Halton Region
Multi-Year Accessibility Plan,
2012 - 2017

Halton
REGION

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Introduction

Halton Region is committed to the ongoing identification, removal and prevention of barriers to people with disabilities[1]. A barrier is anything that makes it challenging or impossible for a person with a disability to access a service, program or a building. This could include:
- a physical barrier, such as a feature of a building or outdoor space that presents a challenge for a person with a physical disability;
- an information or communications barrier that would make it difficult for a person to easily understand information, such as print that is too small to read; or
- a technological barrier such as a website that does not support screen-reading software.

Since the establishment of Halton Region's Accessibility Advisory Committee, Halton staff and committee members have worked together toward improving the accessibility of the Region's facilities and services and creating awareness on issues affecting people with disabilities.

This document sets out the work that will be undertaken by Halton Region toward implementing the requirements of *Ontario Regulation 191/11 – Integrated Accessibility Standards* (IASR) and other initiatives aimed at removing and preventing barriers to people with disabilities.

This document responds to section 4 of the IASR which requires obligated organizations to develop a multi-year accessibility plan outlining how the requirements of the IASR will be met. It also addresses section 11 of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* which requires municipalities to develop an annual plan setting out how barriers to people with disabilities will be identified, removed and prevented.

Halton Region

Halton Region is situated on the northern shore of Lake Ontario. It is a mix of urban and rural areas and covers over 232,000 acres of land, including a 25-km frontage onto Lake Ontario. The Region's approximate population in 2011 was 493,000. In 2011, Halton was named one of the Greater Toronto Area's (GTA) top employers and one of the top employers for new Canadians for the third

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[1] For the purposes of the work of the Halton Region Accessibility Advisory Committee and accessibility planning, the definition of the word "disability" is understood to be that which is identified in the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. The definition in these statutes is taken from the *Ontario Human Rights Code.* This definition can be found in Appendix 1.

consecutive year. It was also recognized as the safest place to live in the GTA and the safest regional municipality in Canada by Maclean's Magazine.

Halton Region is comprised of two levels of municipal government, the Regional Municipality of Halton and four Local Municipalities - the City of Burlington, the Town of Halton Hills, the Town of Milton and the Town of Oakville. These two tiers of government work together to respond to the diverse needs of the Halton community.   Appendix 2 lists the services provided by the Regional Municipality of Halton and those provided by the Local Municipalities within Halton.

Halton Regional Council is comprised of 21 members with the following representation: the Regional Chair; the Mayors of each of the four Local Municipalities; six members of Council from the City of Burlington; two members of Council from the Town of Halton Hills; two members of Council from the Town of Milton; and, six members of Council from the Town of Oakville.

Halton Region Accessibility Advisory Committee (2011-2014)

Pursuant to Provincial accessibility legislation, Halton Region established the Halton Region Accessibility Advisory Committee (HRAAC) in 2002. The HRAAC is a citizen committee that acts as an advisory body and reports to Regional Council through the Administration and Finance Committee. Its mandate is to advise on the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to people with disabilities with respect to Halton Region facilities, programs and services.

Members of the HRAAC are appointed by Regional Council and membership aligns with the term of Regional Council. Current members of the HRAAC are:

- Councillor Blair Lancaster, Committee Chair
- John Albert Beaudette, Vice-Chair
- Howard Bobkin
- Kevin Brackley, Vice- Chair
- Joan Gallagher-Bell
- Axel Krueger
- Anne McEachnie
- Nigel Watson

Since 2002, the HRAAC has provided input on a number of Regional initiatives and projects and has supported activities aimed at creating awareness on issues relating to people with disabilities. During 2011 and 2012, the HRAAC provided advice on physical improvements and renovations to Regional facilities and input on enhancing employment services for people with disabilities at the Accessible Employment Centres in Oakville and Milton.

The members bring to the Committee a wide range of personal experiences and perspectives related to the challenges faced by people with disabilities. They provide invaluable advice and support to Halton Region as it continues to work toward the identification and elimination of barriers.

Status of Accessibility Legislation in Ontario

Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001

In 2001, the Provincial government enacted the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA)*. This Act required organizations within the public sector (the provincial government, municipalities, hospitals, educational institutions and public transportation providers) to undertake activities aimed at reducing and eliminating barriers to people with disabilities. It also required municipalities with populations of over 10,000 to appoint accessibility advisory committees (AAC), develop annual accessibility plans and seek the advice of AACs on certain matters.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005

In 2005, the Provincial government passed the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*. The AODA requires the development of accessibility standards in a number of areas. Five committees were established by the Provincial government to develop accessibility standards in the following areas: customer service; information and communications; employment; transportation and the built environment. The committees included people with disabilities and representatives of sectors and industries that would be impacted by the standards.

