



Elections
Ontario

Elections Ontario's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2017 – 2021

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Overview of Requirements

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) sets out accessibility requirements in the areas of Customer Service, Information and Communications, Employment, Transportation and Design of Public Spaces. These requirements are combined into one standard called the [Integrated Accessibility Standards, Regulation 191/11](#).

AODA Requires Multi-Year Accessibility Plans (MYAP)

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) requires organizations to create a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP.) The plan outlines a strategy for how Elections Ontario will remove and prevent barriers.

The plan's actions are organized using the five categories listed in the requirements:

- **Customer Service** – provide accessible customer service to people with disabilities so that they can access the same goods and services as everyone else.
- **Information and Communications** – create, provide and receive information and communications in ways that are accessible for people with disabilities.
- **Employment** – employers will include accessibility practices for employees across all stages of the employment cycle including recruitment, assessment and selection.
- **Transportation** – transportation service providers will make their services and vehicles accessible.
- **Design of Public Spaces**- newly designed or renovated public spaces will include specific accessibility features, which will make it easier for everyone (people with disabilities, seniors and families) to use.

Commitment to the Plan

Elections Ontario is committed to preventing and removing barriers. We believe we have made significant progress to make elections more accessible. Elections Ontario's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan shows our commitment to continue to identify and remove barriers to improve accessibility.

Elections Ontario has adopted the four principles outlined in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act as part of our continued vision for setting benchmarks in electoral process excellence.

Those principles are:

- Respect for the dignity of persons with disabilities.
- Respect for the independence of persons with disabilities.
- Goods and services that are integrated for persons with disabilities.
- Equality in the ability to obtain, use and benefit from goods and services given to others.

The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will be posted on Elections Ontario's website in both official languages as accessible PDFs, and will be provided in alternative formats upon request.

Elections Ontario will report annually on the progress and implementation of the plan. The progress reports will be posted on the website and provided in alternative formats upon request. The reports will include steps taken to comply with legislation and updates on our progress on the plan.

The plan will be updated at least every five years in consultation with persons with disabilities and stakeholders.

Action Taken for MYAP (2011 – 2016)

Elections Ontario created an accessibility plan covering the years 2011 to 2016. The plan helped to direct and assist staff to put in place many of the deliverables included under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, which are listed throughout this document. The plan was created in consultation with various agencies and individuals representing people with disabilities.

Moving Forward for MYAP (2017 – 2021)

This is Election Ontario's second Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and covers the period 2017 to 2021. This plan serves as a road map to removing barriers as we serve people with disabilities.

Accessibility Planning Involves Stakeholders

Elections Ontario's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2017 - 2021 is developed with the involvement of many groups, people representing people with disabilities, and Elections Ontario employees from across all departments. Their time and expertise assists us in creating an accessibility plan that we believe will have a positive impact on the way we identify, prevent and remove barriers.

Thank you to the following community agencies and individuals for your valuable input:

- Yin Brown, Alliance for Blind Canadians
- Kat Clarke, CNIB
- Yannick Constant, Arthritis Society
- Cindy DeGraaff, Ontario Federation for Cerebral Palsy
- Katie Doran, Alzheimer Society
- Jason Ducharme, MNP
- Edie Forsyth, Accessibility Experts Ltd.
- Signy Franklin, MNP
- Gordon Kyle, Community Living
- Gary Malkowski, Canadian Hearing Society
- Justin Manuel, Parkinson Canada
- Richard McCallum, Spinal Cord Injury Ontario
- Christine Nelson, Bob Rumball Centre for Deaf
- Ray Smith, CNIB
- Yvonne Spicer, Community Living

Staff Training

Elections Ontario trains permanent full-time staff, field staff and election officials on both the Customer Service Standard and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation. This training is important because Elections Ontario must effectively deliver voting services to voters with disabilities.

You can find details of the specific training program in place and under development for each of the standards on the following pages.

Accessibility When Procuring or Acquiring Goods, Services and Facilities

Any time an organization is making decisions on what goods, services or facilities they procure, they shall incorporate accessibility features and criteria. When it is not possible to do so, if requested, an explanation is provided.

