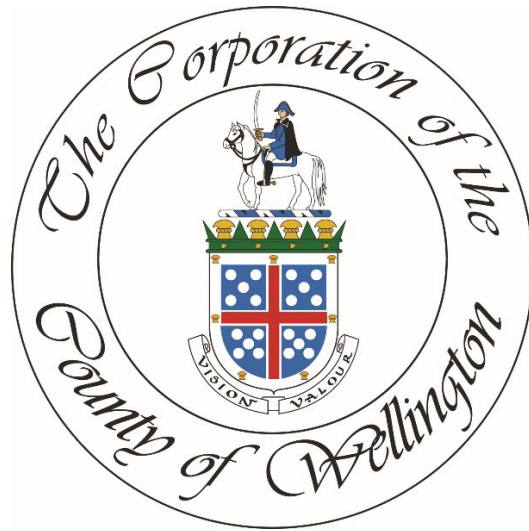


**County of Wellington**  
**Multi-year Accessibility Plan**  
**Status Update**  
**2024**



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## **Objective**

In 2012, we released our multi-year accessibility plan, in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). The plan outlined our strategy to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility, which included how we will meet phased-in requirements under the AODA. This status update includes the accessibility initiatives that were done this year to implement the strategy outlined in our multi-year accessibility plan. It also highlights our commitment for integrating accessibility into our policies and procedures moving forward.

## **Background**

The AODA is the first law of its kind in Canada. Under the AODA, the Province of Ontario 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.

## **Our Commitment to Accessibility**

The County of Wellington tries to make sure its programmes, services and facilities are barrier-free, and continues to support the goal of an accessible Province by 2025 by implementing the AODA. The County will meet or exceed the regulations made under the AODA by making sure equal opportunity is given to people with disabilities and that goods and services are provided in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.

## **2024 Accessibility Initiatives**

We are pleased to report that in the past year the County complied with all of the commitments outlined in our multi-year accessibility plan. This update outlines how we responded to our commitments. Implementation of a new Facilities Accessibility Design Manual (FADM) working group was created to work towards an updated version of this document to be utilized by all of Wellington County.

## **General Requirements and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation**

In 2016, the Province combined the Customer Service Standard, Information and Communications Standard, Employment Standard and Transportation Standard into one regulation, the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR). The General Requirements are regulatory requirements that apply across all standards in this regulation. The County is committed to developing, implementing and maintaining policies governing how we achieve or will achieve accessibility through meeting our requirements under the accessibility standards referred to in this Regulation.

### **What we have done:**

- Posted status update and shared the County's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan in consultation with our Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee (JAAC) for review and posted a status update of the plan.
- Continue to incorporate accessibility features into our procurement or acquisition of goods, services and facilities wherever practicable.
- Continue to train all staff, volunteers and third parties on the IASR and on the Ontario Human Rights Code as it pertains to people with disabilities.
- Updated the Accessibility Policy to better meet all the requirements under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation.
- Implemented the Accessibility Recognition Programme, which was developed by the County of Wellington's Accessibility Advisory Committee. The purpose of the programme is to recognize businesses, organizations and/or people from within the County of Wellington that exceed legislated accessibility requirements.
- Promoting awareness of the role of the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

### **Accessible Customer Service**

The County is committed to making sure all members of the public receive a fair customer service experience that meets their needs. Ensuring our website is fully accessible and making alternative formats available upon request.

### **What we have done:**

- Continued to provide training to all new staff and volunteers.
- Continued to review customer feedback and take appropriate action.
- Continued to comply with the requirements of the Customer Service Standard, including implementing the Accessibility policy and training staff on an ongoing basis.

### **Information and Communications**

The County is committed to making sure that universal design principles and best practices are considered when developing, implementing and maintaining information and communications strategies and products.

### **What we have done:**

- Ensuring print communications are created in a way that considers accessibility and all abilities.
- Our new refreshed website offers more accessibility features including an accessibility checker for web content authors and an online fillable form application.
- Opportunities for staff training is regularly available.
- Preparation of a refreshed training experience for all staff in 2020, including creating accessible documents in Word and PDF formats.
- Continued to provide accessible formats and communication support, upon request.

- Continued to make sure processes for receiving and responding to feedback are accessible.

- Updated the library online catalogue with BiblioCommons which is an accessible and AODA compliant application.
- Purchased Equidox Accessibility software that will allow our staff to remediate documents into fully accessible PDF's.
- Rolled out Equidox accessibility training to all staff and new hires who work on computers.
- County website and web content conforms to the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), initially at Level A and increasing to WCAG 2.0 Level AA.
- The County's public website was launched in June of 2024. The website was developed in compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA. In addition, the content (heading structure, links, images, reading level, etc.) placed on webpages by County users is continuously monitored by an Accessibility Checker module embedded in the website's Drupal Content Management System, and a quality assurance software called Acquia to identify accessibility non-compliant website content and documents. The County also requires all documents placed on the website be remediated for accessibility.

## **Employment**

The County 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.

