



Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

2024-2028

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1. Commitment to Accessibility

The County of Bruce is committed to ensure accessibility for our employees and the public we serve in our services, products and facilities. Employees need to be able to function effectively and customers need to receive timely, high-quality services in a way that works for them.

We want to provide excellent public service for all Ontarians. We want to reflect the public we serve in everything we do and we want to attract the talented people we need to fill jobs. Building a dynamic and accessible organization will help us reach these goals.

The County of Bruce is committed to:

- The continual improvement of access to County facilities and services for people with disabilities
- The participation of people with disabilities in the development and review of its multi-year accessibility plan
- The provision of quality services to all members of the community with disabilities
- Meeting the accessibility requirements under the AODA

2. Background: Accessibility and the Province of Ontario

Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA), S.O. 2001, Chapter 32

The *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (ODA) was established to improve the quality of life and experiences of persons with disabilities by identifying, preventing and removing any barriers that may limit opportunities for individuals with disabilities to fully participate in society.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, S.O. 2005, Chapter 11 (AODA)

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, (AODA) compliments and advances the goals of the ODA to address discrimination against persons with disabilities in Ontario. The purpose of the A O D A is to develop, implement and enforce accessibility standards to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures, and premises on or before January 1, 2025; and for the involvement of persons with disabilities in the development of the accessibility standards. by requiring public, private and non-profit organizations to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility in order to make the Province of Ontario fully accessible for all persons with disabilities by 2025.

O. Reg 191/11: Integrated Accessibility Standards (I A S R)

The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (I A S R) were created as part of the A O D A. The I A S R establishes the accessibility standards for each of information and communications, employment, transportation, the design of public spaces and customer service. These standards are rules that businesses and organizations in Ontario must follow to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to improve accessibility for persons with disabilities.

3. Accessibility Plan

The A O D A requires the County of Bruce to prepare a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. The Plan is to be reviewed and updated at least once every five (5) years. The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan shall be available on the County of Bruce's website.

This Plan describes:

- The measures that the County has taken over previous years to remove barriers to people with disabilities
- The process by which the County is identifying, removing and preventing barriers to people with disabilities
- The continuing and new actions the County will take during the coming years to remove barriers to people with disabilities
- The communication of this accessibility plan

4. Accessibility Advisory Committee

The Bruce County Accessibility Advisory Committee has five voting members; the majority of the members are persons with a disability. The Committee also includes three non-voting resource members.

The Bruce County Accessibility Advisory Committee is a legislatively mandated Committee that was first appointed in 2002. The Committee advised Council about the preparation and implementation of the Accessibility Plan, on promoting and facilitating a barrier-free County for citizens of all abilities, including persons with disabilities. The Committee's role in helping foster a community approach to accessibility and inclusion involves the review of municipal policies, programs and services and the identification, removal and prevention of barriers faced by persons with disabilities.

5. Regulatory Requirements and Commitment to Actions

The County continues to develop and implement accessibility initiatives under the ODA and meet compliance dates for accessibility requirements within the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) under the AODA.

(A) Customer Service

The County of Bruce is committed to ensuring that all staff and customers, whatever their ability, work in an accommodating environment and receive accessible goods and services in a timely manner. The County of Bruce's Accessibility Policy establishes the Customer Service Standards for the following:

- Assistive Devices
- Notice of Temporary Disruptions
- Support Persons
- Service Animals and
- Feedback Process

The County will achieve this by continuing to:

- Review and update policies regularly to ensure high quality, accessible customer service
- Embedding accessibility requirements into staff training and orientation materials
- Reviewing customer feedback and taking appropriate action

(B) General

General requirements under the IASR are those regulatory requirements that apply across all three standards in this regulation - Information and Communications, Employment and Transportation.

The County will achieve this by:

- Developing a multi-year accessibility plan outlining strategies to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility and reviewing the plan once every five years
- Continue to incorporate accessibility criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities
- Continue to train employees, volunteers, all those who participate in developing the County's policies, and all others who provide goods or services on behalf of the County, about the requirements in the

(C) Information and Communications

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

The County follows universal design principles, 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 ensuring that information and communications are available and accessible to people with disabilities.

