

HURON COUNTY

# 2013 Annual Accessibility Report



Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee  
Goderich, Ontario

Phone: 519-524-8394, Ext. 3259

E-Mail: [accessibility@huroncounty.ca](mailto:accessibility@huroncounty.ca) Website: [www.huroncounty.ca](http://www.huroncounty.ca)

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For additional information, please contact

Sandra Thompson, Accessibility Coordinator at [sthompson@huroncounty.ca](mailto:sthompson@huroncounty.ca) or (519) 524-8394, Extension 3259 or mail

Or mail

Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee  
1 Courthouse Square  
Goderich, ON N7A 1M2

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## Vision

For many years now, Huron County has had the vision to inform and inspire people from across the County, in making Huron County accessible for people of all abilities.

The Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee (HCAAC) believes if you believe in a dream and have the courage to try, great things can be accomplished. Alvin Law says “We all have obstacles in life. It is ultimately your attitude that determines whether they block our path to success or strengthen us on our journey.” Everyone with a disability dreams of an accessible world.

The HCAAC believes that improving the quality of life for people with disabilities is achievable. They have a vision and the determination to provide Huron County businesses with the knowledge and information needed to create an accessible community. An accessible Huron County will provide those with a disability with the opportunity to say hello to a new freedom, independence and quality of life.



## Background

About 15.5% of Ontario's population or 1.8 million people are reported as having a disability (Stats Canada, 2006) and that number is expected to grow significantly. By 2017, for the first time, Ontarians aged 65 and over will account for a larger share of the population than children aged 0-14.

Although our governments have dedicated a lot of energy and money towards their vision of a barrier-free Ontario, the reality is that persons with disabilities still face barriers which prevent them from participating in all aspects of society. Canadians with disabilities are no longer viewed as “exceptions” whose needs must be met through segregated programs but rather seen as fellow citizens, who share the belief that they have a responsibility to one another and have something of value to contribute.

While governments acknowledge their role in providing leadership, the achievement of full citizenship requires more than the involvement of governments alone. Efforts from all sectors of society, including government departments and agencies, private enterprise and voluntary organizations, are required to achieve the overall goal of full citizenship.

## **Message From The Chair of the Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee – Paul Klopp:**

Huron County is pleased to present to you the 2013 Accessibility Plan - Working Towards an Accessible Huron County. This report was written by our Accessibility Coordinator, with input and feedback from the Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee (HCAAC) and the Working Group, which is made up of staff from each of the 9 municipalities.

People with disabilities regularly face barriers that prevent them from working, traveling in and enjoying their communities. Seniors also experience barriers to activities as part of the natural aging process. By 2017, for the first time, Ontarians aged 65 and over will account for a larger share of the population than children aged 0-14. The incidence of disability is higher for seniors than in the rest of the population. This will have a profound effect on the way we do business and live our lives. Huron County recognizes the need to change the way we do business and that we will need to accommodate these new realities in order to provide the best customer service we can. Accessibility has become a part of the County's culture.

Ontario's accessibility standards will break down these barriers so that people of all ages and abilities can easily live, work and travel throughout the province. Making the province accessible by 2025 will help Ontario tap into the economic power of thousands of customers and visitors with disabilities and harness a larger, more diverse labour pool.

I encourage you to read the report in its entirety and provide us with you comments.

Paul Klopp, Chair  
Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee

## **County Council (2012)**

Huron County is governed by County Council, which is made up of sixteen (16) members from area municipalities. Each municipality located within Huron County is represented at County Council by their elected representatives: Mayors or Reeves, Deputy Mayor and Deputy Reeves, along with additional Councilor Representatives, as determined by eligible voters.

Annually, at their Inaugural Session in December, County Council elects a Warden from among the Councillors. The Warden is the executive officer of the corporation and the head of County Council. The Warden chairs County Council meetings, sits as an ex-officio member on all Standing Committees, and represents the County at a wide range of functions and activities.

County Councillors are: Ben Van Diepenbeek, Neil Rintoul, Bill Dowson, Paul Klopp, Tyler Hessel, Jim Ginn, David Jewitt, Deb Shewfelt, John Grace, Art Versteeg, Bernie MacLellan (Warden), Joe Steffler, Paul Gowing, Neil Vincent, George Robertson, Jim Dietrich.

## Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee (HCAAC):

The Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee is made up of 12 voting members including 7 persons with a disability as defined in the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA); 2 persons from professional disciplines; 1 elected official; and 2 citizen representatives. The HCAAC is supported by 5 non-voting members including the chair of the ODA working group, 1 person from the County Planning Department; 1 person from the County Social Services Department, 1 Municipal Building Official and the County Clerk.



**Voting Members:** Joe Austin, Ed Bezaire, Debbie Braun, Lorie Falconer, Bob Fisher, Paul Klopp (Chair), Chris Knapp, Maureen A. McCauley, Glen McLachlan, Charlene O'Reilly, Barbara Hicks.

**Non-Voting Members:** Heather Adams, Robyn de Weerd, Claire Dodds, James Spenser, Lynda Rotteau, Sandra Thompson, County Clerk (Vacant).

## Our Vision

The Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee will start now to inform and inspire people from across Huron County on making Huron County accessible for people of all abilities.

## Our Mission

The Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee shall assist Huron County Council and participating municipalities to fulfill the purpose of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* by providing vision and advice to Council in regards to the removal of barriers by 2025.



## Our Mandate

- The authority to establish the Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee originated from the provisions of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and will continue to exist under the provisions of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*.
- The Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee shall operate in accordance with the procedures in this document.
- The Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee is the advisory committee to Huron County Council and participating municipalities for fulfilling the purpose of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*.

## Legislated Duties and Functions

In fulfilling the purpose of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, the Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee shall:

- Advise County Council annually, as required by legislation, regarding the preparation, implementation and effectiveness of the annual accessibility plans of the participating municipalities.
- Advise participating municipalities on the accessibility of buildings, structures or premises, or part of a building, structure or premises that the municipalities lease, purchase, construct or significantly renovate.
- Review in a timely manner and advise municipalities on the accessibility of building plans and drawings for renovations and new construction of public buildings as requested. The Committee will also review development of the exterior to buildings using the Huron County Universal Design and Accessibility Guideline for Site Plan Control.
- Perform other functions specified in the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*.

## Other Duties

The Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee may undertake the following duties:

- Review matters provided for review from participating municipalities and respond with advice as appropriate.
- Consult with persons with disabilities, community groups and organizations representing persons with disabilities in order to capture and communicate emerging issues to municipalities.
- Refer issues and make recommendations or suggestions for action to appropriate groups, agencies, committees and organizations in the community to address barriers that affect persons with disabilities. Because the Committee is not legislated to enforce compliance to standards, the Committee will focus on educating residents and businesses in Huron County on the new AODA standards and providing them with necessary information and links to additional resources.
- Provide advice to County Council and participating municipalities on ways to address issues for the inclusion of persons with disabilities relating to the provision of transportation, housing, employment, recreation and education in order to achieve an accessible community for persons with disabilities.
- Provide advice to County Council and participating municipalities with respect to government directives and regulations relating to the status of persons with disabilities including regulations for the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.
- Liaise with other local accessibility advisory committees.
- Provide feedback to participating municipalities regarding these terms of reference and advise on changes if required. Changes must comply with statutory requirements and shall require the ratification of participating municipalities.
- Work in collaboration with the Huron County Accessibility Working Group to review plans to promote and facilitate a seamless approach to effective barrier removal across the County in public municipal buildings.

## COMMITTEES VALUES:



**Citizen-Centred Focus:** Putting the interests of Huron County's disabled and aging populations first with the goal of full inclusion for all.

**Trust & Respect:** Building long-term relationships founded on trust and respect.



**Collaboration:** Will work in partnership with those who support the Vision, Mission and Values of Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee to achieve shared goals.

**Education & Development of People:** Increasing the capacity of society as a whole to achieve inclusive societies for people of all abilities.



**Integrity:** Will work with everyone with compassion, objectivity and openness.

**Creativity:** Encouraging society to embrace change.

## LAST YEAR'S GOALS:

Goals identified in Huron County's 2012 Annual Accessibility Plan were:

1. Huron County and its Municipalities will continue to maintain and evaluate their compliance to the Customer Service Regulation.
2. The Customer Service Regulation became law for all businesses in Ontario on January 1, 2012. The Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee will strive to educate local businesses to ensure their compliance with the Customer Service Standard.

