

2024 - 2029

The Corporation of the Town of Cochrane

Accessibility Plan 2024-2029



Vision Statement

The Town of Cochrane will establish itself as an independent high-quality service provider that anticipates and meets community needs through service improvements, staff development, integrated planning, use of technology and balanced policies regarding growth and the environment.

Council's Commitment to Accessibility Planning

Through accessibility planning, the Town of Cochrane will strategically identify, remove and prevent as many barriers as possible.

The Town of Cochrane Council is committed to:

- The continual improvement of access to all municipally owned facilities, premises and services for all those with disabilities.
- The provision of quality services to all members of the community with or without disabilities

Introduction

People with Disabilities in Canada / Ontario

People with disabilities represent a significant and growing part of our population. Every five years, Statistics Canada, through the Participation and Activities Limitations Survey (PALS), collects information regarding people with disabilities whose everyday activities are limited because of a health-related condition or problem. The 2017 Census provided essential information on the prevalence of various disabilities and support for people with disabilities, their employment profile, their income and their participation in society.

As a result, it was determined that:

- an estimated 6.2 million Canadians aged 15 and over -- one in five in the population -- reported having a disability in 2017, an increase of close to two million people in ten years.
- The prevalence of disabilities among Canadians tends to increase with age. However, more than 540,000 youths aged 15 to 24 years (13%)

had one or more disabilities. This compared with 20% or 3.7 million of working age adults (25 to 64 years), and 38% or 2 million of seniors aged 65 and over. Women (24%) were more likely to have a disability than men (20%) and this was the case across all groups.

- In 2017, 57% of Canadians with disabilities had a “Milder” disability (classified as having a mild or moderate disability) and 43% had a “more severe” disability (classified as having a severe or very severe disability). In all cases, the disability was severe enough to limit them to some extent in their daily activities.

Governing Legislative and Policy Framework

The Province of Ontario is responsible for determining the legislative framework and standards for accessibility for organizations across the province. Under the provincial legislative framework, municipalities, including the Town of Cochrane, are responsible for accessibility as it relates to municipal programs, services and facilities. Specifically, accessibility within the Town of Cochrane is mandated and governed by a number of pieces of provincial legislation and regulations, including the following:

[The Ontarians with Disabilities act, 2001](#)

[The Ontario Human Rights Code, 1990](#)

[The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005](#)

[Regulation 191/11 – The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations](#)

- Part I – General Requirements
- Part II – Information and Communications Standards
- Part III – Employment Standards
- Part IV – Transportation Standards
- Part IV.1 – Design of Public Spaces Standards (Accessibility Standards for the Building Environment)
- Part IV.2 – Customer Service Standards

Of particular importance is Part I, subsection 4 (1), (2) of the General Requirements in the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations, which requires municipalities to:

- (a) establish, implement, maintain and document a multi-year accessibility plan, which outlines the organization's strategy to prevent and remove barriers to meet its requirements under this Regulation;
- (b) post the accessibility plan on their website, if any, and provide the plan in an accessible format upon request; and
- (c) review and update the accessibility plan at least once every five years. 2 Achievements in the Prevention and Removal of Barriers (2012-2017)

Objectives of the Accessibility Plan

The Accessibility Plan describes the measures that the Town of Cochrane will take in the next five (5) years to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities who utilize the facilities and services of the Town of Cochrane.

The Plan will:

- 1) Describe the process by which the Town will identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities.
- 2) Describe the measures the Town will take in the coming years to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities.

The AODA also imposes other obligations on municipalities either directly or through amendments to other Ontario statutes covering such matters as:

- access to public buildings and facilities;
- accessibility considerations as part of planning, development and subdivision approval;

- accessibility considerations as a part of the building permit process and site plan control;
- misuse of designated parking spaces established in municipal by-laws; and
- improved access to municipal elections, considering access when selecting locations for voting.

Accessibility Standards

Customer Service Standard

Ontario's first accessibility standard, the Customer Service Standard, came into effect on January 1, 2008. The legal requirements are set out in two Ontario Regulations under the AODA: the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service*, Ontario Regulation 429/07, which states the requirements of the customer service standard; and *Exemption for Reporting Requirements*, Ontario Regulation 430/07, which exempts organizations that have fewer than 20 employees (unless the organization is a designated public sector organization) from certain documentation requirements of the Standard.

The *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service* state what businesses and other organizations in Ontario must do to make the provision of their goods and services more accessible to people with disabilities. In broad terms, the regulation requires that the following compliance activities be undertaken:

- 1) Organizations are required to establish policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities, and use reasonable efforts to ensure that policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the core principles of dignity, independence, integration and equality of opportunity.
- 2) Organizations must set a policy allowing people to use their own personal assistive devices to access goods and use services.
- 3) Organizations must allow people with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog or service animal, and permit people with disabilities who use a support person to bring that person with them while accessing goods or services.

