

2020/2021

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; Transportation and Design of Public Spaces. 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 applies to new construction and planned redevelopment.

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.
- Incorporating feedback from people with disabilities in the development and review of its annual accessibility plans and when constructing new or redeveloping existing recreational trails and play spaces.
- 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 2018/2019 Plan

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

Organizational

- Reestablish an accessibility working group that is representative of the departments most impacted by the accessibility standards. The working group met at regular intervals in 2018 and 2019 and will continue to do so going forward, consulting with other staff as required.
- Continue to work on items identified in previous accessibility plan. Action items of ongoing relevance have been incorporated into the chart below.
- Continue to build elements of accessibility into all practices, procedures and policies. Ongoing commitment.

Corporate Policies, Procedures & Processes

Potential Barrier	Action Items & Status Update
Human Resources	Recruitment processes - Ensure accommodation is offered when contacting interview candidates. This is currently being done and will be ongoing.

Potential Barrier	Action Items & Status Update
	NEW - Staff Development – added section to document accommodation plans where required for employees COMPLETED and ongoing commitment
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. Accessibility improvements will be incorporated into new projects going forward. Ongoing. Convert purchasing documents to accessible format for posting on GRCA website and/or external purchasing portal e.g. biddingo Documents are no longer posted on the GRCA website and are posted on Biddingo only. Where procurement documents are requested in an accessible format, they will be provided. Ongoing as applicable.
Signage	NEW – A Signage Strategy will be developed and accessibility will be an important component of the overall strategy. This has commenced in 2019.

Administration Centre

Potential Barrier	Action Items for 2018/2019 & Status Update
Lack of signage	Based on 2017 building assessment, post universal signage where it remains outstanding. Signage will be installed pertaining to barrier free washrooms in 2019.
Main lobby – accessible layout e.g. seating, phone	Needs assessment was conducted in 2017. Accessibility improvements will be incorporated in 2018 where applicable. The needs assessment did not note any concerns with respect to paths of travel, seating, phone etc. in the lobby. Accessibility improvements will be considered in any renovations performed, although none are planned.
Accessibility throughout building	NEW – An elevator to provide access throughout the building will be evaluated in 2019. Additional signage requirements and other improvements to reduce accessibility barriers will also be documented and incorporated into future capital plans. This was deferred and will be incorporated into the 2020 plan.

Information Systems, Technology and Communications

Potential Barrier	Action Items & Status Update
GRCA Website	Ensure all new documents posted are in an accessible format. Refresher training for staff about posting on the website will be provided. Under review. Training will be conducted in 2019. This was explored in 2019 and was deferred pending a website update. It will take place in 2020 as required.
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. This was deferred in 2018; training will be conducted in 2019. Training options were explored in 2019 and was deferred pending a broader

Potential Barrier	Action Items & Status Update
	discussion on accessible communications. It will take place in 2020 as required.

Conservation Areas and Other Recreational Properties

Potential Barrier	Action Items & Status Update
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. A Summary will be prepared in 2019 and incorporated into capital plans. The assessment was partially completed in 2019 and will be completed in 2020 and plans made as appropriate.
Washrooms and Changerooms	Universal signage installation will continue. This will be incorporated into the signage strategy. Commenced in 2019. Continue to implement accessible washroom upgrades in line with the five year forecast. The timeline has been adjusted. The goal was to have an accessible washroom in all Conservation Areas (except Belwood) by 2021. This will be reviewed and incorporated in the Capital Forecast as applicable. The 2021 timeline will be adjusted.
Picnic areas	Implement accessibility upgrades to picnic areas, including trail access, as identified in the five year forecast. This work is ongoing. Will be incorporated into accessibility assessments and capital discussions. Accessibility improvements were made at Sandy Bay at Guelph Lake CA.
Parking	No needs have been identified at this time. Each Conservation Area will identify where designated accessible parking stalls should be installed and implementation will commence in 2019 where applicable. This has been completed.
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. This has been reviewed and will be discussed further in 2019 as Conservation Areas will identify potential locations for barrier-free campsites. Deferred to 2020 and will be part of capital discussions.
Trails	Existing accessible trails at Guelph Lake and Laurel Creek are being expanded and public consultation will be conducted during the project planning phase. This will continue in 2019 for these projects and others that may arise. Appropriate signage about the accessible trails will be installed. Ongoing. We have increased accessibility as per Recreational Trail Standards.
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. This is ongoing. New playgrounds are also planned at Brant Park in 2019. The Guelph and Byng playgrounds were installed in 2018 although accessibility was not achieved. The new Brant, Conestogo and Rockwood playgrounds were deferred in

Potential Barrier	Action Items & Status Update
	2019 and will be considered as part of capital discussions and accessibility assessments.