3. The Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee will focus a large portion of their efforts on working towards understanding and implementing the requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Regulation.
4. The County of Huron Accessibility Advisory Committee will also remain committed to actively reviewing site plans through its Building Plan Review, Site Plan and Physical Architectural Assessment Committee.

## **2012 Achievements:**

1. Huron County continued to provide extensive customer service training to all new employees throughout 2012.
2. The Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee successfully hosted its second National Access Awareness Week event on May 30, 2012 with approximately 200 people in attendance. Alvin Law as the keynote speaker. Over 13,000 babies around the world were deformed in the early 1960's because of a morning sickness drug, Thalidomide. Alvin Law was born without arms after his birth mother, thinking it was completely safe, used just a couple of the tiny pills and their lives were forever altered. Yet, what may have become a tragic life-story did not turn out that way. Today, Alvin is not only a completely independent, remarkably successful professional speaker, but proof that out of nothing can arise one of the most inspiring stories you will ever witness.

This event provided the Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee with the perfect venue to provide local businesses with resources for ensuring their compliance with the Customer Service Standard. The following documents were created, printed and made available to businesses:

- Customer Service Checklist
- Customer Service Brochure
- Serving Customers with Service Animals Guide
- Serving Customers with Service Animals Summary

3. The following accomplishments have been made with regards to the Integrated Accessibility Regulation:
- In an effort to interpret and understand the Integrated Accessibility Regulation (IAR) a Project Charter was developed and approved.
  - A communication explaining the IAR requirements of taxi cabs was developed and shared with Huron County's lower tiers because they are responsible for licensing taxi cabs.
  - Ensured any County and lower tier emergency plans posted on the website are accessible and compatible with readers. Emergency tips sheets related to the IAR requirements were shared with County staff, lower tiers and local businesses.
  - The Integrated Accessibility Regulation policy was developed and will be approved by County Council prior to the January 1, 2013 deadline.
  - Huron County's Procurement Policy & Checklist were developed and will be approved by County Council prior to the January 1, 2013 deadline.
  - Huron County's first multi-year accessibility plan was created and will be approved by County Council prior to the January 1, 2013 deadline.
  - Huron County has added the following statement to all job postings: "The County of Huron is an equal opportunity employer. Accessibility accommodations are available for all parts of the recruitment process. Applicants need to make their needs known in advance" to ensure compliance with the IAR.
  - The Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee is actively working towards compliance with the IAR by providing additional resources to appropriate staff with the introduction of the following documents:
    - CNIB Clear Print Guide
    - In the Zone Guide

- The Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee has developed the Emergency Workplace Response Policy along with an Individual Emergency Workplace Response Plan form, which is still draft. This policy and form will be approved and implemented in 2013.
  - Huron County's Accessibility Coordinator and IT staff attended Accessible Format Training and are currently developing a training package for implementation in 2013 and 2014.
  - The last standard in the Integrated Accessibility Regulation – Outdoor Spaces was released for review and feedback. The Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee prepared a letter to the Ministry of Community and Social Services outlining their feedback to the Outdoor Spaces Standard.
4. The Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee's Building Plan Review, Site Plan and Physical Architectural Assessment Committee reviewed the following site plans and provided formal comments and recommendations:
- Brussels Library
  - Bayfield Library
  - Maitland River Elementary School
  - Goderich Downtown Master Plan

## **2013 Goals**

1. Approval and implementation of the Emergency Workplace Response Policy along with an Individual Emergency Workplace Response Plan form.
2. Develop of training package to be approved and implemented throughout 2013 and 2014.
3. Will develop an enhanced Accessibility website page to share all relevant resources for staff, businesses and individuals.

4. Will continue to work towards full compliance with the Integrated Accessibility Regulation.
5. Review and revise the Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee's priorities as needed in 2013.
6. Create and implement an awards program as part of our National Access Awareness Week event.

## **Making Ontario Accessible:**

On June 13, 2005, the government passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

## **The Act:**

Makes Ontario the first jurisdiction in Canada to develop, implement and enforce mandatory accessibility standards, and applies to both the private and public sectors.

