

County of Wellington
Multi-year Accessibility Plan
2022 – 2026



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Commitment

The County of Wellington works towards making sure its programmes, services and facilities are barrier-free and demonstrate leadership for the local municipalities. The County continues to support the goal of an accessible Province by 2025 by implementing the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA).

The County will meet or exceed the regulations made under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005.

This Multi-year Accessibility Plan outlines our way of making sure we have an inclusive workplace and are an accessible service provider.

Obligations

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) requires public sector organizations to have an Accessibility Advisory Committee and develop an accessibility plan each year.

Under the AODA municipalities must:

- Prepare an accessibility plan each year.
- Include people with disabilities in the planning process.
- Remove barriers over time.

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) is the first law of its kind in Canada. Under the AODA, the Province is developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards.

The Multi-year Plan is based upon requirements under the AODA. Under the AODA the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) contains standards in the following five areas:

- Information and Communications
- Employment
- Transportation
- Design of Public Spaces
- Customer Service

The County of Wellington's Strategy

The County's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan describes how we will become an accessible organization over the next five years. We will focus on the following areas:

- Policies, processes and practices

- Communications and awareness
- Technology
- Infrastructure
- People

Key Outcomes

- People with disabilities have access to quality goods and services in a timely manner.
- People with disabilities have access to information and communications in alternate formats.
- People with disabilities can participate fully in services and employment with the County.
- People with disabilities experience greater accessibility in County-owned facilities.

Our Approach (2013 – 2021)

- Develop purchasing and human resources policies and procedures that include accessibility requirements.
- Incorporate accessibility into planning processes.
- Train current and new staff.
- Remove barriers to employment.
- Continue to make facilities accessible in accordance with our FADM.
- Make sure there is access to information and communications.
- Make sure documents uploaded onto County website are accessible.
- Continue to publish annual accessibility plans.
- Continue to remove and prevent barriers.
- Continue to consult with our Accessibility Advisory Committee.
- Review all policies, procedures and processes to make sure they support accessibility considerations and fix barriers to accessibility.
- Refresher training provided to staff as needed.
- Ongoing requests for public feedback.
- Increase awareness within the County of accessibility best practices in the workplace.

Our Approach (2022 – 2026)

- Utilizing technology to assist with the creation of accessible website content.
- Promoting awareness of the role of the AAC in the Municipality.
- Enhance return to work process and supports for employees returning from disability-related leaves of absence.
- Continue promoting accessibility funding opportunities to Member Municipalities.
- Implementation of revised Accessible Communications guideline.

- Enhanced accessibility in the recruitment application process through use of technology.
- Continue to include accessibility training in New Hire Orientation.
- Continue to publish annual accessibility plan status updates.
- Continue to remove and prevent barriers.
- Ongoing consultation with our Accessibility Advisory Committee.
- Strong organizational commitment to accessibility.

Regulatory Requirements and Proposed and Completed Actions

Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)

Part I - General Requirements

The IASR is law and its requirements are being phased in between 2011 and 2021. This section of the IASR requires the County of Wellington to develop accessibility policies, include accessibility in purchasing processes, and train staff and volunteers. It also requires the County to create a multi-year accessibility plan and consult with the public on the multi-year accessibility plan.

Develop accessibility policies (January 1, 2013):

- Develop accessibility policies, including a statement of organizational commitment and make the policies publically available.

What we have done:

- Developed Accessible Communications Policy, Workplace Accommodations for People with Disabilities Policy and Accessibility Policy.
- All of the above-mentioned policies are available on the County website and in alternative formats upon request.
- Continue to update the Accessibility Policy as the legislation changes.

Develop multi-year accessibility plans (January 1, 2013 and ongoing):

- Develop multi-year accessibility plan that outlines what will be done to implement the requirements of the IASR.
- Post the multi-year accessibility plan on the County's website and provide in an accessible format, upon request.

What we have done:

- The County's multi-year accessibility plan sets out how the County will comply with requirements of IASR.

- The draft plan has been posted to the County's website for feedback and is available in alternative formats upon request.

Report annually on multi-year accessibility plan (2014 and ongoing)

- Prepare annual status report on the progress of measures set out in the multi-year plan.
- Post the plan on the County's website and provide it in an accessible format, upon request.

What we have done:

- Annual status report on the progress of multi-year accessibility plan are developed and posted to the County's website.

Incorporate accessibility in procuring goods, services or facilities (January 1, 2013)

- Incorporate accessibility criteria and features when procuring goods, services or facilities, except where it is not practicable to do so.

What we have done:

- The County's purchasing procedure has been updated to include accessibility requirements.

Training (January 1, 2014 and ongoing)

- Make sure that training on the IASR and the Human Rights Code as it is provided to employees, volunteers, persons who participate in developing policies and others who provide goods, services or facilities on behalf of the organization.

