



Elections  
Ontario

# 2015 Status Update to Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

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# 2015 Status Update to the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

## Message from CEO

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Elections Ontario's mission is to uphold the integrity and accessibility of the electoral process and to manage elections in an efficient, fair and impartial manner. We embrace the accessibility principles outlined in our Accessible Customer Service Policy, Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy Directive and our Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

Under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, Elections Ontario was mandated to develop a five-year accessibility plan which we produced in 2012 as the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2012 to 2016. The plan outlines our strategy on how Elections Ontario removes and prevents barriers to accessibility. We are required to report yearly on the status of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan in accordance with the legislation; this is our 2015 Status Update to the plan.

For 2015, much of our focus was on meeting the deliverables required under the Information and Communications Standard. In order that people with disabilities could access information and communications in an accessible manner, staff concentrated their efforts on creating a new accessible website. The website complies with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, Level AA as legislated. It is accessible and much easier to access and navigate.

We continue to ensure our recruitment, assessment and selection processes for employing people with disabilities are supportive and accommodating. We have focused on removing barriers throughout the employment cycle, so that we create workplaces that are accessible and allow employees to reach their full potential.

As we begin planning for the next election, we are committed to creating a new modernized electoral process by implementing a technology-enabled voting model. The new system will allow election officials to quickly find electors' information and to electronically tabulate voting results.

We feel proud of our accomplishments for 2015. By following clear directives, as set out in the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, we can continue to uphold the integrity and accessibility of internal and electoral processes in the province of Ontario.

Greg Essensa  
Chief Electoral Officer

## Overview

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Elections Ontario is committed to the implementation of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA). In 2011, Elections Ontario created a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan for the years 2011 to 2016. This is Elections Ontario's 2015 Status Update to the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

### Background and Legislation

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) has established accessibility standards and requirements for Customer Service, Information and Communications, Employment, Transportation and the Design of Public Spaces. The four applicable standards which Elections Ontario has to implement under the AODA are explained and listed below:

- **Customer Service Standard** – provide accessible customer service to people with disabilities so that they can access the same goods and services as everyone else.
- **Information and Communications Standard** – create, provide and receive information in ways that are accessible for people with disabilities.
- **Employment Standard** – employers provide for accessibility to employees across all stages of the employment life cycle.
- **Public Spaces Standard** – public spaces are designed to make it easier for everyone (people with disabilities, seniors and families) to use public spaces. Public spaces include: recreational trails, beach access routes, outdoor public use eating areas, outdoor play spaces, exterior paths of travel, accessible parking and service related elements. This standard also includes the maintenance of public spaces.

Under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, Elections Ontario has ongoing obligations to accommodate persons with disabilities to the point of undue hardship. We incorporate the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) but also recognize that additional accommodation measures that go beyond the AODA may be required in accordance with the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.

### Commitment to the Plan

Elections Ontario continues to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility. Our goal is to ensure accessibility is considered in all areas as is evidenced by the many initiatives we have successfully implemented throughout 2015. We continue to update policies, practices and procedures, provide staff training and ensure that staff follows specific guidelines across all divisions so that we remain committed to incorporating accessibility into all areas of service provided to the public.

## Update on 2015 Accessibility Initiatives

Elections Ontario undertakes and completes initiatives in our ongoing strategy to prevent and remove barriers for persons with disabilities. For each of the initiatives we have undertaken we will show the actual “deliverable” followed by a “status update”:

- **Deliverable:** what we are legislated to do under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) for each of the standards, and what we have committed to as per our Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.
- **Status Update:** what we have accomplished for the year 2015.

## General Requirements

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There are a number of general requirements that must be implemented in accordance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA). They include:

- Multi-Year Accessibility Plan;
- Accessibility Policies;
- Staff Training; and
- Accessible Procurement.

### Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

A multi-year accessibility plan outlines an organization's strategy to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility while meeting its requirements under the AODA. The "deliverable" and "status update" for the multi-year accessibility plan are provided below:

#### Deliverable

Establishment, implementation, maintenance and documentation of a multi-year accessibility plan which outlines the organization's strategy to prevent and remove barriers in consultation with persons with disabilities. The plan must be reviewed on a yearly basis and updates provided on the progress.

#### Status Update - Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Elections Ontario continues to meet the deliverables outlined in the 2012 to 2016 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, which outlines a phased-in strategy to prevent and remove barriers and addresses the current and future requirements of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA).

Elections Ontario reports annually on the progress and implementation of the plan by preparing the "Annual Status Update for the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan" report. The information is posted on our website and is provided in accessible formats upon request. The plan is reviewed annually and updated every five years. We are currently working from our five year plan for 2012 to 2016 and reporting on our fourth year.

### Accessibility Policies

Accessibility policies outline how an organization will meet their obligations under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA), as it refers to the Customer Service Standard and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation. The "deliverable" and "status update" for accessibility policies are provided below:

#### Deliverable

Every organization shall develop, implement and maintain policies governing how the organization achieves accessibility through meeting its requirements under the accessibility standards. The policy includes a statement of commitment to meet the needs of persons with disabilities, is publicly available and is provided in accessible formats upon request. The policies must be consistent with the four core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.