Action Taken for Procuring or Acquiring Goods, Services and Facilities (2011 – 2016)

Elections Ontario has a Procurement Policy for Goods and Services, in place that outline the purpose, principles and mandatory requirements for buying or receiving goods, services and or facilities.

Moving Forward for Procuring or Acquiring Goods, Services and Facilities (2017 – 2021)

Elections Ontario will review the current Procurement Policy for Goods and Services to make sure we include accessibility criteria and features as part of our mandatory requirements. We will also include a process for providing an explanation, if asked, when we are not able to incorporate accessibility criteria and features.

Accessibility When Procuring or Acquiring Self-Service Kiosks

Elections Ontario currently does not offer any services through self-service kiosks and has no plans to do so. If Elections Ontario does use kiosks in the future we will incorporate accessibility criteria and features when designing, procuring or acquiring new self-service kiosks. A kiosk is defined as an interactive electronic terminal, including a point-sale device, intended for public use that allows users to access one or more services or products or both.

Action Taken for Self Service Kiosks (2011 – 2016)

Elections Ontario currently does not have any self-service kiosks.

Moving Forward for Self Service Kiosks (2017 – 2021)

Should we in the future decide to purchase any self-service kiosks, we will ensure that accessibility criteria and features are incorporated into the design.

Customer Service Standard

The Customer Service Standard, guides organizations on how to provide services to people with disabilities using the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.

To do this, organizations must make sure that they:

- Establish policies, practices and procedures.
- Provide staff training on Customer Service.
- Provide goods and services in an accessible manner.
- Provide accessible communication and documents.
- Allow for service animals and support persons.
- Have a method to provide feedback.
- Provide notice of service disruption.
- Ensure that any emergency procedures, plans and public safety information are available in accessible formats if requested.

Elections Ontario's Commitment

Elections Ontario is committed to identifying and removing barriers to make the voting process more accessible. This is done by creating and following accessible customer service policies and practices and training staff appropriately. These policies and practices are created to fall within the duties, roles and responsibilities outlined for Elections Ontario in the *Elections Act* and the *Elections Finances Act*.

Different types of employment at Elections Ontario

Elections Ontario has a unique staffing model. It is made up of three different types of employment:

- Employees working at Elections Ontario Headquarters who, mostly, work year-round.
- Field staff that work part-time on an as-needed basis, these include our Returning Officers and Election Clerks.
- Election Officials who work during an event typically limited to a few weeks to as little as one day on Election Day.

The roles and responsibilities of the different employees are, in many cases, described in the *Election Act* and *Elections Finances Act*. Correspondingly, different staff may receive different levels of accessible customer service training depending on their roles and responsibilities.

Action Taken for Customer Service Standard (2011 – 2016)

Elections Ontario created Accessible Customer Service Policies in 2010. The following policies and practices were put in place by Elections Ontario prior to the 2011 General Election and were used in both the 2011 and the 2014 General Elections:

Policies

Elections Ontario created and documented policies for the Accessible Customer Service Standard that:

- Followed the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.
- Provided Accessible Customer Service guidelines for employees who provide goods and services to people with disabilities.
- Allowed people to use their own personal assistive devices to access election services, as long as there was no conflict with Ontario's election laws.
- Allowed service animals and support persons.
- Provided communication to people with disabilities that took into account the person's disability.
- Included different ways for people to provide feedback; telephone, in person, in writing or electronic format.
- Developed a policy that directed that all public information should be provided in accessible formats, if requested.
- Provided a notice of service disruption if facilities or services are disrupted.
- Provided accessible customer service training to employees.

Accessible services offered during an election

During the 2011 and 2014 General Elections, a number of accessible services were provided. These services are also provided during by-elections. The services included:

- Accessible voting locations.
- The cost of an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter can be reimbursed.
- Assistive Devices at voting locations (magnifiers, ballot templates, easy grip pencils.)
- Assistive Voting Technology – accessible voting and vote counting equipment.
- Audio version of "Voting in Ontario" brochure.
- Certificate to vote, enables people without a fixed address to vote.
- Closed captioning advertising and descriptive video.
- Customer Service training for all election officials.
- Vote by mail and home visit voting.
- TTY available to assist those that are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.
- Voting Assistance from friend or support persons.
- Voting locations in hospitals and certain chronic care facilities.

