



Accessibility

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan: 2025-2029

Inclusive Programs, Services and Spaces for All

This plan was created by Town of The Blue Mountains staff in consultation with the Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee. The Plan is available in alternate formats upon request such as print, electronic, plain text and verbal. Other formats may be considered on a case-by-case basis. Additionally, communication supports are also available upon request.

This multi-year plan is available online at www.thebluemountains.ca For more information about the Town of The Blue Mountains' Accessibility initiatives, please contact Human Resources at 519-599-3131 ext.265, accessibility@thebluemountains.ca or in person at:

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Town of The Blue Mountains Commitment to Creating an Accessible Community

The Town of The Blue Mountains (the Town) is committed to identifying, removing and preventing accessibility barriers across the organization by committing to specific initiatives and outcomes aimed at making sure that people with disabilities can participate in the Town's programs, services, facilities, public spaces, information and communication, and employment.

The Town acknowledges that people with disabilities may face compounding barriers due to race, age, gender, socio-economic status, Indigeneity, or 2SLGBTQ+ identity. We are committed to ensuring our policies, programs, and services reflect a holistic approach to accessibility, equity, and inclusion.

The Town supports the goals of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and will establish policies, practices, and procedures which are consistent with the accessibility standards established under the AODA, including accessible customer service, information and communication, employment, transportation and the built environment, and that is consistent with the core principles as outlined in the AODA:

- Dignity—Service is provided in a way that allows persons with disabilities to maintain self-respect and the respect of others
- Independence—all people are allowed to do things on their own without unnecessary help or interference from others
- Integration—Services are provided in a way that all persons with disabilities can benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in the same or similar way as other customers unless an alternate measure is necessary to enable persons with disabilities to access goods or services
- Equal Opportunity—Service is provided to persons with disabilities in such a way that they have an opportunity to access goods and services equal to that given to others.

The Town will continue to prevent barriers by designing inclusive and supporting positive approaches that address attitudes which undervalue and restrict the potential of persons with disabilities.

In working toward its goals under this statement, the Town is committed to meeting the requirements of existing legislation and to its own policies and goals related to the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to people with disabilities and becoming a barrier-free community.

A Background on Accessibility at the Town of The Blue Mountains

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

The AODA sets a roadmap for an accessible Ontario by 2025. This is to be achieved through mandatory standards that public, private and not-for-profit organizations need to meet. The Town needs to meet the deadlines and requirements of the large public sector organization description under the act.

AODA Standards include:

- Customer Service
- Information and Communication
- Employment
- Transportation
- Design of Public Spaces

In addition to the requirements under the Design of Public Spaces Standard, the Town must follow the Ontario Building Code (OBC). The OBC was updated to improve barrier-free design and to ensure indoor spaces of buildings are accessible.

Consultation

Under the AODA, the Town is sometimes required to consult with individuals, persons with disabilities and a municipal Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee (JAAC). The Town is committed to working with these persons and its JAAC to ensure legislation is met.

Implementation

Accessibility is an important element of providing excellence in government service and aligns with the Town's Strategic Plan. Providing accessible and inclusive programs and services is part of Town's culture for customer service. The Town supports the province's goals of making Ontario accessible by 2025 and will work within its means to meet all requirements of accessibility legislation and to eliminate barriers in our services and workplaces. These include barriers that are: physical, attitudinal, systemic, communication, and technological.

Structure

The Town's Accessibility Coordinator oversees compliance reporting as well as participates on the JAAC; however, all staff and departments have a role to play in the implementation of this

plan and in ensuring the programs, services and materials the Town offers meet accessibility legislation.

The JAAC reports to Grey County's Committee of the Whole. The JAAC provides an advisory role, and final decisions are the responsibility of the Town of The Blue Mountains Council.

What is a disability?

Under the AODA, a "disability" is defined as:

- any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement;
- a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- a learning disability or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- a mental disorder; or,
- an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety & Insurance Act, 1997*.

This broad definition includes disabilities of different sensitivity, visible as well as non-visible disabilities, and disabilities which may be temporary or have effects that come and go over time.

Barriers

This multi-year plan will help the Town strategize ways to identify, address and prevent barriers that limit persons with a disability from fully participating in its programs and services.

Barriers are obstacles that prevent someone with a disability from doing a day-to-day activity that many people take for granted. The traditional definition of a barrier has been expanded beyond physical obstructions. There are several other categories of barriers to consider. These include:

Physical Barrier: Buildings, public spaces or features that restrict or impede physical access.

Example: a doorway that is too narrow to accommodate a person in a motorized scooter.

Communication Barrier: An obstacle that prevents the transfer, processing or interpreting of information. Example: a print brochure with text too small to read, or a document written in a way that is too complicated to understand.

