



City of London Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Annual Status Update
2014

DRAFT

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London
CANADA

1. Introduction

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) requires each municipality in Ontario to prepare a five-year accessibility plan. The plan is a strategy to prevent and remove barriers for persons with disabilities. Municipalities must write an annual status report on the progress of measures taken to implement their plan.

Over the past year, the City of London has moved the yard stick forward on accessibility. We have made many improvements to our services and facilities to comply with the legislation. We have also been proactive in addressing accessibility needs that are not legislated. We continue to make incremental changes to move toward being a more accessible city.

This update report gives an overview of steps we have taken to eliminate barriers and comply with the AODA in 2014.

2. Accessibility Commitment

The Corporation of the City of London is committed to providing quality goods, services and facilities that are accessible to all persons we serve and in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities. We are committed to meeting the needs of persons with disabilities in a timely manner and will do so by preventing and removing barriers to accessibility in customer service, information and communication, employment, the built environment and transportation. We are committed to meeting the requirements of applicable legislation, including the AODA and the *Human Rights Code*.

3. 2014 Accomplishments



Fixed queuing at Provincial Offences Building

Customer Service Standard

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service came into effect in 2008. The City of London became compliant with this standard in 2010. We recognize that improving the accessibility of our customer service is ongoing and we will always strive to do better. We continue to offer Accessible Customer Service training to all new employees.

In 2014, we completed an audit of all customer service counters operated by the City. We implemented an accessible counter retrofit program to upgrade frequently used counters we did not previously have intentions of replacing. Under this program, \$200,000 will be contributed to accessible counter upgrades each year for five years.

To improve way-finding for our customers, we purchased larger, more easily readable signage for our Provincial Offences Administration building, and the main floor of City Hall.

Integrated Accessibility Standards General Requirements

The AODA Integrated Accessibility Standards came into effect in 2011. Within this legislation are general requirements and standards for Information and Communication, Employment, Transportation, and the Design of Public Spaces.

The City of London's Integrated Accessibility Policy and Multi-Year Accessibility Plan were each developed and passed by Council in 2013. Also in 2013, the City's Purchasing and Supply By-Law was amended to incorporate accessibility criteria into the purchasing process.

Training on the Integrated Accessibility Standards and the *Human Rights Code* was given to all City staff and volunteers in 2014. Along with this, a refresher on the Customer Service Standards was also given. Accessibility training continues to be a part of new employee orientation

Information and Communications Standards

The City of London launched its new website in 2013. Many aspects of the site were upgraded to increase accessibility and comply with WCAG 2.0 guidelines. Updates included improved keyboard navigability, increased colour contrast, adding play/pause buttons to rotating content, and adding a site map. We purchased Site Improve software which provides us with information on the accessibility of our site.

In 2014, we further improved the accessibility of our website by upgrading our BrowseAloud program so it automatically loads instead of having to download it. This makes it more convenient for those with visual impairments to listen to site content.

We added a more robust Accessibility page to the site. Here, you can find our policies, plans, and resources created by our Accessibility Advisory Committee. This is also where our Feedback and Request for

Accommodation forms can be found, as well as our Notice of Temporary Disruptions in Service webpage.

This year, we launched an Accessible Document Training program to provide staff with a manual on how to create their documents so they are more readable by persons with disabilities. In 2014, over 150 individuals completed the training. It will continue to be offered through our corporate training catalogue.



Accessible Document Training

Employment Standard

The City of London is committed to accessible hiring practices. In 2014, all job postings were amended to include a statement about availability of accommodations for applicants with disabilities throughout the recruitment process.

If an applicant is selected for an interview, they are advised in writing that accommodations are available. When making an offer of employment, a copy of the City's *Accommodation of Employees with Disabilities Guideline* is included in the offer package so that all new employees are aware of our policies.

All new hires are required to attend an orientation session which includes training on AODA standards. Beginning in 2014, the "It Starts

with Me” training was launched which includes an overview of the Accommodation for Employees with Disabilities Guideline.

Design of Public Spaces



Accessible Parking in Springbank Park

The Design of Public Spaces Standards became law in 2013 to remove barriers in public spaces and buildings. Beginning in 2016, the City will be required to meet accessibility requirements when constructing and maintaining new or redeveloped elements of public spaces. The City is already in compliance with many of the Public Spaces Standards, as we have been building to comply with our Facilities Accessibility Design Standards (FADS) since 2001.

Throughout 2014, staff have been working to update FADS to reflect the new AODA standards, as well as changes to the Building Code. The revised FADS Manual will be released in 2015.

Though the Design of Public Spaces Standards are not enforced until 2016, and are not retrofit, we continue to be proactive and made many accessibility improvements to our facilities in 2014 including:

- Constructed new accessible No. 7 Fire Hall
- Constructed a new accessible family washroom and installed a new accessible service counter at Canada Games Aquatic Centre

- Installed automatic door openers on the third and fourth floors of Market Tower
- Installed automatic door openers to the gymnasium and washroom doors at Carling Heights Optimist Centre
- Installed a chair lift and barrier free door operator to create one accessible courtroom at our Provincial Offences Court
- Constructed a new barrier free entrance and ramp to the training centre at AJ Tyler Operations Centre
- Built a new accessible washroom at St. Julien Fieldhouse
- Accessibility improvements to customer service queuing area at the Provincial Offences Administration Building

In addition, we partnered with the Rotary Club to make accessibility upgrades to the Northwest Optimist Park in 2014. Accessibility components of the play structure include:

- Transfer stations on both junior and senior structures
- A double-slide
- A drum panel (sensory play)
- Wheelchair reach gear panel
- Hand rings
- Braille clock panel
- Solo spinner
- Shop counter (social and imaginary play)
- Seat below deck (quiet retreat)

Under the City's Audible Pedestrian Signal program, 25 intersections were updated with audible pedestrian signals in 2014. This brings the total in the city to 91.