- 4) Organizations are required to provide the public with notice when there are temporary disruptions to the facilities that people with disabilities use in order to benefit from their goods and services.
- 5) Organizations must provide training for employees, volunteers, agents and others who deal with members of the public or third parties on the organization's behalf.
- 6) Organizations are required to establish a process for receiving and responding to feedback or complaints received regarding the manner in which they provide goods and services to persons with disabilities.
- 7) Organizations with at least 20 employees are required to notify the persons to whom they provide goods and services that the documents required by the regulation are available upon request.
- 8) Organizations must document all policies, procedures and practices for providing accessible customer services; notify customers that prescribed documents are available upon request; and provide the information in a format that takes into account the person's disability.
- 9) Organizations must communicate with a person with a disability in a manner that takes into account his or her disability.

The Integrated Accessibility Standard

Ontario Regulation 191/11 brought into force the Integrated Standard for Transportation, Information and Communication and Employment. This standard is the third set of regulations enacted under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) and came into force July 1, 2011. The regulations establish accessibility standards to remove barriers in the following four areas.

1) Transportation Standard

The proposed Transportation Standard is the only industry-specific standard to be developed under the AODA and focuses on making transportation services accessible.

2) Information and Communications Standard

This Standard is intended to remove barriers in all information and communications for people with disabilities. The Standard is to help people with disabilities access more sources of information that people rely on every day. This includes websites, public libraries, textbooks and public safety information.

3) Employment Standard

This Standard aims to prevent, identify and remove barriers across all cycles of the employment lifecycle for people with disabilities. The Standard helps employers support and keep skilled employees. It will make accessibility a normal part of finding, hiring and communicating with employees, whether they have disabilities or not.

4) Accessibility Standard for the Design of Public Spaces

The standard for the design of public spaces **only** applies to new construction and major changes to existing features. Here are the highlights of what the standard covers:

- Recreational trails/beach access routes
- Outdoor public eating areas like rest stops or picnic areas Outdoor play spaces, like playgrounds in provincial parks and local communities
- Outdoor paths of travel, like sidewalks, ramps, stairs, curb ramps, rest areas and accessible pedestrian signals
- Accessible parking (on and off street)
- Service-related elements like service counters, fixed queuing lines and waiting areas
- Maintenance and restoration of public spaces

Specific requirements under the various standards will be phased in between 2012 and 2025, however Part I of each of the integrated regulations contains common requirements that obligated organizations must meet under all three standards. The regulations require that all of the areas are addressed through policies and multi-year plans.

Built Environment Standard

The Built Environment Standard is the most extensive of the AODA standards developed to date. The Standard aims to remove barriers for people with disabilities in the physical environment, including over 70 elements such as buildings and facilities, sidewalks, parks, parking areas, housing, amusement parks and more.

The Built Environment Standards Development Committee (SDC) has been active since 2007, developing the initial proposed standard. The proposed standard was released for its mandatory public review period from July 14 to October 16, 2009. The proposed standard is nearly 300 pages in length with an additional document with technical illustrations. The proposed standard would apply to both the public and private sectors, with compliance required for all new construction, extensive renovation, change of use, and retrofitting existing facilities (more information on this to follow in the future) and elements.

2024 - 2029 Accessibility Focus Areas Commitment, Progress and Goals – AODA Standards

Transportation

Commitment

The Town of Cochrane is committed to ensuring people with disabilities have access to accessible public transportation.

Accessible Transit

Cochrane operates through a broker an on demand accessible transit. The Accessible Transit is a door to door service designed to provide transportation to citizens, who because of their mobility impairment, Passengers must be registered to use the service and reservations are required.

How to achieve:

- Follow the intent and spirit of the AODA legislation

Progress:

- Information on accessibility equipment and features of the vehicles, service, customer feedback, support persons, service animals, etc. are posted on the Town's website.
- Allow a person with a disability to be accompanied by a service animal, and ensure that person is permitted to keep service animal with them;
- Allow a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person and ensure that notice is given in advance about the amount, if any, payable in respect of the support person;

Goals:

- Continually update notifications to the public regarding accessibility features of the vehicle, routes and service.
- Regularly hold at least one public meeting involving people with disabilities to ensure that they have the opportunity to participate in a review of the accessibility plan and that they are given the opportunity to provide feedback on the accessibility plan.

Information and Communications

Commitment

The Town of Cochrane will follow universal design principles and best practices when developing, implementing and maintaining information and communications strategies and products. This includes websites, intranet sites, print communication materials as well as face-to-face interactions. The Town of Cochrane is committed to ensuring that information and communications are available and accessible to people with disabilities

An important area in service delivery is learning from customers what it is they need and how well their needs are being met. It is especially important to seek out feedback from people who may experience barriers in services, in particular from people with disabilities. By inviting and listening to feedback from all customers, service improvements can be made that are barrier-free and accessible to everyone.