## Status Update - Accessibility Policies

Elections Ontario maintains policies governing how we meet the requirements under the AODA. The Customer Service Policy and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy shows our organizational commitment to meet the accessibility needs of persons with disabilities. We ensure that we follow the four core principles of accessibility, so that goods and services are provided in a manner that:

- Respects the dignity of persons with disabilities;
- Respects the independence of persons with disabilities;
- Integrated for persons with disabilities unless alternate measures are necessary; and
- Is equal to that given to others to obtain use and benefit from goods and services.

Elections Ontario ensures that the policies are publically available and provided in accessible formats upon request.

## Staff Training

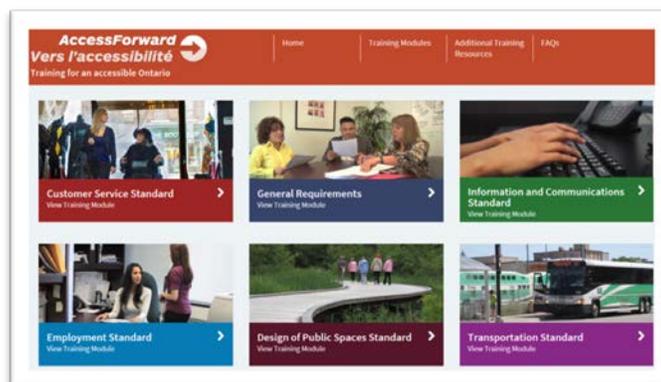
All organizations are required to provide Accessible Customer Service Training, as well as training on the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, and the *Ontario Human Rights Code* as it relates to people with disabilities. The “deliverable” and “status update” for staff training are listed below:

### Deliverable

Training must be provided on the requirements of the accessibility standards and on the *Ontario Human Rights Code* as it pertains to persons with disabilities to all employees, volunteers and all others who provide goods and services on behalf of the organization. Staff shall be trained as soon as practicable. Records will be maintained of the training provided, including dates and the number of individuals trained. Should there be any changes to the policy, staff shall be trained on these changes.

### Status Update - Staff Training

All Elections Ontario employees, including full-time, part-time and volunteers, who are providing goods and services on Elections Ontario’s behalf are trained on the Accessible Customer Service Standard. We utilize the videos funded by the government (AccessForward) which covers the Customer Service Standard.



Training takes place as soon as practicable after individuals are hired and records are maintained and kept with the dates and the number of individuals trained.

## **Accessible Procurement**

In order for goods and services to be more accessible to people with disabilities, it is important that organizations incorporate accessibility into their procurement process. The “deliverable” and “status update” for accessible procurement process are provided below:

### **Deliverable**

Accessibility criteria and features shall be incorporated when procuring or acquiring goods, services, facilities and self-service kiosks except where not practicable to do so. If not practicable to do so, an explanation will be provided upon request.

### **Status Update - Accessible Procurement**

Elections Ontario has created a Procurement Policy for Goods and Services and developed a Request for Proposal (RFP) process. When Elections Ontario procures or acquires goods, services, facilities and self-service kiosks, it follows the Request for Proposal (RFP) process. In the RFP, there is a particular section asking proponents to describe any accessibility features and options available for their goods or services as Elections Ontario is committed to breaking down barriers that prevent or limit persons with disabilities from participating in a variety of activities in Ontario. It also requires that a document describing the proponents' Customer Service training policy, including a summary of the training contents and details of training dates and attendees, be submitted to Elections Ontario.

If an RFP has a large component of accessibility requirements, it becomes part of the evaluation process and proponents are scored on how well they met the requested accessibility criteria.

## Customer Service Standard

The Customer Service Standard applies to all organizations, government, legislative assembly, public, private and non-profit, that provide goods or services either directly to the public or to other organizations in Ontario (third parties) and that have one or more employees in Ontario.

Goods and services must be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities. They must be integrated and persons with disabilities must be given an opportunity equal to everyone else.

Policies, practices and procedures must be in place and staff training provided for all of the standards. They should take into consideration the following requirements as per the Customer Service Standard:

- Assistive Devices;
- Service Animals and Support Persons; and
- Notice of Service Disruption.

### Assistive Devices

People with disabilities may need to use their own assistive devices in order to access an organization's goods and services. The "deliverable" and "status update" for assistive devices are provided below:

#### Deliverable

Develop a policy on allowing people to use their own personal assistive devices to access an organization's goods and services and any other measures offered.

#### Status Update - Assistive Devices

Elections Ontario has written policies and procedures in accordance with the Accessible Customer Service Standard, which states that customers with disabilities may use their own assistive devices to obtain goods and or services. There are many kinds of assistive devices. An example could be a laptop or phone with particular software programs on it or an assistive listening device as shown below:



During an election period, we offer a number of assistive devices during advance polls and all staff are trained on how to operate them. They are also trained on how to interact with people with disabilities in an accessible manner.