Nature Centres

Potential Barrier	Action Items & Status Update
Entrances, doors and walkways	LCNC doorways will be replaced in 2018/19. Other remaining issues will be addressed when funds are available. The LCNC doorways will be replaced in 2019. Completed
Parking	Designate accessible parking spots and post universal signage at Guelph Lake NC. This work will be completed in 2019. Completed other than Guelph Lake Nature Centre.
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. This is being done on an ongoing basis.
Emergency Procedures	Fire alarm notification systems to be enhanced to include visual notification in 2018 at GLNC, LCNC, AMNC and Taquanyah. This work will be completed as systems are upgraded or new systems are installed. NEW – visibility strips will be added to staircases at Laurel Creek NC, Apps Mill NC and Taquanyah NC in early 2020.

3.3 Action Items for 2020/2021

Organizational

- The accessibility working group will continue to 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.
- Conduct AODA refresher training for all staff
- Ensure advance consultation on proposed projects by posting project details on the website and circulating to consulting partner agencies to invite feedback on accessibility

Corporate Policies, Procedure & Processes

Potential Barrier	Action Items for 2020/2021
Procurement of goods, services or facilities	Continue to review procurement and purchasing practices to incorporate accessibility criteria and requirements. Educate staff on these requirements. Identify priority projects for 2020 and beyond.
Signage	The corporate signage strategy will be finalized in 2020 and an implementation plan will be developed and followed.
Procedures	Develop procedures for preventative and emergency maintenance of the accessible elements in public spaces and for dealing with temporary disruptions when accessible elements required are not in working order

Administration Centre

Potential Barrier	Action Items for 2020/2021
Signage	Post universal signage where it remains outstanding.
Main lobby – accessible layout e.g. seating, phone	Conduct an updated needs assessment and incorporate into any renovation plans in 2020.
Accessibility throughout building	The feasibility of installing an elevator to provide access to all levels in the building will be evaluated. Additional signage requirements and other improvements to reduce accessibility barriers will also be documented and incorporated into future capital plans. This was deferred and will be incorporated into the 2020 plan.

Information Systems, Technology and Communications

Potential Barrier	Action Items for 2020/2021
GRCA Website	Ensure all new documents posted are in an accessible format. Refresher training for staff about posting on the website will be provided. Website updates will be done to ensure ongoing accessibility.
Readability of printed materials (e.g. brochures, tabloids, minutes, forms)	Accessible document creation training for applicable staff will be conducted in 2020. Consider transition of escribe to updated platform to provide accessible board meeting agendas and minutes

Conservation Areas and Other Recreational Properties

Potential Barrier	Action Items for 2020/2021
Gatehouses	Accessible customer service training is provided to all staff. An updated accessibility assessment will be conducted in 2020 and remediation of barriers will be incorporated into plans.
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. Ensure that 20% of new outdoor public use tables are accessible and the area around the accessible tables are level, firm and stable.
Parking	Any new parking areas created will include designated accessible parking spots and related signage.
Campsites	Design criteria for accessible campsites will be finalized and a plan for implementation will be developed in 2020 and a plan to identify barrier-free campsites will be discussed.
Trails	Where practicable, newly developed recreational trails will be as accessible as possible. Public consultation will be conducted. Assess all existing trails based on level of accessibility and include this information in signage and on the website Investigate the feasibility of a loaner program for off-road wheelchairs and accessible beach/flotation chairs at some Conservation Areas.
Outdoor Play Spaces	New outdoor play spaces will be designed to be as accessible as possible and public consultation will be conducted as required.

Nature Centres

Potential Barrier	Action Items for 2020/2021
Entrances, doors and walkways	Nothing planned at this time.
Parking	Nothing planned at this time
Washrooms	No action scheduled in this area for this time period.
Programs	Ongoing review of programs and activities for accessibility; determine ways to improve accessibility. Discuss accessibility at every staff meeting to highlight the importance and to share accommodation ideas.
Emergency Procedures	Nothing planned at this time.
New Guelph Lake Nature Centre	A new building is planned to be constructed in 2020 and it will be built in accordance with AODA requirements.

4.0 Plan Review and Communication Processes

4.1 Review and Monitoring Process

The GRCA reestablished an internal accessibility working group, with management representation from key departments, to continue to identify barriers and review progress on removal and development of barrier prevention strategies. This working group meets 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 is 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*.