

# THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF LAURENTIAN HILLS



## **MULTI-YEAR ACCESSIBILITY PLAN**

Made under the Ontarians With Disabilities Act c.32 S.O. 2001

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## **Executive Summary**

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The purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) is to improve the quality of life and experiences of persons with disabilities by identifying, preventing and removing any barriers that may limit opportunities for individuals with disabilities to fully participate in society.

The AODA advances those goals by requiring public, private and non-profit organizations to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility in order to make the Province of Ontario fully accessible for all persons with disabilities.

Through the AODA and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) (Ontario Regulation 191/11), the Government of Ontario has identified key areas for the development of common accessibility standards that are intended to ensure all sectors and organizations can provide fully accessible services and environments for Ontarians. The goal of these standards is to facilitate the full participation of persons with disabilities in society. Key areas identified under the AODA are Customer Service, Information and Communications, Employment, Transportation and the Design of Public Spaces.

The previous plan prepared by the Town of Laurentian Hills was reviewed and updated to describe the measures the Town has taken during the past to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities, who use the facilities and services of the Town, including staff.

The working group is primarily made up of staff members who are familiar with the Towns' facilities including senior management. Only municipalities with a population of 10,000 or more are required to create an accessibility advisory committee. However, we are actively trying to engage members of the community to assist us with identifying and modifying, service delivery, programming and other workplace processes, policies and procedures to ensure equal access for all.

The request below was included in the Town's newsletter mailout to all residents and is also posted at the bottom of the Town's front page on its website and in the hall in the Municipal office.

**REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION** - The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 requires municipalities to address the needs of those within their community with disabilities. The Town is seeking your assistance to help us identify barriers for persons with disabilities in buildings and facilities owned and operated by the Town. Are you facing accessibility challenges in the Town? We want to hear from you! We want your feedback so that we can improve our services and make them more accessible. Please forward your concerns to [info@laurentianhills.ca](mailto:info@laurentianhills.ca) or call the municipal office at 613-584-3114.

Over the next several years, the working group recommends focusing on barriers that have been identified by the various departments and any received from the public. We will endeavour to continue to implement improvements to allow everyone access to municipal facilities on a day-to-day basis. Accessibility planning does not end once a plan is prepared, monitoring is essential to ensure that the Town is meeting its obligations and commitments.

## **Aim**

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This report describes measures the Town of Laurentian Hills has undertaken since its inception and the measures that the Town will take in the years 2023 to 2028 to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities who utilize the facilities and services of the Town of Laurentian Hills, including staff.

## **Objectives**

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This report:

1. Describes the process by which the Town of Laurentian Hills will identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities.
2. Lists the facilities; policies, programs, practices and services the Town will review in the coming year to identify barriers to people with disabilities.
3. Describes the measures the Town will take in the coming years to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities.
4. Describes how the Town will make this accessibility plan available to the public.

## **Description of the Town of Laurentian Hills**

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The Town of Laurentian Hills is the amalgamation of the former village of Chalk River and the Townships of Rolph, Buchanan, Wylie & McKay. The Town has a population base of 2,961 and comprises an area of 640.41 sq. km. The Town of Laurentian Hills is located in the heartland of Ontario's Recreation system, situated in the beautiful Valley of the Ottawa River bordered by the Laurentian Mountains and Algonquin Provincial Park.

The majority of the population resides in the settlement areas of Chalk River, Point Alexander, and Rolphton. The balance of the residents resides along the Highway 17 corridor and along the shoreline of the Ottawa River. This narrow and linear pattern of settlement is confined by the Ottawa River to the east, the Petawawa Forestry Institute and Garrison Petawawa to the south and Algonquin Provincial Park to the west.

Laurentian Hills was formed by the amalgamation of the former Townships of Rolph, Buchanan, Wylie and McKay and the Village of Chalk on January 1, 2000. Laurentian Hills surrounds the Town of Deep River and borders on Crown lands.

The Municipality has nine significant properties with structures; the Point Alexander Municipal Administration Office which houses the Point Alexander library, two (2) public works buildings one in the Village of Chalk River and one in Point Alexander, two (2) fire halls one in the Village of Chalk River and one in Point Alexander, a public library in the Village of Chalk River a Resource Centre building located at 19 Railway Street in the Village of Chalk River and a Water Treatment and Waste Water Treatment Plant in the Village of Chalk River. The municipality has three outdoor rinks two with adjacent rink buildings and six playground areas.

