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## MULTI-YEAR ACCESSIBILITY UPDATE

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the commitment, passion and dedication of the Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee. This Committee has made a many advancement towards achieving our Vision of “Informing and inspiring people from across the County, in making Huron County accessible for people of all abilities.”

### **2014 Achievement:**

Below are the Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee’s achievements identifying both completed goals that were identified for 2014 and achievements above and beyond those:

#### **1. Accessibility Plans:**

The County of Huron has create an Annual Accessibility Plan under the Ontarians with Disability Act, 2001 and a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 with annual updates on successes. The County of Huron has completed both requirements with the documents being approved at the November 24, 2014 County Council meeting. Both documents are posted to the County’s website, a copy mailed to the Ministry and are available in alternate formats upon request.

#### **2. Site Plan Reviews:**

The Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee has had much success over the past year with an increase in requests for Site Plan Reviews from both County staff and private businesses and organizations. We believe this speaks volumes and clearly identifies that the message on the importance of accessibility in Huron County is being shared and understood.

The Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee completed 22 site plan reviews throughout the year and provided written feedback and recommendations ensuring that the renovations and construction meet the requirements of the AODA. The reviews completed included:

- All County Libraries:
  - Howick
  - Wingham
  - Blyth
  - Seaforth
  - Clinton
  - Goderich
  - Exeter

- Zurich
- Bayfield
- Kirkton
- Hensall

- Huron County Museum
- Huron County Gaol
- Maitland Valley Medical Centre
- Kingston Street Public Washrooms
- Hensall Town Hall Renovations
- Realignment of County Road 13 in Clinton
- Construction of County Road 12 in Brussels
- Reconstruction of the main intersection and stop lights in Seaforth
- CIBC in Seaforth
- Huron and John Streets in Exeter
- Wingham Hospital renovations

The Huron County Accessibility Committee would like to commend the Architects and Engineers in making accessibility a priority and understanding the requirements of the newly released standards and implementing the standards into their drawings. Based on this, the Committee recognizes that their efforts to educate the community on the standards and the importance of removing barriers has been effective.

### **3. Government Directives and Regulations:**

The Accessibility Advisory Committee continues to provide updates on and advice about new Government directives and regulations. Regulations and Directives Huron County had to be in compliance with in 2014 included:

#### **Website Accessibility:**

Huron County's website ([www.huroncounty.ca](http://www.huroncounty.ca)) and its content meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 as outlined in the Accessibility Standard for Information and Communications. WCAG 2.0 is an internationally accepted standard for web accessibility developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), an international team of experts.

WCAG 2.0 sets out guidelines for organizations to follow to make their websites more accessible for people with disabilities. The guidelines cover things like writing web content in clear language, providing alternate text for images and making sure someone can navigate your website with just a keyboard.

Each guideline has three levels of accessibility: A, AA and AAA. Level AAA is the highest level of accessibility. Following these guidelines should make it easier for everyone to access your website and content, including people without disabilities.

**Huron County Libraries have met all requirements; which include:**

- Provide or arrange for people to get accessible formats of library materials where they exist. Materials include literary, musical, artistic and dramatic works. Accessible formats are alternatives to standard print. Accessible formats may include large print, electronic, video, DVDs, CDs, audio and Braille.
- When libraries acquire new materials, they must consider the accessibility needs of their users. Make sure as many people as possible can access their collections. Some libraries may have extensive collections of accessible materials, while others have smaller collections. Libraries can use the inter-library system to provide users with accessible materials.
- A library may have special collections, rare books and archival materials that need special handling and treatment. These do not have to be provided in accessible formats.
- Let the public know you are providing accessible formats. (This only applies to information that you control directly or indirectly through a contract or other formal arrangement. It doesn't apply to information you provide on behalf of another organization.)

**Service Disruption Notification Policy:**

Huron County has approved and implemented a Service Disruption Notification Policy as required under the AODA.

**Training:**

All staff including volunteers and third party contractors have received mandatory training specific to their job duties.

**4. School Board Curriculum:**

A goal for 2014 was to assist in the development of accessibility resources for the Avon Maitland District School Board (AMDSB) but this goal was later revised to develop a working relationship with the AMDSB. While participating in a joint event with the Perth County Accessibility Advisory Committee and the AMDSB in celebrating International Day of Persons with Disabilities it was determined that the AMDSB already has excellent accessibility resources.

The Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee refocused its efforts in creating a relationship with the AMDSB and we hosted our Fourth Annual National Access Awareness Week event in partnership. This proved to be a very successful venture and more details are highlighted below under the heading National Access Awareness Week Event.

## **5. Developed Relationships with County Council, Lower Tiers and Businesses:**

This was achieved through:

- Regular Council updates that were shared by County Council representatives with their respective municipalities.
- Speaking engagements at BIA meetings, agencies and businesses by Deb, Luke and Zane Braun. Debbie is a very engaged and insightful member of the Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee. Luke and Zane are Debbie's teenage boys who have lived their lives with Morquio Syndrome. The message they share is about walking or wheeling through life with their heads held high and being able to meet any challenges life throws their way and how these challenges would be easier if businesses were aware of how to make their businesses accessible. They spoke on how creating an accessibility environment is just the right thing to do and highlighted the economic benefit of increasing your customer base.

## **6. Annual Awards Program:**

The Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee introduced their annual awards program in conjunction with their National Access Awareness Week event in 2013. The Awards Program was expanded to include two (2) awards – one presented to a private business and one to a public sector organization.

The purpose of the awards program is to celebrate organizations and individuals who are working to build a more inclusive society. These people make a difference in the lives of thousands of Canadians living with a disability.

The Award of Merit for Barrier-Free Design is to promote public awareness of the importance of barrier-free design, and to recognize excellence in accessibility design. Eligibility criteria and structures that qualify for this award include:

- New public or private buildings or facilities, the design of which incorporate barrier-free accessibility;
- Existing buildings or facilities that have been re-designed or renovated to incorporate barrier-free accessibility.
- Satisfies the requirements of use and heightens the integration of people with disabilities in the community;
- Incorporates practical, useful, and innovative solutions to typical barriers.

The Award of Merit was presented to the Avon Maitland District School Board for their demonstrated commitment and passion in the advancement of accessibility with their design

in the construction of the new Maitland River Elementary School.

The second Award of Merit award was presented to the Blyth Bakery. It is very exciting that private businesses, more specifically, the Blyth Bakery understands the importance our community businesses and organizations play in creating an inclusive society for all.

## **7. National Access Awareness Week:**

The Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee successfully hosted its fourth National Access Awareness Week on May 29, 2014 in partnership with the Avon Maitland District School Board with approximately 800 students in attendance.

Victoria Nolan was our guest speaker. Victoria was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa, an eye disease that causes slow, progressive loss of vision at the age of 18. Though her diagnosis devastated her, it also provided a lot of insight: it explained why she always felt a little uncomfortable in crowds, why she didn't like speaking in front of people and why she struggled with anything athletic. After years of frustration, she decided to make a change, regain her independence and chase her goals.

Having never rowed before, Nolan loved it the moment she tried it. What started out as a hobby quickly turned into a passion - one that she was really good at. In 2007, Nolan was named to the Canadian National Adaptive Rowing Team and began travelling the world, winning medals and breaking records and within a year was competing at the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing.

Today Nolan is a retired Paralympian, special education teacher, motivational speaker and an advocate for people with disabilities. In 2010, she and her rowing crew won gold at the World Rowing Championships in New Zealand and competed in the 2009 World Rowing Championship in Poland. She and her husband live in Toronto with two children.

Victoria was an excellent speaker, painting a very vivid picture of some of her experiences, to her audience of students. Victoria was inactive with the students after her presentation and a large number of students chose to stick around to get their picture taken and have a conversation with Victoria. It was great to see the connection between Victoria and a large number of students.

Aside from inspiring others and providing a true perspective on everyday challenges those with disabilities still face, the Accessibility Advisory Committee developed a very valuable relationship with the AMDSB.

## **8. Goals & Objectives:**

Goals and Objectives of the Accessibility Advisory Committee were developed, approved and implemented in 2013 and have been reviewed and updated for 2015.

## **9. Site Plan Control Guidelines:**

Huron County's Site Plan Control Guidelines have been revised to include the new standard Public Spaces. This document is still in draft form. It has been reviewed with Chief Building Officials and Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee. The Committee has recently reviewed a document called the Illustrated Technical Guide to the Accessibility Standard for the Design of Public Spaces developed by the Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments (GAATES) and supported by the Ontario Government. The Committee has revised it goal for this document to be the staff resource of choice when reviewing site plans.