

2024  
Accessibility  
Annual Status  
Update



# 2024 Accessibility Annual Status Update

## Accessibility Status Update

The Accessibility Status Update provides information on the advancements made to the initiatives outlined in Haldimand County's 2022-2027 Accessibility Plan, as well as the execution of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (Ontario Regulation 191/11).

Under the AODA, municipalities must create Annual Accessibility Status Reports each year and make them available to the public on their websites. Furthermore, municipalities must submit additional AODA compliance reports to the Government of Ontario every two years.

## 2024 Summary of Accessibility Actions

In accordance with the standards in the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR), we have completed the following actions according to the following sections: General, Information and Communication Standard, Employment Standard, Transportation Standard, Design of Public Spaces Standard, Customer Service Standards, and Compliance.

The Accessibility Advisory Committee has also reviewed a variety of projects that are listed after the IASR standard action items. After listing all of the action items achieved in 2024, the County has collaborated with a number of different departments as well as the Accessibility Advisory Committee to compile a list of accessibility goals for 2025. These goals also execute some of the initiatives outlined in Haldimand County's 2022-2027 Accessibility Plan.

### Part one - General

#### Actions taken

##### Procurement

- Amended all corporate bid document templates to ensure vendors and contractors adhere to the AODA:
  - Under Section 10.0 – AODA Compliance, the following language was added:
    - “Document Standards: The Insert Bidder Classification shall render all documents accessible according to the latest AODA standards; ensuring that all forms, documents, or information to be made public be accessible or provide accessible alternate formats upon request. Work must conform to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2 AA.”

##### Promotions

- Celebrated National Access-Ability Week with a variety of events and promotions. This special week is dedicated to celebrating the valuable contributions and leadership of Canadians with disabilities, as well as promoting efforts to increase accessibility and inclusion across the country.

## 2024 Annual Accessibility Status Update

- Celebrated Red Shirt day on Wednesday, May 28, to support Canadians living with disabilities
  - Accessibility Advisory Committee members were invited to a Meet and Greet with Haldimand County staff
  - Pledges were made and written by the Accessibility Advisory Committee as well as Haldimand County staff. These pledges were aimed at encouraging individuals to consider making commitments to improving inclusion and remove barriers when it comes to accessibility in the County
- Highlighted the Inclusive Hiring Initiative by interviewing key staff hired
  - Interviews were highlighted on our website and also shared with permission in The Haldimand Press
  - Benefits of the Inclusive Hiring Initiative include building a more inclusive and diverse workplace and providing meaningful employment to individuals with disabilities

## Part two - Information and Communications Standard

### Actions taken

- Launched Haldimand County's website re-design in November 2024
- Developed language in the Web Governance Guide to address the use of PDFs on the website in order to maintain compliance
- Developed new Accessibility Ambassador roles
  - Acting as a central point of contact or 'go-to' for staff in their work area who require support or have questions about accessible documents
  - Providing tips and guidance regarding Word & PDF document accessibility
  - Ensuring staff in their work areas are following correct processes/using proper templates to maintain AODA compliance
  - Checking documents provided by staff or external vendors for accessibility before publishing to the website. (If a document is identified as inaccessible, the Ambassador will liaise with the vendor and project manager to ensure any compliance issues are remedied in accordance with the RFP, RFQ and/or contract agreement).
- Offered a two day Accessible Documentation training to staff to maintain accessible documents on the website
- WCAG/AODA training offered to all staff at Haldimand County
- Purchased new software – CommonLook PDF
  - CommonLook PDF remediation software is a plugin for Adobe Acrobat – it enables users to rest, repair, and report on accessible PDF documents
  - Adobe Acrobat Pro – new licences were purchased so staff can review and remediate PDFs

## Part three - Employment Standard

### Actions taken

- Initiated research and planning for development Disability Management policy for 2025
  - Relating to accommodations for individuals with disabilities in the workplace
- Updated volunteer orientation process to ensure sufficient training is provided and records of training kept as prescribed by the AODA

## Part four - Transportation Standard

### Actions taken

- Ensured all taxicab operators and drivers were following the IASR and charging the same fare for accessible taxicabs as standard taxis
- Monitored taxi industry and ensured compliance with accessible taxicab requirements.
- Consulted the Accessibility Advisory Committee regarding the proportion of on-demand accessible taxicabs required in the community

