



The Corporation of the Township of Billings

# **Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2020-2025**

## **Background**

The Township of Billings is formed from Billings Township and the Eastern half of adjacent Allan Township, and occupies the north central portion of Manitoulin Island. It contains part of Lake Kagawong, Lake Manitou, Otter Lake and Lake Mindemoya, and its northern boundary is Lake Huron. The extensive lake frontage explains the residence distribution, and the large portion of seasonal residences. The Kagawong River drains Lake Kagawong, flows over Bridal Veil Falls, and reaches Lake Huron in the Hamlet of Kagawong. The Harbour at Kagawong is directly south of the Benjamin Islands cruising grounds on the North Channel, and between the harbour towns of Little Current to the east, and Gore Bay to the west. The M'Chigeeng First Nation reserve is within the boundaries of Billings, with Mindemoya directly to the south.

The economy of Billings is driven more by tourism and service industries than by agriculture or logging as in the past. There are souvenir and collectibles shops, eateries, a kayak rental facility, small chocolate and furniture businesses, an engine and machine shop, a boating supply and repair facility, High School, two gas stations and several tourist resorts.

### **2020-2025 Priorities and Commitments**

- Customer Service
- Communication
- Employment
- Transportation
- Public Spaces

### **Customer Service**

The Accessible Customer Service Standard under the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation requires the municipality to provide accessible public services for people with disabilities and to ensure that policies and procedures are in place to support this requirement.

### **Outcomes**

- An accessible environment that includes ensuring people with disabilities receive quality goods and services in a timely manner, supported by effective policies, procedures, tools and resources that promote accessibility in customer service.

### **Commitments**

#### **Policies and Practices**

- Examine and address potential barriers at public spaces.

- Ensure that in the case of planned or unplanned service disruptions, notice is provided, via municipal website, social media and hand delivered notices, explaining the reason for the disruption, estimated duration, and any alternative facilities or services available.
- The municipality's website, social media, email and phone services will be available during all business hours. Payments can be made in a variety of methods including: online bill payments, mailed in cheques, credit card payment over the phone and credit/debit services in person at the municipal office. Digital services will be accessible and result in an improved customer experience.
- Comments and concerns related to accessibility are accepted by email, phone or in person via complaint/suggestion forms (which will be provided by municipal staff). All submitted forms will be reviewed by Staff and Council. Any decision or discussion will be relayed to the complainant/suggestor as per our Municipal Complaint Handling Policy.

### **Training**

- Ensure that all employees continue to complete mandatory accessibility training and other foundational training in-class with the Health and Safety Officer at time of hire.
- Continue to promote training to support the municipality towards achieving excellence in accessible customer service.

### **Communication**

The accessibility standard is to communicate and provide information in ways that are accessible to people with disabilities.

### **Outcomes**

- Provide enhanced accessibility as it relates to communication supports, formats, and websites and web content.
- Municipal staff have the tools and resources to effectively develop information and communications in accessible formats.

By delivering information and communications in accessible formats to all municipal employees, clients and customers, we can guarantee an effective delivery of services.

As well, the municipality will regularly review compliance and accept suggestions and focus on ways to improve accessibility in information and communications.

### **Commitments**

#### **Standards and Resources**

- Develop and update standards and guides for accessible digital, marketing and media content in the municipality.

- Develop, provide and promote resources, using a variety of communications and training formats, including in-person sessions, guides, tutorials and testing methodology and tools (e.g., PowerPoint, Excel, Word, use of PDFs, etc.).
- Develop and update yearly status reports of all progress made with the multi-year Accessibility Plan.

### **Web Platforms**

- Continue to implement the <https://billingstwp.ca/> platform to ensure it is accessible.

### **Digital Services**

- Ensure that digital services are designed with accessibility at its core, striving for all users to have equal access to information and functionality.

### **Forms**

- Ensure all forms on the municipal website are accessible by 2020.
- Add additional forms as requested or as fit.

### **Notices**

- Provide consistent notices on the municipal website, social media, mailed hard copies or via email as requested.

## **Employment**

The Employment Standard under the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation sets out accessibility requirements that the municipality must follow to support the recruitment and accommodation of employees. This includes preparing individualized emergency response information for persons with disabilities and making employment practices and workplaces more accessible for new and existing employees with disabilities.

### **Outcomes**

- Efforts will align with the province's employment strategy for people with disabilities as the government works to ensure that more people with disabilities are employed, engaged and advancing.
- Accommodation practices will be reviewed to ensure people with disabilities are able to participate fully and meaningfully as municipal employees.

