

2018/2019

Grand River Conservation Authority Accessibility Plan



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Summary

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) became law in 2005. The purpose of this Act is to improve opportunities for people with disabilities by identifying, preventing and removing barriers that may otherwise limit their abilities to fully participate in society. Accessibility simply means giving all people opportunities to participate fully in everyday life.

The Accessibility Plan describes measures the GRCA will take to remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities who use the facilities and services of the GRCA, including employees and members of the public and highlights changes and improvements made to date.

The GRCA is committed to the continual improvement of accessible services, facilities and information.

1.0 Background

1.1 Legislation

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, known as the AODA, is intended to develop, implement and enforce mandatory accessibility standards in key areas of daily living. Standards have been developed in Customer Service; Information and Communications; Employment; and Transportation. In addition to these standards which have now been legislated, there remains one more standard to be enacted, the Built Environment standard. The accessibility standards apply to all organizations in Ontario.

The purpose of the AODA is to:

- Develop, implement and enforce accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises by January 2025; and
- Provide for the involvement of persons with disabilities, of the Government of Ontario and of representatives of industries and various sectors of the economy in the development of the accessibility standards.

1.2 Types of Disabilities

Disabilities may be clearly evident, such as physical disabilities, but they may be invisible and are not always apparent. The broad range of disabilities also includes vision impairment, deafness or being hard of hearing, intellectual or developmental, learning and mental health disabilities. The AODA uses the same definition of “disability” as the Ontario Human Rights Code, which includes both visible and invisible disabilities.

1.3 Overview of the Accessibility Standards

The AODA is made up of five Standards, each covering an aspect of daily living.

The **Accessibility for Customer Service Standard** was the first standard to be developed and released. This standard addresses business practices and training needed to provide better customer service to people with disabilities.

The **Integrated Accessibility Standards** brings together four standard areas into one Regulation: Information and Communications, Employment, Transportation and Design of Public Spaces.

- **Information and Communications** addresses the removal of barriers in access to information being provided in person, through print, a website or other means.
- **Employment Accessibility** addresses paid employment practices relating to employee-employer relationships, which include recruitment and hiring and retention policies and practices.
- **Accessible Transportation** addresses aspects of accessible public transportation.
- **Accessible Design of Public Spaces** addresses barriers in public spaces and buildings. This will apply to new construction and planned redevelopment beginning January 1, 2016.

The GRCA does not operate or provide public transportation thus the Accessible Transportation Standard does not apply.

2.0 Objectives and Commitment to Accessibility Planning

This report describes the measures that the GRCA has taken and will continue to take to identify, remove and prevent barriers for all people, including those with disabilities who use the facilities and services of the GRCA.

The GRCA is committed to:

- Continuous improvement of access to facilities and services for employees and members of the public with disabilities.
- Providing accessible customer service.
- The participation of people with disabilities in the development and review of its annual accessibility plans.
- Annually reviewing the accessibility plan and incorporating elements of accessibility into all future projects and activities.

3.0 Barrier Identification

3.1 Barrier-Identification Methodologies

The following methodologies are used to identify accessibility barriers:

Methodology	Description
Staff meetings	Accessibility legislation and barrier identification is discussed at Management meetings, Department meetings and Joint Health & Safety Committee meetings. These meetings give various departments an opportunity to discuss legislative requirements and brainstorm accessibility initiatives.
Site visits	All worksites are visited periodically by Managers, Directors and other applicable staff to review accessibility barriers. During site visits, staff and supervisors are invited to provide feedback and discuss barriers they, or members of the public, have identified in their work areas.
Public feedback forms	Members of the public are invited to provide accessibility feedback in a variety of formats: in person, by speaking directly with a member of the GRCA staff; by completing a feedback form online through the GRCA website; or by submitting comments in writing to any of our facilities. Visitor surveys conducted periodically invite suggestions for improving accessibility which are incorporated into work plans as applicable.
Checklist for physical barrier identification	A checklist has been provided and completed for all buildings in our various work locations. The checklist pertains to the identification of physical barriers and is provided to the Operations department to be considered in capital planning and facility upgrade discussions.
Public Consultation	Public consultation will be conducted when required. The methodology will be determined as appropriate to the project.

