

SEPTEMBER 2006 – SEPTEMBER 2022

**CORPORATION
OF THE
TOWNSHIP OF STRONG**

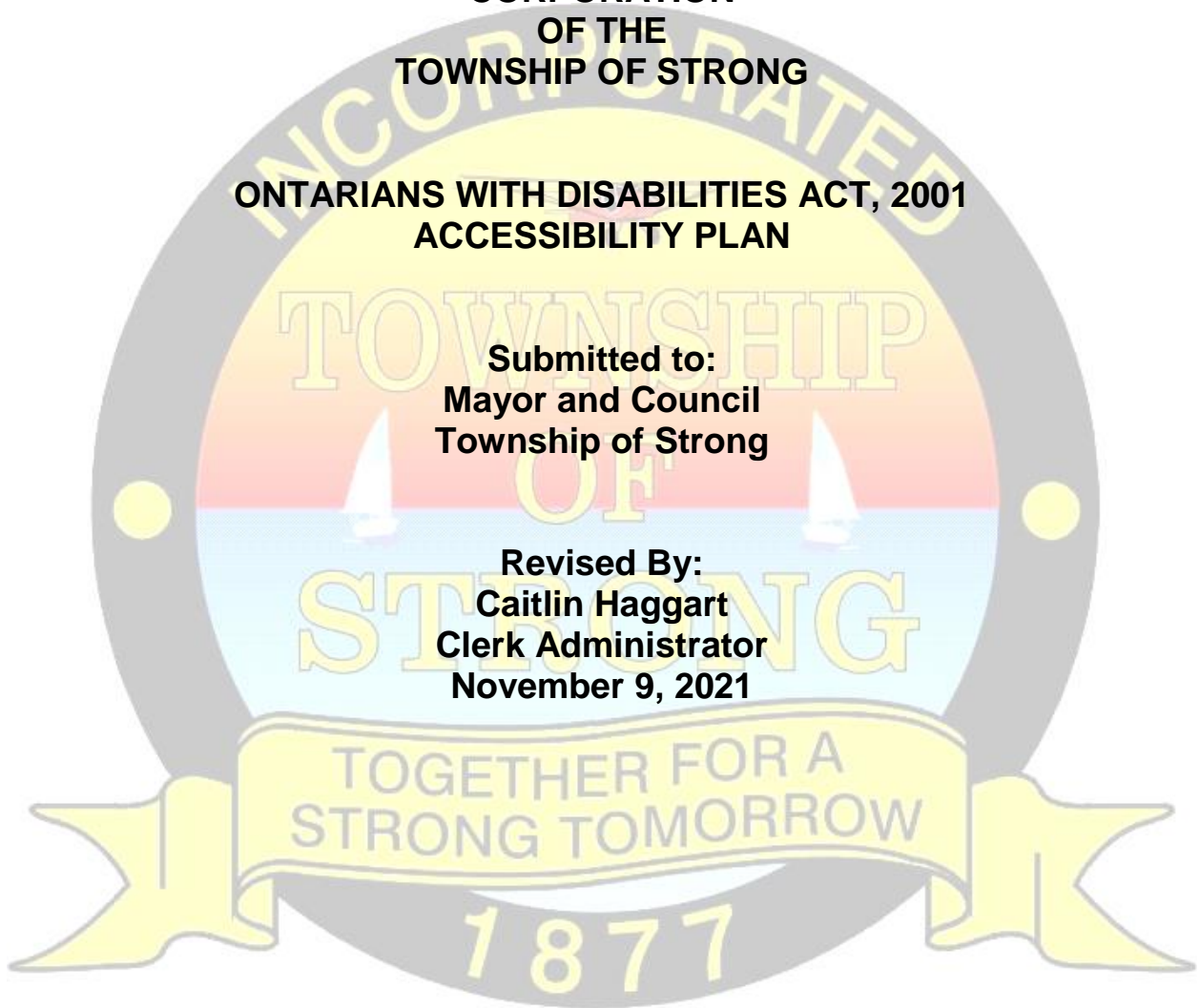
**ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, 2001
ACCESSIBILITY PLAN**