## **Guide Dogs, Service Animals and Support Persons**

People with disabilities may need to be accompanied by their guide dog, service animal or a support person. The “deliverable” and “status update” for both guide dogs and service animals, and support persons are provided below:

### **Guide Dogs and Service Animals**

Guide dogs and service animals assist a person with a disability in their daily lives. Whether they are providing physical or emotional support, they help the individual to access goods and services and are allowed anywhere the public is allowed. The “deliverable” and “status update” for guide dogs and service animals are provided below:

#### **Deliverable**

In accordance with the Customer Service Standard, organizations must allow people with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog and/or service animal in those areas of the premises you own or operate that are open to the public, unless the animal is excluded by another law.

#### **Status Update - Guide Dogs and Service Animals**

Elections Ontario has specific policies and procedures stating that we allow persons with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide or service animal to obtain goods or services. If staff cannot identify whether the animal is a guide dog or service animal, they can ask the person to provide documentation from a doctor or a nurse verifying that the person with the disability requires a guide dog or service animal.

The service animal must be under the care and control of the individual at all times. We provide training to all head office staff, Returning Officers and polling staff on proper guide dog and service animal etiquette.

If a service animal is excluded by law, Elections Ontario will ensure that there are measures in place so that those same services are being provided by an Elections Ontario staff or through other means.

### **Support Persons:**

A support person can be used by a person with a disability in order to help them with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or to help access goods or services. If a fee is being charged, the support person must know ahead of time so that they are prepared in advance. The “deliverable” and “status update” for support persons are provided below:

#### **Deliverable**

Organizations must permit people with disabilities who use a support person to bring that person with them while accessing goods or services in premises open to the public or third parties.

Where admission fees are charged, notice must be provided ahead of time on what admission, if any, would be charged for a support person of a person with a disability.

### **Status Update - Support Persons**

Elections Ontario permits any person with a disability to bring their support person with them while accessing any goods or services we offer. Elections Ontario does not provide any services where a fee would be required. If there were a fee for an event, the support person would not be charged a fee to enter.

During an election period, a support person is permitted to assist an individual while voting and can mark a ballot providing they have taken the oath or affirmation that they will keep secret the name of the candidate for whom the ballot was marked.

### **Notice of Temporary Service Disruptions**

In order to use or benefit from a provider's goods or services, people with disabilities normally use particular facilities or services. If there is a temporary disruption in those facilities or services, it is important that the individual is informed so that they can make plans accordingly. The "deliverable" and "status update" for providing notice of temporary service disruption are provided below:

#### **Deliverable**

Provide notice when facilities or services that people with disabilities rely on to access or use your goods or services are temporarily disrupted. The notice must include the following three items:

- Reason for the disruption;
- Anticipated duration of the disruption; and
- Alternative facilities or services.

### **Status Update - Notice of Temporary Service Disruptions**

In accordance with Elections Ontario's Accessible Customer Service Policy, we provide notice of service disruption to the public and it includes information about what service is being disrupted, the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities or services. The notice is posted as soon as possible, in visible places and/or on Elections Ontario's website, or any other method that may be reasonable under the circumstances.

During the voting process at polling stations, we are legislated under the *Election Act*, and the Customer Service Standard to provide notice of service disruption. Notice is given in advance and remediation where possible is provided.

## Information and Communications Standard

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People with disabilities need to access information and communications about the goods, services or facilities offered to clients or customers in an accessible manner. Under the Information and Communications Standard the following sections apply:

- Accessible feedback process;
- Accessible formats and communication supports;
- Emergency procedure, plans or public safety information; and
- Accessible websites and web content.

### Accessible Feedback Process

In order for persons with disabilities to be able to provide feedback on the services they are receiving they must have a means to be able to do so and it must be in a manner that is accessible. The “deliverable” and “status update” to provide an accessible feedback process are provided below:

#### Deliverable

Every provider of goods and services shall establish a process for receiving and responding to feedback about the manner in which it provides goods or services. Organizations must ensure the processes are accessible to person with disabilities by providing or arranging for accessible formats and communication supports, upon request.

#### Status Update - Accessible Feedback Process

Elections Ontario remains committed to identifying barriers that exist for persons with disabilities and taking the necessary steps to address them. Through feedback processes on our website and public opinion surveying during elections, we continue to gather information pertaining to barriers that exist for persons with disabilities.

