

Memorandum to the Council of Corporation of the Municipality of Temagami

Subject: Adoption Municipality Records Format to Ensure Accessibility Compliance

Memo No: 2025-M-013

Date: January 9, 2025

Attachment: None

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Recommendation

Be IT RESOLVED THAT Council receives Memo 2025-M-013 as presented;

AND FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Council approves the preparation of all municipal records in compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act to enhance accessibility and legal compliance;

AND FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Clerk is authorized to revisit and reformat existing municipal documents as necessary to align with accessibility standards, ensuring no changes to content and limiting modifications solely to formatting adjustments required for compliance;

AND FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council authorizes the allocation of necessary resources to support the reformatting and compliance initiative.

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Executive Summary

This memo proposes adopting an updated format for all municipal records to ensure compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). The initiative involves:

- Reformatting existing records,
- Adopting accessibility guidelines for new records, and
- Training relevant staff.

To achieve this, the municipality must allocate appropriate manpower, working hours, and resources to ensure successful implementation. These updates will enhance accessibility, reduce legal and reputational risks, and position the municipality as a forward-thinking leader in inclusivity and transparency. Approval of this initiative is critical for compliance and demonstrating a commitment to accessibility and good governance.

Background

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) requires public sector organizations, including municipalities, to provide accessible information and documents to individuals with disabilities. Key guidelines under the AODA include:

- Enhanced readability through appropriate text formatting,
- Descriptive alternative text for images to support screen readers,
- Structured headings for improved navigation, and
- Correct language settings to facilitate effective use of assistive technologies.

Adopting these guidelines ensures compliance while supporting the municipality's broader commitment to fostering an inclusive and accessible community

Rationale for Compliance

Adopting the updated format for municipal records addresses several key objectives:

1. **Improved Accessibility:** Ensures all individuals, including those relying on assistive technologies, can access and understand municipal information.
2. **Legal Compliance:** Aligns with the AODA, the internationally recognized Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1), and relevant municipal standards, reducing risks of legal and reputational repercussions.
3. **Commitment to Equity:** Reinforces the municipality's dedication to creating an inclusive environment and providing equitable access to information for all community members.

By implementing these updates, the municipality will demonstrate leadership in accessibility, accountability, and inclusivity.

Legal Compliance and Relevant Acts

1. **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA):** Mandates public sector organizations to provide accessible documents.

2. Municipal Act, 2001 (Ontario):
 - Section 224: Highlights the municipal council’s role in ensuring accountability and transparency, including providing accessible public information.
 - Section 270(1): Requires municipalities to adopt policies promoting accountability and transparency, which can include accessible information and services.
3. Ontario Human Rights Code: Prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability and requires reasonable efforts to provide accessible services and information. Non-compliance risks reputational harm and legal challenges.

Implementation Plan

To achieve compliance with AODA standards, the municipality must allocate appropriate resources, including:

- Review and Reformat Existing Municipal Records: Ensuring all current documents align with accessibility standards, with additional resources engaged if necessary.
- Train Staff: Providing training on creating, maintaining, and assessing accessible documents to build internal capacity and expertise.
- Monitor Ongoing Compliance: Establishing periodic reviews to address evolving accessibility standards and ensure continued alignment with AODA guidelines (<https://www.aoda.ca>).

These resources are essential to ensure timely and effective implementation of the updated document formats, minimizing disruption to regular operations, and maintaining high standards of accessibility.

Conclusion

Ensuring accessibility for municipal records is both a legal obligation and a reflection of the municipality's commitment to equity, transparency, and good governance. This initiative aligns with the AODA and WCAG 2.1, enhancing accessibility and demonstrating leadership in inclusivity.

Approval of this initiative is recommended, along with authorization for the Clerk to oversee its implementation by allocating necessary resources to ensure equitable access to information for all residents.