Although the AODA was proclaimed in force in 2005, the ODA was not revoked. The Provincial government has indicated that the ODA will be likely be repealed, however, no definitive timeframe has been provided. As a result, municipalities are still obligated to adhere to the requirements of the ODA.

Ontario Regulation 429-07 – Accessibility Standards for Customer Service

The first Regulation enacted under the AODA was *Ontario Regulation 429-07– Accessibility Standards for Customer Service*. Designated public sector organizations, including municipalities, were to be in compliance by January 1, 2010 and submit a compliance report to the Provincial government by March 31, 2010. Report No. LPS63-09 – *Accessibility Standards under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and Report No. LPS39-10 – *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act: Compliance with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service* set out the steps that Halton Region was taking to meet the requirements of the Regulation. As noted in Report No. LPS39-10, Halton Region submitted its compliance report to the Province in advance of the March

31, 2010 deadline indicating it had addressed the requirements of the Regulation and had met its compliance obligations.

Accessible Built Environment Standards

Also being developed are accessibility standards relating to the built environment. The Provincial government recently released, for review and comment, proposed accessibility standards for the design of public spaces. The proposed standards focus on outdoor spaces including recreational trails, beach access routes, outdoor public use eating areas, outdoor play spaces, exterior paths of travel and on and off-street parking. The proposed standards have an implementation date of 2016 for designated public sector organizations, including municipalities. These standards may be finalized as a Regulation under the AODA next year. Standards associated with the interior of buildings are still being developed and the Provincial government has indicated that they will likely be captured as amendments to the Ontario Building Code. It is unknown when these standards will be issued for public review or enacted.

Recently Enacted Regulatory Requirements

Ontario Regulation 191/11-Integrated Accessibility Standards (IASR)

The IASR was enacted in July 2011. It includes a number of general and specific accessibility requirements in the areas of information and communications, employment and transportation. The requirements have compliance dates ranging from when the IASR was enacted (July 2011) to the year 2021. The requirements apply to the public, private and not for profit sectors. The sections of the IASR that most impact Halton Region are those related to accessible information and communications, and employment. As the Region is not a provider of public transit, the transportation requirements do not apply.

The categories and requirements addressed in the Regulation (except those related to accessible transportation) are summarized below.

General Requirements
- Development of an integrated accessibility standards policy;
- Development of a multi-year accessibility plan;
- Annual reporting on the progress of the multi-year accessibility plan;
- Training staff and volunteers on the requirements of the Regulation and the Ontario Human Rights Code, as it pertains to people with disabilities; and,
- Ensuring that accessibility considerations and features are reflected in procurement processes.

Information and Communications – This section reflects requirements for organizations to create, provide and receive information and communications in ways that are accessible to people with disabilities. The specific requirements include the following:

- Ensuring that feedback processes are accessible, upon request;
- Providing accessible formats and communication supports, upon request;
- Providing publicly available emergency procedure, plans or public safety information in accessible formats, upon request; and,
- Improving the accessibility of websites and web content.

Employment – This section of the IASR requires employers to provide for accessibility across all stages of the employment cycle and integrate accessibility into regular workplace processes. The specific requirements include the following:

- Notifying employees and the public of the availability of accommodation for applicants with disabilities in recruitment and assessment processes;
- Notifying successful applicants of the availability of accommodations;
- Informing employees of policies to provide support to employees with disabilities;
- Providing accessible formats and communication supports for employees with disabilities;
- Providing work place emergency response information to employees with disabilities;
- Establishing processes to develop documented individual accommodation plans;
- Developing a return to work process for employees who have been absent from work due to a disability or who require disability-related accommodations to return to work; and,
- Considering the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities and accommodation plans in performance management processes, when providing career development opportunities or when considering redeployment.

Halton Region Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy and Halton Region Multi-Year Accessibility Plan - Development Process

Following the enactment of the IASR, an Accessibility Project Team that included representation from the areas of the Regional organization most impacted by the Regulation (e.g., Purchasing Services, Human Resource Services and Strategic Communications) was struck to review its requirements. Work was undertaken on developing an integrated accessibility standards policy and a multi-year accessibility plan. Both the policy and plan are required by the IASR and are to be in place by January 1, 2013.

The Halton Region Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy has been developed. As required by the IASR, it includes a statement of organizational commitment and sections that set out the Region's obligations in relation to accessible information and communications, and employment.

Similarly this document, the Halton Region Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, was developed to set out the actions Halton Region will take to achieve compliance with the IASR. To address the IASR's requirement that the HRAAC along with people with disabilities be consulted on the plan, a number of actions were taken including placing the draft plan on the Region's website for review. Advertisements were also placed in local newspapers advising that the draft plan was available for review and inviting members of the public to attend the September 2012 meeting of the HRAAC to discuss elements of the draft plan and provide feedback. The focus of the HRAAC September 2012 meeting was a presentation and discussion of the draft plan. The elements of the draft plan were supported by the HRAAC.

