planning and development; aviation matters related to Muskoka Airport; transactional real estate matters; litigation before Courts and Tribunals (OMB, HRTO, etc.); and provincial offences prosecution service.
- Provincial Offences Office: Administration and Court Services for the Ontario Court of Justice within the District pursuant to a Memorandum of Understanding with the Province.

Services Not Delivered by The District Municipality of Muskoka

As the District is a two-tiered municipality, there are some services that are delivered jointly by the two tiers and some that are delivered solely by either the upper or lower tier. The lower tiers are solely responsible for:

- Fire Services
- Community Centres and Libraries
- Heritage Arts and Culture
- Recreation Programs and related Facilities

As required under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (the Act), the lower tiers will prepare their own Accessibility Plans addressing their services.

The District Municipality of Muskoka's Response to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005

Per the Act, all municipalities with a population greater than 10,000 must have an Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) to provide advice and consultation on accessibility matters to staff and their respective Councils. In October 2002, Muskoka District Council first adopted by By-law 2002-62 which was repealed and replaced by 2006-97 (a by-law to continue the Accessibility Advisory Committee).

On June 13, 2005, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA 2005) received Royal Assent and is now law. The AODA's Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) came into effect in 2013 and sets requirements in the areas of: Customer Service, Information and Communication, Employment, Transportation and Public Spaces. The IASR requires provincial and municipal governments to work with the community and the private and public sectors to work towards ensuring that Ontario is fully accessible by 2025. The District is committed to accessibility and the tenets of the Act. With the help of the District's Accessibility Advisory Committee, the District is actively working to remove barriers to persons with disabilities.

The District Municipality of Muskoka Accessibility Advisory Committee

On December 10, 2018 District Council passed Resolution 3/2019 appointing District Councillors to the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC).

On August 12, 2019 District Council resolution P141/2019 adopted the recommendation by the AAC appointing three community members to the AAC.

The following members have been appointed by Council for a term ending November 30, 2022.

Name	Membership
Councillor Sandy Cairns	Chair
Councillor Ruth Nishikawa	Vice-Chair
Councillor Steven Clement	Council Representative
District Chair John Klinck	Council Representative
Diane Lloyd	Bracebridge Representative
Gordie Merton	Gravenhurst Representative
Dione Schumacher	Huntsville Representative

Accessibility Advisory Committee Mandate

1. Assist the Staff Accessibility Working Group in identifying barriers and working towards solutions for removal of those barriers;
2. Advise Muskoka District Council each year on accessibility issues, including the preparation and implementation of the Accessibility Plan;
3. Advise Muskoka District Council on accessibility for persons with disabilities as to the buildings, structures or premises described in section 12(4) of the Act;
4. Assist the Staff Accessibility Working Group in assessing the effectiveness of the Plan.

The Accessibility Advisory Committee meets as required and plays a pivotal role in setting District priorities, reviewing District plans and linking with allied organizations to promote accessibility throughout Muskoka.

Message on Behalf of The District Municipality of Muskoka's Accessibility Advisory Committee

The District Municipality of Muskoka is committed to:

- The continual improvement of access to all municipally-owned facilities, premises and services for all those with disabilities;
- Delivering excellent and accessible customer services and programs to all residents and visitors;
- Providing a supportive working environment for its staff;
- The participation of persons with disabilities in the development and review of its annual Accessibility Plan;
- Providing equal access to all.

Accessibility planning is intended to identify, remove and prevent many types of barriers by a comprehensive review of by-laws, services, policies, procedures, practices and programs to determine what changes are required to make them accessible to everyone - including staff and members of the public with disabilities.

The Plan also serves as an educational tool to raise awareness of issues faced by people with disabilities on a daily basis.

All Accessibility Plans will strive to balance stakeholder priorities and Muskoka's ability to achieve changes over time, by establishing priorities within budget resources. While the Province requires that no new barriers be created, removal of existing barriers will be phased over a period of time as budgets permit.

Terms of Reference

The District Municipality of Muskoka (District) is committed to providing access to municipal services to all persons within the municipality, wherever possible.

To accomplish this goal, Muskoka will make all reasonable efforts to:

- Continually improve access to all District facilities which are open to the public on a general and unrestricted basis for those with disabilities
- Deliver accessible customer services and programs to all residents
- Provide a supportive accessible working environment for its staff in their assigned work areas

The Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) will assist the District in accomplishing this goal.

