

Statistics indicate that there are some 1.9 million people in Ontario with disabilities. The Province of Ontario enacted the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) on June 13, 2005. The AODA focuses on achieving accessibility in areas such as customer service, communications, transportation, goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises on or before January 01, 2025.

The AODA includes the development of mandatory standards to address the full range of disabilities and barriers and the introduction of timelines to ensure that the standards are implemented. The AODA repeals the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001, however, until the standards of the new legislation have been established by the Province, there is a transition period during which the Town is required to continue to fulfill its obligations under the Ontarians With Disabilities Act, 2001.

The Town of Wasaga Beach has committed itself to the improvement of access to municipal facilities and has established an Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) to advise the Municipal Council on matters pertaining to equal opportunity and access for all persons, regardless of needs, to participate as fully as possible, in all aspects of community life. The AAC's objective is to provide guidance and advice to the Municipal Council as well as to act as a liaison with other agencies and individuals on physical, architectural, informational, communications, technological and attitudinal barriers to reduce and hopefully eliminate these barriers in our community. A disability may be physical, mental, visual or auditory and the complete definition is contained within the Act.

The Wasaga Beach Accessibility Advisory Committee was formed in April, 2003. It now consists of at least 8 members from the community, the majority being persons with disabilities, 1 member of council and 2 senior staff persons who are resourced to the committee. The AAC will take a very proactive roll in the Town's efforts to provide a barrier free environment for the disabled.

The creation and implementation of the 2008 Accessibility Plan is under the authority and approval of the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Wasaga Beach. This is the second update of the original plan (2003). It describes the actions taken by the Town to date, and also our plan for the future. The Town of Wasaga Beach recognizes that all of its facilities are not fully barrier free which, of course, impacts our residents and visitors. Over a phased time frame, it is the Town's intention to remove these barriers.

Should you be inclined, the Committee would welcome knowing whether you would like to be considered for membership on the Advisory Committee. Also, we encourage the public to advise the Committee or the Town of circumstances where a barrier to accessibility exists.