The development of the Halton Region Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy and the Halton Region Multi-Year Accessibility Plan was guided by, and is in keeping with, interpretative materials and resources issued by the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario, Ministry of Community and Social Services. In addition, as both documents were being developed information was shared with accessibility staff in the Local Municipalities within Halton and with a broader network of municipal accessibility staff.

The following tables set out the actions Halton Region will take to address the IASR and achieve compliance.

Regulatory Requirement	Compliance Deadline	Actions to be Taken
Part I - General **This section of the Regulation requires Halton Region to:** • **develop accessibility policies and a multi-year accessibility plan** • **report annually on the progress of the multi-year plan** • **incorporate accessibility features and considerations in procurement processes** • **ensure staff and volunteers have been trained on the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation and the Ontario Human Rights Code**		
Develop accessibility policies • Develop, implement and maintain accessibility policies, including a statement of organizational commitment • Make policies publically available	**January 1, 2013**	Halton Region has developed a policy that addresses the requirements in the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) and

Regulatory Requirement	Compliance Deadline	Actions to be Taken
		includes a statement of organizational commitment.

The policy is to be placed on Halton Region's website, once approved by Regional Council. |
| **Develop a multi-year accessibility plan**
• Establish, implement, maintain and document a multi-year accessibility plan
• Post multi-year accessibility plan on website and provide in an accessible format, upon request | **January 1, 2013** | A multi-year accessibility plan that sets out how Halton Region will comply with requirements of IASR has been developed. Once approved it will be placed on Halton Region's website. |
| **Report annually on the multi-year accessibility plan**
• Prepare an annual status report on the progress of measures set out in the multi-year plan
• Post annual status report on website and provide in an accessible format, upon request | **Year 2014 and ongoing** | Annual status report on progress of multi-year accessibility plan will be developed and placed on Halton Region's website. |
| **Incorporate accessibility in procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities**
• Incorporate accessibility criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities, except where it is not practicable to do so | **January 1, 2013** | Wording in Halton Region procurement documents will be reviewed and updated, as required, to reflect requirements of IASR.

Resources are being developed to assist staff in considering accessibility criteria and features in procurement processes and decisions. |
| **Training**
• Ensure that training on the IASR and the Human Rights Code as it pertains to persons with disabilities is provided to employees, volunteers, persons who participate in developing policies and others who provide goods, services or facilities on behalf of organization | **January 1, 2014** | The Ontario Government has indicated that training materials are being developed and will be provided to obligated organizations. Once training materials are provided, they will be reviewed to assess their applicability to Halton Region. |

Regulatory Requirement	Compliance Deadline	Actions to be Taken
		Training program options are being considered and staff training to be undertaken in 2013.

Regulatory Requirement	Compliance Deadline	Actions to be Taken
Part II - Information and Communications Standards **This section of the Regulation includes requirements related to:** • **accessible feedback processes** • **accessible formats and communication supports** • **publically available emergency procedures, plans, public safety information** • **accessible websites and web content**		
Feedback processes • Ensure that processes for receiving and responding to feedback are accessible to persons with disabilities by providing/ arranging for accessible formats and communication supports, upon request • Notify the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports	**January 1, 2014**	Halton's advertisements currently include wording that asks residents to advise if they require accommodation at any Regional event or meeting. Existing feedback processes and wording on Halton's website on the availability of accessible documents to be reviewed and updated, as required.
Accessible formats and communication supports • Upon request, provide for provision of accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities • Notify the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports	**January 1, 2015**	Already existing procedures regarding documents in alternate formats and American Sign Language interpretation will be reviewed to determine if they require updating based on the IASR. Wording on Halton's website on the availability of accessible formats will be reviewed and updated, as required.
Emergency procedures, plans or public safety information • Provide emergency procedures, plans or public safety information, that are available publicly, in an accessible format or with appropriate communication supports, upon request	**January 1, 2012**	**Complete** – documents provided in alternate formats, upon request Information on emergencies and people with disabilities is available on Halton Region's website. Brochures and information available in a variety of formats.

Regulatory Requirement	Compliance Deadline	Actions to be Taken
Accessible websites and web content • Websites and web content to conform to WCAG 2.0 Level AA	**January 1, 2021**	Following the re-design of Halton's website, the Adaptive Technology Resource Centre reviewed the site and provided feedback on its accessibility. An accessibility tool checker is run weekly on Halton's website to identify accessibility issues. Efforts are ongoing to educate staff on creating accessible documents for Halton's website. Staff are reviewing resources provided by the Ontario Government on making websites accessible.