**Submitted to:
Mayor and Council
Township of Strong**

**Revised By:
Caitlin Haggart
Clerk Administrator
November 9, 2021**

**TOGETHER FOR A
STRONG TOMORROW**

1877



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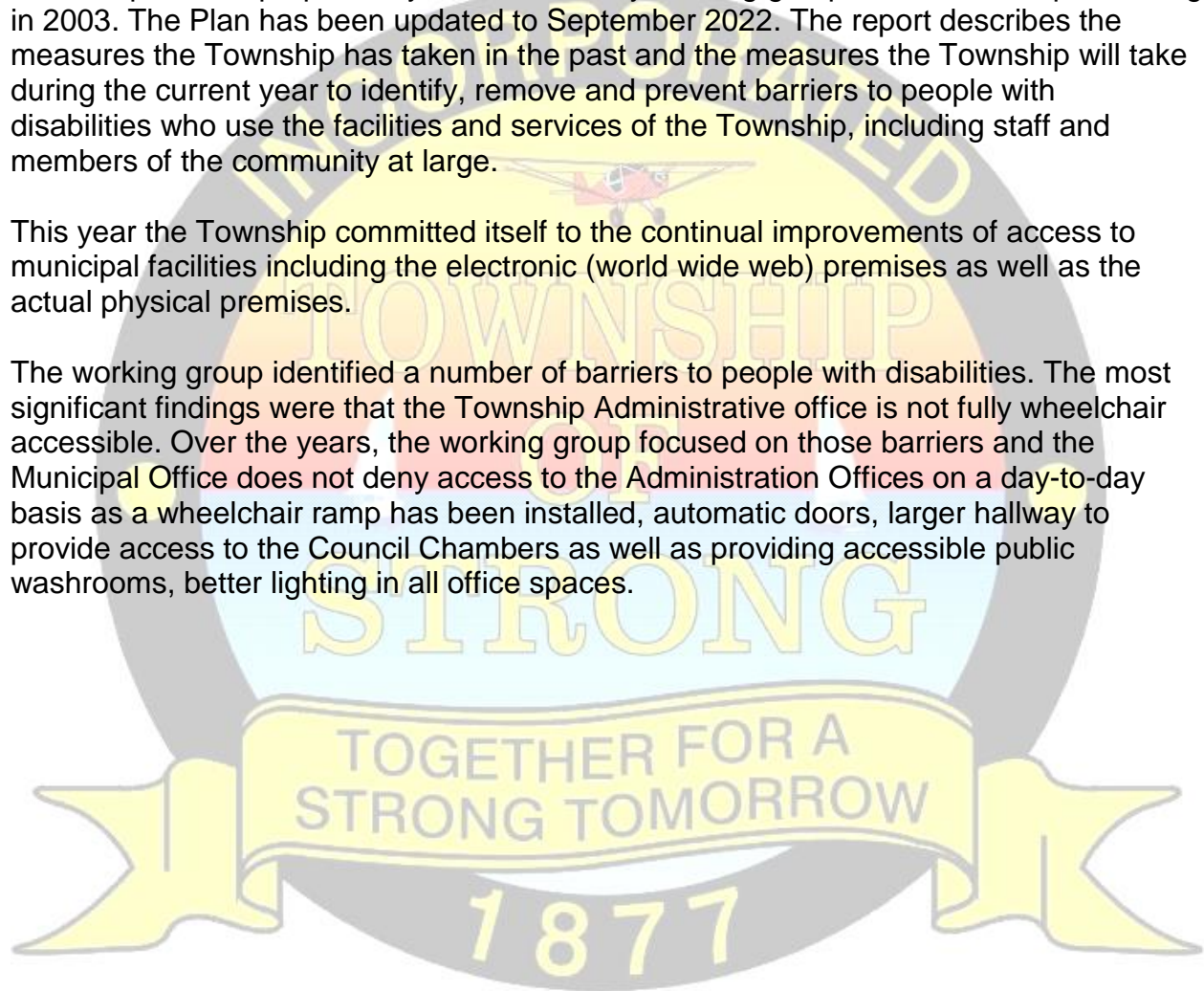
Executive Summary

The Purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (AODA) is to improve opportunities for people with Disabilities and to provide for their involvement in the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to their full participation in the life of the Province. To this end, the AODA mandates that each municipality prepare an annual accessibility plan.