3.2 Barriers Identified & Status of Corrective Actions from 2016/2017 Plan

The following barriers and status updates on corrective actions taken to date are listed below:

Administration Centre

Barrier	Strategies for Removal/ Prevention	Status Update on Actions Taken in 2016/2017
Customer service	All current employees have received training in accessibility standards for customer service. Training will be ongoing for new employees or as needed when new practices or policies are implemented.	Training is provided to all new employees. Additional training is provided when required.
Recruitment processes	Research to identify best practices in similar organizations for	Job postings state that accessibility accommodations are

	inclusion of accessible formats and communication supports.	available throughout the recruiting process. Offers of employment reinforce our accommodation policy.
Procurement of goods, services or facilities	Review procurement and purchasing practices to incorporate accessibility criteria and requirements. Educate staff on these requirements. Research options when acquiring point-of-sale (POS) devices and other types of self-serve kiosks.	Ongoing as purchases are made
Lack of signage	Where applicable, post universal signage to direct people to accessible entrances, washrooms, etc.	Needs assessment will be conducted in 2016 – partially completed. Some signs have been updated.
Main lobby	Assess current layout of the main lobby (i.e. location of public telephone, furniture placement, etc.). Where feasible, make improvements to increase accessibility.	Needs assessment was conducted in 2017.

Information Systems, Technology and Communications

Barrier	Strategies for Removal/Prevention	Status Update on Actions Taken in 2016/2017
Current GRCA website not compliant with accessibility standards	Currently evaluating design of website, with AODA compliance as a priority. Redesign website and web content according to WCAG 2.0 Level A, AA.	New website meets compliance requirements. Additional features were also added i.e. Browse aloud
Readability of printed materials (i.e. brochures, tabloids, minutes, forms)	Educate staff on creating accessible documents. Research alternatives and redesign new printed materials to make them accessible. Provide alternative accessible formats when requested.	Accessible document guidelines have been created and shared with staff. Training on accessible web writing was provided. Alternative accessible formats have not been requested to date. New public material is created in compliance with guidelines.
Phone lines	Research and evaluate TTY services for deaf and hard-of-hearing people.	Deferred at this time. Not identified as a priority based on a lack of requests.

Conservation Areas and Other Recreational Properties

Barrier	Strategies for Removal/Prevention	Status Update on Actions Taken in 2016/2017
Gatehouses	Evaluate gatehouses to determine accessibility; make improvements as feasible. Provide exceptional customer service to persons who	Accessible customer service training is provided to all staff. All gatehouses will be assessed in 2016 to identify specific barriers

	may not be able to access the gatehouse.	to accessibility – deferred to 2017/2018. Remediation of barriers will be included in Five Year Capital Plan.
Washrooms and Change rooms	Post universal signage to direct people to accessible washrooms and stalls. Where feasible, make improvements to existing washroom facilities to make them accessible or build accessible washroom facilities in locations that currently do not have any.	Universal signage installation in progress. Washroom facilities were assessed in 2016 to identify specific accessibility barriers. Goal is to have a minimum of one barrier-free, public washroom at each conservation area by 2020. New accessible washrooms opened at Byng Island in 2016. A new accessible washroom was built at the Marston Pavilion at Elora Gorge in 2017.
Picnic areas	Conduct a detailed review of the barriers at picnic areas and shelters. Improve accessibility as needed at each location.	Accessibility improvements were made at the Marston Pavilion at Elora Gorge in 2016. Other pavilions were assessed in 2017 during capital inspections. Opportunities for barrier free picnic areas and shelters are being reviewed with Superintendents in 2017 during capital inspections. Some parks have built wheelchair accessible picnic tables.
Parking	Create accessible parking spots. Post universal signage.	Accessible parking spots have been identified and signed at all areas
Campsites	Investigate the possibility of accessible campsites, identify current barriers, and develop accessible campsites where feasible.	Each conservation area will identify a preferred location for an accessible campsite in 2016 – this is in progress and has been partially completed. Initial discussions have occurred regarding the design criteria for accessible campsites.
Trails	Review trail systems including those in Conservation Areas and NCs; promote accessible trails through website and printed documents; work towards improved trail accessibility.	Approximately 1.5 km of accessible trails have been developed at Guelph Lake and Laurel Creek. Additional trail work is in progress in 2017 at Dickson Trail, which also contains boardwalks.
Outdoor Play Spaces	Evaluate opportunities for improving accessibility of outdoor play spaces including access to the space.	An accessible amphitheatre has been built at Shade's Mills.