Regulatory Requirement	Compliance Deadline	Actions to be Taken
Part III – Employment Standards This section of the Regulation includes requirements related to: • **recruitment, assessment and selection** • **accessible formats and communication supports for employees** • **workplace emergency response** • **return to work processes** • **performance management, career development and redeployment**		
Recruitment • Notify employees and the public about the availability of accommodation for applicants with disabilities in recruitment process • Notify job applicants when selected to participate in an assessment or selection process that accommodations are available • When making an offer of employment, notify successful applicants of policies for accommodating employees with disabilities	**January 1, 2014**	Wording on Halton Region's website (Employment Opportunities page) and in job postings will be updated to reflect what applicants are to do should they require accommodation due to a disability. Human Resource staff to advise individuals who are selected to participate in interviews of the availability of accommodations. A statement notifying successful applicants of policies for accommodating employees with disabilities will be added to offer letters or reiterated verbally if the offer is made in person or by telephone.
Informing employees of supports • Inform employees of policies to support employees with disabilities	**January 1, 2014**	New employees will be advised of policies in place to support employees with disabilities, as soon as possible after they begin employment. Existing employees will be advised of changes to policies through a variety of methods, including the Region's intranet site and email.

Regulatory Requirement	Compliance Deadline	Actions to be Taken
		This requirement will also be addressed in IASR staff training program.
Accessible formats and communication supports for employees • When requested by an employee with a disability, employers shall provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for information needed to perform employee's job and information generally available to employees in workplace	**January 1, 2014**	This requirement will be reflected in IASR policy and addressed in IASR staff training program.
Workplace emergency response information • Provide individualized workplace emergency response information to employees who have a disability, as required	**January 1, 2012**	**Completed** – A process has been put in place for employees to self identify so that a workplace emergency response plan can be developed.
Documented individual accommodation plans • Develop and have in place a written process for the development of documented individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities	**January 1, 2014**	Halton Region's existing Work Accommodation Policy will reviewed and updated, as required.
Return to work process • Develop and have in place a return to work process for employees who have been absent from work due to a disability and require disability-related accommodations to return to work	**January 1, 2014**	A return to work process guide will be developed.
Performance management, career development and redeployment • Take into account accessibility needs of employees with disabilities and individual accommodation plans as part of performance management processes, when providing career development opportunities and considering redeployment.	**January 1, 2014**	IASR policy will reflect requirements for performance management, career development and redeployment. Existing policies associated with career development and redeployment will be reviewed and updated, as required.

Next Steps

The development of the Halton Region Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy and the Halton Region Multi-Year Accessibility Plan are just two of the many actions that are required by the IASR.   Throughout 2013, Halton staff will work toward meeting the additional requirements of the IASR and undertake other activities aimed at eliminating barriers. They include the following:

- meeting the requirements of the IASR associated with training and accessible employment;
- developing an annual update on the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, as required by the IASR;
- preparing for the submission of a report to the Provincial government demonstrating compliance with components of the IASR and Ontario Regulation 429/07- Accessible Customer Service;
- reviewing existing accessibility procedures and updating them, as required;
- consulting with and seeking the input of the HRACC on physical improvements projects, and Regional initiatives such as the Comprehensive Housing Strategy Update and the Active Transportation Master Plan;
- monitoring the development of the accessible built environment standards and reporting to Regional Council, as appropriate; and,
- continuing to share information and network with Local Municipal accessibility staff, the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals and the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario.

Once approved by Regional Council, the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will be placed on Halton Region's website. The plan will also be made available in alternate formats, upon request.

APPENDIX 1

Definition of Disability

The definition of disability that appears in the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* and in the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* is the same as that which is used in the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.

For the purposes of this document, the term "disability" is taken from the provincial statutes mentioned above and is defined as follows:

a) 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 coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;

b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;

c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;

d) a mental disorder; or

e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

APPENDIX 2

The following table lists the services provided by Halton Region and those provided by the Local Municipalities within Halton.

Halton Region	Local Municipalities
• Economic Development	• Business Development
• Regional Roads and Transportation	• Fire Protection
• Children's Services	• Local Museums and Libraries
• Regional Clerk's Office	• Local Land-Use Planning
• Emergency Medical Services (EMS)	• Local Roads, Sidewalks, Street Lighting
• Emergency Preparedness	• Municipal Licensing/Permits and Building Code
• Garbage Collecting and Recycling	• Parks and Recreation
• Housing	• Snow Removal
• Ontario Works Halton	• Storm Sewers
• Museum	• Tax Collection
• Planning and Growth Management	• Transit
• Public Health Programs and Services	
• Seniors	
• Wastewater / Sewage	
• Water Purification	

For more information, contact

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