

County of Wellington

Multi-year Accessibility Plan

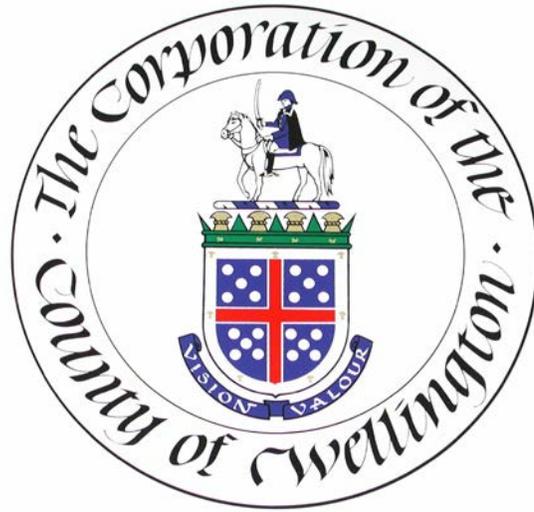


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Commitment

The County of Wellington tries to make 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 by making sure:

- Goods and services are provided in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.
- Equal opportunity will be given to people with disabilities.
- A reason will be provided, when asked, if the County is unable to include accessibility criteria when purchasing goods or services.
- People with disabilities are able to use their own personal assistive devices to access services offered by the County.

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

Obligations

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

Under the ODA 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 goal of the act and the standards is to make the province accessible for all people with disabilities by 2025.

The Multi-year Plan is based upon requirements under the AODA. The AODA sets out the roadmap for an accessible Ontario by 2025. It contains standards in the following five areas:

- Customer Service
- Information and Communications
- Employment
- Transportation
- Built Environment

The Accessible Customer Service Standard came into effect in 2008. In 2011, the Province combined the Information and Communications, Employment and Transportation Standards into one regulation, the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR). The Built Environment Standard is still with the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

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 (2013-2014)

- 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.

Our Approach (2015-2021)

- 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.
- Continue to include accessibility training in New Hire Orientation.
- Ongoing requests for public feedback.

- Increased awareness within the County of accessibility best practices in the workplace.
- Continue to publish annual accessibility plans.
- 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

Accessible Customer Service

The Accessibility Standard for Customer Service was the first standard to become law.

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.

1. 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.

2. Provide accessible customer service training (January 1, 2010)

- 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 and Accessible Documents during New Hire Quarterly Orientation.

Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation

Part I - General Requirements

Information and Communications, Employment, and Transportation Standards, were combined under one regulation, the IASR. The IASR is now 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.

1. 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, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, Workplace Accommodations for People with Disabilities Policy and Accessibility Policy.
- All the above mentioned policies are available on the County website and in alternative formats upon request.

2. Develop multi-year accessibility plans(January 1, 2013)

- 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.

3. 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 are working on:

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

4. 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.

5. Training (January 1, 2014)

- 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 are working on:

- Accessibility Training in New Hire Orientation includes information related to the IASR.
- The Ontario Government has indicated that training materials are being developed and will be provided to organizations.
- Once training materials are provided by the Ontario Government, they will be reviewed to assess their applicability to the County and implemented into New Hire training and the training of our 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.

1. 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 HR Accessibility Clerk for alternative formats and communication supports.
- Website Accessibility Survey was given to members of the AAC to give feedback on the accessibility of the County website.

2. 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 HR Accessibility Clerk or Communications Manager.
- The County provides accessible formats when requested.

3. 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.

4. Accessible websites and web content (January 1, 2021)

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

What we are working on:

- Employees to review resources and attend training on making websites accessible.
- Continuous efforts to educate employees on creating accessible documents for County's website.
- Website redesign in accordance with WCAG 2.0 Level AA
- Staff training on WCAG 2.0 Level AA needed.

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.

1. 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 inform 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. 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.

7. 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:

- Performance Appraisals policy will be reviewed and revised 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.

1. 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,
 - (a) charge a higher fare or an additional fee for persons with disabilities than for persons without disabilities for the same trip;
 - (b) charge a fee for the storage of mobility aids or mobility assistive devices.

What we are working on:

- The County amended Taxi By-Law 5266-11 to reflect the requirements in the Integrated Accessibility Regulation. **(completed)**
- The County will hold a public meeting to help determine the proportion of on demand taxis needed.

Accessible Built Environment

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.

Since 2005, many construction projects have included the design requirements of the FADM.

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.

Since 2005, accessibility has been increased in to the following buildings:

- Social Services Building (138 Wyndham St., Guelph)
- Palmerston Housing – Elevator installation
- Clifford Library and Medical Centre
- County Administration Building and Courts
- Drayton Library
- Mount Forest Library
- Mount Forest Child Care Centre
- Hadati Road Housing – Elevator Installation
- Waterloo Ave Housing – Elevator Installation
- Gordon Street Housing Fergus
- Wellington County Archives
- Elora Library
- Museum Trail Improvements
- Puslinch Library
- Aboyne OPP Station
- Rockwood OPP Station
- Harriston Library
- Social Services Building (321 St. Andrew's St. West, Fergus)

All renovation and construction projects moving forward will comply with the FADM.

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 2021.

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.

Phone 519.837.2600 x 2373

Toll Free 1.800.663.0750 x 2373

Mail Kristen Weber, HR Accessibility Clerk
County of Wellington Administration Centre
74 Woolwich St., Guelph ON N1H 3T9

Email kristenw@wellington.ca

This document is available in alternate formats.