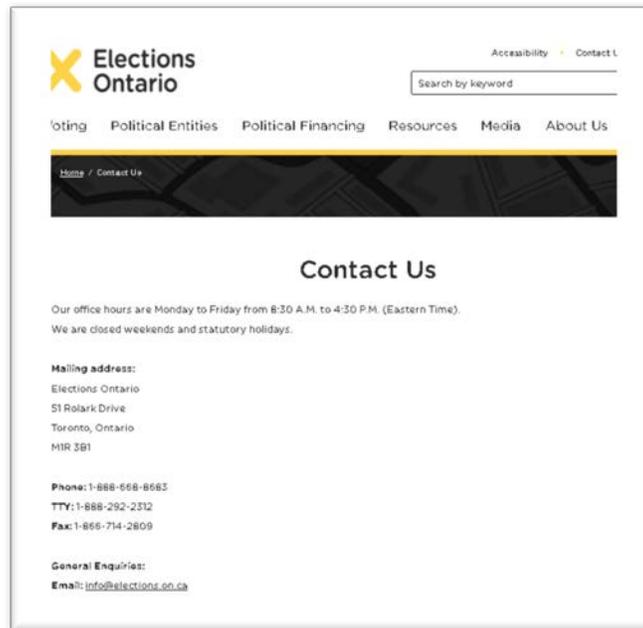
In accordance with the Customer Service Standard, we had to ensure that we had a feedback system. In 2013, the Customer Service Standard was amended and legislated us to ensure that the feedback system was accessible. In 2015, Elections Ontario created a new and accessible website. Throughout the website, we provide contact information and feedback options so that people with disabilities can provide feedback in an accessible manner.

Elections Ontario has a number of ways individuals can provide feedback:

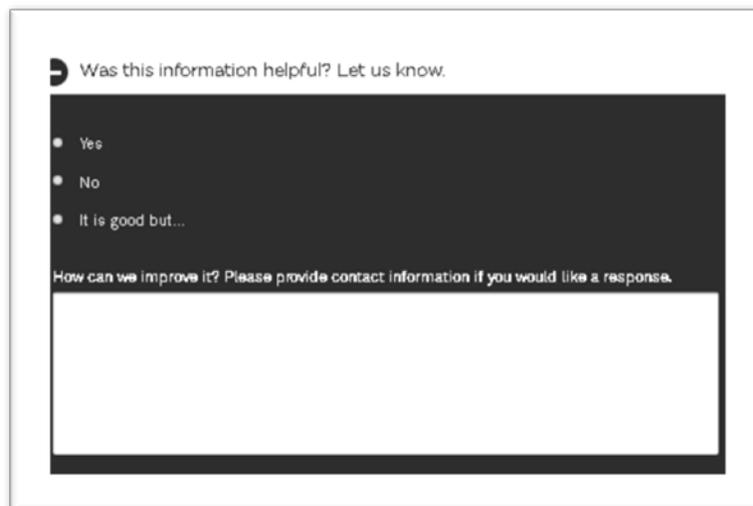
- In writing;
- Call toll free number or by using TTY;
- By fax;
- In person;
- By completing a feedback form available on each website page;
- By completing general website feedback form;

- By completing a formal complaint form on the “Contact Us” page of Elections Ontario’s website;
- By submitting feedback by email to [info@elections.on.ca](mailto:info@elections.on.ca); and
- Various channels throughout Elections Ontario’s website and on the “Contact Us” page.

Below is an example of the “Contact Us” page from Elections Ontario’s website. If a person wished to provide feedback they can do so by using the multiple options listed.



There is also a feedback form on every page so that people can provide their feedback. Below is an example of the form from Elections Ontario’s website.



During an election, Elections Ontario welcomes customer service feedback from all Ontarians, including feedback about services provided to persons with disabilities. At each voting location, including returning offices and advance polls, customer service feedback forms and boxes are available. Poll officials check the boxes throughout voting to determine which issues can be resolved immediately and which should be responded to later. Some feedback is also provided verbally. Electors can also contact Elections Ontario headquarters directly by email, mail or by phone to provide feedback.

With the feedback provided, Elections Ontario is able to continually improve accessibility for voting and the services we provide.

In the February 5, 2015 Sudbury by-election, Elections Ontario received 72 pieces of feedback regarding accessibility issues. Approximately one third of the comments were positive. Positive comments focused primarily on customer service provided by polling staff and accessible parking at the voting locations. The negative comments were primarily about the voting locations and challenges with the Notice of Registration Card. As a result of the feedback provided on the voting locations, election officials and election-day staff provided advice to returning officers regarding ways of improving accessibility at voting locations in the future. All feedback has been taken into consideration as we prepare and plan for future elections.

Prior to a general election, all voting locations (more than 7,000) are listed on Elections Ontario's website six months prior to election-day, and the public is asked for their feedback on whether the voting location presents any accessibility barriers. Remediation is provided where possible or new sites are selected to ensure accessible voting is provided.

## **Accessible Formats and Communication Supports**

In order for people with disabilities to access sources of information and communications, it is important to ensure that they are created and available in accessible formats. The "deliverable" and "status update" to provide accessible formats and communication supports are listed below:

### **Deliverable**

Organizations must create, provide and receive information and communications in ways that are accessible to people with disabilities. They must also notify the public that accessible formats and communication supports are available upon request.