Moving Forward for Customer Service Standard (2017 – 2021)

In July of 2016 the Customer Service Standard under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, changed. As a result, Elections Ontario will need to update our Customer Service Standard so that we meet or exceed the new standard.

Elections Ontario will make the following changes so that we meet or exceed the updated Customer Service Standard:

- Update our staff training requirements to include Customer Service training for all Elections Ontario headquarters staff, field staff and election officials. This training is not limited to those that provide goods or services.
- Review current staff training programs to assess if they are reflective of the needs of voters with disabilities as raised through consultations.
- Will update our policies regarding service animals to be in line with updated customer service standards.
- Review the policy that allows for Elections Ontario to reimburse cost of an ASL interpreter. Specifically Elections Ontario to consider extending the policy to include intervenors as also eligible for reimbursement. .

Following consultations that were held on November 15, 2016 with organizations who provide services to or advocate for people with disabilities Elections Ontario commits to:

Conducting inter-jurisdictional policy review

Elections Ontario will review customer service and accommodations policies from other agencies in Ontario including the new policy on [ableism and discrimination based on disability](#) from the Ontario Human Rights Commission, as well as the [Accommodations Policy](#) from the Office of the Independent Police Review Director. This inter-jurisdictional review will be used to inform Elections Ontario's updates and revisions to policies and practices related to the Customer Service Standard.

Reviewing the customer service accommodations reimbursements

Elections Ontario will review customer service options for people who are deaf, deafened and hard of hearing. Specifically Elections Ontario will review the option of providing TTY and the reimbursement policy for ASL interpreters.

Participants in the consultation held with people with disabilities shared that TTY is not widely used by people who are deaf or hard of hearing. In their experience, most people who are deaf or hard of hearing now use Video Relay Service (VRS) or e-mail.

In reference to Elections Ontario's policy to reimburse the cost of an ASL interpreter for people who are deaf, deafened and hard of hearing when they come to vote, participants recommended that Elections Ontario consider expanding this reimbursement to include other types of interpreters used by people who are deaf, deafened and hard of hearing or have other disabilities that make verbal communications difficult. Participants shared that it is very difficult

to book an ASL interpreter. In addition, participants advised that people with disabilities often use other interpretation and communications services and supports such as: an FSQ interpreter if they are French language, a deaf interpreter, intervenor for people who are deaf-blind or, a communications assistant for people who are non-verbal.

Review the signage provided for voting locations

Elections Ontario will review the standard visual signage that is provided for voting locations. Participants in the consultations suggested that signage in voting locations could be improved to better help people with disabilities navigate to a voting location (e.g. find the gym within a school) and to indicate the assistive voting supports that are available (e.g. magnifiers, support people). Specifically, participants recommended exploring the use of infographics which are useful to many people with disabilities and those with low-literacy.

Information and Communications Standard

Under the Information and Communications Standard, organizations must make sure that all public communications are accessible to people with disabilities.

Elections Ontario's Commitment

Elections Ontario is committed to making public communications more accessible to people with disabilities through multiple channels of communication including on-line, direct mail, advertising, outreach programs etc. This is done by creating and following the information and communications standards in the following four ways:

- Updating websites to be accessible by following the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0.
- Making sure that all public feedback channels (e.g. online, in-person, phone and email) are accessible.
- Making emergency procedures, plans and public safety documents available in accessible format, upon request.
- Providing or arranging for accessible formats and communications supports upon request.

Action Taken for Information and Communications Standard (2011 – 2016)

Elections Ontario had a deadline of 2013 to make the changes required by the Information and Communications Standard. These changes included developing new communications policies, a new website, and a working group that was responsible for seeing that the changes were made.

New policies

Elections Ontario created and documented new policies for public communications that:

- Made all of our public information available in accessible formats by request.
- Let the public know through our website and other notices that accessible formats are available by request.
- Created an Accessible Communications Standards Guide to help staff make their public information accessible.
- Made sure our video advertisements were accessible by including closed captioning and descriptive video.