Through the Act and the accessibility standards, our Government's goal is to make Ontario accessible by 2025. Under the AODA, the Province has committed to developing five sets of accessibility standards, which both public and private sector organizations will be required to meet. Huron County met the Customer Service Regulation on January 1, 2010. All businesses in Huron County needed to be in compliance with the Customer Service Regulation on January 1, 2012.



Since then, three of the remaining standards: Information and Communication, Employment and Transportation have been consolidated into a single Integrated Accessibility Standard (IAS) described in greater detail below.

The Integrated Accessibility Standard was released on June 3rd, 2011 as regulation. Along with requirements in Information and Communication, Employment and Transportation, the Regulation also includes a number of general requirements for policies, planning and training. Huron County is obligated to meet the requirements of the IAS within timelines ranging from July 1, 2011 to January 1, 2021. Penalties for any organization that does not meet the requirements outlined in the Regulation are up to a maximum of \$100,000 per day.

The Integrated Accessibility Standard harmonized three standards in: Information and communication, which includes accessibility standards for websites, accessible formats of documents and communications to the public, accessible feedback processes, providing accessible emergency and public safety information, and requirements for public libraries.

Employment, which includes providing accommodation throughout the recruitment process, providing accessible formats of information and communications to employees, documenting accommodation plans for employees with disabilities, and accommodating employees during return-to-work, redeployment, and career development.

Transportation, which applies to conventional and specialized transit, as well as taxi licensing, and includes a number of technical requirements, service requirements, and planning and public consultation requirements.

Broadly, the IAS requires organizations to document policies and process for various provisions, to train all employees, volunteers, and relevant third parties in the IAS requirements and the Human Rights Code as it relates to people with disabilities, and to develop or acquire various resources or equipment to support compliance.



The last accessibility standards identified under the AODA, standards for the built environment, are in development. These standards will apply to buildings and outdoor spaces. At the time of publication, the Province of Ontario has divided the standards for the built environment into two distinct areas of the built environment: the Design of Public Spaces, and buildings.

A draft Design of Public Spaces Standard, developed under the AODA, was made available to the public for comment until October 1, 2012. According to the Ministry of Community and Social Services website, enhancements to accessibility for buildings are to be addressed at a later date and incorporated into future revisions of the *Ontario Building Code*.

## **Requirements of the Regulation:**

Once fully implemented, Huron County will have the following new policies and processes that will impact all Departments:

- Accessibility criteria when procuring and acquiring goods and services;
- Providing accessible formats and communications to the public upon request;
- Arranging for accessible library materials if they exist;
- Ensuring accessible recruitment and selection processes;
- Developing individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities;
- Planning for providing an appropriate number of accessible taxi cabs to the community.

Among other provisions, the Regulation also requires Huron County to provide:

- Training to all employees, volunteers, and others who provide goods, services, and facilities, on the requirements of the Regulation and on the Human Rights Code, that is appropriate to the duties to those who are being trained;
- A staged approach ensuring websites meet accessibility criteria;
- An accessible feedback process for the public;
- Communication supports, ie) sign language interpretation for the public upon request;
- Accessibility accommodations for employees and applications, upon request;
- Taxi identification information inside and outside the taxi cab;
- A number of technical requirements for both conventional and specialized transit.

## **Breaking Down Barriers While Supporting Businesses:**

People with disabilities regularly face barriers that prevent them from working, traveling in and enjoying their communities. Seniors also experience barriers to activities as part of the natural aging process. Ontario's accessibility standards will break down these barriers so that people of all ages and abilities can more easily live, work and travel throughout the province. Making the province accessible by 2025 will help Ontario tap into the economic power of thousands of customers and visitors with disabilities and harness a larger, more diverse labour pool.



## **Quick Facts:**

- These standards could help Ontario become a destination choice for tourists with disabilities, which would generate \$1.5 billion in new spending and grow the tourism sector between two and seven per cent.
- Canadians with disabilities spend \$25 billion every year and influence the spending decisions of 12 to 15 million other consumers.
- More than 1.85 million Ontarians have a disability and this number is quickly rising as the population ages.