### **Status Update - Accessible Formats and Communications Support**

When an individual requests an accessible format or communication support, Elections Ontario consults with the person to determine their accessibility needs and the suitability of information they are providing.

The information or communication is provided in a timely manner that takes into account the person's accessibility needs and is at a cost that is no more than the regular cost charged to the general public.

If it is not feasible to convert the information being requested, then an explanation is provided as to why it cannot be converted along with a summary of the content.

We also developed an Accessible Communications Standard which helps to guide Elections Ontario staff. The Accessible Communications Standard provides recommendations on a series of items, including designing documents using headings and styles, sans serif, minimum font size of 12 points, plain language and following the CNIB Clear Print Guidelines.

Below is an example of our Accessible Communications Standard.



## Emergency Procedures, Plans or Public Safety Information

A person with a disability may want to know and understand an organization's emergency procedures, plans or public safety information prior to attending or arriving at a particular location. It would be important for people with disabilities to have that information in an accessible format or with appropriate communication supports. The “deliverable” and “status update” to provide emergency procedures, plans or public safety information and the action taken by Elections Ontario are listed below:

### Deliverable

If an organization prepares emergency procedures, plans or public safety information and makes the information available to the public, it must be available in accessible formats or with appropriate communication supports, as soon as practicable, and upon request.

### Status Update - Emergency Procedures, Plans or Public Safety Information

Elections Ontario has a number of emergency safety procedures and plans including:

- Emergency Evacuation Plan;
- Emergency Procedures Handbook;
- Emergency Management Policy; and
- Continuity of Operations Plan.

These documents have been created as internal processes for staff and are not made available to the public. Should a visitor or the public visit our head office facilities and request emergency safety information, we would provide relevant information in a format that would work for the individual.

## Accessible Websites and Web Content

The intent of this requirement is to ensure that websites are accessible to people with disabilities by conforming to international standards for website accessibility. The “deliverable” and “status update” to provide accessible websites and web content and the action taken by Elections Ontario are listed below:

### Deliverable

By January 1, 2012, **new internet and new intranet websites**, and **web content** on those sites must conform to WCAG 2.0 Level AA, other than success criteria 1.2.4 Captions (Live) and 1.2.5 Audio Descriptions (Pre-recorded).

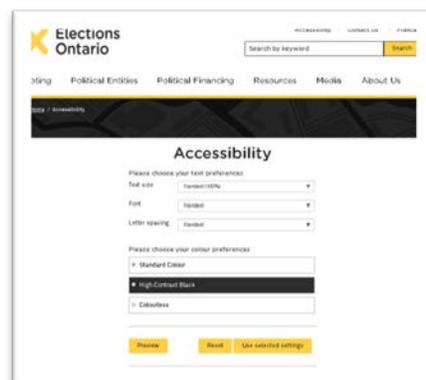
By January 1, 2016, **all internet websites** and **web content** on those sites must conform to WCAG 2.0 Level AA, other than success criteria 1.2.4 Captions (Live) and 1.2.5 Audio Descriptions (Pre-recorded).

By January 1, 2020, **all intranet websites** must conform to WCAG 2.0 Level AA, other than success criteria 1.2.4 Captions (Live) and 1.2.5 Audio Descriptions (Pre-recorded).

### Status Update - Accessible Websites and Web Content

Elections Ontario created a new website which was launched in September 2015 and in accordance with the legislation, we had to comply with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0. We achieved and met WCAG 2.0 at an AA level of compliance. Regular checks for compliance are completed quarterly.

This new website is simpler for Ontarians to access and navigate and enables our stakeholders to find the information they need more easily. We undertook the website redesign in collaboration with our stakeholders to ensure it is more user-centric, with accessibility features that comply with all legislated requirements. The website also has additional accessibility features including options for colour preferences, text size, letter spacing and font selection.



## Employment Standard

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The Employment Standard requires employers to provide for accessibility across all stages of the employment life cycle for an employee with a disability. By proactively removing barriers, employers can help to create workplaces that are accessible and that allow employees to reach their full potential. The Employment Standard applies to paid employees and covers the following seven categories:

- Recruitment, assessment and selection;
- Accessible formats and communication supports for employees;
- Workplace emergency response information;
- Documented individual accommodation plans;
- Return to work process;
- Performance management; and
- Career development, advancement and redeployment.

### **Recruitment, Assessment and Selection**

Notification must be provided that accommodations are available upon request during all three stages of employment, including recruitment, assessment and selection. The “deliverable” and “status update” for recruitment, assessment and selection are provided below:

#### **Deliverable**

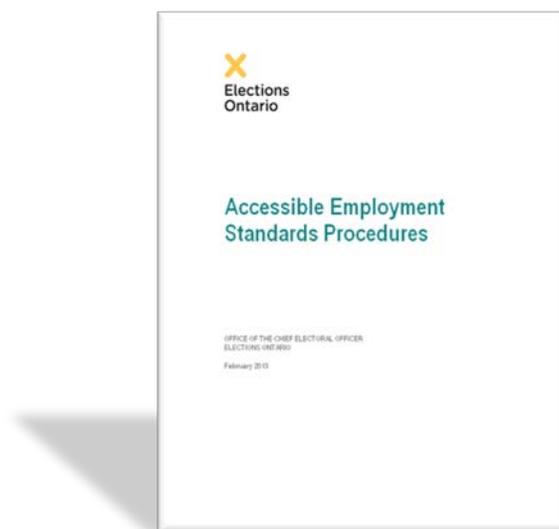
Every employer shall notify its internal and external job applicants that accommodations will be provided upon request to support employee’s participation in all aspects of the recruitment, assessment and selection process.