New website

By 2015 all new websites needed to meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0. Elections Ontario created a new website that:

- Met WCAG 2.0 guidelines.
- Achieved an AA level of compliance.
- Has additional accessibility features including options for colour preferences, text size, letter spacing and font selection.

Accessible information and communications working group

Elections Ontario developed programs and procedures to help our staff understand how to create accessible communications. To do this we:

- Formed an Accessible Information and Communications Working Group to determine deliverables and timelines.
- Trained key staff to be able to create accessible documents.

Moving Forward for Information and Communications Standard (2017 – 2021)

Elections Ontario is committed to continuing to follow the processes, policies and communications practices listed above for the 2017 - 2021 period. During this period, we will also:

- Review and continue to make improvements to our website.
- Review our current communications channels to see if accessibility can be improved.
- Review and update the Accessible Communications Standards Guide.
- Review accessibility of Elections Ontario's internal website (Intranet) and make a plan to make it WCAG accessible before the 2020 deadline.
- Explore how our outreach and partnership programs might be better used to increase public awareness of accessible voting options.
- Explore how outreach and education programs might be used to provide persons with disabilities voter's rights information for the voting process.
- Explore how our advertising and marketing programs might be better used to increase public awareness of accessible voting options.

Following consultations that were held on November 15, 2016 with organizations who provide services to or advocate for people with disabilities Elections Ontario commits to:

Conducting an inter-jurisdictional scan of accessible advertising and outreach products

Elections Ontario will as part of its review of election advertising and marketing programs conduct an inter-jurisdictional scan to find out what assistive options other jurisdictions use in their advertising and outreach that is in video format. During consultations participants suggested other jurisdictions are using ASL in addition to closed captioning in video products and print products are making more use of iconography (e.g. info graphics).

Employment Standard

This standard tells employers that they must make accessible accommodations available, if requested, in all stages of the employment lifecycle (e.g. assessment, selection and retention.)

Elections Ontario's Commitment

Elections Ontario is committed to identifying and removing barriers so that all employees can reach their full potential. This is done by creating and following accessible employment policies and practices. These policies and practices must be created to fall within the duties, roles and responsibilities outlined for Elections Ontario in the *Elections Act* and the *Elections Finances Act*.

Different types of employment at Elections Ontario

Elections Ontario has a unique staffing model that is made up of three different types of employment:

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- Field staff that work part-time on an as-needed basis, these include our Returning Officers and Election Clerks.
- Election Officials who work during an event typically limited to a few weeks to as little as one day on Election Day.

The roles and responsibilities of the different employees are, in many cases, described in the *Election Act* and *Elections Finances Act*.

Action Taken for Employment Standard (2011 – 2016)

Elections Ontario had a deadline of 2013 to make the changes set out in the Employment standard. For Elections Ontario, these changes included creating new policies and processes, changing current policies and processes and communicating these changes to our employees and the public.

New policies and processes

Elections Ontario created and documented new policies and processes for head office staff as part of our work leading up to 2013, including:

- Accessible Employment Policies and Procedures.
- Process for the development of individual accommodations plans.
- A return to work process.
- A workplace emergency response process.

Updating existing policies and processes

Election Ontario reviewed and made changes to our existing employment policies that applied to our head office staff. These changes made it clear that accessibility accommodations are available for:

- Career development.

- Performance management; and
- Redeployment

Communicating

Elections Ontario tells employees and members of the public about the changes to policies and procedures by doing the following things:

- All employees, including head office staff, field staff and election officials, receive training on the Customer Service Standard, Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation and the Human Rights Code.
- As required all job advertisements clearly state that accessibility accommodations are available to applicants.
- All job advertisements include a list of skill sets required to perform the job.
- Accessible formats and communication support are available to employees if and when they are required to reasonably perform their job.
- When changes are made to existing policies or new policies are created Elections Ontario tells all affected employees so that they know about the changes.
- Elections Ontario Human Resources and Management are aware of the process to follow if someone discloses a disability and/or requests accommodations.

Moving Forward for Employment Standard (2017- 2021)

Elections Ontario is committed to continuing to follow the processes, policies and communications practices listed above for the 2017- 2021 period.

