



The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)

Progress Report 2021

Received by Council February 28, 2022

Accessible formats and communications support available upon request.

Accessible formats and communications support available upon request.

Town of The Blue Mountains Commitment to Accessibility

The Town of The Blue Mountains (The Town) is committed to providing programming and services that consider the diverse needs and abilities of the people it serves. This 2021 Progress Report is the annual update on the progress of the measures the Town has taken to improve accessibility and implement the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (Ontario Regulation 191/11).

This Progress Report includes the accessibility initiatives that were completed in 2021 to implement the strategies outlined in the Town's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, as adopted by Town of The Blue Mountains Council on September 30, 2019.

Reporting Requirements

The Town successfully submitted the 2021 Compliance Report as required by the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility.

Progress on the AODA Regulations

The following pages outline the Town's 2021 accomplishments in **Customer Service, Information and Communication, Employment, Transportation and Design of Public Spaces**.

There are also general requirements that apply across all accessibility standards.

General Requirements

Procurement:

- Accessibility is considered in all Town procurement.
- Accessibility and ergonomics are considered when purchasing new equipment or office furniture.

Training:

- All employees hired in 2021 received comprehensive AODA Training.
- Job specific training is provided in accordance with the needs of each position (i.e., accessible document training).
- The Town's Communications Strategy identified additional AODA and diversity training opportunities for staff. This additional training will be scheduled in 2022.

Feedback:

The Town is committed to ensuring its goods or services are provided in an accessible manner. Feedback is welcomed as it may identify areas requiring change and encourage continuous service improvements. Feedback may be provided in person, in writing or electronically using our [Accessible Customer Service Feedback Form](#).

Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)

Accessible Customer Service Standard

- Resources including “A Guide for Making Small Businesses Accessible” and the Government of Ontario’s Guide to Accessible Festivals and Events have been posted on the Town’s Accessibility page.
- An Evacuation Chair has been purchased and installed at Town Hall to assist persons with a mobility disability in evacuating the second floor in the event of an emergency. Refresher training is scheduled for 2022 for Staff on how to use the chair to assist in an emergency.
- All staff receive accessible customer service training as part of their new employee orientation.
- Council has selected internet and telephone voting as the methods of voting for the 2022 municipal election. Internet and telephone voting makes voting more accessible for those unable to attend a voting location.

Information and Communications Standard

- Council and Committee of the Whole meetings are livestreamed, recorded and the video is posted to the Town website. Committees of Council Meetings are recorded, and the videos are posted to the website. All livestreaming and video recordings have closed captioning available. There has been improved closed captioning for Council and Committee meetings.
- Revisions to Procedural By-law. Council has revised its Procedural By-law to allow any member of the public to participate virtually to provide verbal deputations and verbal public comments in response to a Public Meeting Notice.
- Website development staff continue to stay informed of WCAG regulations and attend training opportunities.
- Site Improve – In 2020, the Town procured and started to use Site Improve, which is an online tool used to review and evaluate the accessibility of the municipal website. The Town’s website team has worked diligently throughout the year to correct and improve upon the identified issues.
- The Town continuously strives to produce all digital media in a fully accessible format.

- Website Development – The Town has developed a new municipal website that launched in 2021. As part of the development process, the website has been designed and built according to WCAG and AODA specifications.

Employment Standard

- Human Resources continues to create individual emergency response plans for employees who have permanent or temporary accessibility needs, as requested.
- Each job posting includes, “In accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) please advise the Human Resources Department to ensure your accessibility needs are accommodated throughout this process. Personal information provided by the applicants is collected under the authority of the Municipal Act, 2001 and will be used for the purpose of candidate selection.”
- All offers of employment include, “The Town has an accommodation process in place and provides accommodations for employees with disabilities. If you require a specific accommodation because of a disability or a medical need, please contact Human Resources so that arrangements can be made for the appropriate accommodations to be in place before you begin your employment.”
- Human Resources is continuing to review all job descriptions to ensure they are free of systemic barriers.
- Human Resources completed a review of the Early and Safe Return to Work Program and added both physical and psychological restrictions, impairments and/or functional limitations that affect an employee’s ability to do their job within Return-to-Work forms.
- Refresher training on the Duty to Accommodate and Return to Work for staff was not completed in 2021 and is now planned for 2022.
- Job Interviews for open positions and staff meetings have transitioned to virtual. This was a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, provided the added benefit of improving accessibility for candidates and employees.

Transportation Standard

- The Grey Transit Route (GTR) offers extended service from Owen Sound to Craigeleith. The GTR also provides accessible services upon request.
- The Blue Mountains and Collingwood Transit Link provides service from Collingwood to Craigeleith. Accessible service is available upon request.
- Accessibility will be considered through the Town’s Transportation Master Plan process.

Design of Public Spaces

2021 Projects included:

- Completion of pickleball courts at the Tomahawk Recreation Property that meet AODA including hard surface paths to the court. The parking lot is being completed this fall and will be AODA compliant to connect to the access path.
- Thornbury Pier was resurfaced with a concrete deck and meets AODA requirements including a bump railing around the perimeter.
- Review of development projects with consideration of accessibility as required by the Planning Act.

2022 Projects will be determined through the budget process and will consider AODA compliancy. Through its Official Plan Review project, the Town will assess the Official Plan policies and any necessary changes to promotes development design that is safe and accessible.

Joint Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee

The Town of The Blue Mountains is a member of the Grey County Joint Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee. Grey County's Joint Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee advises Grey County Council and staff members, as well as participating municipalities, on ways to identify, prevent, and remove barriers from municipal services, by-laws, policies, programs, and facilities.

Ongoing Review of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Ongoing review and feedback are important for the Town's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan to stay effective. The Town will continue to collect feedback and implement changes that will enhance the accessibility of its services. Members of the public are encouraged to make comments on this plan and accessibility matters in general.

The Town's Accessibility Coordinator will continue to review the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan annually and prepare annual Progress Reports for review by the Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee and Town of The Blue Mountains Council.