New and existing employees are informed of the organization’s policies for accommodating employees with disabilities. Once a person is hired and/or a current employee discloses that they require accommodations, an Individual Accommodation Plan process begins.

Employers shall provide updated information to its employees whenever there is a change to existing policies on the provision of job accommodations that take into account an employee’s accessibility needs due to a disability.

## Status Update - Recruitment, Assessment and Selection

Elections Ontario has developed Accessible Employment Standard procedures and processes. Newly hired individuals and existing employees are informed of policies for accommodating employees with disabilities. The policies promote Elections Ontario's commitment to support and accommodate our employees throughout the lifecycle of their employment.



All Elections Ontario job postings include the following statement: “If you require a disability related accommodation to participate in the recruitment process, please contact us. We will accommodate your needs under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. We are an equal opportunity employer.”

Accommodations are also provided during the assessment process if needed. Once an individual is selected, should they wish to disclose that they have a disability and require accommodations, the Individual Accommodation Plan process is followed.

### Documented Individual Accommodation Plan

Employers will develop a written individual accommodation plan for employees with disabilities so that employers will have a clear and consistent approach for accommodating people with disabilities. The “deliverable” and “status update” for the Individual Accommodation Plan process are provided below:

#### Deliverable

Employers shall develop and have in place a written process for the development of documented individual accommodation plan (IAP) for employees with disabilities. The process for the development of an IAP shall include the following 12 elements:

- An employee requesting accommodations participates in development of the IAP;
- Assessment on an individual basis;
- Identification of accommodations to be provided;

- Timelines for the provision of accommodations;
- Request for an evaluation by outside medical or other expert, at organizations' expense, to assist with determining accommodation and how to achieve accommodation;
- Employee may request the participation of a representative from their bargaining agent, where represented, or otherwise a representative from the workplace where employee is not represented by a bargaining agent;
- Steps taken to protect the privacy of the employee's personal information;
- Frequency with which the IAP will be reviewed and updated and the manner in which it will be done;
- If denied, the reasons for denial are to be provided to the employee;
- A format that takes into account the employee's disability needs;
- If requested, any information regarding accessible formats and communication supports provided; and
- Identification of any other accommodation that is to be provided.

### **Status Update - Individual Accommodation Plan**

If an employee discloses that they have a disability, or an employer recognizes the need for accommodations, the Employment Accommodation Procedures are followed and implemented by Human Resources (HR). An Individual Accommodation Plan (IAP) is completed with participation from both the employee and a Human Resources staff person. Human Resources completes an Individual Accommodation Response Plan to finalize the appropriate accommodation required for the individual and then, if approved, accommodations are provided. The support and accommodations are provided throughout the life-cycle of their employment.

During an election period, field staff (Returning Officers and approximately 70,000 poll officials), receive a copy of the "Elections Ontario Officials' Guide; Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation" brochure which covers the Employment Standard. The brochure shows Elections Ontario's commitment to accommodate applicants and employees with disabilities who require accommodations throughout the entire recruitment and employment process.

All information gathered is held in confidence and becomes part of the formal process to document the accommodation needs of employees with disabilities.

The IAP is reviewed to ensure adjustments, if any, to the plans are made as changes occur such as:

- Employee changes position;
- Need for accommodations change; and
- Elections Ontario's policies and practices change.

Elections Ontario is committed to making the workplace accessible for all applicants and employees, and continues to make every effort to meet the disability-related

requirements of its employees so that they can effectively and efficiently perform their job. Should the accommodation be denied, the reasons for denial are provided to the employee.

Steps are taken to protect the privacy of the employee's personal information. The Individual Accommodation Plan is reviewed and updated regularly and follow-up provided to ensure accommodation needs are continually being met.

## **Accessible Formats and Communication Supports for Employees**

In order for people with disabilities to perform their jobs effectively they must be provided with the accessible formats and communication supports they require. The "deliverable" and "status update" for providing accessible formats and communication supports to employees are provided below:

### **Deliverable**

Consult with the employee to provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for information that is needed in order to perform the employee's job and information that is generally available to employees in the workplace. The employer shall consult with the employee making the request in determining the suitability of an accessible format or communication support.

### **Status Update - Accessible Formats and Communication Supports**

When an employee with a disability requests accessible formats and/or communication supports, Elections Ontario provides and/or arranges for the provision of information that is:

- Needed in order to perform the employee's job; and
- Generally available to employees in the workplace.