Elections Ontario will also improve accessibility for our employees and accessible services for electors during the 2017- 2021 period by:

- Hosting consultation sessions with representatives from organizations that provide services to or advocate for people with disabilities. The goal of these sessions is to explore how Elections Ontario can improve accessibility for our employees and provide more accessible services for electors with disabilities.
- Reviewing our current orientation process for new employees. We will look for ways to make the accessibility component more effective. We will also make sure the materials provided for the process are accessible.
- Continuing an inclusive approach to accessibility when developing new human resources policies and practices.

Following consultations that were held on November 15, 2016 with organizations who provide services to or advocate for people with disabilities Elections Ontario commits to:

Reviewing the accessibility of the job application process

Elections Ontario will review the accessibility of the job application process specifically with reference to election-period jobs.

Transportation Standard

The goal of the Transportation Standard is to make sure that transportation providers as well as municipalities, universities, colleges, hospitals and school boards make their services and vehicles accessible to people with disabilities.

Accessible transits allow people with disabilities to live, work and participate in their communities.

Action Taken:

Elections Ontario is not impacted by the Transportation Standard as we are not a designated public sector transportation organization and we do not provide transportation. As a result, we do not have any legislated requirements that need to be met.

Design of Public Spaces Standard

The Design of Public Spaces Standard applies to public spaces that are being newly constructed or renovated. There are seven areas which include:

- Recreational trails and beach access routes.
- Outdoor public use eating spaces.
- Outdoor play spaces.
- Exterior paths of travel.
- Accessible parking.
- Obtaining services.
- Maintenance.

Action Taken:

Elections Ontario is not impacted by the Public Spaces Standard because voting locations do not apply to the Public Spaces Standard and we have not purchased or renovated our existing customer service area at our headquarters office. As a result, we do not have any legislated requirements that need to be met. If in the future, we do buy or renovate our headquarters space an accessibility audit will be conducted.

Appendix A: Voting Locations

Context:

The spaces that are used as voting locations are not subject to the Public Spaces Standard. However, Ontario's election laws do include accessibility guidelines for voting locations.

To make sure we meet or exceed these guidelines, Elections Ontario has created site accessibility criteria. These are used by our field staff to decide if a particular location can be a voting location. These criteria are one of several factors that decide if a particular place can be a voting location.

Voting Locations Moving Forward (2017 – 2021)

Elections Ontario will continue to use our site accessibility criteria to make sure that all voting locations, in by-elections and General Elections are as accessible as possible and practical. We will do this by:

- Reviewing our site accessibility standards and updating them if needed; and,
- Training Returning Officers on changes to our site accessibility standards if needed.

Appendix B: Other Feedback From Consultations

On November 15, 2016 Elections Ontario, as part of the development of this Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, held a full-day detailed consultation with representatives from organizations who provide services to, or advocate for, people with disabilities. Participants were provided with a draft of Elections Ontario's MYAP and provided with detailed comments on the proposed plan. Many of their comments and recommendations have been included in the plan. However, there was additional feedback on specific practical and tactical actions that Elections Ontario could explore.

At this time, Elections Ontario cannot commit to any of these specific actions. However, they may become part of an implementation plan for any of the policy and process change areas listed in this plan. The following is a non-exhaustive list of topics of interest identified during the consultations which we will explore further:

- Assistive voting devices
 - Review the non-technology assistive devices (e.g. wide grip pen, magnifiers, chairs.)
- Information and Communications
 - Consider how people with disabilities may be engaged in user acceptance testing for online communications.
 - Explore what specific accessible formats are most commonly used by people with disabilities when developing alternative formats.
 - Explore different channels of communications.
- Voting Locations
 - Expand the voting location accessibility criteria to include availability of accessible bathroom facilities.
 - When reviewing the site accessibility standards consider travel to the voting location, signage and lighting.
- Outreach
 - Create outreach products that empower people with disabilities to self-advocate.
 - Engage with the participants to conduct a survey that identifies barriers to voting for people with disabilities.
 - Outreach of job postings to provide further employment opportunities.
- Partnerships
 - There was a strong interest in Elections Ontario exploring partnerships with participating organizations on many aspects of accessibility including: site accessibility, outreach, education, employment, communications and staff training.
- Vote anywhere
 - Organizations strongly support the 'vote anywhere' voting model.