### **What we have done:**

- Reviewed policies to consider 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.
- Provided County-wide training on Mental Health Awareness.
- Continued to inform applicants and employees of our accessible hiring practices and policies.
- Continued to support employees who were absent from work because of a disability, through our return to work process.
- Continued to provide individualized workplace emergency response information to employees who require one because of a disability.
- Enhanced return to work process and supports for employees returning from disability-related leaves of absence (2023).
- Enhanced accessibility in the recruitment application process through use of technology (2023).

## **Transportation**

The majority of the Transportation standard does not apply to the County of Wellington, with the exception of taxi services. Ride Well ride share services is fully accessible to those who request it.

### **What we have done:**

- Continue to encourage taxicab companies to provide on demand accessible taxi service within Wellington County.
- Implemented a rideshare programme (Ride Well) which provides an on demand, publicly funded, rural transit service that provides door to door service to people of all abilities. Accessible service vehicles can be booked upon request.Design of Public Spaces

The County is committed to removing barriers in public buildings and spaces by making sure that new construction and major changes to existing features incorporate universal design.

### **What we have done:**

- The FADM was reviewed in 2017 and we are in the process of implementing the suggested changes.
- Continued to make sure that all new construction and major changes to existing features meet the requirements of the Design of Public Spaces standard by meeting the requirements in the Facility Accessibility Design Manual (FADM).
- The FADM incorporates universal design into the planning process and was adopted by the County as a design standard for newly constructed and retrofitted buildings. Since the FADM was adopted, the Design of Public Spaces Standard became law, and amendments were made to the Ontario Building Code. We are in the process of reviewing our FADM to make sure it meets or exceeds the requirements in the Design of Public Spaces Standard and the Ontario Building Code.
- In 2024, first steps were taken to initiate a working group made up of JAAC members, Chief Building Officials, Wellington County Construction Manager, and support staff to implement an updated modernized FADM. This project is ongoing.

## **Accessible Building Improvements**

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

- Social Services Building (138 Wyndham St., Guelph)
- Palmerston Housing – Elevator installation
- Clifford Library and Medical Centre
- 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)
- County Administration Building and Courts
- Fergus Library
- Palmerston Library
- Teviotdale OPP- sidewalk
- Two audible pedestrian signals installed (in Mount Forest and Arthur)
- Palmerston Arena (accessible doors and entrances)
- Guelph Housing (263 Speedsville Ave.) – Combined two buildings into one providing an elevator and a storage/charging room for mobility devices to make the building more accessible for residents and visitors
- Guelph Housing (263 Speedsville Ave.) – Created two fully accessible units for residents
- Arthur Housing – Barrier free entrance renovations
- Elora Housing – Elevator Installation
- Erin Housing – Elevator Installation
- Fergus Housing – Elevator Installation
- Harriston Housing (56 Mill St.) – Front entrance renovations to make barrier free
- Harriston Housing (51 John St.) – Front entrance renovations to make barrier free and elevator installation
- Mount Forest Housing – Elevator Installation
- Aboyne Library
- Museum and Archives – Renovated washrooms to meet accessible requirements
- Social Services Building (129 Wyndham) – Renovated Lobby to meet accessible requirements
- Webster Place Housing (169 Gordon Street Fergus)

- Palmerston Affordable Housing
- Hillsburgh Library
- Palmerston Library
- Drayton garage
- Children’s Early Years (133 Wyndham Street)
- Mapleton EarlyON Child and Family Centre
- Aberfoyle Pollinator Garden
- Housing (229 Dublin St.) – main entrance widened to 42”
- Housing (450 Albert St.) – door operators were added to lounge
- Housing (387 Waterloo, 500 Ferrier, 450 Ferrier, 221 Mary – new signage with braille was added to these buildings
- Housing (229 Dublin, 576 Woolwich and 32 Hadati) – strobe lights were installed into the new fire alarms systems in all common areas
- Housing - automatic door operators installed on tenant doors where required
- Mount Forest Housing Fourplex
- 127 Wyndham elevator modernization
- Conversion of old Drayton works garage in E.M.S. offices/garage
- Indigenous gathering circle – Wellington County Museum and Archives
- Playground opening at the Wellington County Museum and Archives

### **Accessibility Incentive Fund**

In 2024, The County provided \$10,000 through the Accessibility Incentive Fund to each of the following member municipalities for accessibility advancements to their buildings or public spaces:

- Township of Centre Wellington
- Town of Erin
- Town of Minto
- Township of Wellington North

### **Next Steps**

The County of Wellington will continue to identify, prevent and remove barriers where we find them. We will continue to consult with people with disabilities as we engage in the ongoing process of reviewing and refining our policies and practices to better serve our community. We continue to have training for staff to ensure everyone is trained on identifying and creating accessible documents. We look forward to producing a new FADM to help ensure new projects and retrofit renovations in Wellington County meet and exceed the Ontario Building Code.

## More Information

Our organization remains committed to achieving meaningful accessibility across all facilities and business functions. Although significant strides have been made, continued improvement is essential. As we move forward, we invite your feedback. Please share any insights regarding our accomplishments to date or opportunities for further enhancement.

**Please contact us with your questions.**

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