Progress:

- Employees have been trained on how to create accessible documents.
- Adobe Acrobat Professional Licenses have been purchased for specific work stations.
- Staff is encouraged to avoid constant use of PDF's.
- Ensured most web content and images meet the WCAG 2.0 Priority AA and provided alternatives for content outside this standard (e.g. custom applications)
- Organized website to be easily navigated.
- Indicate on the Town's website www.cochraneontario.com at all service counters that alternate formats and communication supports are available upon request.
- Ensuring that emergency information, procedures, plans and public safety information is available in alternate formats, when requested.
- Reviewed principles for clear language

Under the AODA Customer Service Regulation the Town of Cochrane currently provides opportunities for anyone to share feedback in person, by telephone and electronically by email. To provide a more comprehensive approach, the Town of Cochrane will make it even easier to share feedback on services by creating and implementing a universal, accessible process for collecting and responding to feedback on services. The following principles will guide this project:

- Ensuring universal design in the feedback process.
- Providing multiple channels to obtain feedback.
- Documenting feedback.
- Ensuring feedback is given to the right person.
- Following up on feedback in a timely manner.
- Using feedback to guide service improvement initiatives.

How to achieve:

1. Develop feedback gathering processes.
2. Coordinated feedback processes, focusing on accessibility.
3. Enhanced the processes for providing notification of service disruptions.

Customer Service

Commitment

The Corporation of the Town of Cochrane is committed to eliminating barriers and improving accessibility for persons with disabilities in a manner that respects dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity. The Town of Cochrane recognizes the diverse needs of all our residents and customers and will respond by striving to provide services and facilities that are accessible to all.

Progress:

- Accessible Customer Service training:
 - Program continues to be provided to elected officials, members of boards and committees, all staff (full-time, part-time, temporary and students), volunteers and contractors who interact with the public on behalf of the Town of Cochrane.
 - New employee training is offered on a per basis through an online platform.
 - Contractors must complete training and be added to the Qualified Contractor List.
- Responding to customer feedback and continuously making changes to goods services and facilities.
- Service Disruption notices were developed and have been posted through RSS feeds.
- Filed completed compliance report with the Ministry of Community and Social Services, Accessibility Directorate of Ontario.

Employment

Commitment

The Town of Cochrane is committed to inclusive and accessible employment practices that ensure the process of finding, hiring, communicating and retaining employees who have disabilities is effective.

How to achieve:

- Train recruitment staff and managers to support the spirit and goals for the AODA.
- Identify and remove barriers in the workplace
- Understanding employer obligations to provide employment accommodations.
- Enhance workplace emergency response.
- Ensure that any policy, procedure or practice of the Town of Cochrane that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities will be modified or removed.
- Employees with disabilities are supported throughout the employment cycle.

Progress:

- Developed workplace emergency response information policy and notified employees of process.
- AODA policy includes a section on employment standard.
- Provide ongoing AODA training through Human Resources Policies and Procedures.
- Accommodation is advertised as available upon request through our recruitment process.

Goals:

- Prepare for compliance with Employment Standards
- Revise Recruitment Policy to ensure a barrier free recruitment process, remove barriers from hiring and selection process.
- Develop guides, tools and templates for managers and supervisors
- Develop a list of policies used to support employees with disabilities.
- Develop job postings and job descriptions in accessible formats.

General Requirements - Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)

Commitment

The Town of Cochrane is committed to meet and maintain compliance with the AODA's Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation general requirement.

Progress:

- Developed overarching accessibility policy with organizational statement of commitment to meet accessibility and to incorporate the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (Ontario Regulation 191/11).
- Continue to develop, implement and maintain policies governing how the Town of Cochrane achieves or will achieve accessibility through meeting its requirements in the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation.
- Established a multi-year accessibility plan in accordance with the AODA, to be reviewed and updated at least once every five years.
- Posted the multi-year accessibility plan on the Town's website and is available in an accessible format upon request.

The 2024 - 2029 Accessibility Plan is available in a number of accessible formats such as: print copy and electronic copy. Requests for other formats will be considered and can be made by contacting:

Municipal Office
171 Fourth Avenue
Cochrane, Ontario P0L 1C0
Attention: Clerk
Tel: 705-272-4361
E-mail: clerk@cochraneontario.com

This Accessibility Plan may be accessed on the Town's web site:
www.cochraneontario.com

Appendix A - Definitions

Accessibility

Accessibility means that the ability of people with disabilities will be enhanced to have equal access to opportunities, live independently and contribute to the community. To be sustainable, accessibility must have long term viability as part of the institution's systems and culture.

Barrier

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

An example of each of the different kinds of barriers is shown below:

Physical	A doorknob that cannot be operated by a person with limited upper-body mobility and strength.
Architectural	A hallway or door that is too narrow for a wheelchair or scooter.
Information	Typefaces in reports or on the website that are too small to be read by a person with low-vision.
Communication	Sign language interpretation is not available at public meetings.
Attitudinal	A receptionist assumes an individual in wheelchair is not intelligent.
Technological	A paper tray on a laser printer that requires two strong hands to open.
Policy/Practice	A practice of not allowing job applicants an opportunity to complete job testing in alternate formats.

Disability

The ODA adopts the broad definition for disability that is set out in the Ontario Human Rights Code.

A “disability” is:

- (a) Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and includes, but is not limited to:
 - 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.