To prepare for the 2016 Public Spaces Standards, we amended our Zoning and Parking By-laws to reflect the new parking standards for size and number of accessible parking stalls. The City continues to offer two-hour free parking in all off-street municipal lots for persons with an accessible parking permit.

Municipal Elections 2014



Accessible Voting Machine Demonstration

Accessibility was a top priority during the 2014 Municipal Election. Accessibility training was given to all elections staff. A training video was created to teach staff about accessible customer service at the polling stations. A second video was filmed and aired on Rogers TV informing the public about accessibility during the election.

All polling locations were located in accessible buildings and along a bus route. The Accessibility Advisory Committee reviewed all new polling locations.

For the first time ever, accessible voting machines were available at all advanced polls. These machines have features which increase accessibility including a magnifier screen, head phones that read the ballot aloud, and a sip and puff mechanism for marking a ballot.

4. Accessibility Advisory Committee

The City of London Accessibility Advisory Committee (ACCAC) was created in 2002. The Committee advises and assists the City in creating a barrier-free London. We are fortunate to have such a dedicated group of engaged and informed volunteers. Throughout 2014, ACCAC reviewed and advised the City on a number of initiatives including amendments to the Zoning By-Law, the Parking By-Law, the Downtown Master Plan, and the London Plan.

Through its sub-committees, great work was accomplished in improving accessibility at the City. A parks and playground user survey was developed by the Built Environment Sub-Committee for consideration in future park design. The Policy Sub-Committee reviewed ACCAC's Terms of Reference.



Carmi Levi Speaking at the App-Ability Lunch-and-Learn

Traditionally, ACCAC's Education and Awareness Sub-Committee has held an annual conference on accessibility. This year, the group decided to try a different public awareness approach by conducting a series of Lunch and Learns. Over 80 participants attended sessions that were held in 2014 at the Public Library including:

- “Putting the Pieces Together” – Speakers Lori Hassall and Laurie St. Pierre from London Health Science Centre conducted a session on supporting individuals with mental health issues to secure and maintain meaningful employment
- “Vote, It’s Your Right” – City Elections staff demonstrated technology available to voters in the municipal election
- “App-Ability” – Carmi Levi, a technology analyst and journalist, explored how persons with disabilities can use apps to enhance their lives

5. Accessibility Governance

The City’s Accessibility Coordinator acts as a resource for all service areas and facilitates compliance with the AODA. The Coordinator keeps informed about legislation, and participates in accessibility networks such as the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals (ONAP). The Coordinator also acts as a resource for the community and in 2014 made presentations on the AODA to a Western University Social Work Master’s class and a Municipal Law class.

In 2013, an Accessibility Implementation and Compliance Committee was formed to coordinate all internal efforts required for compliance with the Integrated Accessibility Standards. In order to streamline the number of cross-divisional teams at the City, this committee was disbanded in 2014.

Now, all oversight of AODA matters is handled through the City’s Operations Management Team (OMT). This team has representatives from each Service Area, ensuring that standards are being met, and bringing forward accessibility issues in their areas. This group also oversees the AODA budget.

Throughout the past year, OMT brought forward suggestions for purchasing over 35 items that would help make the City’s services more accessible. Using the AODA Operating Budget, the City bought items such as a pool access chair, accessible picnic tables, an emergency evacuation chair for our long-term care home, signage, automatic door openers, an accessible change table, and

communication devices. Though these items are not required by the AODA, they are “nice to have” and increase access to our services.



Accessible Picnic Table



Accessible Change Table

6. Accessibility Budget

In 2013, the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation became law under the AODA. Previously, it was thought that the Public Spaces portion of this standard would apply retroactively. This would create a significant expense for compliance. It is now confirmed that the new Design of Public Spaces Standard applies only to new builds and renovations.

In anticipation of the Public Spaces Standard, the AODA Reserve Fund had accumulated over \$1.2 million in 2013. At this time, it was recommended that the entire contents of the reserve be utilized for an improvement program to existing capital assets. An additional \$50,000 per year was contributed to the Audible Pedestrian Signal program for the next 5 years, doubling the existing program. \$200,000 per year was contributed to updating customer service counters for the next 5 years.

The AODA Operating Budget remains at \$374,220 per year. This budget is used for operational expenses such as training, software, interpreters, alternate document formats, and the purchase of one-off items that increase accessibility of our services.

7. Conclusion

Over the past year, the City has made tremendous improvements to its policies, by-laws, services, and facilities to increase accessibility. The City of London is committed to removing barriers and improving the quality of life for people of all ages and abilities.

We look forward to implementing the remainder of the 2013-2017 Accessibility Plan and moving toward a more accessible Ontario.