

County of Lennox and Addington

2021-2025 Accessibility Plan

Message from County Council

The Council of the County of Lennox and Addington is committed and guided by the four core principles of Accessibility - Dignity, Independence, Integration and Equal Opportunity - and supports the full inclusion of persons with disabilities as set out in the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and its Standards.

The County of Lennox and Addington will make every effort to ensure that we meet the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner.

Introduction

The County of Lennox and Addington provides a wide range of services for its citizens. Currently the services are organized within seven departments - Administrative Services, Financial Services, Human Resources, Infrastructure Services, Community and Development Services, Emergency Services, Long Term Care Services and Social Services.

Lennox and Addington County has developed and maintained annual accessibility plans under the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* since 2003. With the passing of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) under *the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*, the County has developed this multi-year plan to assist in implementing policies, practices, procedures and training, and to identify and evaluate projects to remove barriers. This plan will be reviewed and updated at least once every five years.

Section 1 – Past Achievements to Remove and Prevent Barriers

Customer Service

The County of Lennox and Addington provides goods and services to people with disabilities, with particular consideration of the following areas:

Communication

The County of Lennox and Addington communicates with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability. Staff who communicate with customers have been trained on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.

The County of Lennox and Addington is committed to providing fully accessible telephone service to our customers. Staff have been trained to communicate with customers over the telephone in clear and plain language, to speak clearly and slowly and to tailor their responses as much as possible in support of the individual.

The County of Lennox and Addington communicates with customers by other means, including relay service or e-mail, if telephone communication is not suitable to their communication needs or is not available.

Assistive Devices

The County of Lennox and Addington is committed to serving people with disabilities who use assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from our goods and services. Staff have been trained and made familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by customers with disabilities while accessing our goods or services.

The County of Lennox and Addington also ensures that staff know how to use the assistive devices which are available on our premises, including electronic door openers and elevators.

Billing

The County of Lennox and Addington is committed to providing accessible invoices to all of our customers. For this reason, invoices are provided in large print or by e-mail, upon request. Any questions customers may have about the content of the invoice are answered in person, by telephone or e-mail.

Use of Service Animals and Support Persons

The County of Lennox and Addington is committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal, in the areas of our premises that are open to the public and other third parties. All staff, volunteers and others dealing with the public are properly trained in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

The County of Lennox and Addington is committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person is allowed to enter the County of Lennox and Addington's buildings with his or her support person. At no time is a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person prevented from having access to his or her support person while on County premises.

No admission fee is charged to the support person for admission to the County of Lennox and Addington Museum. Customers are informed of this by a notice that is posted in the County of Lennox and Addington Museum and on the County of Lennox and Addington's website.

Notice of Temporary Disruption

The County of Lennox and Addington provides customers with notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities. This notice includes information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available. The notice is placed at all public entrances and service counters on our premises, as well as on the County website.

Training

The County of Lennox and Addington provides training to all employees, volunteers and others who deal with the public or other third parties on their behalf, and all those who are involved in the development and approvals of customer service policies, practices and procedures. Members of County Council, as well as all staff of the County of Lennox and Addington have received this training.

The accessible customer service training is provided during orientation, in a timely manner after staff commence their duties.

Training includes the following:

- The purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the Customer Service Standard
- How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities
- How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person
- How to use the automatic door openers and elevators available at the County of Lennox and Addington's premises
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing the County of Lennox and Addington's goods and services

The County of Lennox and Addington's policies, practices and procedures relating to the customer service standard.

Staff are also trained on policies, practices and procedures that affect the way goods and services are provided to people with disabilities. This training continues on an ongoing basis when changes are made to these policies, practices and procedures.

Feedback Process

The ultimate goal of the County of Lennox and Addington is to meet and surpass customer expectations while serving all people, including those with disabilities. Comments regarding how well those expectations are being met are welcome and appreciated.

Feedback regarding the way the County of Lennox and Addington provides goods and services to people with disabilities is made by using a feedback form, by mail, e-mail, or verbally. Customers can expect a response within thirty (30) days.

Information and Communications

For several years, the County of Lennox and Addington has provided large print books and other accessible formats in its five public libraries. The libraries and the County's Museum and Archives are outfitted with public access computers with large screen monitors, accessible keyboards and JAWS software. Hand-held magnifiers are also available.