Attitudinal Barrier: Prejudgments and assumptions that directly or indirectly discriminate against persons with disabilities. Example: assuming all visually impaired persons can read Braille or treating a support person as if they are your client.

Technological Barrier: When technology cannot or is not modified to support various assistive devices and/or software. Example: a website that doesn't provide for increased text sizes.

Systemic Barrier: Policies, practices and procedures that do not consider accessibility. Example: requiring a valid driver's license for a position prevents a person with visual impairment from applying for the job.

Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee

The Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee advises Town of The Blue Mountains Council and staff members on ways to identify, prevent and remove barriers for persons with disabilities in municipal services, programs and spaces. The committee meets approximately four times per year plus additional meetings and consultation as required.

The Town's Progress on the AODA Regulations

The following pages outline the Town's accomplishments and its commitments over the next five years in meeting the accessibility standards in five key areas: **Customer Service, Information and Communication, Employment, Transportation and Design of Public Spaces.**

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

General Requirements

Accessibility Policies & Procedures: The Town has written policies and procedures in place regarding the standards set out by the AODA. The Accessible Customer Service Standard Policy is being reviewed and updated in 2025. The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation Policy is being reviewed and updated in 2025. They are posted on the Town's website and are available in accessible formats upon request.

Procurement: People with disabilities will be treated equitably with respect to the procurement, use and benefit of municipal services, programs, goods and facilities in a manner that respects their dignity, independence, and integration. This commitment extends to residents, employees, visitors and other stakeholders with visible and non-visible disabilities. Furthermore, the Town will ensure that accessibility is integrated into all municipal initiatives, business practices, boards, committees and departments. Where it is not practicable to incorporate accessibility criteria and features into the procurement of goods, services or facilities, an explanation will be provided, upon request.

Reporting: Reports will be shared with the Town's Council on the progress and implementation of this multi-year accessibility plan and this information will be posted on www.thebluemountains.ca and will be available in alternate formats upon request. The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will continue to be updated once every five years with other updates made throughout the term as required. Reports will be filed with the Accessibility Directorate as required.

Minutes of the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee will be provided to Council to be included on Council Agenda

Training: All Town employees, Council, committee members, local board members and volunteers receive mandatory accessibility training. Everyone will receive general training on accessibility which will include legislation requirements (AODA and Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, Human Rights Code) and customer service training. Staff will also receive necessary job-specific training to ensure their day-to-day work is accessible. Staff have the responsibility of staying up to date with changes within their designated fields (example: a web

designer taking WCAG training). The Accessibility Coordinator is available to provide additional support as needed.

All new staff receive accessibility training during orientation. Staff also receive yearly refresher training. Additional job-specific training is provided on a case-by-case basis as necessary. For example, all staff who create documents to be posted on the Town's website will receive accessible document training

2025-2029 Goals:

1. Improvements can be made to better identify which staff receive job-specific training and to identify more opportunities for staff development.
2. Incorporate accessibility considerations in other corporate and departmental training.
3. Provide optional training to all staff on anti-bias training, bystander training, etc.

Feedback: The Town is always open to suggestions about ways to improve accessibility of its programs and services. The public is encouraged to share their comments by contacting the Town in person at the address below, by calling 519-599-3131 ext. 265, emailing accessibility@thebluemountains.ca or by mail to:

Town of The Blue Mountains
Human Resources
32 Mill Street, PO Box 310
Thornbury, ON
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Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)

Accessible Customer Service Standard

Commitment: Continue to provide staff with the training they need to provide high-quality accessible service to people of all abilities who access the Town's programs and services. To design and provide programs and services that consider accessibility and respect the dignity and independence of the people we serve.

Progress: The Town trains all new employees on accessibility and the Accessible Customer Service Standard as part of mandatory orientation. All employees receive yearly refresher training on accessible customer service. Assistive listening devices have been implemented in Council Chambers and the webcasting of Council and Committee of the Whole meetings are provided with closed captions. Public facilities are designed with accessibility in mind. The Town Hall building has several accessibility features including automatic door openers, accessible washrooms, Evac chair, and an audio and visual alarm system. The Town continues to listen to feedback to find ways to improve the accessibility of our programs and services.

2025-2029 Goals

1. Provide mandatory accessible customer service workshops for staff, council, volunteers, committees and local board members.
2. Review guidelines and processes for service disruptions, customer feedback and request for alternative formats.
3. Enhancements will be made to the Town's Intranet to provide additional accessibility resources for staff.

Information and Communications Standard

Commitment: The Town is committed to providing information and communications about its programs and services in an accessible manner to people of all abilities.

