
HALDIMAND COUNTY

Memorandum CEC-M01-2025 Annual Accessibility Compliance Report and Status Update



For Consideration by Council in Committee on February 4, 2025

To: Mayor Bentley and Members of Council

From: Kyra Hayes, Supervisor, Customer Experience & Communications

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Memorandum CEC-M01-2025 Annual Accessibility Compliance Report and Status Update be received.

The purpose of this memorandum is to advise Council on the status of initiatives within Haldimand County's 2023-2027 Accessibility Plan, as well as report on compliance status with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) described under Ontario Regulation 191/11.

2024 Accessibility Compliance Report

Every two years, municipalities are required to submit AODA compliance reports to the Government of Ontario, indicating compliance or areas of issue. Haldimand County submitted its 2024 Accessibility Compliance Report to the province on December 10, 2024 declaring full compliance with all requirements encompassed by the AODA.

This was an exciting accomplishment. As Council may remember, previously, the County fell short of meeting the AODA regulations, noting non-compliance in three key areas:

- **Composition of the Accessibility Advisory Committee** – less than 50% of members self-disclosed as having a disability.
- **Haldimand County website** – the website did not conform to World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 Level AA (WCAG 2.0).
- **Outdoor public use eating areas** – the County did not meet minimum acceptable 20% ratio for accessible picnic tables.

Since the 2022 submission, all three of these areas of non-compliance have been addressed through committee member recruitment efforts, the website redesign project, and interdepartmental collaboration with the Facilities, Parks, Cemeteries and Forestry Operations Division ensuring installation of required picnic tables to meet acceptable levels. As a result, the County is now considered fully compliant by the province and no longer at immediate risk of substantial penalties or fines.

2024 Accessibility Status Update

Under the AODA, municipalities are required to develop Annual Accessibility Status Reports yearly and make those reports publicly available through the website. The County's 2024 Accessibility Status Update report – as well as reports from previous years – can be found on the County website.

Haldimand County Accessibility Advisory Committee is directly involved in the setting of these priorities, reviewing anticipated workplans, and providing ad hoc advice to corporate projects with an accessibility lens.

At a high level, Haldimand County saw a number of successes across all areas of the IASR in 2024, and many new initiatives were introduced to further the County's accessibility goals. These include, but are not limited to:

- The full re-design and launch of Haldimand County's corporate website, as well as two individual microsites; one each for Tourism and the Haldimand County Public Library, all of which meet, or exceed, WCAG 2.0;
- Created and carried out the inaugural year for an Inclusive Spaces Fund (\$50k annually towards accessibility enhancements at existing facilities). For 2024, this included completion of 6 capital projects to make programs, facilities and services more accessible to individuals with disabilities;
- Developed and implemented a corporate-wide Accessibility Ambassador program along with comprehensive accessible document training;
- Updated the volunteer orientation process to ensure training provided meets AODA requirements;
- Offered new, focused training for all staff on Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and AODA requirements;
- Added criteria related to accessibility on special event permit applications;
- Updated language in Requests for Proposals (RFPs) and Requests for Quotes (RFQs) to ensure external vendors provide the County with fully AODA compliant products and services;
- Consulted with the Accessibility Advisory Committee on various community projects including the new website, Visitor Experience Strategy, redesign of the Cayuga Kinsmen Community Centre, extension of the Grand Vista trailhead and bridge and more; and
- Introduced new, accessible outdoor seating in parks across the County.

This list is not exhaustive. A comprehensive breakdown of 2024 initiatives undertaken is available within the 2024 Accessibility Status Update document included as Attachment 1.

Next Steps

The County is committed to enhancing accessibility in all areas and has defined actionable steps to break down barriers and make programs, services and facilities more inclusive.

In 2025, staff will focus on furthering employees' knowledge of the AODA, WCAG and accessible customer service to ensure accessibility remains front and centre when it comes to introducing new services or making changes that directly impact the public. Additionally, staff intend to:

- Develop and finalize a new, comprehensive Corporate Accessibility Policy for Council review and approval;
- Review and implement recent changes to the Building Code and AODA and update the County's Accessible Design Standards to ensure alignment with both pieces of legislation;
- Work with Economic Development & Tourism staff and Business Improvement Areas to find opportunities for enhancing accessibility in downtown cores;
- Work with internal divisions to plan and facilitate capital accessibility projects for 2025 (funded through the Council-approved Inclusive Spaces Fund); and
- Continue participating in audits of County-owned facilities to plan for future improvements, including accessibility enhancements.

REFERENCES:

1. [Haldimand County 2023-2027 Accessibility Plan](#)

ATTACHMENTS:

1. 2024 Accessibility Annual Status Update