



Annual Accessibility Status Report

2016

Objective

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). The plan outlines the County's strategy to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility, including how we will meet phased-in requirements under the AODA.

This status update includes the accessibility initiatives that were done in 2016 to implement the strategy outlined in our 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 of 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. Timelines for compliance vary. In order 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.

Compliance Reporting

Bruce County filed its fourth Accessibility Compliance Report in 2016 with the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario (ADO) under the Ministry of Economic Development Employment and Infrastructure. The County successfully passed an IASR audit in January, 2016.

2016 Accessibility Status Update

The 2016 Accessibility Status Update 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.

a) Accessible Customer Service

In 2016 the Customer Service Standard was incorporated into the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR). Coincident with that change, the government has made a number of changes to the requirements of the Customer Service Standards to make them more closely align with the Integrated Accessibility Standards. The County is committed to making sure all members of the public receive a fair customer service experience that meets their needs.

What we have done:

- Updated the Customer Feedback Form and continue to review customer feedback and take appropriate action
- Continue to comply with the requirements of the Customer Service Standard, including implementing the Accessibility policy and training staff on an ongoing basis.
- Introduced a new Corporate Accessibility Policy which combined all accessibility policies into one. This Policy outlines what the County will do to comply with the 2016 Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations and what our customers and employees can expect

b) General Requirements

In 2011, the Province combined the 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:

- Reviewed the County's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan in consultation with our Accessibility Advisory Committee and posted a status update of the plan on the County's website in accordance with AODA requirements.
- Continue to incorporate accessibility features into our procurement or acquisition of goods, services and facilities wherever practicable
- Continue 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.

c) Information and Communications

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

What we have done:

- Continue 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 upon request
- Continue to train staff on creating accessible documents to ensure that all documents are accessible. Additional staff training was held in September, 2016
- Continue to provide accessible formats and communication supports, upon request.
- A new feedback form was created in 2016 and we continue to make sure processes for receiving and responding to feedback are accessible
- New County of Bruce Website planned for 2017, taking into account AODA requirements for new websites, which means ensuring that the County of Bruce internet and intranet websites and web content, with some exceptions, conform to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA
- Ongoing conversion of departmental templates to accessible formats
- All Library branches continue to provide accessible materials and communications supports upon request. In addition, the library has several accessible materials and resources available including but not limited to: large print books; audio books; large print 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

d) 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.

There were no new requirements for the Employment Standard in 2016.

What we have done:

- Continue 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.
- Continue to support employees who were absent from work because of a disability, through our return to work process.
- Continue 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.

e) **Design of Public Spaces Standard**

The Accessibility Standards for the Built Environment was the last standard to become law and is also part of the IASR. The County is committed to identifying, removing and preventing barriers in public buildings and spaces by making sure that 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.

What we have done:

- Continue to make sure that major changes to existing features meet or exceed the requirements of the Design of Public Spaces Standard.
- Continue to train staff on the Design of Public Spaces Standard which is included with the IASR training
- Changes were made to the existing front counter in the Corporate Services Department which included lowering a section of the counter and creating space for someone to be seated
- The carpet located on the ramp in the council chambers was inlaid with the County's new logo to help identify the change in elevation
- In 2016 braille and tactile accessibility signs were installed for washrooms, fire extinguishers, pull stations, AED and Exits located in the public areas at the Administration Centre
- Ongoing reference and updates to Maintenance Procedures for the Design of Public Spaces Standard

Legislation Update

The Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA) and Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) continue to be in effect.

Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation

Changes to the Accessible Customer Service Standard were enacted July 1, 2016 and took immediate effect.

New Standards

A Standards Development Committee was established in Fall 2016 to develop a Health Standard under the AODA.

Ministry Timeline for Review of Standards - Every 5 Years

The Design of Public Spaces Standard began in 2007.

- The Standard was enacted in 2013
- Implementation in the Public Sector will be in 2016
- **Under Review in 2018**, date of changes to come into effect to be determined

The General Requirements Standard began in 2007

- The Standard was enacted in 2013
- Full implementation in the Public Sector January 1, 2016
- **Under Review in 2018**, date of changes to come into effect to be determined

The Employment Standard began in 2007

- The Standard was enacted in 2011
- Full implementation in the Public Sector is 2015
- **Currently under review**, date of changes to come into effect to be determined

The Information and Communication Standard began in 2007

- The Standard was enacted in 2011
- Full implementation in the Public Sector will be in 2021
- **Currently under review**, date of changes to come into effect to be determined

The Transportation Standard began in 2006

- The Standard was enacted in 2011
- The Full implementation in the Public Sector will be in 2017

The Customer Service Standard began in 2006

- The Standard was enacted in 2008
- Full implementation in the Public Sector was 2010
- Standard was reviewed in 2013-2014

- Final recommendations posted for public comment 2015-2016
- **Changes to the standard came into effect on July 1, 2016**

Next Steps

We will continue to identify, prevent and remove barriers where we find them. We will also 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 will continue to train staff on creating accessible documents to ensure that all documents are accessible and that content on our website conforms to WCAG 2.0 Level AA by January 1, 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.

Contact Information

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Accessible formats and communication supports available upon request.