Nature Centres

Barrier	Strategies for Removal or Prevention	Status Update on Actions Taken in 2016/2017
Entrances, doors and walkways	Review facilities for ease of access. Where feasible make improvements.	Facilities have been reviewed and improvements to accessibility are being integrated into renovations as they occur. Accessibility improvements have been made at Apps Mill NC and County of Brant Accessibility Advisory Committee awarded the GRCA a 2017 Accessibility Award in recognition and appreciation of the contribution to the community for the fully accessible renovation and addition.
Parking	Designate accessible parking spots and post universal signage.	Shade's Mills, Apps and Laurel Creek NCs all have accessible parking spots and universal signage. Guelph Lake NC remains outstanding
Washrooms	Post universal signage to direct people to accessible washrooms and stalls. Where feasible, make improvements to existing washroom facilities to make them accessible or build accessible washroom facilities in locations that currently do not have any.	SMNC and LCNC accessible and posted. AMNC renovations are done and signs are posted. Currently, GLNC is inaccessible but a new building is in the planning stages.
Programs	Review programs and activities for accessibility; determine ways to improve accessibility.	Programs continue to be modified to increase inclusion options for students (needs identified at time of booking). Two all-terrain wheelchairs purchased with attachments. Accessible access paths were built to the outdoor classrooms at LCNC, Taquanyah, AMNC and SMNC.
Emergency Procedures	Review emergency procedures and notification systems. Where needed make improvements to emergency systems with consideration to accessibility standards.	Emergency procedures reviewed and updated to incorporate accessibility needs as required. Fire alarm notification system has both sound/visual notifications at SMNC. Remainder of NCs to be addressed in 2018.
Other		AMNC and LCNC installed accessible water bottle filling stations.

3.3 Action Items for 2018/2019

Organizational

- Reestablish an accessibility working group that is representative of the departments most impacted by the accessibility standards. The working group will meet at regular intervals.
- Continue to work on items identified in previous accessibility plan (see above)
- Continue to build elements of accessibility into all practices, procedures and policies.

Administration Centre

Potential Barrier	Action Items for 2018/2019
Recruitment processes	Ensure accommodation is offered when contacting interview candidates.
Procurement of goods, services or facilities	Continue to review procurement and purchasing practices to incorporate accessibility criteria and requirements. Educate staff on these requirements. Research options when acquiring point-of-sale (POS) devices and other types of self-serve kiosks. Convert purchasing documents to accessible format for posting on GRCA website and/or external purchasing portal e.g. biddingo
Lack of signage	Based on 2017 building assessment, post universal signage where it remains outstanding
Main lobby – accessible layout e.g. seating, phone	Needs assessment was conducted in 2017. Accessibility improvements will be incorporated in 2018 where applicable.

Information Systems, Technology and Communications

Potential Barrier	Action Items for 2018/2019
GRCA Website	Ensure all new documents posted are in an accessible format. Refresher training for staff about posting on the website will be provided.
Readability of printed materials (e.g. brochures, tabloids, minutes, forms)	Accessible document creation training for applicable staff will be scheduled in 2018. Additional training will be provided where needed.