1) Role and Function of the AAC

The primary roles of the AAC will be to assist the Staff Accessibility Working Group (SAWG) by reviewing the work prepared by that group to identify barriers and develop solutions for the removal of those barriers and providing council with the annual report hereinafter detailed. The process shall be as follows:

a) Initial Phase

- i) Initially, SAWG shall prepare a draft accessibility plan and circulate the same to the AAC and any other interested parties.
- ii) Upon receipt of the draft plan AAC will review it and consult with persons with disabilities, as necessary.
- iii) The AAC will thereafter meet with SAWG and provide advice, feedback and assistance to SAWG in developing the accessibility plan.
- iv) SAWG may request the advice and assistance of AAC at any time during the development of the accessibility plan.
- v) After consultation with AAC and finalization of the plan, SAWG shall present the final plan to Council for consideration.

b) Plan Updates

- i) SAWG shall, on an as needed basis but not less than once annually, meet to discuss modifications, changes, or improvements to the plan. SAWG shall, as needed, consult with and request advice from AAC.
- ii) SAWG shall, not less than once annually, present a report to Council.

2) General

- a) Any formal comments and advice by AAC are to be in writing and must take the form of recommendations within resolutions passed by the AAC. Resolutions of

the AAC must receive the vote of the majority of the appointed members to be effective.

- b) Meetings of the AAC are open to the Public.
- c) All recommendations of the AAC which include an action or activity component shall include review of the anticipated need and take in to consideration the total costs of undertaking the action or activity (i.e. initial capital costs, maintenance costs, replacement costs, etc.).
- d) On or before December 31st of each and every year, the AAC, in conjunction with the SAWG, shall advise Council in writing about the preparation, implementation and effectiveness of Muskoka's Accessibility plan.
- e) The AAC will also carry out such additional duties as may be assigned to it by Council from time to time.
- f) While members of the AAC are, subject to law, free to express their personal view to any person at any time, members shall, in expressing such views, make it clear that such views are their own and not that of either the AAC or Muskoka. Each member shall be solely and totally responsible for such personal views and Muskoka shall not be liable for the results of expressions of such personal views.
- g) Members of the AAC may select a spokesperson for the purposes of speaking to members of the press and others about advice and recommendations put forward by the AAC, in accordance with item a).

3) The Staff Accessibility Working Group (SAWG)

a) Mandate:

- i) Conduct a comprehensive review of all facilities, services, policies, procedures, by-laws, practices and programs to identify accessibility barriers and develop strategies for barrier prevention and removal
- ii) Developing, reviewing, preparing, implementing and evaluating an annual accessibility plan for consideration by the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) and Muskoka District Council.
- iii) Act as a liaison between the Accessibility Committee and Council.

Specific accountabilities for members include but are not limited to:

- b) Contributing to the development and consolidation of Muskoka's Accessibility Plan as it is created, incorporating accessibility planning initiatives and spearheading the accessibility planning process within each department in order to complete the overall Accessibility Plan;
- c) Reviewing recent initiatives and identifying successes in removing and preventing barriers within Muskoka;
- d) Identifying barriers to people with disabilities that may be addresses in the coming year and beyond;
- e) Listing of by-laws, policies, services, programs and practices Muskoka will review in the coming year and beyond;

- f) Determining how Muskoka will identify, remove and prevent barriers in the coming year and beyond;
- g) Establishing performance criteria that will measure the extent to which barriers identified in the previous year(s) have been removed or prevented.

2013-2019: The District Municipality of Muskoka Accessibility Successes

The AODA's accessibility standards establish rules and timelines that businesses and organizations in Ontario must follow to effectively identify, remove and prevent barriers for persons with disabilities.

Extensive work has been carried out to ensure that the District is in compliance with the AODA's General Requirements and each of the five standards outlined in the IASR. The District met all of its accessibility compliance targets from 2013 through 2019, with work occurring steadily to meet subsequent accessibility compliance requirements by or in advance of our compliance deadlines.