The County will achieve this by:

- Ensuring that emergency information, procedures, plans and public safety information that is available to the public is available in alternate formats, when requested
- Developing guidelines and best practices for creating accessible documents for common desktop applications such as MS Word, Excel and PowerPoint
- Notifying the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Level 2.0 AA Compliance (2021)
- Working towards ensuring web content published on the County's website is in an accessible format whenever possible
- Providing access to or arranging for the provision of access to accessible library materials where they exist
- Informing the public about the availability of accessible library materials and providing information in an accessible format or with appropriate communication supports, upon request

(D) Employment

The County of Bruce is committed to ensuring that the process of finding, getting and keeping a job is as inclusive as possible in order to build an effective workforce. The County of Bruce will be an employer of choice that enables and encourages persons with disabilities to participate fully in all aspects of the organization.

The County will achieve this by:

- Reviewing on an ongoing basis, Human Resources policies, practices and procedures to ensure accessibility to persons with disabilities throughout the employment process, including recruitment, retention, career development and return-to-work
- Notifying job applicants who have been invited to participate in recruitment, assessment or selection process that, where needed, accommodations for disabilities are available, on request, to support their participation in the process
- Notifying successful applicants of the County's policies for accommodating employees with disabilities when offering employment
- Informing new and existing employees of the County's policies for supporting employees with disabilities, including providing employment related accommodations for disabilities
- Consulting with employees who have disabilities in order to provide them with the accessible formats and communications supports they require to do their jobs effectively and to be informed of information that is generally available to all employees in that workplace
- Have in place a documented process for supporting employees who return to work after being away for reasons related to their disabilities
- Take into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities during the performance management process (annual performance reviews)
- When providing career development and advancement opportunity the County will take into account the accessibility needs of their employees who have disabilities
- Redeployment processes will consider the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities when moving them to other positions, so that employees can continue to have their accommodation needs met

(E) Transportation

The County of Bruce does not have specific requirements under the Transportation section as the County does not offer conventional, specialized or public transportation services.

The County of Bruce completed a Master Transportation Plan in 2021. The consultation process included 2 virtual public information meetings to solicit public input and feedback. The Plan identified that although the County does not provide transit services, Saugeen Mobility and Regional Transit; and The Home and Community Support Services/Movin'GB provides accessible transportation within Bruce County.

6. Design of Public Spaces

Bruce County will meet the Accessibility Standards for the Design of Public Spaces (Ontario Regulation 191/11), as applicable, when building new or making major modifications to public spaces. In addition to the Design of Public Spaces Standard, the Ontario Building Code was amended in 2016 to include accessible requirements. The amended Building Code is used when issuing building permits and conducting building inspections.

Public Spaces include:

- Recreational Trails;
- Beach Access Routes;
- Outdoor Public Eating Areas;
- Outdoor Play Spaces; (playgrounds)
- Outdoor Paths of Travel; (sidewalks, ramps, stairs, curb ramps, rest areas and accessible pedestrian signals)
- Accessible Off Street Parking;
- Service-related elements (service counters, fixed queuing lines and waiting areas)

(A) Recreational Trails

Trails throughout the County of Bruce are considered to be wilderness trails and therefore are not regulated under the standard.

At any time should a trail in Bruce County be designated as a recreational trail, Bruce County will consult with the public and persons with disabilities and with the Bruce County Accessibility Advisory Committee and members of the public before constructing any new recreational trails or redeveloping existing recreational trails, especially with regard to the following features:

- Slope of the trail;
- Need for and location of ramps on the trail;
- Need for, location and design of rest areas, passing areas, viewing areas, amenities on the trail and any other pertinent features.

Where technical specifications are indicated in Ontario Regulation 191/11, Bruce County will make every effort to ensure compliance with the technical requirements set out in the Regulation, to the extent that it is practicable and does not contravene other legislation.

(B) Outdoor Public Use Eating Areas

This part applies to newly constructed and redeveloped outdoor public use eating areas that the County intends to maintain and includes tables that are found in public areas specifically intended for use by the public as a place to consume food.