## **Council Commitment to Accessibility Planning**

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The Council of the Corporation of the Town of Laurentian Hills is committed to:

- The continual improvement 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 including staff members.
- The Town of Laurentian Hills comprehensive Zoning By-Law contains provisions within the By-Law to ensure accessibility issues are addressed in buildings that the Public will access.

## **Audit - Municipally owned Facilities**

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The Town's working group that consists of senior management and department heads completed a review of the municipal facilities focusing on accessibility and any barriers that may exist with the intent of recommending solutions to removing those barriers in order to comply with the current legislation under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

The Town's previous audit identified a number of barriers at the Municipal Administration Building in Point Alexander, the Municipal Rink Facility in Chalk River and the Chalk River Public Library.

The Town will continue to ensure that playground equipment replacement purchases will continue to be accessible equipment and installed in a manner to make the structures accessible to all. Gutzman Park is scheduled to have additional equipment added in 2023.

The Town will continue to include in its recruitment advertisements, the statement that upon request, accommodations can be made for applicants who are selected to participate in the interview process. We will consult with applicants where an accommodation is required and provide or arrange for suitable accommodations specific to their needs.

Staff will continue to seek public participation in identifying areas in our public spaces that can be improved to accommodate everyone.

## **Barriers / Accomplishments**

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Since the last review of the of the Town's facilities, the rink building in Chalk River was replaced with a new building that is fully accessible.

The municipal website has been updated to (WCAG) 2.0, Level AA and is AODA compliant.

The handicap washroom in Point Alexander was made easier to access. The front entrance outer doors to the Municipal administration building were replaced. The inner doors and outer doors have been installed with automatic openers and an audio alert when the door is opened.

Council Chambers was renovated and the elevated sitting area designated for the Mayor when presiding over meetings was removed. This has made the area accessible to anyone who may be elected to the position of Mayor in the future as well any group/committee using Council Chambers.

The design and renovation of the rear emergency exit ramps at the Point Alexander Public Library and auditorium were completed. The Town contracted the installation of ramps to facilitate a walkway, which can access the adjoining parking lot on the west side of the building. An accessible door was installed at the Chalk River library.

2022 was a Municipal / School Board election year. Training with polling staff included how to accommodate people with disabilities and the allowance of people to accompany and assist anyone that required assistance both in the polling station and in the voting booth. Visual magnifiers were available in the polling station and voting booths. Polling stations are fully accessible.

The replacement of accessible playground equipment was done in Anne Crosson Park in 2022. We will continue to focus on structures that are accessible, ensuring that the ground covering in the playgrounds are made of materials that will make the structures wheelchair accessible.

A resident that uses the existing interior accessible ramp to access the library and the main office identified an issue with the ramp. Public works reinforced and secured the ramp and it has been given a cosmetic facelift with non -slip paint. We will continue to inspect the ramp to ensure that it is secure and safe.

Service animals are allowed and welcomed in all the Town's buildings.

The Town will continue to meet the needs of employees who require assistive technologies and or / modified workstations. Two (2) modifications were requested and completed.

## **Review and Monitoring of the Process**

The Council of the Town of Laurentian Hills is committed to following through with this plan. This plan will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis, allowing the Public, Council and Staff to monitor the barriers and the progress of the Town in achieving the removal of all barriers to Town property under the ODOA.

The Town will continue to review and update policies as required to ensure high quality, accessible customer service.

The Town will meet the Accessibility Standards for the Design of Public Spaces (Ontario Regulation 191/11), as applicable, when building new or making major modifications to public spaces.

Public Spaces include: Recreational Trails, Beaches and Access Routes, Outdoor Public Eating Areas, Outdoor Play Spaces (playgrounds); Outdoor Paths of Travel (sidewalks, ramps, stairs, curb ramps, rest areas and accessible pedestrian signals); and accessible off-street parking.

The Town's employment advertisements for recruitment will continue to include accessibility accommodations for all parts of the selection and interview process.

Laurentian Hills is a small rural community; the municipality does not have a traditional downtown area with sidewalks and curbing. The municipality does not own an identified recreational trail system or a developed beach and swimming area.

The Town does not have specific requirements under the Transportation section of the Act. The Town does not own or offer a conventional, specialized or public transportation service.