General Requirement Successes

- (2015) Successfully passed a file review of the District's 2015 Accessibility Compliance Report.
- (2016) The District's Strategic Priorities have been updated to include accessibility priorities.
- (2016) There has been a 40% increase in Ontario Disability Support Program participants in Ontario Works programs since 2014 due to improvements in accessible marketing material and incorporating disability related topics into client workshops.
- (2017) The District continued to consider accessibility in its procurement process by:
 - Reviewing new procurement requirements and ensuring accessibility criteria were considered, where possible.
 - Including an AODA clause in its bid documents to make suppliers aware they are required to comply with the AODA and informing suppliers the District is required to consider accessibility in its procurement process.
 - Ensuring that the procurement process was inclusive so that all vendors could participate by providing bid documents in accessible formats, where requested.
 - Reviewing and updating tender documents to ensure an accessible reading format.
 - Ensuring sidewalks were accessible during construction by identifying trip hazards and taking appropriate measures to accommodate accessibility such as providing sidewalk ramps and reducing gaps between the sidewalk and the road.
- (2018) Agenda and report templates for Committee and Council have been reformatted to move closer to full compliance.
- (2018) Webcasting equipment has been installed and is available in the Council Chamber. District Council and Committee meetings held in the Council Chamber were webcast online at the time of the meeting and posted for 6 months.

- (2019) The Muskoka Official Plan, as amended by Official Plan Amendment 47, was updated to include a section devoted to accessibility and approved by the Province on June 28, 2019. Policies include the following:
 - Promote improved accessibility for all people, particularly persons with disabilities and the elderly.
 - Accessibility shall be improved for all people but particularly persons with disabilities and seniors by removing or preventing land use barriers that restrict full participation in society.
 - In reviewing applications under the Planning Act, the District will have regard for accessibility to all facilities, services and matters to which these Acts apply and will identify, prevent, and/or remove land use barriers which may restrict full participation in society for persons with disabilities and seniors.
 - Lower-tier Municipal Official Plans shall include accessibility policies in accordance with any applicable legislation.
 - Lower-tier Municipalities shall consider improved accessibility in the review of development applications.
 - In considering a plan of subdivision or condominium description regard shall be had, among other matters, to the health, safety, convenience, accessibility for persons with disabilities and welfare of the present and future inhabitants of the municipality.

Customer Service Standard Successes

- (2014) All employees were trained on the Ontario Human Rights Code as it relates to people with disabilities.
- (2014) At The Pines:
 - Skype, televisions in each unit, and telemedicine have been made available to assist with resident care, customer service, and information delivery.
 - All staff completed a topic-specific training package on Accessibility in August.
 - Resident families were contacted via email to ask what accessibility concerns or suggestions they might have. Staff were asked to provide feedback at three resident home area meetings in 2014.
- (2015) Provided modified court service at the Provincial Offences building as requested through the accessibility coordinator. Some accessible features that were offered upon request include:
 - Hearing-assistive devices;
 - Real-time captioning;
 - Visual language interpretation;
 - Communication support for people who have difficulty speaking and use alternate ways of communicating;
 - Scheduling meetings/proceedings in rooms that can accommodate disabilities;
 - Accessible or alternative formats of documents; and

- Wheelchair provision as required.
- (2018) Fillable form for request of seasonal shut on/off water was made available online (in addition to the option of a verbal request).
- (2018) Facility Services completed:
 - The renovation of the common area at the Social Housing Building located at 124 Alice Street in Bracebridge to create an accessible public washroom and to make the common room and laundry rooms more accessible.
 - The renovation of two apartments at 124 Alice Street to make the bathrooms and kitchens more accessible including the installation of a power operated door on each apartment entry.
 - The re-working of the entrance ramp and guards and common area patio at the Seniors' Social Housing Apartment located at 175 Lofty Pines in Gravenhurst to make these spaces more accessible.
 - Several accommodation upgrades to housing apartments by the installation of grab bars around toilets and bathtubs, the installation of additional fire alarm audibility devices for tenants with hearing impairments and the installation of power operated doors on tenant apartment doors as deemed necessary.
- (2019) The completion of a 12-unit apartment building at Cambrian Court in Bracebridge including 2 fully accessible units with the balance of apartments containing accessible features, i.e. grab bars in all showers, as well as fully accessible common areas.
- (2019) Accessibility accommodations were made upon request at transfer sites such as assistance with holding bin doors open, or tying them open so customers can deposit their recycling/garbage in.
- (2019) Policy developed for people with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog or service animal in ambulances.