Progress: The Town follows accessible document design principles and ensures procured services and associated documents are accessible. All public documents posted to the website are made electronically accessible to the best of our ability. Where necessary, documents in an alternate format can be made available upon request at no expense to the requestor. The Town's website is designed to the WCAG 2.0 AA. The Town is also committed to producing information in plain language.

2025-2029 Goals:

1. Schedule mandatory plain language refresher training for staff.

2. All documents produced by the Town will be in an accessible format, to the best of its ability.
3. Web development staff will continue to stay informed of WCAG regulations, attend training opportunities and explore website accessibility enhancements and monitoring compliance.
4. Explore opportunities to communicate municipal business in a variety of formats, based upon the needs of the community.

Employment Standard

Commitment: The Town is an equal opportunity employer providing inclusive and accessible recruitment and employment practices.

Progress: The Town continues to meet the requirements of the Employment Standard. Accommodation is available at all points in the recruitment process at the request of the applicant. The Town works with staff with disabilities to develop accommodation plans.

2025-2029 Goals:

1. Continue to update a list of all staff who require assistance exiting the workplace during an emergency to ensure it is accurate. Modify and create plans as required.
2. Review the steps for creating individual accommodation plans and return to work process.
3. Update the Town's intranet with accessibility resources for staff.
4. Ensure Human Resources staff remain informed of any updates to the Employment Standard and policies are kept up to date.
5. Explore opportunities for diversity and inclusiveness training for staff in consultation with the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) Committee.
6. Develop a standard operating procedure for accommodation during the recruitment process.

Transportation Standard

Our Commitment: The Town is committed to providing accessible transit services that meet all provincial legislation.

Progress: The Town partners with the Town of Collingwood for transit, in accordance with requirements under the Transportation Standard. Currently, the Town does not license taxi cabs.

2025-2029 Goals:

1. Ensure accessibility is considered when investigating transit options for the Town.

2. Promote Specialized Transit provided within the Town.
3. Accessibility needs are considered and addressed through the Town's Master Transportation Plan.

Design of Public Spaces Standard

Commitment: The Town will ensure that public properties and facilities meet the requirements of the Design of Public Spaces Standard as well as the Ontario Building Code.

Maintenance of Public Spaces: The Town will reasonably maintain public spaces and elements of all accessible trails, playgrounds, paths of travel and outdoor eating areas. See *Appendix A*.

Progress: The Town continues to design public spaces with accessibility in mind and refers designs and drawings to the JAAC for input.

2025-2029 Goals:

1. Improve documentation and continually update maintenance procedures for the Town's facilities in respect to the Design of Public Spaces Standard.
2. Consult with the JAAC about new or re-developed public spaces.
3. Consider implementing other accessibility improvements as recommended by the JAAC or public.
4. Ensure accessibility is considered and implemented in all future Town led infrastructure projects as per accessibility improvement recommendations made through Town's Engineering Standards, TMP, OP, Corporate Strategic Plan, and respective MCEAs.
5. Improve accessibility with looking for opportunity to add new MUT network, Pedestrian Bridges, sidewalk, streetlights, off street and on street parking, through Town's Infrastructure Projects.
6. Consider updating the Town website to include which public facilities have accessible features such as washrooms, parks with cork flooring, etc.
7. Formalize a working group with members of the public who can provide feedback on accessibility of existing public spaces as well as plans for future public spaces.

Ongoing Review of this Plan

Ongoing review and feedback are important for this 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.

Additionally, this plan will be reviewed by the Accessibility Coordinator annually and annual status reports will be provided to the Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee and Town of The Blue Mountains Council.



Appendix A: Preventative and Emergency Maintenance of Accessible Elements in Public Spaces

The Town has procedures for preventative and emergency maintenance of accessible elements in its public places. Accessible public space elements maintained by the Town include:

- Accessible parking
- Exterior paths of travel (walkways, sidewalks, stairs, ramps etc. that fall outside of the Ontario Building Code)
- Service counters
- Recreational trails and lookouts

Maintenance Procedures

Preventative maintenance schedules will be developed as required to ensure accessible elements are in good working order and will outline how they will be restored if they become unavailable.

Notices of service interruption will inform the public of any disruption to accessible elements due to planned maintenance or unplanned disruption. When planned, notices will be posted in advance and will provide information about the disruption, its duration and a description of alternate accessible elements that may be available. The notice must be posted in a conspicuous place such as a front entrance as well as on the Town of The Blue Mountains' website, if circumstances require it.

Accessible elements of public spaces and buildings will be inspected on a yearly basis, or as legislated. Elements that are found to have defects or need maintenance will be identified, and a plan will be developed to correct the defect or maintenance issue.

If an accessible element requires emergency maintenance or repairs, it will be taken out of service. Necessary repairs will be assessed and addressed based on priority.