



The County of Northumberland Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2022-2025

Updated January 2024



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Executive Summary

We are pleased to present the County of Northumberland's 2022- 2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. This plan builds on the accomplishments of the 2012-2021 Plan.

The 2022-2025 plan was developed in consultation with the Northumberland Accessibility Advisory Committee, people with disabilities, members of the public and staff. The 2022-2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan acts as our accessibility road map, outlining key actions to continue to meet our requirements under the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 \(AODA\)](#).

The Corporation of the County of Northumberland (Northumberland County) is committed to ensuring that people of all ages and abilities enjoy the same opportunities as they live, work, visit and invest in our community. The County is guided by the four core principles of dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity, and supports the full inclusion of persons as set out in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

The County will work hard to continue to remove barriers and improve accessibility for people with all types of disabilities as we work toward creating a thriving and inclusive community.

Through our corporate values we promote a caring, supportive, and respectful community where our programs, services and facilities are available to everyone, including people with disabilities. We strive to ensure accessibility for the public and our employees.

Introduction

About Northumberland County

Located on the traditional territory of the Mississauga Anishinaabeg, Northumberland County is a thriving, south-eastern Ontario community.

Northumberland County is the upper tier level of municipal government that weaves together seven distinct, yet complementary municipalities*.

- Township of Alnwick/Haldimand
- Municipality of Brighton
- Town of Cobourg
- Township of Cramahe
- Township of Hamilton
- Municipality of Port Hope
- Municipality of Trent Hills

We also value our long-standing relationship with Alderville First Nation.

Currently at least 15% of the population has a disability which means that approximately 13,000 people in Northumberland County are living with a disability (based on 2016 population). Within the next 20 years, the number of people with disabilities will increase as the population ages and we can expect the percentage of people with disabilities to increase to 20% or at least 17,000 people.

A disability may be a physical disability caused by conditions present at birth, injury or illness including, but not limited to, diabetes, epilepsy, a brain injury, paralysis, amputation, lack of physical coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal, or on a wheelchair or other device. Disability also includes conditions of mental impairment or a developmental disability, a learning disability, a mental health disorder or any injury or disability for which benefits were claimed under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

- * Note: Each of the seven municipalities has its own multi-year accessibility plan focussed on the programs, services, and facilities under its jurisdiction.

Legislation

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005 sets out a road map for creating an accessible Ontario by 2025. The [Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation \(IASR\)](#), under the AODA, provides the standards that businesses and organizations in Ontario must follow to identify, remove, and prevent barriers.

In addition to the **General Requirements**, which include the development of accessibility policies and plans, procuring goods, services and facilities and requirements for training, the IASR contains mandatory and enforceable standards in five key areas:

- **Customer Service**
- **Information and Communications**
- **Employment**
- **Design of Public Spaces**
- **Transportation**

The Design of Public Spaces Standard focuses on removing barriers in areas not covered by the Ontario Building Code such as exterior paths of travel, on- and off-street parking, recreational trails, pedestrian crossings and service counters. It applies to new construction or redevelopment of existing spaces. It does not require organizations to retrofit in order to be compliant.

[The Ontario Building Code \(OBC\)](#) regulates the minimum building standards for the construction of all new buildings and buildings that undergo a significant renovation. The OBC includes requirements for minimum accessibility within buildings. In 2015, the OBC was amended to include enhancements to accessibility in buildings. Most new construction and extensive renovations will be subject to these updated requirements; existing buildings where no work is planned are not affected by these new requirements.

[The Ontario Human Rights Code](#) prohibits actions that discriminate against people based on a protected ground in a protected social area. Disability is one of the 14 protected grounds. Protected social areas are housing, contracts, employment, goods, services & facilities, and membership in unions, trade or professional associations.

Northumberland's Accessibility Advisory Committee

The Northumberland Accessibility Advisory Committee (NAAC) is a local citizen committee that provides advice, recommendations and support to County Council and all County departments regarding the development, implementation, and maintenance of the County's Accessibility Plan in accordance with the AODA. The NAAC advises on the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers to people with disabilities when accessing County goods, services, and facilities.

Each member of the NAAC is a volunteer and the majority of NAAC membership is held by people with disabilities. The NAAC members bring a wide range of personal and professional experiences and perspectives related to the challenges faced by people with disabilities. They provide invaluable advice and support as we continue to work towards a barrier-free community.

The NAAC is supported by the Accessibility Coordinator and the Corporate Services Department.

Accessibility Partnerships

The Accessibility Coordinator is a member of the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals (ONAP). This network is composed of accessibility professionals within the broader public sector across Ontario and its purpose is to share best practices and resources in accessibility.

Northumberland County also collaborates with its member Municipalities through its Inter-municipal Accessibility Committee. The Committee meets three times per year and shares updates and resources to support greater accessibility across Northumberland County.