Information and Communication Standard Successes

- (2014) All District Committee meetings included the use of microphones for all speakers and the use of PowerPoint presentations for visual aid. It was noted on all agenda packages that hearing-assistive devices could be made available in the Council Chamber and that all agendas and related documents could be reproduced in larger font.
- (2014) Standard municipal waste management guides were mailed via Canada Post to ensure all residents, even those who do not have access to a computer, were equipped with the information they required to optimize their waste management efforts. Traditional radio and print advertisements were executed to reach a broader audience on a more consistent basis.
- (2014) More modern uses of technology were utilized, such as social media and electronic newsletters, for those who released consent to the District. This advancement enabled residents to access the information when it was most convenient, or when required. In addition, more personal, one on one education

sessions were also made available for all residents in Muskoka, including home visits and presentations to residents, associations and community groups.

- (2016) The new District website offered the following accessible features:
 - Text associated with images for anyone needing to read what the images portray and prompts for text alternatives for any non-text content;
 - Automatically adds title text on links;
 - Allows assistive technologies to determine page structure and language;
 - Browse aloud technology;
 - Compliant with Website Content Accessible 2.0 AA standards;
 - Ability to support text to speech technology; and
 - Ability to support various screen readers.
- (2016) At The Pines, all meeting materials were posted in 16 pt. font for residents and accompanied by basic symbols/imagery.
- (2016) District staff were trained on how to convert and create documents in an accessible format in Adobe PDF and Microsoft Word.
- (2018) Browse Aloud deployed to District and Bracebridge public facing websites to assist with reading disabilities.
- (2019) The Provincial Offences court house upgraded assisted listening devices to enhance sound and eliminate interference.
- (2019) At The Pines, all staff informational index cards, in addition to the colour being visually on the card, the colour was also written.
- (2019) Created new Committee/Council presentation template that is designed for the new webcasting/AV systems and have shared presentation guidelines with staff re: accessible standards for presentations.
- (2019) District communications staff received some training in accessible tools, guidelines and AODA requirements; this will continue into 2020.
- (2019) Updated Corporate and Department letterheads for accessibility.
- (2019) Developed a Corporate Communications strategy that includes targets related to accessibility for all District online, digital and print media.

Employment Standard Successes

- (2014) A Disability Accommodation policy was developed and implemented for which all employees have received training. The policy and training have also been added to the New Employee Orientation (NEO) program.
- (2014) Wording was added to all job postings and the “How to Apply” page on the District of Muskoka website to advise potential candidates with disabilities that accommodation is available at any point in the recruitment process and the Human Resources department processed a number accommodation requests from 2014 – 2019.
- (2016) Accessibility training was implemented for all staff at The Pines.
- (2018) Finalized and submitted PTSD Prevention Plan for Paramedics.
- (2018) Developed cognitive and physical demands analyses for all job families to assist with the disability accommodation process and help get employees back to work.

- (2018) Incorporated Ontario Human Rights Code training into the New Employee Orientation.
- (2018) Reviewed and updated emergency evacuation plans for individuals who may require assistance during an evacuation.
- (2018) At The Pines, falls prevention education was provided for staff.
- (2018) Human Resources provided self-care training for employees through a monthly safety talk and implemented a new Dealing with Difficult Customers policy for which training was provided to all employees. Managers received additional mental health first aid training.
- (2018) Community Services created three workspaces to allow for appropriate accessibility space to enter into and out of the workspaces.
- (2019) Paramedic department trained staff, volunteers, contractors and any other people who interact with the public on their behalf on a number of accessibility topics as outlined in the customer service standard.

