



Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Annual Status Report

2021

Accessibility Status Report

This Accessibility Status Report is the annual update on the progress of measures taken to improve accessibility and implement the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR).

This status report includes the accessibility initiatives that were completed in 2021 to implement the strategies outlined in Bruce County's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

Bruce County's Commitment to Accessibility

The Corporation of the County of Bruce is committed to eliminating barriers and improving accessibility for persons with disabilities in a manner that respects dignity, independence integration and equal opportunity.

Bruce County recognizes the diverse needs of all our residents and customers and will respond by striving to provide services and facilities that are accessible to all. Bruce County is committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner and will do so by preventing and removing barriers to accessibility and meeting accessibility requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

The County will promote accessibility by ensuring that compliance is met for all regulations made under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005. To ensure that timelines are met, the County will establish, implement and maintain a multi-year accessibility plan. The plan will outline the County's strategy to prevent and remove barriers to people with disabilities.

AODA Compliance

The County completes an AODA compliance report for the Province every two years. A compliance report was completed and submitted to the Province on December 17, 2021.

The County reported non-compliance for the Information and Communications Standard, for accessible websites and web content. Though we are non-compliant, the County will continue to work towards compliance with the requirements of the AODA for accessible websites and web content.

2021 Accessibility Status Report

The 2021 Accessibility Status Report includes the County of Bruce's commitment to removing barriers to our programs, services and facilities and the progress we have made on the actions to meet the AODA.

1. Accessible Customer Service

The County is committed to offering excellent accessible customer service by making sure all members of the public receive a fair customer service experience that meets their needs. Ongoing compliance with the customer service standard includes the training of new hires as part of their orientation and volunteers who interact with the public on the County's behalf.

Accomplishments:

- 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.

2. General Requirements

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 the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation.

Accomplishments:

- Reviewed the County's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan in preparation of the Annual Status Report which will be posted on the County's website.
- Continued to incorporate accessibility features into our procurement or acquisition of goods, services and facilities where applicable.
- Continued to train all staff and volunteers on the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR), which now includes the Customer Service Standard and the Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC) as it pertains to people with disabilities.
- The County's Accessibility Policy guides efforts to achieve compliance with AODA requirements and establishes the County's core accessibility principles. The Policy's statement of commitment affirms the County's commitment to meet the accessibility needs of all people. The Policy was updated in 2017 to include revisions related to service animals and support persons that were effective July 1, 2016.

3. Information and Communication

The County is committed to ensuring information and communications are available and accessible to people with disabilities.

Accomplishments:

- Continued to make sure that content on websites, intranet sites and print communications are created in a way that considers accessibility.
- A statement is included on the County's website informing users that documents are available in an accessible format.
- Staff continue to receive annual training on creating accessible documents.
- Continued to provide accessible formats and communication supports as requested.
- A feedback form is provided on the website, and we continue to make sure processes for receiving and responding to feedback are accessible.
- All Library branches continue to provide accessible materials and communications supports. In addition, the library has several accessible materials and resources available including but not limited to large print books; audio books; large font keyboards (available in most branches); trackball mouse (available in all branches); assistive technology on all computers (i.e., magnifier, high contrast, narrator - all included with Microsoft software); online access to resources, policies, online request for items
- Siteimprove (an auditing tool) scans the County's website content for accessibility and identifying errors. Web Content Ambassadors work towards correcting any identified errors.
- eScribe is used for the provision of electronic meeting management software. This provides for the utilization of common software for reports, agendas and minutes with a dedicated portal for access to agenda items. The portal will provide an easily accessible manner for Council, staff and the public to find and view any relevant items. The implementation of this software has been a step in the right direction towards full compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.
- eScribe provides closed captioning for the videos of Council and Committee meetings.
- A Guide to Accessible Documents was created in 2021 for use by staff.
- In 2022 staff will have access to on-line training tutorials for creating and checking accessible Word and PDF documents to ensure they are AODA compliant.
- Interested Staff attended a "Understanding the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)" webinar on October 4, 2021
- Staff participated in virtual accessible document training in October and November, 2021
- Staff continue to monitor and correct departmental templates to accessible formats

4. Employment

The County is committed to inclusive and accessible employment practices that ensure the processes of recruiting, hiring, communicating with, and retaining employees who have disabilities is inclusive.