We cannot assume to know what challenges people with disabilities are faced with when accessing public spaces. Nor can we assume we know the solution for their challenges. The Town will continue to use its newsletter to encourage and engage the public who are or have been challenged with the Town's public spaces to participate and work with us on obtaining and implementing solutions to challenges.

## **Communication of the Plan**

This Plan is available at the Town Office and posted on the Town of Laurentian Hills website. Every attempt will be made to meet the requirements of those with disabilities to ensure the Plan is available for their perusal and review.

The audits were conducted to assess the existing compliance of the Municipal buildings and properties, to the AODA standards. Barriers were identified as follows and the suggested timelines to implement are attached.

Contact information: Municipal Office 34465 Highway 17 RR# 1 Deep River, ON K0J 1P0 613-584-3114 or email [info@laurentianhills.ca](mailto:info@laurentianhills.ca)

### **Municipal Buildings and Barriers Identified to be addressed 2023 - 2028**

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Point Alexander Municipal Building:	Handicap parking spots and signage should be moved to a more level area in the right hand side of the parking lot. Additional ground material needs to be added to emergency exit side ramps and sloped for ease of mobility.
Point Alexander Fire Hall	Restricted public access
Point Alexander Rink Building	Building entrance is not level with the bottom of the door. Does not have automatic doors and push button. Install grab bars and lever facets in both washrooms.
Point Alexander Public Works Building	Restricted public access
Chalk River Fire Hall	Restricted public access
Chalk River Library	Main Entrance has a drop off box that is on the ramp. Relocating the drop box will allow for additional space for persons with mobility assistance devices on the landing to enter the building. This would also allow for easier drop off of books without having to go up the ramp. The side exit is an emergency exit with a wooden step which should be replaced with a ramp. There are no handicap parking spots and signage.
Chalk River Resource Centre	Currently in a lease contract for private use. An automatic door with push button should be considered if the Town uses the building in the future. Handicap spots and signage should be added at that time as well.
Chalk River Rink Building	No barriers identified with the building. There are no handicap spots and signage at the building.
Chalk River Public Works building	Restricted public access
Water and Sewer Plants	Restricted public access to buildings



Playgrounds: The Town’s playgrounds are assessed on an ongoing basis equipment and structures are replaced to meet accessibility requirements.

Anne Crosson Park Playground  
Bob Sequin Playground  
Mountainview Playground  
McKee Subdivision Playground

Gutzman Playground

New accessible equipment and ground covering to be installed 2023

Point Alexander Playground

Wooden structure needs to be taken out of service and replaced with accessible structure and ground covering.

### **Maintenance of Accessible Elements**

Accessibility maintenance involves proactively ensuring that accessible features are consistently maintained and updated to address evolving technologies and user needs. The Town of Laurentian Hills will deal with preventative and emergency maintenance of accessible elements in public spaces as well as with temporary disruptions when accessible elements are not in working order for its' outdoor playgrounds, accessible parking, parking lots, ramps and buildings that are accessible to the Public.

The Town will apply best practices in the preventative maintenance of accessible elements with periodic checks such as:

- The working group will continue to conduct annual audits of signage, ramps, playgrounds parking lots and buildings that are open to the public to identify defects and any maintenance needs.
- The Town will conduct regular annual inspections, or more frequently as per the Minimum Maintenance Standards after storms or events that might affect accessible elements.
- The Town will respond to any reports of vandalism or complaints and take the appropriate corrective actions required in a timely manner.
- The Town will conduct regular inspections to ensure the signage posted at the playgrounds advising the public that the playgrounds are regularly inspected and maintained by the Town and should they have any concerns to call the number listed are in good condition.
- The Town will apply best practices in the emergency maintenance of accessible elements as quickly as possible once identified or notified of a maintenance issue.
- Repairs will be done as soon as practicable and on a priority basis such as but limited to ramps.

### **Notification**

In keeping with compliance requirements under the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation (O. Reg.191/11) the Town will make every effort to provide public notification of any temporary disruptions in the following manner:

- The Town will provide advance notice of planned maintenance or repairs that may impact accessibility, including information about the disruption, its duration, and alternative accessible elements.
- Should the Town incur a disruption a Notice of the disruption will include: the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities or services, if any are available.
- Notice will be given by posting the information in a conspicuous place as well as by posting the information on the Town's website