Accessible Transportation Standard Successes

- (2014) The contracted company providing transportation services to residents at The Pines entered into a new contract stipulating that accessibility training would be provided to all drivers on hire and as needed. Staff was also trained to support residents during outings when outside transportation services are utilized.
- (2014) In the projects where sidewalks were not previously ramped, the panels at the intersection were re-graded to remove or reduce obstacles.
- (2019) Completed upgrades and the installation of pathways at the Port Carling Locks to include more pedestrian and accessibility friendly unit pavers
- (2019) Required Hammond Transportation to acquire an Accessible Bus for use on the Highway 11 Corridor Route which will provide better service to all residents.
- (2019) 12 audible traffic signals have been installed to date. There are now 6 audibles in Bracebridge, 4 in Gravenhurst, and 2 in Huntsville.
- (2019) Included accessible individual transportation as a matter to be addressed within the Transportation Needs Assessment and Growth and Sustainability Plan for which The Community Transportation Grant initiative has provided \$674,382 of funding to the District over four years.

Design of Public Spaces Standard Successes

- (2014) At The Pines:
 - 5 barrier free parking spaces were created.
 - A new support wing opened in spring 2014. Facility accessibility guidelines were followed in completing the construction.
- (2014) The District constructed a court facility complying with the guidelines for barrier-free design of Ontario Government Facilities, specifically court facilities:
 - The exterior sidewalks and entrances were revised to a universally accessible design;

- The barrier free parking spaces created along Pine Street included an adjacent hatched area;
 - Power door operators were added onto the Court Room entry doors; and
 - Stairs to the Justice's dais in both Courtrooms were replaced with ramps.
- (2014) Renovations and improvements continued at several child care facilities that included capital expenditures to enhance accessibility for disabled children, such as a portable ramp being made available at Bracebridge Children's Place.
- (2014) The bathroom at the Port Carling Locks had renovations done which improved access. Thresholds were lowered and door access was widened.
- (2014) An Accessible Tourism Training Workshop was held in partnership with the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario and the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association (organized by Muskoka Tourism Marketing Agency and the Town of Bracebridge) to promote accessible customer service for tourist destinations in Muskoka. The Muskoka Tourism Visitor Centre on Highway 11 was retrofitted and is now compliant with Provincial accessibility standards.
- (2015) Huntsville Community Office received a gradual ramp leading to the main entrance.
- (2015) Installation of a keypad at The Pines reception to assist with residents who cannot open the doors.
- (2017) New Ambulance Station was built fully compliant with AODA requirements:
 - Accessible washrooms including a wheel chair accessible shower;
 - Accessible parking at the front of the building;
 - A lowered portion of the reception counter;
 - Widened hallways; and
 - Chair options in the waiting room.
- (2018) Huntsville Community Office renovations included:
 - Reorganized coffee area to allow individuals in wheelchairs access to tables;
 - Moved office items that are used on a regular basis to lower cabinets to allow safer and increased accessibility for staff that use mobility devices;
 - Added identification for gender neutral washrooms; and
 - Replaced chairs for public waiting area that do not have arms on the side to allow for easier access to seating by the public.
- (2018) 169 Pine Community Services Hub:
 - Accessible office improvement over previous downtown Bracebridge location; and
 - Improved washroom and related accessible features.
- (2018) At The Pines:
 - New sensors in courtyard doors were installed to ensure the doors are safer for those with poor mobility.
 - Signage was added to courtyards to improve orientation.
 - Full length side rails removed from all beds, half rails added to a few as needed for mobility.
 - Lighting was improved throughout the building to increase accessibility for those with visual impairments.

- (2018) Lagoon Lane administration building was completed with exterior door openers for accessibility and one fully accessible bathroom with a shower on the main floor.
- (2018) Installed power operated doors on the Council Chamber at the District Administration Building.
- (2018) The small court room in the Provincial Offences building was modified to be accessible for extended trials.
- (2018) Health Services purchased 40 high-low beds and 7 adjustable height place setting tables were purchased; and accessible improvements to flooring for the long term care home, were made.
- (2019) At The Pines:
 - The Consult Therapy room moved to below ramp so residents have better access.
 - Floor waxing program reintroduced to help with preventing slips, trips and falls.
- (2019) Reviewed accessible parking spaces at the Administration building to improve signage and revised the adjacent curbing to improve accessibility.
- (2019) Planned for accessibility in airport design; stair chair for plane, accessible washroom in terminal, ramp.