Northumberland County's Plan

Our plan shows how Northumberland County has, and will continue, to play its role in making Ontario an accessible province for all Ontarians.

This document includes the ways in which the County will continue to meet accessibility requirements, highlighting recent accomplishments and identifying strategies to continue to make improvements over the next 4 years (2022-2025).

General requirements

Northumberland County has met all of the General Requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards regulation (IASR). The County continues to:

- Monitor and update its accessibility policies, as necessary
- Monitor and update its accessibility plan, as required
- Incorporate acceptable design, criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services, and facilities, unless it is not practicable to do so anyway
- Incorporate accessible features when acquiring self-service kiosk train new employees and volunteers on the requirements of the IASR and Human Rights Code as it relates to people with disabilities
- Ensure persons who provide goods, services, or facilities on behalf of the County are trained on the requirements of the IASR and Human Rights Code as it relates to people with disabilities
- File an accessibility compliance report every two years

The County has taken the following actions to improve access:

- Developed an overarching HR policy 4.1.5 Accessibility (replacing AODA policy manual) and provided policy training for all staff
- Incorporated accessible design considerations into purchasing by-law
- Developed training strategy to ensure employees and anyone providing goods, services, and facilities on behalf of the County receive training as it relates to their position
- Updated 2012-2021 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan annually.

2022-2025 General Requirements Goal

1. Conduct an annual review of the Multi Year Accessibility Plan, and update the Plan as required (Accessibility Coordinator, ongoing to 2025).

Customer Service

Northumberland County has met all of the Customer Service Standards of the Integrated Accessibility Standards regulation (IASR). The County continues to:

- Train staff and volunteers on providing accessible customer service
- Ensure that anyone who provides service on behalf of the County has been trained on providing accessible customer service
- Ensure that customers who use assistive devices, support animals or support persons are welcomed
- Monitor customer service to ensure we are maintaining and improving upon the level of accessibility we provide in programs, services, and facilities
- Explore new technologies that support internal and external customer service

The County maintains a process for receiving and responding to feedback in ways that are accessible to people with disabilities. We provide customers with the opportunity to provide feedback on the service provided to customers with disabilities. Information about the feedback process is readily available at each of the County's customer service desks and on the County's website. Feedback can be submitted by completing the customer feedback form, by e-mail, phone, fax, mail or in person. In addition, the County reviews programs, services, and facilities to identify and remove barriers.

Some recent actions the County has taken to respond to customer feedback or potential barriers include:

- Conducted additional staff training on communicating with people with hearing loss
- Developed a recycling accessibility program
- Converted 2 public washrooms to universal washrooms at County headquarters
- Researched, tested, and installed assistive listening technology with hearing loops at the 4 customer service desks located at County Headquarters.

2022-2025 Accessible Customer Service Goals

1. Continue to receive and respond to accessibility feedback and address identified barriers in a timely manner (Accessibility Coordinator and all departments, ongoing)
2. Explore and provide training on communicating using plain language (Accessibility Coordinator, 2022, **Completed 2023**)
3. Research training options to address attitudinal barriers and stigma associated with disabilities (Accessibility Coordinator, 2023 in progress for 2024 completion)

Information and Communications

Northumberland County has met all of the Information and Communication Standards of the Integrated Accessibility Standards regulation (IASR). The County continues to:

- Maintain accessible websites and web content to ensure [WCAG 2.0AA](#) compliance
- Provide emergency procedures and public safety information in accessible formats, upon request
- Review documents and templates to ensure they are accessible
- Notify the public about the availability of accessible formats and provide accessible formats, upon request.

Some recent actions the County has taken to improve access to information and communications include:

- Redeveloped all County websites to WCAG 2.0 AA compliance
- Equipped main website with assistive technology software that adds text-to-speech and other supportive functions
- Integrated technology that monitors County websites to ensure WCAG 2.0 AA compliance
- Established accessible documents training program for employees
- Developed accessible document templates
- Migrated to an AODA-compliant solution for the documentation and management of public meetings.

2022-2025 Information and Communication Goals

1. Develop branding guidelines that improve accessibility, including standardized accessible font sizes and style for emails, business cards, presentations (Communications, Accessibility Coordinator, 2022, in progress for 2024 completion)
2. Develop and facilitate Accessible Presentations training (Accessibility Coordinator, 2022, in progress for 2024 completion)
3. Modernize Council and Standing Committee meetings by implementing a technology that allows people to attend hybrid meetings, combining in-person attendance with virtual attendance (Information Technology and Clerk, 2022, **Completed 2022**)

Employment

Northumberland County has met all of the Employment Standards of the Integrated Accessibility Standards regulation (IASR). The County continues to:

- Notify applicants and the public about the availability of accessibility accommodations in the recruitment and selection process.
- Notify job applicants when they are selected to participate in the assessment process that accommodations are available, upon request, in relation to the materials or processes to be used (interviews, testing, etc).
- Notify successful applicants of policies for accommodating employees with disabilities when making offers of employment.
- Make policies on accommodating and supporting employees with disabilities available to all employees.
- Provide accessible formats and /or communication supports to employees with disabilities who require it.
- Develop individualized workplace emergency response plans for employees who require it.
- Document individual accommodations plans for employees with disabilities.
- Offer a return-to-work program for employees with disabilities.
- Consider the employee's individual accessibility needs and/or individual accommodation plans during performance management, career development and redeployment processes.

