

Type of Decision									
Meeting Date	Friday, April 12, 2013				Report Date	Thursday, March-28-13			
Decision Required	X	Yes		No	Priority	X	High		Low
Direction	x	Information Only			Type of Meeting	X	Open		Closed
REPORT TITLE									
Accessibility Plan Report #12/04/13/1202									

Subject: Explanation of requirements to draft an Accessibility Plan for the municipality plus an outline of information shared at training session attended in March.

RECOMMENDATION: That Council approve the following policy and plan development outline to meet legislated accessibility requirements.

WHEREAS the provincial government has legislated the creation of plans and policies to ensure accommodations for persons with disabilities;

AND WHEREAS planning for accessibility for all Ontarians is the right thing to do;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Council of the United Townships of Head, Clara & Maria does hereby agree to adopt the Accessibility Policy as presented as a first step to meeting legislated requirements and creating an Accessibility Plan and Program.

BACKGROUND/EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: On Wednesday March 27, 2013 the Clerk attended a training and workshop on the creation of Accessibility Plans and policies as legislated by the Province provided by an Accessibility consultation, Sarah White.

Why do we need to pay attention to Accessibility?

Partly because it is now legislated and the province can lay charges for an infraction with increased penalties added for each subsequent day of non-compliance but most importantly –

“BECAUSE IT IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO”

and

“IT’S JUST GOOD BUSINESS”.

The areas which require compliance include:

- Information and Communications;
- Employment;

- Transportation;
- Design of Public Spaces;

By January 2014 Small Municipalities must address/have:

- Accessibility Policy;
- Multi-year accessibility plan;
- Include accessibility criteria when procuring goods and services;
- Include accessibility features when designing or procuring self-serve kiosks; and
- Website accessibility WCAG 2.0 A. (It is recommended that when upgrading a website you reach WCAG 2.0 AA which will come in to effect in 2021.)

Options/Discussion: Many.

Financial Considerations/Budget Impact: Varied.

- Costs will be incurred if and when alternate formats of documents, meetings etc. are requested.
- Costs will be incurred with updating the website to make it compliant.
- Costs will be incurred in making changes to the built environment; and more costly if they are not implemented during construction.
- Costs may be incurred through fines and penalties imposed by the province for non-compliance.

Policy Impact: The need to be compliant with legislation is obviously new. New legislation requires a review of existing policies and plans and a creation of new. The draft policy provide to meet current requirements is new but refers to existing municipal policy.

Other’s consulted: Sarah White – Accessibility Consultant;

Resources: P&G165/ ADMIN/ Customer Services Standard Policy Oct-09; P&G159/ADMIN/Policy on accommodation/Oct-2009; Draft Work plan presented by Sarah White; City of Thunder Bay on line Policy.

Approved and Recommended by the Clerk	
Melinda Reith, Municipal Clerk	<i>Melinda Reith</i>

Background:

The following important points were made at the training attended some of which require additional attention now and others not until some time in the future:

1. 1 in 7 Ontarians has some type of disability. A large percentage of the population do not consider their personal situation as being a disability but the situation often falls under the legislation for accommodation. These disabilities are normally issues for which the person has reached independent accommodations such as crutches when a broken leg is healing, hearing aids etc.

2. Updated training is required for all employees, Council members, Library Board members and volunteers of the municipality. This includes training on the new Accessibility regulation as well as on the Ontario Human Rights Code.
 - a. Horton Township is planning a train the trainer for the near future which the Clerk is planning to attend.
3. There is a requirement for consultation with this plan. A request for interested members of the community to participate will be advertised.
 - a. Are there members of Council interested in working on this committee?
 - b. If a committee cannot be formed, we do have the opportunity to consult with the committee formed by the County. Obviously, local involvement would be preferred.
 - c. A survey will be included in an upcoming Newsletter requesting individuals to self-identify as having disabilities for which accommodations might be required and requesting input for participation on the committee.
4. Although the built environment is not yet law, it would be prudent for Council to consider accommodation in all planning to eliminate as many barriers as possible even before the legislation takes effect. Original building is often less expensive than retro-fits.
5. The Library Board has requirements as well and the steps they are taking should form part of Council's plan. Staff will coordinate.
6. For communication there is a need to coordinate and detail a process for creating alternate formats for print and other materials if requested such as audio, interpreter, electronic formats etc. depending on the incident and information requested.
 - a. Funds need to be budgeted for this incidence on an annual basis.
 - b. Notices of the availability of alternate formats are required in all printed documents – agenda, minutes, reports, newsletters, website etc.
 - c. Changes to forms, agenda, etc. will occur in the near future as this process is implemented.
 - d. Staff will need to be trained on using/creating these alternate formats.
 - e. Some of this already exists in our current policy – Accessible Customer Service.
7. Any website updates are required to be in an accessible format. There are standards that need to be met.
 - a. Funds need to be budgeted for compliance.
 - b. With talk to update our website, compliance with WCAG standards (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0) is now legislated. There is money in IT reserves which may be used for new software and/or platform to house an updated website.
 - c. We must be sure that any work that is completed on our site is compliant and that the person hired to do the work is well versed in this format.
8. Our Emergency plan needs to be available in alternate formats.
 - a. Staff will work on updating all documents to include new formats.

b. The Microsoft Word version we use now has the capability, staff simply need to learn how to use it. Learning to create all documents in accessible format would relieve the need to translate or have alternates created upon request.

9. Our policy on Feedback needs to be better advertised in all communications be they printed, on-line, email etc.

10. Our hiring and employee policy should detail accommodations which are available, willing to provide or currently being provided. This does not mean that we have to hire someone who is not qualified for or able to do a job nor does it mean that we have to accommodate every need to a point of undue hardship or creating a new position.

a. Some of this already exists in our Accommodation policy.

b. What it means is that we are willing to work with individuals to meet needs if possible. An example is an interview for someone to work in the front office on the first floor of a building being disqualified because an inaccessible workplace will not allow her to have an interview in an office on the second floor. The simple accommodation is to hold the interview in another location.

c. Another example is an individual who for health reasons needs to break at a specific time every day for food and/or medication. Allowing that person to break at that time, no matter what else is occurring is an accommodation. Simple enough but extremely important.

11. The transportation standard does not apply to HCM as we do not have public transportation or do not license cabs.

Obviously, this plan and policy are all encompassing and affect many things that staff, Council and the municipality will do in the future. Come budget time, closer attention needs to be paid to budgeting for accessibility in all future changes, modifications to processes, plans, etc.