What we have done:

- Accessibility Training in New Hire Orientation includes information related to the IASR.
- Training is provided to all employees at the New Hire Orientation.
- A training document for volunteers has been created and is shared with all new volunteers.

Part II - Information and Communications

Information and communications are a large part of County of Wellington daily business. It is because of this that it so important to make sure that information and communications are created in a way that considers accessibility.

The County will follow universal design principles and best practices when developing, implementing and maintaining information and communications strategies and products. This includes websites, intranet sites, print communications materials as well as face-to-face interactions.

The County is committed to making sure information and communications are available and accessible to people with disabilities. We will do this by:

- Achieving compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines to make sure that both internal and external websites are accessible to people with disabilities.
- Developing resource materials for creating accessible documents for common software programmes such as MS Word, Excel and PowerPoint.
- Making sure that emergency information, procedures, plans and public safety information is available in alternate formats, when requested.
- Developing a training strategy to make sure that staff has the knowledge, tools and technical advice to create accessible materials.

Feedback processes (January 1, 2014)

- Make sure that processes for receiving and responding to feedback are accessible to persons with disabilities by providing/arranging for accessible formats and communications supports, upon request.
- Notify the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports.

What we have done:

- County advertisements currently include wording that encourages people to let us know if they require accommodations or alternative formats.
- County website directs people to call or email the Human Resources Department for alternative formats and communication supports.
- The County website has a fillable form for people to provide feedback on County goods and services.
- Website Accessibility Survey was given to members of the AAC to give feedback on the accessibility of the County website.

What we are working on:

- A refreshed website accessibility survey will be prepared for members of the AAC to give feedback on the County's external website.

Accessible formats and communication supports (January 1, 2015)

- Upon request, provide accessible formats and communications supports for persons with disabilities.
- Let the public know about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports.

What we have done:

- Let the public know about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports on the County website and County publications.
- Requests for accessible documents are directed to the Human Resources Department or Communications.
- The County provides accessible formats when requested.

Emergency procedures, plans or public safety information (January 1, 2012)

- Provide emergency procedures, plans or public safety information that is publicly available in an accessible format or with appropriate communication supports, upon request.

What we have done:

- Information on emergencies is available on the County website and in alternative formats when requested.

Accessible websites and web content (January 1, 2021)

- All websites and web content to conform to WCAG 2.0 Level AA.

What we have done:

- All computer users received AODA and document accessibility training.
- Implemented accessibility software to assist with digital and website accessibility compliance and monitoring.

What we are working on:

- Continuous efforts to educate and train new employees on AODA legislation for web content, WCAG 2.0 Level AA compliance requirements, and document accessibility.

Part III - Employment

The County of Wellington is committed to making sure the process of finding, obtaining and keeping a job is as inclusive as possible in order to build an effective workforce.

Human Resources staff will receive training in order to comply with the Integrated Accessibility Regulation. It is expected that training will cover a variety of topics, including:

- Understanding employer obligations to provide employment accommodations.
- How to identify and remove barriers in the workplace.
- Enhancing workplace emergency responses through individualized emergency response information and assistance as required.
- Revising individual work plans and developing tools and templates to remove barriers from the recruitment process.

Recruitment - general, selection process, notification to successful applicants (January 1, 2014)

- Tell employees and the public about the availability of accommodation for applicants with disabilities in recruitment process.
- Inform job applicants when selected to participate in an assessment/selection process that accommodations are available.
- When making an offer of employment, tell the successful applicant of policies for accommodating employees with disabilities.

What we have done:

- Job advertisements inform applicants about the availability of accommodations in the recruitment process.
- Human Resources employees tell applicants of the opportunity to participate in an interview and of the availability of accommodations throughout the process.
- When making an offer of employment, Human Resources verbally informs the individual of the County's commitment to providing accommodations in the workplace.
- Handout explaining the procedure for requesting accommodations is given to all new hires on their first day.

What we are working on:

- Enhanced accessibility in the recruitment application process through the use of technology.

Informing employees of supports (January 1, 2014)

- Inform employees of policies to support employees with disabilities.

What we have done:

- Current employees are advised of policies through the County's intranet (The Well).

- New hires attend New Hire Training, where policies to support employees with disabilities are discussed in the Accessibility portion of the training.

Accessible formats and communication supports for employees (January 1, 2014)

- Provide or arrange for accessible formats and communication supports when it is requested by an employee with a disability and the information is needed to perform the employee's job and is generally available to employees in the workplace.

What we have done:

- The County's Workplace Accommodations for Disabilities policy outlines the County's commitment to providing accommodations to employees when requested.

Workplace emergency response information (January 1, 2012)

- Provide individualized workplace emergency response information to employees who have a disability, as required.