Moving Forward: The District Municipality of Muskoka Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2020-2022

The District is working to create a more inclusive, Age-Friendly and Accessible Community through proactively identifying, preventing and/or removing barriers to accessibility. The community is growing and the District's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan aims to be responsive to this growth by supporting community development and intensification. The District's diversity will become one of its greatest strengths and the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will help it break down barriers to participation for all community members.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), people with disabilities experience more significant barriers to participation - barriers that are physical as in the design of public spaces, technological as in absence of assistive devices, and attitudinal in the form of prejudice or negative attitudes towards disability.

Persons with disabilities frequently encounter barriers including, but not limited to the following:

- **Attitudinal barriers** are the most basic and may contribute to other barriers. Attitudinal barriers are exhibited as personal attitudes, feelings and behaviours and negatively impact how we interact with persons with disabilities.
- **Communication barriers** are experienced by people who have disabilities that impact their hearing, seeing, speaking, reading, writing and understanding. Lack of available communication supports is also considered a barrier.
- **Physical barriers** include the physical design of spaces and places, making it difficult or impossible for persons with disabilities to move or access spaces.
- **Organizational/Systemic barriers** include policies, procedures and programs that may discriminate, exclude or prevent persons with disabilities from fully participating.
- **Social barriers** are related to social determinants of health that can contribute to decreased functioning among older adults and persons with disabilities, including but not limited to; social isolation, unemployment or under-employment, and living in poverty.
- **Technological barriers** include poor technologies or systems that prevent people with disabilities from accessing information.
- **Transportation barriers** are due to a lack of affordable accessible transportation options which interferes with a person's ability to become and remain independent within the community of their choice.

By removing barriers for persons with disabilities, we are removing barriers for everyone.

Priorities to be Addressed: 2020 – 2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

General Accessibility Standard Goals

- Continue to modify court processes to meet accessibility needs as requests are made to the court.
- Develop and implement Mental Health awareness plan.
- Add accessibility to procurement scoring process and develop Checklist for District use.
- Review and suggest updates to the Accessibility Policy.
- Ensure accessibility requirements are met on all District forms.
- Review AODA legislation and ensure plans are in place to remain compliant.
- Operating Budgets and Capital Budgets and Forecasts will include allocations to support the accessibility goals identified which will be considered during budget deliberations.

Customer Service Standard Goals

- Update Accessible Customer Service training for all employees.
- Implement the Corporate Customer Service Strategy that will include recommendations on Customer Service and sensitivity training for front-line staff.
- Continue to update marketing materials in accessible formats.
- At The Pines, complete room upgrades, high low beds, wheelchair friendly wardrobes.
- Provide staff training on creating accessible word documents.
- Purchase stair chairs (paramedics).
- Continued efforts to review buildings and properties to identify and improve on accessibility for buildings that have yet to be reviewed.
- Continued completion of accommodation upgrades in housing to improve accessibility such as adding grab bars and powered doors to units.
- Provide certification training for one member of the HR Department on the Working Mind program that is designed to promote mental health and reduce stigma in the workplace.

Information and Communication Standard Goals

- Ensure all public forms are properly formatted.
- Participate with District Administration as required to make the prescribed Provincial Forms accessible.
- Publications, Forms, Templates, Reports, Presentations, etc. will be reformatted for accessibility.
- Training be provided on creating accessible documents regarding publications, forms, templates, reports, presentations, brochures, notices, etc.
- Consider training an AODA in-house expert to vet documents and assist with ongoing compliance training.
- Achieve AODA website compliance by January 1st, 2021.

- Continue webcasting Council and Committee meetings held in the Council Chamber online through the District website at the time of the meeting and keep available for 6 months following the meeting.
- Consider closed captioning for council chamber meeting webcasts uploaded to our website. Further investigation to see if we can have live closed captioning during the webcast.
- Pending the upgrades to the webcasting and audio visual equipment, examine potential use for other meetings or for recording training sessions.
- Develop a one-page list of requirements for delegations to Committee/Council meetings regarding AODA compliance standards for presentations, no perfumes, etc.
- Ensure department and division staff attend AODA compliance training as made corporately available.
- Host a Seniors/Accessibility Fair.
- Inventory of department brochures and other print material is underway. Specific documents to be targeted for re-design to meet accessibility standards will continue in 2020.
- Continue training for District communications staff on accessible tools, guidelines and AODA requirements.
- Roll out corporate communication strategy with the District Strategic Leadership Team and set training schedules for department staff as required in order to meet AODA requirements and deadlines noted within the strategy (e.g. for the redevelopment of the District's website and ensuring accessible content by January 1, 2021 and the preparation of new or re-designed District online, digital and print media).
- Create a formal "Presentation Guidelines" procedure document (which incorporates AODA requirements) and upload to SIMON to be made available for reference by all District staff.
- Work with Finance and Corporate Services to review/develop an Accessibility Standard that is required for consultants designing District documents, reports, visuals/graphics, promotional material etc. to be included in District RFPs.
- Add an Accessibility Informational Link to the District's internal website (SIMON).