The County will achieve this by:

- Adhering to general requirements to make a portion of the spaces accessible on a level, firm and stable surface.

(C) Outdoor Play Spaces

This part applies to newly constructed or redeveloped outdoor play spaces that the County intends to maintain and include play equipment or features where the equipment or features are designed and placed to provide play opportunities and experiences for children and caregivers.

The County will achieve this by:

- Consulting on the needs of children and caregivers with various disabilities with the public and persons with disabilities and the County's Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Incorporating accessibility features into the design of outdoor play spaces
- Ensuring that outdoor play spaces have a ground surface that is firm, stable and has impact attenuating properties for injury prevention and sufficient clearance to provide children with various disabilities the ability to move through, in and around the outdoor play space

(D) Exterior Paths of Travel

This part applies to newly constructed and redeveloped exterior paths of travel that the County intends to maintain and that are outdoor sidewalks or walkways designed and constructed for pedestrian travel and are intended to serve a functional purpose and not to provide a recreational experience.

The County will achieve this by:

- Adhering to certain technical requirements
- Meeting certain requirements if the path of travel is equipped with a ramp
- Meeting certain requirements if the stairs connect to exterior paths of travel
- Meeting certain requirements where a curb ramp is provided on an exterior path of travel, the curb ramp must align with the direction of travel
- Meeting certain requirements where a depressed curb is provided on an exterior path of travel

- Where new pedestrian signals are being installed or existing pedestrian signals are being replaced at a pedestrian crossover, they must be accessible pedestrian signals
- Consulting with the public, persons with disabilities and the County's Accessibility Advisory Committee on the design and placement of rest areas along the exterior path of travel

(E) Accessible Parking

Off-Street Parking

Meeting certain requirements when constructing new or redeveloping off-street parking facilities, as stated in the Regulation, that the County intends to maintain.

The County will achieve this by:

- Providing two types of accessible parking spaces for the use of persons with disabilities. Wider spaces to accommodate mobility aids and standard width spaces to accommodate mobility assistive devices such as canes or crutches
- Providing access aisles that can be shared by two accessible parking spaces
- Providing a minimum number and type of accessible parking spaces
- Ensuring that parking spaces for the use of persons with disabilities are distinctly indicated by erecting an accessible permit parking sign

There are also exceptions to the requirements for accessible parking.

On-Street Parking

When constructing or redeveloping existing on-street parking spaces, the County shall consult on the need, location and design of accessible on-street parking spaces by consulting with the public, persons with disabilities and the County's Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Consultation topics could include:

- Expected accessibility benefits
- Any relevant concerns
- Local traffic patterns

(F) Obtaining Services

Bruce County strives to provide welcoming environments for all members of the public to visit and/or conduct business with the County. In order to ensure the public spaces and service areas used by the public are accessible, Bruce County will ensure all new or redeveloped service counters, fixed queuing guides (where people line up for service) and waiting areas accommodate mobility aids.

Where technical specifications are indicated in Ontario Regulation 191/11, Bruce County will make every effort to ensure compliance with the technical requirements set out in the Regulation.

(G) Maintenance

As required under the Design of Public Spaces Standard, Bruce County has developed procedures for dealing with preventative and emergency maintenance of accessible elements in public spaces.

As per the Accessible Maintenance Procedure, Bruce County Departments:

- Shall apply best practices in the preventative maintenance of accessible elements with periodic checks such as;
 - Annual inspections, or more frequently
 - After storms or events that might affect accessible elements
 - As part of any reports of vandalism or complaints
- Shall apply best practices in the emergency maintenance of accessible elements with active response when notified

(H) Notice of Temporary Service Disruption

When disruptions occur that will impact the accessibility of goods, services or facilities provided by Bruce County, notice will be given to the public indicating:

- a) Description of the service disruption
- b) Reason for the disruption
- c) Anticipated duration of the disruption
- d) Alternate routes, facilities or services, if any that are available
- e) Contact information

Notice will be given by posting the information at public entry points, key locations around the service disruption, posted on the County's website or by such other method as is reasonable.