## Part five - Design of Public Spaces Standard

### Actions taken

#### The Inclusive Spaces Fund

- Obtained Council approval for the Inclusive Spaces Fund
- Proposed and reviewed projects for Inclusive Spaces fund with the Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Presented prospective Inclusive Spaces fund projects to the Senior Management Team and received feedback and approval
- Completed 6 different projects with various departments for the Inclusive Spaces Fund
  - Accessible automatic door opener added to Council Chamber doors
  - Accessible automatic door openers added to Caledonia arena spectator viewing areas
  - Accessible automatic door openers added to Hagersville arena spectator viewing areas
  - Accessible picnic table added to Port Maitland “Esplanade” park
  - Accessible path added from parking lot to set of bleachers at Dunnville Kinsmen Park
  - Accessible parking signs and spots added to Dunnville Kinsmen Park
  - Adult/Youth change table added to Dunnville Library in their universal washroom
  - Water wheelchair purchased for use at the outdoor Caledonia pool

#### Other actions taken

- Ensured that accessible seating was provided for Council meetings
- Added 10 accessible picnic tables to parks around the County
- Council approved the Accessible Design Standards (ADS) document in January 2024. This document sets the standards for Accessible Design at Haldimand County and goes above and beyond the minimum standards in the Ontario Building Code

## Part Six - Customer Service Standards

### Actions taken

#### Corporate Customer Service Standards

- Developed new Corporate Customer Service Standards that include the following language relating to accessibility:
  - Offer alternative formats to eliminate barriers to service
  - Ensure you are using the customer's preferred method of communication.
  - Provide documentation in an accessible format.
- Developed new Guidelines for Accessibility to support staff in meeting the new Corporate Customer Service Standards:
  - Added guidelines relating to service animals, support persons, and personal assistive devices
  - Information on the assistive hearing loop service we offer to customers

#### Website re-design

- Launched a new website that is fully accessible and compliant with WCAG 2.0 guidelines
  - Features many new and easy-to-use online forms
  - Meets accessible information requirements outlined by the AODA

#### Other actions taken

- Set up eScribe to create and publish AAC agendas and minutes
- Added supportive chairs in meeting rooms so individuals using walkers can sit down safely
- Added criteria related to accessibility for special event applications
  - Added stipulations regarding the proximity of accessible washrooms and parking as well as access for those who use mobility devices

## Part Seven – Compliance

As a designated public sector organization, Haldimand County is required to submit an accessibility compliance report to the Province every two years. The last report was submitted to the province in December of 2023. The County answered “no” to the following two questions in the Accessibility Compliance Report in 2023:

- “Do your new internet websites and the content on them conform to the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA? (except for live captions and pre-recorded audio descriptions) Yes or No (IASR s. 14)
- “Is the majority of members in the committee persons with disabilities?”

### Actions taken

- Haldimand County launched a new, accessible website in November 2024 that fully adheres to WCAG 2.0 guidelines
- The Accessibility Advisory Committee recruited and obtained one new member fulfilling our legislative requirement of ensuring over 50% of our members have a disability

## Haldimand County Accessibility Advisory Committee

The Accessibility Advisory Committee is a vital part of Haldimand County. The committee provides important information and advice to Council on identifying, preventing and eliminating barriers to people with disabilities in municipal programs, services, public spaces and facilities.

In 2024, the County consulted with the Accessibility Advisory Committee on the following:

- Terms of Reference for the Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Inclusive Spaces Fund projects
- The new website
- Wayfinding Signage strategy
- Visitor Experience Strategy
- The addition of more accessible parking signs
- The drawings and graphics of a new, accessible parking lot and entrance at the Cayuga Kinsmen Community Centre
- Review of Grand Vista trailhead and bridge
  - Reviewed the parking lot and entrance to the trail

## 2025 Goals

### Action required

- Develop internal training for staff to continue to learn about accessible documentation
- Refresh internal training relating to the AODA, Accessible Customer Service, and Human Rights
- Develop and finalize a new, comprehensive Corporate Accessibility Policy for Council review and approval
- Work with the Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) to discuss how the County can assist in offering opportunities to enhance downtown accessibility
- Implement 2025 project ideas for Inclusive Spaces Fund
- Develop strategies and internal processes to review and update the Accessible Design Standards regularly
- Conduct a county-wide audit of all Haldimand County-owned facilities
- Complete the new Disability Management Policy in collaboration with Human Resources
- Participate in job fairs that include employers who will include inclusive hiring
- Implement and review new Ontario Building Code changes as they related to accessibility
- Implement and review new ministry recommendations relating to the built environment under the AODA

## Contact Information

For more information about accessibility initiatives within the County or to obtain this information in an alternate format, please contact the Accessibility Coordinator:

**Phone:** 905-318-5932 ext. 6186

2024 Annual Accessibility Status Update



**E-mail:** [accessibility@haldimandcounty.on.ca](mailto:accessibility@haldimandcounty.on.ca)