Employment Standard Goals

- Provide training for all managers and staff on the Working Mind program.
- Provide additional Mental Health First Aid training opportunities.
- Document Corporate Employee Wellbeing Strategy.
- Implementation of Nuance Dragon Naturally Speaking software which allows a document to be created from your voice (dictation, editing and formatting), search the web, update social media.
- Review and update the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Prevention Plan for Paramedics.
- Review and update individual emergency evacuation plans for employees who may require assistance during an evacuation.

- Upgrade of the VPN (Virtual Private Network) Client to assist users to connect to the network from home or a remote location.
- Launch of the new VDI client server (Virtual Desktop Infrastructure) that will allow users to connect to a virtual machine from the browser of any internet connected PC or laptop.
- Muskoka Paramedics Train-the-Trainer for two staff in the Road to Mental Readiness program.
- Provide refresher training for all employees on Accessibility and Human Rights Code. This will include identifying updated training resources.
- Develop a list of tools and/or providers for accommodation services so that can be more easily/quickly responded to for requests for accommodation.

Accessible Transportation Standard Goals

- Work jointly with the lower-tier municipalities to coordinate the installation of 14 additional audible crosswalks.
- Include accessible individual transportation as a matter to be addressed within the Transportation Needs Assessment and Growth and Sustainability Plan for which The Community Transportation Grant initiative has provided \$674,382 of funding to the District over four years.

Design of Public Spaces Standard Goals

- At The Pines:
 - Purchase more high-low beds, adjustable tables, transition strips, etc.
 - Elevate gardening beds.
 - Balcony at back of building will be renovated to have the correct slope for accessibility.
 - Upgrade Spa to be more accessible for all residents.
- Continue efforts to review buildings and properties to identify and improve on accessibility.
- Continue with Huntsville Community Office renovations:
 - Install new exterior door that reflects appropriate width for accessibility;
 - Install exterior power door system on main entrance;
 - Renovation to outside sidewalk area entry to create accessible ramp that will meet accessibility building code requirements;
 - Rework one workspace to allow for appropriate accessibility space to enter into and out of workspace; and
 - Add TV monitor in waiting area to display important information items that meet visual standards.
- The installation of power operated doors throughout the Administration building.
- The installation of handrails along the interior ramps in the basement and main floor link hallways in the Administration Building.
- Review and improvement of interior wayfinding signage at the Administration Building to improve accessibility and provide a standard for corporate signage.

- Council Chamber AV upgrades complete, system installed, commissioning and training underway for 2020.
- Accessibility improvements to washrooms and customer service counters at the Administration building.
- Install accessibility opening to customer service entrance door at the Muskoka Airport.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The 2020-2022 District's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan provides an update on activities that were undertaken between 2013 - 2019; in addition to planning for Muskoka's accessible future. The Staff Accessibility Working Group and Accessibility Advisory Committee jointly guided the development of this Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and created a firm vision moving forward to improve the accessibility of all our programs, policies, services and facilities. The District has strengthened its commitment to increased accessibility and will continue to improve and make strides to achieve its accessibility goals.

Get Involved

The next two years will be an exciting time for improvements to the accessibility of the District, where more and more improvements will be introduced and barriers to accessibility removed.

As improvements are made, solutions will be sought for problems that persons with disabilities living in or visiting Muskoka continue to face and the District wants your help. Staff have already received some great feedback from the community which has helped develop this document. Now the District wants to hear from the community about its experiences and ideas for how we can further enhance the accessibility of the District's programs, services and facilities beyond 2022.

For more information please contact:

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- By email to: clerk@muskoka.on.ca
- visit the [District of Muskoka's Website](#)