7. Progress to Date and Ongoing Initiatives

See Schedule "A" Progress to Date and Ongoing Initiatives.

8. Proposed Accessibility Initiatives 2024-2028

See Schedule "B" Accessibility Initiatives for 2024-2028.

10. Communication of the Accessibility Plan

The approved Multi-Year Accessibility Plan shall be posted on the County's website and be provided in an accessible format upon request.

11. Contact Information

The County of Bruce is committed to ensuring accessibility is a reality throughout all facilities and business operations. There is still so much to accomplish, and as we progress, we would be pleased to hear from you. Please contact us with your questions, ideas or comments.

Phone 519.881.1291
Toll Free 1.877.681.1291
Mail Linda White, Clerk
 County of Bruce
 30 Park Street, PO Box 70, Walkerton ON N0G 2V0
Email clerk@brucecounty.on.ca

Schedule A

Accessibility Actions Completed to date including Ongoing Initiatives

Customer Service

To reduce potential barriers in delivering goods and services to customers the following actions have been completed and continue to be ongoing initiatives:

- Provide training on Accessible Customer Service to all employees and volunteers
- Review and update policies regularly to ensure high quality, accessible customer service
- Review customer feedback and take appropriate action
- The Accessibility Policy was adopted in 2017. The policy is to be reviewed every 5 years, or as required.

General

To ensure compliance with the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations the following actions have been completed and may continue to be ongoing initiatives:

Training

- Provide training on the requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards and on the Human Rights Code as it relates to people with disabilities. This is ongoing staff training.

Procurement

- Incorporate accessibility criteria and features into procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities. In 2012 a statement was added to the Purchase and Procurement Policy regarding accessibility. The Policy is being updated in 2024 and will be updated if necessary.

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

- Develop a multi-year accessibility plan. Multi-Year Accessibility Plans have been developed for 2013-2014, 2015-2018, 2019-2023 and 2024-2028.

Information and Technology

To improve accessibility and remove potential barriers relating to information sharing the following actions have been completed and continue to be ongoing initiatives:

Training

- Introduced staff to the use of plain language writing by providing training in 2013/2014. The information was forwarded to new employees following orientation.

- Accessible document training was provided to staff in 2013, 2014, 2016 and 2017.
- A consultant was hired to create accessible document training videos in 2022. The videos are now available on Compass for all staff to access.

Website

- Created a statement that was added to the County's website to inform the public that documents are available in an accessible format upon request. Completed in 2014.
- A new website was created in 2017 and is compliant with World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA.
- An auditing tool (Siteimprove) was purchased in 2017 to scan the website content for accessibility and identifying errors.

Feedback

- Ensure that receiving and responding to feedback is made available in an accessible format upon request or with appropriate communication supports. An updated feedback form was created in 2016 and posted on the website. Feedback is processed as required.

Accessible Documents

- Ongoing conversion of departmental templates and documents to accessible formats.
- Provide information and communicate in an accessible manner about goods, services or facilities to people with disabilities, upon request. Ongoing
- Public libraries provide access to, or arrange for, provision of access to accessible materials where they exist. Inform the public about the availability of accessible format or with appropriate communication supports, upon request. Ongoing

Design of Public Spaces

Administration Centre

- Contrasting carpeting for floor transitions. In 2013 illuminated strips were installed in the Council Chambers to identify floor transitions.
- Railings were installed in 2012
- The carpet 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
- In 2013 installed railing in elevator at the County Administration Centre

Long-Term Care

- An emergency ramp has been installed providing a second floor to the ground surface direct access for residents and staff at Gateway Haven. The ramp was built off the existing second floor exit to the courtyard equipped with handrails.
- In May 2017 three automatic door openers were installed on the second, third and fourth south dining room doors to the balconies in Bruce Lea Haven.

Museum and Cultural Centre

- In 2014 purchased portable ramps for the interior and install a permanent ramp on the exterior of the Bruce Gallery.
- The counters in the accessible washroom were renovated by removing the skirt around the counter to allow for wheelchair access in 2014.
- Automatic door openers were installed in the washrooms at the Bruce County Museum and Cultural Centre in 2017.