## **Commitments**

- Continue to regularly review our human resources policies to prevent or remove systemic employment barriers, ensure they are compliant with legislation and reflect best practices.

## **Recruitment**

- The municipality will focus on expanding job descriptions and advertisements in a variety of formats and distribute them in a variety of forums (social media, municipal website, and newspaper advertisements).
- Availability of accommodations will be communicated in all job descriptions/notices of employment.
- Availability of accommodations will be communicated in all offers of employment.

## **Learning and Development**

- Continue to build accessibility awareness through training to respond to the needs of employees with an illness, injury, and/or disability.
- Employees will have access to training that helps them understand how hidden biases impact workplace interactions and how to prevent biases from negatively impacting others, including people with disabilities.
- Promote principles and practices of respectful workplaces through training and resources that help:
  - Improve managers' ability to intervene in workplace conflict, including potential harassment and discrimination
  - Promote employee responsibilities for contributing to respect in the workplace
  - Support employees to address low intensity rude or disrespectful behaviours that erode productivity, engagement, teamwork, diversity and service.
- Ensure all materials, activities and learning methods for developed programs are in accessible formats, or will be made accessible upon request, to support the professional development and advancement of all employees.

## **Employee Support**

- Embed a centralized disability support services model to provide better manager support and dedicated employee accommodation planning.
- Continue to collaborate with service delivery partners to secure employee feedback that will help improve services.

## **Transportation**

The Transportation Standard under the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation sets out the requirements to prevent and remove barriers to public transportation so that everyone can more easily travel in Ontario.

Much of the responsibility for removing barriers to transportation in Ontario resides with municipalities and public agencies. However, over the next five years, the OPS will provide support to help make transportation and related services more accessible to the people of Ontario.

### **Commitments**

#### **Aus Hunt and Small Craft Marina**

- Add new, accessible docks and ramps while completing the Marina renovations in 2020.

### **Transit**

- Public transit provides an opportunity to break down isolation barriers for seniors who have no means of moving about through their community and can generate a sense of independence and fulfillment for the mobility-challenged and people with disabilities.
- Work with other municipalities to improve public transit on an island-wide approach.

### **Programs**

- The United Manitoulin Islands Transit (UMIT) committee will have a small bus that will provide two round trips per weekday, five days a week, on a fixed route schedule around Manitoulin Island. The small community bus will be able to accommodate up to 15 people and up to two wheelchairs and would be used in a fixed-route scheduled service Manitoulin Island Wide (Note: this program is not facilitated or organized by the Township of Billings).

## **Public Spaces**

The Design of Public Spaces Standard under the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation requires the municipality to ensure that newly-constructed or significantly renovated public spaces (e.g., beach access routes and accessible parking) are accessible.

The municipality also complies with the Ontario Building Code's requirements for accessibility in the built environment.

## **Outcomes**

- Greater accessibility to facilities and public spaces. This includes incorporating accessibility retrofits where possible during renovations.

## **Standards**

- When constructing or renovating municipal facilities, all features, such as doors, washrooms, parking, and furnishings, will be fully accessible.

## **Infrastructure Planning and Projects**

- Included in developing our Asset Management Plan, there will be a description of the state of township-owned infrastructure assets, a description of anticipated infrastructure requirements and a strategy to meet these requirements.
- Continue to prioritize accessibility in every element of the infrastructure projects at municipal owned facilities and properties.
- Township staff, mayor and council will be engaged during infrastructure project planning, design and implementation stages.
- The renovations of the Municipal Office in the Old Mill Heritage Building will include accessibility in the completed builders design and specifications (2020).

## **Tourist Attractions**

- Accessible Parking Spots and washroom facilities are available at the Main Beach and at the top of the Bridal Veil Falls Look-Out.

## **Municipal Office**

- Accessible Parking, a wheelchair ramp and wide door frames are in place to help make the Municipal Office accessible. The renovations to the Municipal Office in 2020 will take accessibility standards into mind during the design.

## **Governance, Policies and Legislation**

In addition to the Standards under the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation, the municipality is committed to going beyond to ensure that barriers to accessibility are identified and addressed.

## **Outcomes**

- Clear roles and accountability at all levels of the organization.
- Employees are supported to identify barriers to accessibility and actively seek solutions to prevent and remove them.

## **Conclusion**

As the Township of Billings continues to prevent, identify and remove accessibility barriers, it is important for us to monitor and report on the progress and results in meeting the commitments in the five-year accessibility plan.

The municipality is open to suggestions from the public regarding how to make any area more accessible.

All required compliance reports will be submitted to the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario on the specified dates.

Moving forward together, the municipality will become a more accessible employer, service provider and destination.