The first plan was prepared by the accessibility working group of the Township of Strong in 2003. The Plan has been updated to September 2022. The report describes the measures the Township has taken in the past and the measures the Township will take during the current year to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities who use the facilities and services of the Township, including staff and members of the community at large.

This year the Township committed itself to the continual improvements of access to municipal facilities including the electronic (world wide web) premises as well as the actual physical premises.

The working group identified a number of barriers to people with disabilities. The most significant findings were that the Township Administrative office is not fully wheelchair accessible. Over the years, the working group focused on those barriers and the Municipal Office does not deny access to the Administration Offices on a day-to-day basis as a wheelchair ramp has been installed, automatic doors, larger hallway to provide access to the Council Chambers as well as providing accessible public washrooms, better lighting in all office spaces.



Aim

This report describes one measure that the Township of Strong has taken for the 2003 year and the measures that the Township will take for the 2022 year to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities who utilize the facilities and services of the Township, including staff.

Objectives

1. Describes the process by which the Township of Strong will identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities.
2. Review earlier efforts to remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities
3. List the facilities, policies, programs, practices and services the Township will review in the coming year to identify barriers to people with disabilities
4. Describe the measures the Board will take in the coming year to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities
5. Describe how the Township will make this accessibility plan available to the public.

Description of the Township of Strong

Provincial Location - The Township of Strong is located north of Central Ontario on the East side of Parry Sound District and in the Central area of the Almaguin Highlands and the Blue Sky Region. The Township has an area of 15,861 ha. and surrounds Lake Bernard, the largest lake in Ontario without an island and with a flood elevation at 330.5 m. There are 14 concessions in Strong and 32 Township original lots of survey.

Local Location - The Township of Strong has Hwy #11 and Hwy #124 intersecting in the centre of the Township. There is the CN Railway line running south to north through the centre of the Township and also to the North east of the Township there is the Almaguin Highlands Airpark located in Joly Township to the East of Strong Township and also located east of Strong is the Unorganized Township of Laurier. To the North of Strong is the Unorganized Township of Lount, Machar Township and the Village of South River and located within the boundaries of Strong Township is the Village of Sundridge. South of the Township of Strong is the Township of Armour and within Armour is the Village of Burk's Falls. To the West of the Township of Strong is the Municipality of Magnetawan and the Township of Ryerson.

Population/Households - The Township of Strong has a population of 1439 and 922 households (2016 census).

Public Assembly Buildings within the Township of Strong

The High School, Almaguin Highlands Secondary School, is located within the Township.

There are 3 churches within the boundaries of the Township.

The Masonic Lodge is located within the Township.

The Township Municipal Office and Public Works Garage are located on adjoining properties.

Council commitment to accessibility planning

The council of the Corporation of the Township of Strong is committed to:

- The continual improvements of access to all municipally owned facilities, premises and services for all those with disabilities;
- The provision of quality services to all members of the community with disabilities;
- The provision of training for administration staff so they can adhere to applicable legislation requirements.

The Council has authorized the Clerk to prepare an accessibility plan that will enable the Council to meet these commitments.

Recent barrier – removal initiatives

In 2010 the municipal office completed a major expansion to the facility and included a wheel chair ramp to the front office door, automatic doors in both entrances, accessible public washrooms, accessible hallway to council chambers. Council approved paving the parking lot and pathway to the basement access to the Emergency Operations Centre in the 2020 Budget, which was completed in September. Staff are recommending the basement access door be widened in 2021.

Council had a request submitted by a member of the public in August 2019, about an accessibility ramp being placed at the South Lake Bernard Beach area. The Township has supported Christian Horizon's in 2019/2020 fundraising efforts for accessible park equipment and washroom. Council approved an application for COVID ICIP Funding in December 2020, which was approved in early 2021 with a completion date of 2023. Staff are working to being capital work in 2022.