Maintenance of Accessible Elements

- 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 2015-2018 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan
- In 2017 procedures for the Temporary Disruptions when accessible elements required are not in working order was approved and added to the 2015-2018 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

Obtaining Services

- In 2016/2017 changes were made to the existing front counter in the Corporate Services and Human Services Departments which included lowering a section of the counter and creating space for someone to be seated.
- In 2016 an accessible central reception space was created on the main floor in the Atrium at the County Administration Centre.

Outdoor Public Use Eating Areas

- Must comply with the IASR when building new or making major changes to existing areas. Ongoing

Outdoor Play Spaces

- Must comply with the IASR when building new or making major changes to existing outdoor play spaces. Ongoing

Exterior Paths of Travel

- Must comply with the IASR when building new or making major changes to existing exterior paths of travel. Ongoing

Accessible Parking

- Must comply with the IASR when building new or making major changes to existing parking spaces. Ongoing

Obtaining Services (service counters, queuing guides and waiting areas)

- Must comply with the IASR when building new or making major changes to existing features. Ongoing

Employment

- Regularly review policies, procedures and practices to ensure accessibility. Ongoing
- Notify internal and external job applicants about the availability of accommodations for applicants with disabilities in the recruitment process. Letters, advertisements and website completed in 2014. Ongoing
- Notify job applicants who have been invited to participate in the recruitment, assessment or selection process that accommodations for disabilities are available on request. Completed in 2014. Ongoing.
- Notify successful applicants of the policy for accommodating employees with disabilities when offering employment. Staff are advised at orientation, in their letters of hire and communication with employees that require accommodation. Ongoing
- Inform employees of policies supporting employees with disabilities. Provide updated information whenever there is a change to existing policies on the provision of job accommodations. Advised at orientation, in letters of hire and through the Employee Relations and Wellness Specialist. Ongoing.
- Accessible Formats and Communication Supports for employees - consult an employee with a disability to provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports. As needed.
- Documented Individual Accommodation Plans - Develop a written process for the development of documented individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities. Process is in place. Ongoing.
- Return to work process - Develop and have in place a return-to-work process for employees who have been absent from work due to a disability and require disability-related accommodations in order to return to work. The process has been created. Ongoing.
- Performance Management - Consider the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities during the performance management process. The performance management process has been completed. Ongoing

- Provide career development and advancement opportunities that take into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities. The performance management process has been completed. Ongoing.
- Redeployment - Consider the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities as well as individual accommodation plans when redeploying employees with disabilities. Done through the Return-to-Work Process or Individual Accommodation Plan. Ongoing

Bruce County Accessible Washrooms Project

- A web-based mapping project identifying public washrooms (including accessible features) in all municipalities in the County was launched on April 30, 2015. This information is accessible from the Explore the Bruce website.

Adventure Passport Map

- The Adventure Passport Map includes the following statement: “The wheelchair symbol indicates that the stop is wheelchair and stroller accessible”.

Schedule “B”

Proposed Accessibility Initiatives 2024-2028

Strategic Objectives and Actions to improve accessibility in the County of Bruce:

1. **Objective:** Be a welcoming and inclusive community

Action: Develop a County-wide framework to achieve age-friendly communities.

Action: Add employment service providers that serve those with disabilities and racialized individuals.

2. **Objective:** Provide more integrated services and seamless technology that enhance the customer experience.

Action: Increase the number of services available for virtual/online delivery in all the County departments.

3. **Objective:** Actively foster Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in all aspects of our work.

Action: Develop and implement policies or initiatives that promote EDI in recruitment, hiring, and retention practices.

Action: Conduct corporate-wide EDI training sessions for employees at all levels of the organization.

4. **Transit Demand Study:** Explore opportunities to collaborate with Home and Community Support Services (HCSS) and Saugeen Mobility and Regional Transit (SMART) for accessible transportation.

5. **Corporate Facilities:** Reduce the physical barriers within the Council Chamber.