Conservation Areas and Other Recreational Properties

Potential Barrier	Action Items for 2018/2019
Gatehouses	Accessible customer service training is provided to all staff. All gatehouses will be assessed in 2016 to identify specific barriers to accessibility – deferred to 2018/2019. Remediation of barriers will be included in Five Year Capital Plan.
Washrooms and Changerooms	Universal signage installation will continue. Continue to implement accessible washroom upgrades in line with the five year forecast.
Picnic areas	Implement accessibility upgrades to picnic areas, including trail access, as identified in the five year forecast
Parking	No needs have been identified at this time

Campsites	Areas that have not yet identified a preferred location for an accessible campsite in 2018. Design criteria for accessible campsites will be finalized and a plan for implementation will be developed by 2019.
Trails	Existing accessible trails at Guelph Lake and Laurel Creek are being expanded and public consultation will be conducted during the project planning phase.
Outdoor Play Spaces	New outdoor play spaces are planned for Guelph Lake, Byng Island, Conestogo and Rockwood during 2018/19 and public consultation will be conducted as required.

Nature Centres

Potential Barrier	Action Items for 2018/2019
Entrances, doors and walkways	LCNC doorways will be replaced in 2018/19. Other remaining issues will be addressed when funds are available.
Parking	Designate accessible parking spots and post universal signage at Guelph Lake NC.
Washrooms	No action scheduled in this area for this time period.
Programs	Continue to review programs and activities for accessibility; determine ways to improve accessibility.
Emergency Procedures	Fire alarm notification systems to be enhanced to include visual notification in 2018 at GLNC, LCNC, AMNC and Taquanyah.

4.0 Plan Review and Communication Processes

4.1 Review and Monitoring Process

In 2018/2019, the GRCA will reestablish an accessibility working group, with representation from key departments, to continue to identify barriers and review progress on removal and development of barrier prevention strategies. This working group will meet at least twice per year to evaluate progress of the plan and develop accessibility initiatives.

An annual status report on the progress of measures taken to implement the plan will be prepared. This status report will be made available on the GRCA website and in an alternate accessible format upon request. The accessibility plan will be updated at least once every five years.

4.2 Communication of the Plan

Copies of this plan are available to staff and members of the public on the GRCA website. Alternative accessible formats will be available upon request.

APPENDIX

Glossary of Key Terms and Definitions

BARRIER as defined by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, means 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, an information or communication barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice. There are many kinds of barriers. Some are visible, but many are not visible.

Barriers to accessibility	
Type of barriers	Examples
Attitudinal barriers are those that discriminate against people with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• thinking that people with disabilities are inferior• assuming that a person who has a speech impairment cannot understand you
Information or communications barriers happen when a person cannot easily understand information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• print is too small to read• websites that cannot be accessed by people who are not able to use a mouse• signs that are not clear or easily understood
Technology barriers occur when a technology cannot be modified to support various assistive devices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• a website that doesn't support screen-reading software
Organizational barriers are an organization's policies, practices or procedures that discriminate against people with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• a hiring process that is not open to people with disabilities
Architectural and physical barriers are features of buildings or spaces that cause problems for people with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• hallways and doorways that are too narrow for a person using a wheelchair, electric scooter or walker• counters that are too high for a person of short stature• poor lighting for people with low vision• doorknobs that are difficult for people with arthritis to grasp• parking spaces that are too narrow for a driver who uses a wheelchair• telephones that are not equipped with telecommunications devices for people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing

BARRIER-IDENTIFICATION METHODOLOGIES are processes or practices used to determine what barriers exist, where barriers exist and any other information.

Examples of barrier identification methodologies may include: customer feedback surveys or questionnaires, and discussions with employees or members of the public.

DISABILITY means:

- 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 impairment, deafness or hearing impairment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;
- 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 and Insurance Act, 1997*.