Accomplishments:

- Continued to inform applicants and employees of accessible hiring practices and policies.
- Continued to provide individualized workplace emergency response information to employees who require one because of a disability.
- Continued to support employees who were absent from work because of a disability, through our return-to-work process.
- Continued to include a statement on all job postings that we accommodate the needs of qualified applicants under the Human Rights Code in all parts of the hiring process.
- Advise candidates when scheduling interviews/testing that we have an Accommodation in the Workplace Policy for persons with disabilities and ask them if they require an accommodation for their interview and or test.
- Inform all new employees in their offer letter about the County's Accommodation in the Workplace Policy.
- Inform all new and existing employees of the County's policy for supporting employees with disabilities.

5. Design of Public Spaces Standard

The County is committed to identifying, removing and preventing barriers in public buildings and spaces by making sure that new construction and major changes to existing features do not create any new barriers.

As a large public sector organization, the Design of Public Spaces Standard only applies to new construction and planned redevelopment on or after January 1, 2016.

Ontario's Building code has been amended to include enhancements to accessibility in buildings. As of January 1, 2015, new construction and renovations will be subject to updated accessibility requirements.

If a public space is temporarily disrupted or not functioning, the public will be notified in a variety of formats about the scope of the disruption.

Accomplishments:

- Continued to make sure that major changes to existing features meet or exceed the requirements of the Design of Public Spaces Standard.
- Continued to train staff on the Design of Public Spaces Standard which is included with the IASR training. This training is done on-line through the County's attendance management software as part of the onboarding for new hires.
- In 2016/2017 changes were made to the existing front counter in the Corporate Services Department and the Human Services Department which included lowering a section of the counter and creating space for someone to be seated
- In 2017 the Accessible Maintenance Procedure for the preventative and emergency maintenance of the accessible elements in public spaces was approved and added to the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2015-2018
- In 2017 procedures for the Temporary Disruptions when accessible elements required are not in working order was approved and added to the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2015-2018
- An accessible central reception space was created on the main floor in the Atrium at the County Administration Centre
- The Bruce County Museum & Cultural Centre installed automatic door openers for the washrooms.
- The public washrooms on the second floor at the County Administration Centre were retrofitted in 2019 with push button entrances, accessible sinks and counters.
- The existing push button entrance into the Council Chambers was updated in 2019 to allow both doors to open at the same time, including the installation of a new push button.

Next Steps

Throughout 2022, the County of Bruce will continue to work towards meeting and maintaining its obligations under AODA and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation.

In keeping with our goal of becoming a barrier-free community we will:

- Continue to identify, prevent and remove barriers where we find them.
- Respond to requests for information in an alternative format.
- Continue to support and educate staff on creating accessible documents. Accessible Document Training will continue to be offered on an annual basis.
- Continue to review and update accessibility policies. The current Accessibility Policy was approved in 2017 and is scheduled for a review in 2022.
- Provide staff and volunteers with updated information on changes to our accessibility policies and continue providing accessibility training to all new staff and volunteers.
- Respond to public inquiries related to accessibility.

- All Library branches continue to provide accessible materials and communications supports upon request.
- Continue to review customer feedback and take appropriate action.
- eScribe will continue to close caption Council and Committee meeting videos.
- Staff will continue to review content on the County’s website to ensure compliance with document accessibility.
- Technical upgrades in the Council Chambers will be completed in early 2022. Further modernization of the Council Chambers will be considered in 2023.
- The development of Bruce County’s Master Transportation Plan was completed in 2021.

Reviewing and Monitoring the Accessibility Plan

The County of Bruce's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will be reviewed and updated at least once every five years. The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2019-2023 was approved by Bruce County Council on November 1, 2018 and is available on the County’s website.

Contact Information

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