

SECTION:	General	APPROVED BY:	Council
NUMBER:	9.04	SIGNATURE:	Original signed by Ben Addley, CAO
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REFERENCE POLICY:	9.3	REVISED:	December 13, 2023

## Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

### POLICY

The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan outlines the County of Oxford's strategy to prevent and remove barriers and to meet its requirements under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) and the *Integrated Accessibility Standards* (O.Reg.191/11). This plan is to be established, reviewed and updated in consultation with the Oxford County Accessibility Advisory Committee. The goal in implementing this plan is to make our community fully accessible by 2025.

### DEFINITIONS

#### *Accessible Format*

may include, but is not limited to, large print, plain language, recorded audio, or electronic, such as Word, PDF, Rich Text, or HTML formats, Braille, and other formats usable by persons with disabilities.

#### *Barrier*

anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of a disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice.

- *Attitudinal Barrier: Judgement and assumptions that directly or indirectly discriminate against persons with disabilities (e.g. Assuming all visually impaired persons can read Braille or talking with a support person instead of a client).*
- *Communication Barrier: An obstacle that prevents the transfer, processing or interpreting of information (e.g. A print brochure with text too small to read; a document that is confusing or too complicated).*
- *Physical Barrier: Buildings, public spaces, or features that restrict or impede physical access (e.g. A doorway that is too narrow to accommodate a person on a motorized scooter; lighting that is too bright or too dim; a very noisy/busy area; any obstacles preventing passage).*
- *Systemic Barrier: Policies, practices and procedures that do not consider accessibility (e.g. Requiring a valid driver's licence to apply for a job that does not involve driving prevents a person with visual impairment from applying).*

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- *Technological Barrier: When technology does not support assistive devices and/or software (e.g. A website that does not provide for increased text size).*

## Disability

- (a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;
- (b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- (c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- (d) a mental disorder; or
- (e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

## PROCEDURES

### 1.0 Statement of Organizational Commitment

Pursuant to its mission, t Oxford County is committed to enriching the quality of life for persons with disabilities by continually identifying, removing and preventing barriers to ensure a fully accessible community exists for all citizens.

The Oxford County acknowledges that persons with disabilities:

- represent a growing and diverse community that is dramatically increasing due to the demographic trends of a maturing population;
- form part of the work force, and include our families, friends, customers and members of the community at large;

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- purchase goods and services and make important financial decisions on where they do business, enjoy recreation and choose to live; and
- are valuable contributors in Canadian society, and their full participation requires well-considered commitment from all levels of government.
- County goods, services, and facilities are to be available to people with disabilities in a manner that:
  - Is free from discrimination;
  - Strives at all times to respect the individual's dignity and independence;
  - Is integrated with the provision of services to others, except when alternative measures are necessary to meet the needs of people with disabilities; and
  - Takes individual needs into account where a uniform response is inappropriate to overcome barriers to access or participation and that individuals with disabilities are treated equitably.

The County's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan commits to "**Building a community where everyone belongs...**Inherently, growth is also diversifying Oxford County's community, bringing not only new perspectives but also different needs. As the County plans for the future, it must strive for a diverse, equitable and inclusive community where everyone can be safe, healthy, and prosper."

## 2.0 Legislative Authority

The purpose of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA) was to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities and to provide for their involvement in the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to full participation. Pursuant to the Act, Oxford County established an Accessibility Advisory Committee to assist in developing an accessibility plan informed by consultation with persons with disabilities.

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) went a step further. It requires the development, implementation and enforcement of new, mandatory accessibility standards to address the most important aspects of the lives of those with disabilities. These mandatory standards apply to both public and private sectors with the ultimate goal of having a fully accessible province by 2025.

The legislated accessibility standards are:

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1. Information and Communication (Integrated Accessibility Standards, O.Reg.191/11) – aims to identify and consider the nature of barriers experienced by people with a wider range of disabilities in the area of information and communications;
2. Employment (Integrated Accessibility Standards, O.Reg.191/11) – governs how we recruit, hire and accommodate individuals in the workplace;
3. Transportation (Integrated Accessibility Standards, O.Reg.191/11) – aims to remove barriers to public transportation, so people with disabilities can travel more easily in Ontario; and
4. Design of Public Spaces (Integrated Accessibility Standards, O.Reg.191/11) – aims to make outdoor public spaces in Ontario accessible for all new construction and extensive renovations.

The first set of standards released was the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service which was to be implemented by December 31, 2009 by all public sector organizations. See the [Accessibility Standards for Customer Service](#) Policy No. 9.3 available on the County of Oxford website.

In 2011, the Province of Ontario released the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR), which combined the accessibility requirements for information and communication, employment, and transportation, and included general requirements for policy, planning and training. The requirements of the IASR were to be implemented between 2011 and 2021.

In 2012, the Province amended the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) to include Design of Public Spaces Standards (Accessibility Standards for the Built Environment) which applies to public spaces that are newly constructed or redeveloped, for the purpose of creating accessible exterior spaces for persons with disabilities.

The implementation, distribution and promotion of the Facility Accessibility Design Standards (FADS) have been adopted to create barrier free design guidelines. These guidelines are intended to ensure the level of accessibility for persons with disabilities is equal to or exceeds the level of accessibility required by the *Building Code Act, 1992* and the regulations made under it and in keeping with the AODA .

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### 3.0 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

The IASR requires the establishment, implementation and maintenance of a multi-year accessibility plan which outlines the organization’s strategy to prevent and remove barriers. In fulfilling its obligations under the regulation, Oxford County commits to the following:

- Post the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan on the Oxford County website and provide the plan in an accessible format upon request;
- Review and update the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan at least once every five years;
- Review and update the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan in consultation with persons with disabilities and with the established Oxford County Accessibility Advisory Committee;
- Prepare an annual status report on the progress measures taken to implement the strategies referenced in the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan; and
- Post the annual status report on the Oxford County’s website and provide the report in an accessible format upon request.

Oxford County’s Senior Management Team, in consultation with the Oxford County Accessibility Advisory Committee, have reviewed the requirements of the legislation in detail and have provided the status of each requirement as well as proposed actions moving forward to achieve compliance and to ensure that our community is fully accessible by 2025.

**Appendix 1** sets out the Oxford County Multi-Year Accessibility Plan - Annual Accessibility Status Report, including target completion dates identified in the AODA, recommended actions and the current status of compliance for each requirement.

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#### **4.0 Review and Monitoring of Plan**

Annually, Corporate Services will update the status report in conjunction with the annual business plan and budget planning process and will posting the County's Annual Accessibility Status Report on the County website.

#### **5.0 Communication of Plan**

The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will be posted on the County of Oxford website [www.oxfordcounty.ca](http://www.oxfordcounty.ca) in accessible format. Hard copies, electronic copies or other accessible formats of the Plan will be made available to residents/stakeholders upon request.