The County provides its Emergency Plan and brochures in accessible formats, upon request. This is done by providing the pdf documents in an MS Word version or providing the document in a larger font.

Employment

The County of Lennox and Addington Human Resources (HR) department provides workplace accommodations to staff under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.

The *Code* protects people from discrimination and harassment because of past, present and perceived disabilities. These accommodations include modifying the terms and conditions of employment and/or making adjustments in the workplace. These adjustments have included change in work locations as well as assistive devices such as height adjustable desks for improved access.

The HR department always ensures that job interviews and meetings with current staff are held in facilities which are fully accessible to persons with disabilities.

Procurement

The County of Lennox and Addington purchases goods and services with accessibility in mind. For example, photocopiers at most worksites have accessible features, such as touchscreens which move in order to allow access for people in wheelchairs, and the choice to increase font size on the touchscreen. When procuring third party services, the County ensures that the firm provides accessible customer service and that their staff have had proper accessible customer service training.

Self-service Kiosks

The County of Lennox and Addington does not provide any services using self-service kiosks.

Other Achievements

The County of Lennox and Addington has had many achievements in removing physical barriers to accessibility. These projects have included:

- Retrofit, upgrade and construction of an addition to the County Court House saw dramatic improvements in accessibility to the County's administration building. Despite some limitations arising from the heritage designation and character of the 1864 portion of the building, the architect designed what was deemed to be a barrier-free facility. Key improvements include: ramp access, wider door access throughout the building, elevator access to all levels and barrier free washrooms.
- Major improvements and renovations to the County Memorial Building. The major objective of the project was to create ground level access to the facility and elevator access to all three floors in the building. Barrier-free public washrooms were also included in the retrofit.
- Construction of The John M. Parrott Centre, a 168 bed long-term care facility to replace the County's Lenadco Home. The state-of-the-art facility provides full accessibility for its residents, their families and staff.

- The County facilitates access to informational and recreational materials for people with disabilities through its “Among Friends” and “Books by Mail” programs. Volunteers deliver library materials to users in the larger urban areas in the “Among Friends” program and materials are mailed to users in rural areas in the “Books by Mail” program.

Section 2 – Strategies and Actions

The County of Lennox and Addington has identified the following projects and programs to be undertaken between 2021 and 2025, to meet the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and to remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities.

Customer Service

The County of Lennox and Addington is committed to providing accessible customer service to people with disabilities. This means that we will provide goods and services to people with disabilities with the same high quality and timelines as others.

In order to comply with the Customer Service Standard, Lennox and Addington County will continue to:

- Take people’s disabilities into account when communicating with them.
- Familiarize staff with assistive devices available to people with disabilities.
- Provide billing information to customers in alternate formats, upon request.
- Allow service animals and support persons to remain with people with disabilities in all service areas which are open to the public.
- Provide notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities.
- Train new County staff on the following:
 - The purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the Customer Service Standard.
 - How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.
 - How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person.
 - How to use the automatic door openers and elevators available at the County of Lennox and Addington’s premises.
 - What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing the County of Lennox and Addington’s goods and services.
 - The County of Lennox and Addington’s policies, practices and procedures relating to the customer service standard.
- Provide ongoing training on any changes made to the County’s Accessible Customer Service policies, practices and procedures at departmental staff meetings.

Information and Communications

The County of Lennox and Addington is committed to making our information and communications accessible to people with disabilities. Staff will make every effort to create, provide and receive information and communications in ways that are accessible to people with disabilities. Initiatives include:

- The County of Lennox and Addington Public Libraries arrange for the provision of accessible information. The public is notified of this availability with signs posted at library branches.
- The County of Lennox and Addington has a process in place for receiving and responding to feedback and will ensure that those processes are provided in accessible formats and with communication supports, upon request.
- Accessible formats and communication supports will be made available to the public, upon request.
- The County of Lennox and Addington will notify the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports.
- The County's website was redeveloped with all web content meeting the WCAG 2.0, Level AA requirements in 2017.