The County has taken the following actions to support people with disabilities throughout its recruitment and selection process and throughout the stages of the employee life cycle:

- Updated HR policies 4.18.1 Recruitment and Selection and 4.16.2 Performance Management to align with the Integrated Accessibility Standard for Employment
- Developed HR policy 4.1.4 Accommodating Disabilities
- Updated job posting template to include statement regarding accommodations
- Updated employee orientation to include HR policies 4.1.5 Accessibility Policy and 4.1.4 Accommodating Disabilities
- Improved new employee orientation by ensuring videos include captions

2022-2025 Employment Goals

1. Conduct proactive outreach and sharing job postings with local disability organizations to encourage applications from people with disabilities (Human Resources, 2022, **Completed 2022**)
2. Review HR policies and practices to ensure applicants and employees with disabilities receive the supports they need (Human Resources and all Departments, 2023, **Completed 2023**)
3. Review and revise HR policy 4.1.4 Accommodating disabilities to clarify procedure and include plain language (Human Resources, 2023, **Completed 2023**)
4. Update employee orientation presentation and handouts to improve accessibility (Human Resources, ongoing to 2024)

Design of Public Spaces

Northumberland County has met all of the Design of Public Spaces Standards (DOPS) of the Integrated Accessibility Standards regulation (IASR). The County continues to:

- Ensure that all new and redeveloped public spaces owned and/or operated by the County meet or exceed the requirements of DOPS.
- Consult with the Northumberland Accessibility Advisory Committee, the public and people with disabilities prior to redeveloping or constructing new public spaces under this Standard.
- Incorporate public consultations into existing processes wherever possible.
- Meet or exceed the technical requirements of DOPS.

The County has taken numerous actions to improve access to County facilities, Northumberland County Forest, and community housing locations including:

- Conducted accessibility audits of various areas within County facilities
- Added universal trail (Heritage Trail) within the Northumberland County Forest
- Installed tactile warning surface at top of staircase and improved colour contrast of staircase nosing at County headquarters
- Added priority seating for people with disabilities within Council Chambers
- Installed 30+ powered door operators throughout County facilities
- Added 2 universal washrooms at County Headquarters

2022-2025 Design of Public Spaces Goals

1. Explore expansion of universal trails within Northumberland County Forest (Natural Heritage, 2022, **Completed 2022**)
2. Improve accessibility of trail signage within Northumberland County Forest (Natural Heritage, 2023, in progress for 2024 completion)

3. Explore transportation options to improve access to universal trails (Natural Heritage and Accessibility Coordinator, 2025)

Transportation

The Transportation Standard makes it easier for people with disabilities to travel on specialized and conventional public transit and in taxicabs in Ontario.

The County of Northumberland does not provide or operate conventional or specialized transportation services, school transportation or ferries, nor does the County license taxicabs; therefore, the transportation standards do not apply to the County.

Additional Initiatives

Northumberland County has implemented additional initiatives to promote awareness and enhance access for, and inclusion of, people with disabilities, including:

- Held annual Awareness campaigns during National AccessAbility Week (May) and International Day of Persons with Disabilities (Dec) (ongoing)
- Presented annual Helping Hands Award for employees who champion accessibility (ongoing)
- Conducted accessibility audits at all community housing providers including Northumberland County Housing Corporation, non-profit and cooperative housing providers
- In partnership with the Northumberland County Housing Corporation, installed vertical platform lifts at 6 community housing locations

2022-2025 Additional Initiatives Goals

1. Conduct research (census, Canadian Health Survey) to better understand the types of disabilities and the number of people with different types of disabilities within the County (Accessibility Coordinator, 2023, in progress for 2024 completion)
2. Seek out funding opportunities to support accessibility initiatives (Grant Writer, Accessibility Coordinator, ongoing to 2025)
3. Explore a learning and networking forum that brings together members of the municipal accessibility advisory committees throughout Northumberland County (Accessibility Coordinator, 2024)
4. Work with community housing providers to support accessible housing improvements (Housing Services and Public Works, ongoing)

For More Information

For more information on the Northumberland County's 2022- 2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, please contact the Accessibility Coordinator by telephone at 1-800-354-7050 ext. 2327 or by email at accessibility@northumberland.ca .

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