The COVID-19 Pandemic also caused the Township to quickly modernize operations which provide additional customer service solutions to those with accessibility issues. A polyconference camera and speaker system was purchased so meetings can be streamed, allowing residents, Council members and staff to attend virtually through Zoom. A large screen was also installed in Council Chambers so that the agenda materials can be projected. Council have been made aware of the Accessible Web Content Guidelines due by January 1, 2021 and approved creating a new accessible municipal website www.strongtownship.com that was launched August 1, 2020, which meets the Accessibility requirements. The Municipal Website carries the Ontarians with

Disabilities Act, 2001, Township of Strong's Accessibility Plan, Customer Service/IASR policy, Emergency Plan, and "How to bring a Concern" documents are available. The website also allows for more "at your fingers" services accessed at home, including making tax payments, applying and paying for fire permits, applying and paying for various licenses, and submitting any feedback, comments, services requests or concerns. These can be done using a mobile device, tablet device or computer.

The Clerks Department is already in preparation for the 2022 Municipal Election, taking place Monday, October 22, 2022. Council has approved by by-law to switch to Vote by Mail and counting by tabulators, which will address accessibility concerns by allowing residents to complete their vote at home and either place their ballot in the mail or drop to a secure voting box at the municipal office during prescribed times or on voting day. The Clerk will review the Election Accessibility Policy, as well as prepare a Post-Election Accessibility report.

Informal Site Audit of the Municipally owned buildings

In July 2003 the staff and council completed a survey of the municipally owned building and in particular to assess any barriers that may exist and with that, any solutions to removing those barriers in order to comply with the current legislation under the Ontarians With Disabilities Act, 2001.

There have been some barriers identified in the Municipal Administration Office and parking lot. Those will be discussed further in this document under Barriers identified.

Methodology Description Status

A survey was given to all The Survey has been completed by members of council, staff by the Office staff, Council and the Chief Building Chief Building Official. The Public Works Department could not identify any Barriers.

Barriers Identified

Those who completed the survey identified the barriers listed below. Over the next year, council will have to decide which barriers should be addressed, keeping in mind budget restraints and feasibility.

| Barrier | Type of Barrier | Strategy for Removal or Correction |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|---|
| Front Walkway slopes to the door | Architectural | Removed and levelled |
| Front Door has no automatic opener | Architectural | 2004 – installed automatic door openers |
| Foyer Door has no automatic opener | Architectural | 2004 – installed automatic door openers |

| | | |
|--|----------------|--|
| No Handicapped Parking Spots | Architectural | Designated area for handicapped parking close to entry doors |
| Washrooms are not accessible | Physical | Installed new accessible washrooms |
| No Handicap sign to indicate parking spots | Communications | Handicap parking signs installed |
| Tax bills – sight impaired cannot read bills | Communications | The Province has legislated the wording of tax bills. A solution has not been found to date. Alternative payment options have been pursued in 2018/2019 and information is on the website in accessible format |
| Communications to residents | Communications | Part of the web is text only for those who use reader devices |
| No accessible parking at public beach areas | Communications | Identify and install handicap parking signs |
| No accessible access to the lake on beaches | Physical | Install accessible beach path to the lake and playground equipment at the main public beach area |
| Accessible park equipment for all abilities | Physical | Include accessibility friendly park equipment and benches when considering asset management planning |
| Barrier Free door access | Physical | The Township basement access is not wide enough to meet accessibility requirements. Council budget for replacement of a wider automatic opening door. |

Barriers to be addressed in 2022

Council have also identified that the Emergency Operation Shelter located in the basement of the administration offices is not accessible for those with disabilities. Council has installed a paved pathway and will consider widening the doorway.

Council identified their public spaces as a priority for 2021 and will continue to address accessible parking areas and park equipment.

Review and monitoring of the process

Council is committed to following through with this plan. This plan will be updated annually thus allowing council, staff and the public to monitor the barriers identified and the direction to which the Township is moving to remove all barriers under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001.

Communication of the Plan

This Plan will be available on the web site as well as at the office and we will make every attempt to make it available to those with disabilities for their perusal and review. Should a copy in Braille be requested, Council will try to accommodate by having staff contact the CNIB to inquire if it could be translated.