Elections Ontario consults with the employee making the request to determine the suitability of an alternative format and/or communication support.

## **Workplace Emergency Response Information**

Employers must be informed and aware of the needs that an employee with a disability may have in an emergency situation. This will help employees with disabilities and the employers they work for, to prepare for a range of potential emergencies. The "deliverable" and the "status update" are listed below:

### **Deliverable**

Every employer must provide individualized workplace emergency response information to employees who have disabilities, under the following conditions:

- When the employees disability is such that the information is necessary; and
- The employer is aware of the need for accommodation due to the employee's disability.

If an employee who receives individualized workplace emergency response information requires assistance, with the employee's consent, the employer shall provide the

workplace emergency response information to the person designated by the employer to provide assistance to the employee.

Employers shall provide information required under this section as soon as practicable after the employer becomes aware of the need for accommodation.

The individualized workplace emergency response information shall be reviewed when an employee moves to a different location; their overall accommodation needs or plans are reviewed and when an employer reviews its general emergency response policies.

### Status Update - Workplace Emergency Response Information

Workplace emergency response information is gathered to accommodate employees during an emergency. Should an employee disclose that they require workplace accommodations during an emergency, they are asked to complete a “Workplace Emergency Form for Employees with Disabilities.” Elections Ontario then completes a “Workplace Emergency Response Plan” form and implements the process.

The image shows a document titled "Appendix A: Workplace Emergency Response Information" with the subtitle "DOCUMENT 2: WORKPLACE EMERGENCY FORM FOR EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES". It is intended to be completed by the employee. The form includes a purpose statement, a confidentiality notice, and instructions to complete the form and return it to the Human Resources Officer. The form is divided into three main sections: Employee Information, Emergency Contact Information, and Work Location. Each section contains several fields for text entry, such as Name, Division, Work #, Cell #, E-mail, Contact Name, Relationship to Employee, Name of Workplace, and Work address.

The Employer reviews the individualized workplace emergency response information when:

- The employee moves to a different location in the organization;
- The employee’s overall accommodation needs or plans are reviewed; and
- The employer reviews its general emergency response policies.

This process helps Elections Ontario to assist and support employees with disabilities to prepare for a range of potential emergencies such as fire, power outages, severe weather, natural disasters and security incidents.

## **Return to Work Process**

The Return to Work Process ensures that employers have in place a documented process for supporting employees who return to work after being away for reasons related to their disabilities. The “deliverable” and “status update” for the return to work process are provided below:

### **Deliverable**

Develop a return to work process for employees who have been absent from work due to a disability and require disability related accommodations in order to return to work. The process shall be documented, outline the steps the employer will take to facilitate the return to work, and will use the Individual Accommodation Plan as part of the process.

### **Status Update - Return to Work Process**

Elections Ontario has developed a return to work process for employees who have been absent from work due to a disability. A “Return to Work Assessment” form is provided to an employee with a disability who is absent from work for two weeks or longer. Any work modification, including information about the duration of the modification is discussed with the employee’s manager. An Individual Accommodation Response Plan is then created and followed.

## **Performance Management**

It is important to take into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities when assessing performance management. The “deliverable” and “status update” for performance management are provided below:

### **Deliverable**

An employer that uses performance management for its employees shall take into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities, as well as individual accommodation plans, when using its performance management process in respect of employees with disabilities.

### **Status Update - Performance Management**

Elections Ontario takes into account the accessibility needs of persons with disabilities when conducting performance management processes. Performance management includes activities related to assessing and improving employee performance, productivity and effectiveness with the goal of facilitating employee success. Performance reviews are conducted annually for full time staff and every 3, 6, and 12 months for probationary staff.

## **Career Development and Advancement**

When providing career development and advancement opportunities, employers are required to take into account what accommodations employees with disabilities may need to succeed elsewhere in their organization or to take on new responsibilities in their current position.

The “deliverable” and “status update” for career development and advancement are provided below:

### **Deliverable**

Employers that provide career development and advancement opportunities will take into account the accessibility needs of their employees as well as any individual accommodation plans, when providing career development and advancement to its employees with disabilities.

This can include:

- Providing additional responsibilities within an employee’s current position;
- The movement of an employee from one job to another that may be higher in pay;
- Provide greater responsibility or be at a higher level in an organization; and
- Any combination of them.

### **Status Update - Career Development and Advancement**

Elections Ontario continues to take into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities, as well as an employee’s individual accommodation plan, when providing career development and advancement. We provide accommodations to employees with disabilities so that every employee can be successful in their career when acquiring new positions or new responsibilities in their current position.

## **Redeployment**

By considering the accessibility needs of individuals with disabilities when redeploying employees, employers may help individuals continue to contribute effectively. The “deliverable” and “status update” for redeployment are provided below:

### **Deliverable**

Redeployment means the reassignment of employees to other departments or jobs within the organization as an alternative to layoff, when a particular job or department has been eliminated by the organization. An employer that uses redeployment shall take into account the accessibility needs of its employees with disabilities, as well as individual accommodation plans, when redeploying employees with disabilities.