Employment

The County of Lennox and Addington is committed to fair and accessible employment practices. The County will:

- Notify employees and the public about the availability of accommodations for applicants with disabilities during the recruitment process when job applicants are individually selected to participate in an assessment or selection process;
- Consult with the applicant and provide or arrange for the provision of a suitable accommodation that takes into account the applicant's disability, if a selected applicant requests an accommodation;
- Notify successful applicants of the policies for accommodating employees with disabilities.
- Inform employees of County policies which support employees with disabilities, including but not limited to, policies on the provision of job accommodations that take into account an employee's accessibility needs due to a disability;
- Make employees aware of any changes to existing job accommodation policies that take into account an employee's accessibility needs due to a disability.
- Consult with employees with disabilities who request accessible formats and communication supports to determine suitable format and supports.
- Have documented individual accommodation plans in place for employees with a disability.
- Have a return to work process in place for employees who have been absent from work due to a disability and require disability-related accommodations in order to return to work. Such processes will be documented and will outline the steps that the County of Lennox and Addington will take to facilitate the return to work and include an individual accommodation plan.

- Take into account the accommodation needs and/or individual accommodation plans of employees when using performance management processes, when providing career development and advancement information and when redeploying employees.

Procurement

The County of Lennox and Addington is committed to accessible procurement processes. The County will:

- Follow the Procurement Policy which includes the County's commitment to including accessible criteria or features in the procurement process, except where it is not practicable to do so.
- Consider accessibility from the outset of the procurement process.
- Consider accessibility over the entire lifecycle of the good, service or facility, so that the end result is robust and adaptable enough to be accessible in the future.
- Set out basic requirements around asking suppliers to demonstrate their knowledge of accessibility as it relates to their goods, services or facilities when tendering.

Self-service Kiosks

The County of Lennox and Addington does not provide any services using self-service kiosks at this time. In the event that the County begins to offer the use of self-service kiosks, we are committed to incorporating accessibility features and considering accessibility for people with disabilities in their design.

Training

The County of Lennox and Addington is committed to providing training in the requirements of Ontario's accessibility laws and the Ontario Human Rights Code as it applies to people with disabilities. The County will:

- Train all employees, volunteers and policy developers on the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation and the Ontario Human Rights Code as it applies to people with disabilities.
- Train new employees, volunteers and policy developers as part of their orientation program, as soon as practicable.
- Provide additional training to all employees, volunteers and policy developers if any changes are made to the County's Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation Policy.
- Provide specific training to staff who create documents for the County website on how to create accessible documents.
- Maintain a record of the dates when training is provided and the number of individuals to whom it was provided.

Design of Public Spaces

The County of Lennox and Addington is committed to meeting accessibility laws when building or making major changes to public spaces. The County will:

- Follow the Design of Public Spaces standard when building or making any changes to exterior paths of travel, rest areas, ramps, stairs, curb ramps and depressed curbs.

- Install accessible pedestrian signals which meet the requirements of the Design of Public Spaces standard when new pedestrian signals are being installed or existing pedestrian signals are being replaced at a pedestrian crossover.
- Provide the number of accessible parking spaces at new or renovated County service locations, in-keeping with the numbers set out in the Design of Public Spaces standard.
- Determine the best location for the accessible parking spaces in relation to providing the greatest access to accessible entrances.
- Meet all of the requirements of the Design of Public Spaces standard when constructing new or replacing existing service counters.
- Provide accessible seating when constructing a new waiting area or redeveloping an existing waiting area.
- Maintain all accessible elements as per County maintenance procedures.
- Notify the public at the site and on the County website if there is a disruption to any of these services.

Other Initiatives:

The County of Lennox and Addington plans the following accessibility initiatives:

- Continue to provide Affordable Housing to the community which includes Accessible Units.
- Continue to support the Eastern Ontario Regional Network project to improve high speed connectivity for citizens across Eastern Ontario.
- Ongoing reconstruction and upgrading of County Roads and Bridges will occur, with the inclusion of paved shoulders for use by cyclists, pedestrians and persons in wheelchairs.

For More Information

For more information on this accessibility plan, please contact Tracey McKenzie, County Clerk at 613-354-4883, ext. 3368, tmckenzie@lennox-addington.on.ca.

Standard and accessible formats of this document are also available free of charge, on request by contacting the County Clerk.