



# Accessibility

---

## The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)

### Progress Report 2023

Received by Council

Accessible formats and communications support available upon request.

# Town of The Blue Mountains Commitment to Accessibility

The Town of The Blue Mountains (The Town) is committed to providing programming and services that consider the diverse needs and abilities of the people it serves. This 2023 Progress Report is the annual update on the progress of the measures taken to improve accessibility and implement the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (Ontario Regulation 191/11).

This Progress Report includes the accessibility initiatives that were completed in 2023 to implement the strategies outlined in the Town's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, as adopted by Town of The Blue Mountains Council on September 30, 2019.

## Reporting Requirements

The Town successfully submitted the 2022 Compliance Report as required by the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility. The next Compliance Report was due by December 31, 2023. A Desk Audit was conducted by the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility on compliance progress to date and was submitted in January 2023. The Town was found to be in compliance.

## Progress on the AODA Regulations

The following pages outline the Town's 2023 accomplishments in **Customer Service, Information and Communication, Employment, Transportation and Design of Public Spaces**.

There are also general requirements that apply across all accessibility standards.

## General Requirements

### **Procurement:**

- Accessibility is considered in all Town procurement.
- Accessibility and ergonomics are considered when purchasing new equipment or office furniture.

### **Training:**

- All employees hired in 2023 have received comprehensive AODA Training.
- Job specific training is provided in accordance with the needs of each position (i.e., accessible document training).

## Feedback:

The Town is committed to ensuring its goods or services are provided in an accessible manner. Feedback is welcomed as it may identify areas requiring change and encourage continuous service improvements. Feedback may be provided in person, in writing or electronically using our [Accessible Customer Service Feedback Form](#).

## Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)

### Accessible Customer Service Standard

- An Evacuation Chair has been purchased and installed at Town Hall to assist persons with a mobility disability in evacuating the second floor in the event of an emergency. Refresher training will be scheduled for 2024 for Staff on how to use the chair to assist in an emergency.
- All staff receive accessible customer service training as part of their new employee orientation.
- The Accessible Customer Service Policy has been reviewed and updates made to include a Statement of Commitment as required under the Customer Service Standard.

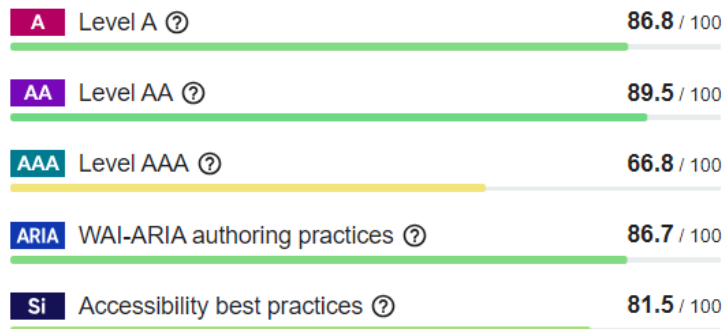
### Information and Communications Standard

- Council and Committee of the Whole meetings are livestreamed, recorded and the video is posted to the Town website. Committees of Council Meetings are recorded, and the videos are posted to the website. All livestreaming and video recordings have closed captioning available. There has been improved closed captioning for Council and Committee meetings.
- Revisions to Procedural By-law. Council has revised its Procedural By-law to allow any member of the public to participate virtually to provide verbal deputations and verbal public comments in response to a Public Meeting Notice.
- Website development staff continue to stay informed of WCAG regulations and attend training opportunities.
- The Town continuously strives to produce all digital media in a fully accessible format.
- Website Development – The Town developed a new municipal website that launched in 2021. As part of the development process, the website was designed and built according to WCAG 2.0 AA standards. To monitor and maintain accessibility on the website, the Town procured Siteimprove, which is an online tool used to review and evaluate the accessibility of the municipal website. The Town's website team has worked diligently to improve the accessibility score within Siteimprove, which currently is 84.5/100. The industry benchmark for Government organizations in Siteimprove is 85.2/100. The Communications team will continue to work to ensure the score is acceptable, with additional work scheduled for August 2024.

## Accessibility overview

🔗 Did you know that you can set a site target and track progress

Score details ?



Accessibility score ?



📊 [View score breakdown](#) →

## Employment Standard

- Human Resources continues to create individual emergency response plans for employees who have permanent or temporary accessibility needs.
- Each job posting includes, “In accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) please advise the Human Resources Department to ensure your accessibility needs are accommodated throughout this process. Personal information provided by the applicants is collected under the authority of the Municipal Act, 2001 and will be used for the purpose of candidate selection.” All offers of employment include, “The Town has an accommodation process in place and provides accommodations for employees with disabilities. If you require a specific accommodation because of a disability or a medical need, please contact Human Resources so that arrangements can be made for the appropriate accommodations to be in place before you begin your employment.”
- Human Resources reviews job descriptions with a consultant to ensure they are free of systemic barriers.
- Job Interviews for open positions and staff meetings have transitioned to a virtual/in person hybrid. For interviews, candidates are given the option to interview virtually or in person. This was a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, provided the added benefit of improved accessibility for candidates and employees. Not only from increasing the accessibility for employees and candidates to participate more easily and safely, but also for those who may have a hearing impairment as an example and find it

difficult to hear and participate in larger, in-person group meetings. Staff and candidates now have the option to choose whether in person or virtual is best for them, which allows for flexibility for disabilities.

- With the updated onboarding program, new staff are walked through the accommodation process and given information on what the Town accommodates for and how to access accommodation.
- HR has struck an internal DE&I committee, with members from Operations, Planning and Development Services, Finance, Community Services, Administration, and the Library. Members include staff level employees, as well as members from the Senior Management Team. The committee decided their focus would be “IDEA”: Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility, and will focus on accessibility from a belonging perspective.

## Transportation Standard

- The Grey Transit Route (GTR) offers extended service from Owen Sound to Craigeith. The GTR also provides accessible services upon request.
- The Blue Mountains and Collingwood Transit Link provides service from Collingwood to Craigeith. Accessible service is available upon request.
- Collingwood is implementing a new specialized accessible service for transportation. This service will be an in-house service.
- Accessibility will be considered through the Town’s Transportation Master Plan process. The Transportation Master Plan has goals and objectives regarding accessibility, specifically for the design and operations of active transportation and public transportation. The Transportation Master Plan has been endorsed by Council.

## Design of Public Spaces

2023 Projects included:

- Washroom enhancements at Little River Park. Work on the washrooms began in July 2022 and were completed in 2023. The washrooms meet AODA standards.
- The Town purchased and installed mobility mats to provide accessible access to the waterfront at Little River Park.

## Joint Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee

The Town of The Blue Mountains is a member of the Grey County Joint Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee. Grey County’s Joint Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee advises Grey County Council and staff members, as well as participating municipalities, on ways to identify, prevent, and remove barriers from municipal services, by-laws, policies, programs, and facilities.

The Town is also in the process of developing a Community Working Group which would advise the Town on accessibility related topics.

## Ongoing Review of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Ongoing review and feedback are important for the Town's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan to stay effective. The Town will continue to collect feedback and implement changes that will enhance the accessibility of its services. Members of the public are encouraged to make comments on this plan and accessibility matters in general. The current Multi-Year Plan is expiring and a new 5-year Accessibility Plan will be presented soon.

The Town's Accessibility Coordinator will continue to review the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan annually and prepare annual Progress Reports for review by the Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee and Town of The Blue Mountains Council.