### **Status Update - Redeployment**

Elections Ontario considers the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities when moving individuals to other positions, so that employees can continue to have their accommodation needs met. Information is gathered from the Individual Accessibility Plan (IAP) and the Individual Accommodation Response Plan so that we ensure appropriate accommodations and communication supports are being provided at the new position.

## Design of Public Spaces Standard

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Accessible public spaces include specific features that make it easier for everyone to use public spaces, including people with disabilities, seniors and families. The requirements under the Design of Public Spaces apply to new construction and the redevelopment of elements in public spaces. This standard came into effect in 2015.

### Public Spaces and Accessible Voting Location

When creating new or renovating existing public spaces, Elections Ontario follows the Design of Public Spaces Standard. When creating accessible voting locations, we follow Elections Ontario Voting Location Site Accessibility Inspection Checklist which incorporates the Design of Public Spaces Standard and other guidelines such as the London Facility Accessibility Design Standards (FADS) and the *Ontario Building Code*. The “deliverable” and “status update” to provide accessible design of public spaces are provided below:

#### Deliverable

When designing newly constructed or redeveloped public spaces specific accessibility criteria must be incorporated for the following:

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

There are 44 sections under the Design of Public Spaces Standard with specific measurements and requirements. Sections 80.1 to 80.44 under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* are the guidelines for the Design of Public Spaces, which Elections Ontario would use if and when it creates new spaces or is undertaking a major renovation.

#### Status Update - Public Spaces

Elections Ontario has not designed any new spaces or provided major renovations to any of the existing buildings this year. The Design of Public Spaces Standard has not been applicable in 2015. In the future, should we design new public spaces or renovate existing public spaces we will follow the Design of Public Spaces Standard.

We provide accessible voting locations during an election. Elections Ontario has created its own accessibility criteria when choosing the approximately 7,000 voting locations across the province. The voting location criteria that Elections Ontario has developed, in many instances, exceeds the specific measurements and requirements listed under *Ontario Building Code* (OBC) and Public Spaces Standard. Our criteria incorporates the OBC, Public Spaces Standard and the London Facility Accessibility

Design Standards (FADS). Ensuring voting locations are accessible is a key strategic priority for Elections Ontario as it gives everyone the opportunity to vote.

## Other Accessibility Initiatives

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Elections Ontario's mission is to uphold the integrity and accessibility of the electoral process and to manage elections in an efficient, fair and impartial manner. We embrace the accessibility principles outlined in our Accessible Customer Service Policy, Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy Directive and our Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

The following accessibility initiatives are in addition to the legislative requirements of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

### Modernize the Electoral Process

Elections Ontario is committed to modernizing the electoral process by implementing a new technology-enabled voting model to use for by-elections and general elections. This new model introduces two pieces of technology to automate manual processes. The first is an e-Poll Book which allows an election official to quickly find an elector's information on the list of electors and perform the necessary steps to issue a ballot. The second is the Vote Tabulator which automates the counting of the ballots. On-going testing during by-elections and with internal staff will ensure we are ready for the 2018 general election.

### Accessible Voting

For the Sudbury by-election February 5, 2015, we were successful in providing an accessible voting experience. Below is a list of our accomplishments:

- All staff were trained on and certified to deliver services in an accessible manner;
- Accessible voting locations and accessible materials for electors with disabilities including assistive devices were provided;
- Other accommodations were provided and available such as:
  - Cost of an American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreter could be reimbursed;
  - Assistive Voting Technology – accessible voting and vote counting equipment;
  - Assistive devices were provided at voting locations (magnifiers, ballot templates, easy grip pencils);
  - Moving ballot box to curb, providing documents and or information in accessible formats, reading candidates name to voters and other assistive tools;
  - Vote by mail, vote by home or hospital visit option; and
  - Electors permitted to bring friend or support person to assist with marking ballot;
- 85 voters cast their ballots during home visits and special ballot officers provided them assistance by reading the candidates' names out loud, marking the ballot if needed or providing assistive devices so elector could independently mark ballot;
- All 46 voting locations met Election Ontario's site accessibility standards and Assistive Voting Technology was provided but not used;
- Some alterations were required such as ramps, bevelled thresholds, mats, parking cones or signage; and
- Approximately 25 Information Assistants were employed to ensure that locations were accessible to all electors.

## Final Remarks

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Elections Ontario has had a productive year and is proud to share our many accomplishments for 2015. Our employees are committed to building an inclusive and accessible society both in our day to day operations and during an election.

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA), sets out specific guidelines that organizations must follow. Elections Ontario is committed to the implementation of the AODA and continues to identify, remove and prevent barriers so that people with disabilities can participate in every-day life and especially during an election in the province of Ontario. Everyone has a right to vote!