What we have done:

- Process in place for employees to self-identify so that an individualized workplace emergency response plan can be developed.
- Handout explaining the procedure for requesting accommodations is given to all new hires on their first day.

Documented individual accommodation plans (January 1, 2014)

- Develop and have in place a written process for development of documented individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities.

What we have done:

- The County's Workplace Accommodations for Disabilities Policy outlines the County's process for developing and documenting individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities.

Return to work process (January 1, 2014)

- Develop a return to work process for employees who have been absent from work due to a disability and require disability-related accommodations to return to work.

What we have done:

- The County's Modified Work Policy outlines the County's commitment to providing reasonable accommodations to facilitate an early and safe return to work for employees who have been absent from work due to a disability.

What we are working on:

- Implementation of a Modified Work Plan document and process outlining in detail the accommodations an employee requires when returning to work from a disability-related absence and the work tasks that are suitable.

Performance management, career development and advancement, redeployment (January 1, 2014)

- Take into account accessibility needs of employees with disabilities and individual accommodation plans during the performance management process, when providing career development and advancement or when re-deploying an employee.

What we are working on:

- Continue to conduct Performance Appraisals to include IASR requirements for performance management, career development and redeployment.

Part IV - Transportation

The majority of the Transportation standard does not apply to the County of Wellington, with the exception of taxi services.

Accessible Taxicabs

- Consult with municipal accessibility advisory committee, the public and persons with disabilities to determine the proportion of on-demand accessible taxicabs needed in the community.
- Identify progress made toward meeting the need for on-demand accessible taxicabs, including any steps that will be taken to meet the need, in its accessibility plan.
- Make sure that owners and operators of taxicabs place vehicle registration and identification information on the rear bumper of the taxicab.
- Make sure that owners and operators of taxicabs make available vehicle registration and identification information in an accessible format to persons with disabilities who are passengers.
- Any County that licenses taxi cabs must make sure that owners and operators of taxicabs are unable to:
 - Charge a higher fare or an additional fee for persons with disabilities than for persons without disabilities for the same trip;

- Charge a fee for the storage of mobility aids or mobility assistive devices.

What we have done:

- The County amended Taxi By-Law 5266-11 to reflect the requirements in the Integrated Accessibility Regulation.

Part IV.1 - Design of Public Spaces

What we have done:

- In 2005, the County of Wellington partnered with the City of Guelph, Homewood Health and the Upper Grand District School Board to develop a regional approach to accessibility design known as the Facility Accessibility Design Manual (FADM).
- The FADM exceeds the Barrier-Free section of the Ontario Building Code.
- The County of Wellington will strive to make sure that facilities are designed and built in accordance with the FADM. Once the Accessible Built Environment Standard has been passed by the Province of Ontario, the County will review the standard to make sure that compliance is met or exceeded.
- Continue to review and update the County of Wellington best practices and procedures for preventative and emergency maintenance of the accessible elements in public spaces and procedures for dealing with temporary disruptions when accessible elements are not in working order.

What we are working on:

- Accessibility has been increased in several County buildings and spaces, to see a complete list please view the most recent Multi-Year Status Update Plan.
- All renovation and construction projects moving forward will comply with the FADM where reasonable, special circumstances will be reviewed by the AAC.

Part IV.2 - Customer Service Standards

The Accessibility Standard for Customer Service was the first standard to become law. The Customer Service Standard was placed under the IASR in 2016. The County of Wellington is committed to making sure all customers receive accessible services in a timely manner. Members of the public will receive a fair customer service experience that meets their needs. The County will achieve this by:

- Reviewing and updating policies to make sure high quality, accessible service.
- Including accessibility requirements into staff training and orientation materials.
- Reviewing customer feedback and taking appropriate action.

Develop accessible customer service policies (January 1, 2010)

- Develop and implement accessible customer service policies, procedures and practices.

What we have done:

- Accessible Communications Guidelines and policy implemented.

What we are working on:

- Implementation of revised Accessible Communications guideline.

Provide accessible customer service training (January 1, 2010 and ongoing)

- Provide accessible customer service training to staff and volunteers.

What we have done:

- Current employees were trained on Accessible Communications and Accessible Documents.
- New Hires are trained in Accessible Communications during the New Hire Orientation that is held quarterly.
- New hires are trained on the Customer Service Standard during New Hire Orientation.

Conclusion

The County recognizes that further steps need to be taken to help us become completely barrier-free. Therefore, the Multi-year Plan presented above reflects a commitment to engage in initiatives that will make the County free of physical, attitudinal and social barriers by the year 2026.

Contact Information

The County of Wellington is committed to making sure accessibility is a reality throughout all facilities and business operations. There is still so much to accomplish, and as we progress, we would like to hear from you.

Do you have any thoughts or feedback on what has been accomplished so far, or ideas on how we can improve? Please contact us with your questions and ideas.

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This document is available in alternate formats upon request.