



**SECTION: ACCESSIBILITY**

**SUBJECT: MULTI-YEAR ACCESSIBILITY PLAN FOR LANARK COUNTY**



**A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER:**

Lanark County prides itself in selecting and committing to these Corporate Values. In addition diversity and fairness must be shared to be meaningful.

For several years Lanark County has been working to become a more accessible organization. There have been remarkable improvements to date however the momentum needs to continue to meet our goals.

Lanark County shall ensure the requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation are met, which came into effect on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011. A Multi-Year Accessibility Plan must be adopted by January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013. This plan outlines the strategy to ensure the County is 100% compliant.

Our Plan sets out Lanark County’s vision for accessibility, the changes we must make and the results Lanark County intends to achieve. Our immediate focus is to improve how Lanark County does business, makes decisions and interacts with our employees and citizens.

Improving accessibility for people is essential. It provides our workforce with the knowledge and tools to deliver the highest level of service.

Kurt Greaves  
Chief Administrative Officer

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**INTRODUCTION:**

For Lanark County, accessibility means much more than people getting through the front door. It’s what happens once they’re inside that makes all the difference.

Navigating easily into and around buildings and offices, accessing services and information in an appropriate format, working in an accommodating environment – all these everyday situations are important parts of accessibility and they benefit everyone.

For many years, Lanark County has had a vision and commitment to building an inclusive environment. Even prior to the regulations Lanark County has engaged the Accessibility Advisory Committee to consult and advise on the major building renovations in 2007/08.

This Multi-year Accessibility Plan details our approach to building an inclusive Lanark County and takes our vision to a whole other level: achieving an accessible public service.

**PURPOSE:**

This accessibility plan outlines the policies and actions that Lanark County shall put in place to improve opportunities for people with disabilities.

The Lanark County Multi-year Accessibility Plan is a road map that describes how Lanark County shall transform our operations into an accessible organization.

The contents were developed in consultation with staff and the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

In this document, you will find important background information about accessibility sections detailing our approach to building an accessible organization:

**GOALS AND VISION:**

The overall vision, desired outcomes and strategy that shall lead to achieving accessibility by 2025.

**OBJECTIVES:**

What Lanark County are doing to achieve results over the next five years.

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**APPROACH:**

Our approach to compliance with Ontario’s accessibility legislation and highlights of key successes.

**LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY:**

Under the Ontario’s Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), private and not-for-profit organizations with 50 or more employees must create a multi-year accessibility plan and accessibility policies.

In 2005, the government of Ontario passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), which requires that Ontario be an accessible province by 2025. To help public, private and non-profit organizations identify, prevent and remove barriers to accessibility; the AODA contains accessibility standards in areas, including:

- 1. Customer Service
- 2. Information and Communications
- 3. Employment
- 4. Transportation
- 5. The Built Environment

The accessibility standard for customer service came into force in 2008. The next three standards – information and communications, employment and transportation – have been combined into the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR). The IASR is now law and the requirements shall be phased in over time. The standard for the built environment for facilities and outdoor spaces is still in development.

**DEFINITIONS:**

**Accessibility** a general term used to describe the degree of ease that something (e.g., device, service, environment) can be used and enjoyed by persons with a disability. The term implies conscious planning, design and/or effort to ensure it is barrier-free to persons with a disability and, by extension, highly usable and practical for the general population as well.

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**Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005** the purpose of the Act is to develop, implement and enforce accessibility standards in order to remove barriers for Ontarians with disabilities on or before January 1, 2025 in relation to goods, services, facilities, accommodations, employment, facilities, structures and premises. The AODA came into force on June 4, 2005.

**Accessible** that which can be easily reached or obtained; a facility that can be easily entered; posing no obstacles to persons with disabilities.

**Accessible formats** may include, but are not limited to, large print, recorded audio and electronic formats, Braille and other formats usable by persons with disabilities.

**Adaptive technologies** technologies that enable persons with disabilities, primarily physical disabilities, to use regular versions of products such as computers or telephones.

**Assistive devices** equipment that assists people to perform a given task; usually devices that people bring with them, such as a walker, scooter, wheelchair or personal oxygen tank.

**Assistive technology** technological devices that have been developed with features specifically helpful for people with disabilities. Publishers may be asked to supply file formats that are compatible with particular types of assistive technology.

**Communications** the interaction between two or more persons or entities, where information is provided, sent or received.

**Communication supports** may include, but are not limited to, captioning, alternative and augmentative supports, plain language, sign language and other supports that facilitate effective communications.

**Conversion ready** an electronic or digital format that facilitates conversion into an accessible format.

**Disability** the interaction between the social, cultural or physical environment and a person's impairment that creates barriers. Disability may be apparent to others or hidden, inherited, self-inflicted or acquired, perceived or presumed.

**Diversity** refers to the presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within a group or an organization. The dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to, age, gender, race, ethnicity, physical and intellectual ability, religion,

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sexual orientation, educational background and expertise.

**HTML/XHTML (HyperText Markup Language)** the markup language for web pages and provides the basic building blocks of web pages. XHTML is a set of XML specifications that extend the rather limited capabilities of HTML and make it more disciplined. Both HTML 5.0 and XHTML 5.0 are currently under development by the World Wide Web Consortium.

**Information** includes data, facts and knowledge that exists in any format, including text, audio, digital or images and that conveys meaning.

**Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA), 2001** requires government ministries, municipalities and public sector organizations such as transportation organizations, hospitals and school boards to develop an annual accessibility plan aimed at identifying, removing and preventing barriers to accessibility in a number of areas, such as government buildings, publications and internet sites.

**PDF (Portable Document Format)** a file format, which enables a document to be used on many different computer platforms but always to maintain the same visual appearance and page layout. Originally developed by Adobe in the early 1990s, PDF is now an ISO standard and is widely used throughout the publishing industry both as part of its process for producing printed products and for some types of electronic products. The specifications of PDF files may vary depending on their intended use; some forms of PDF (particularly those specifically aimed at printing applications) are far from ideal for use in the production of accessible editions.

## **STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT**

Lanark County is committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. Lanark County believes in integration and equal opportunity. Lanark County are committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner, and shall do so by preventing and removing barriers to accessibility and meeting accessibility requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

Lanark County endeavours to demonstrate leadership for accessibility by ensuring accessibility for our employees and the public Lanark County serve.

Lanark County has been building an accessible organization for a number of years. As a public sector organization, Lanark County is required to do this by law, under

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the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. But our involvement began several years ago and has been influenced by several milestones including the renovation of the Administration and Public Works Buildings in 2007-2008.

**GOALS AND VISION**

Accessibility is a positive influence to improve our communications, it brings more people together, and it increases our ability to reach more citizens. In an accessible organization, a broader range of people will be attracted to seek employment with Lanark County and more people shall have access to our services.

Our goal is to make Lanark County workplaces and customer service centres accessible and welcoming environments – places where both employees and customers are accommodated according to their needs. Employees need to be able to function effectively and customers need to receive timely, high quality services in a way that works for them.

Lanark County wants to provide excellent service to our community. Lanark County wants to reflect the public Lanark County serve in everything we do. And Lanark County wants to attract the talented people we need to fill jobs. Building an expert and accessible organization shall help us reach these goals.

Organizational change is complex and involves many components: policies, processes and practices; people; technology; infrastructure; communications and awareness. When combined together these are the strategies that shall bring about change.

The Lanark County Accessibility Multi-year Plan provides an overall view of the approach to and management of organizational change.

**OBJECTIVES**

**Informed and committed leadership**

Lanark County is committed to generate an informed and committed organization to achieve the highest in accessibility standards; Lanark County has identified accessibility as a priority by adopting and implementing Accessibility Plans, Policies and Procedures.

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**Organization-wide alignment and coordination**

Lanark County is an upper tier government with a workforce of 350 staff providing a multitude of services. The Clerk’s Services Office, guided by the Clerk/Deputy C.A.O., provides coordination, vision and leadership to achieve organization-wide accessibility, diversity and inclusion. As a service provider to the 8 local municipalities, the county provides leadership to the lower tier.

The Clerk’s Services department is responsible for the Lanark County Multi-year Accessibility Plan and for identifying the actions required to comply with the AODA.

The aim of the Clerk’s Services Department with the guidance of the Human Recourses Department is to achieve a diversity and inclusiveness, delivering an excellent service and support to all its employees in realizing their full potential.

Employees who are engaged and knowledgeable are able to incorporate accessibility considerations into their daily business practices at all levels. To ensure they have the tools and information they need, the Clerk’s Services Department is responsible for delivering clear communications across the organization. It also serves as a centre of excellence and provides Lanark County with leading-edge expertise on accessibility, diversity and inclusion.

**Strong governance and accountability**

An effective governance structure is crucial to realizing our vision. All employees have a role to play in accessibility, and key individuals and groups have been assigned responsibilities to ensure our goals are met:

**Clerk/Deputy C.A.O.:** Acts as the Accessibility Coordinator who champions and is accountable for accessibility. This position is accountable for implementing accessibility standards and coordinating the accessibility strategy. Compliance reporting on behalf of Lanark County is done by the Directory or their delegate to the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario.

**Accessibility Advisory Committee:** The Accessibility Advisory Committee advises Council on the preparation, implementation and effectiveness of its annual accessibility plan. It reviews several specific areas, such as site plans for municipal buildings, by-laws, purchases and proposed renovations. The committee consults with local municipalities on accessibility issues and monitors federal and provincial

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directives and regulations. Members examine barriers in municipal buildings, facilities, programs, practices, services, by-laws and policies and produce an Accessibility Plan reporting on steps the County has taken to identify, remove and prevent these barriers.

**Department Accessibility Champions:** Staff representing many areas of the organization work as part of a group that champions the Lanark County accessibility strategy. The leads may be a director, manager or a specialist that provides strategic and practical assistance to guide the Accessibility Coordinator and Committee in their accessibility work. The leads provide guidance on their areas of expertise, whether it is human resource management, purchasing, facilities, information technology or emergency preparedness.

**Employee Services, Safety and Wellness:** Providing support to help promote effective, safe and timely employment accommodation for employees with disabilities and coordination of workplace discrimination and harassment prevention processes.

**Measurement, evaluation and reporting:** The success of this strategy – like any other – depends on having a clear way to measure, evaluate and report on progress.

Lanark County publicly post their accessibility plans annually.

A corporate progress report shall be released annually that documents progress on the accessibility strategy.

A Lanark County compliance report is submitted to the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario, which regulates compliance for all organizations in Ontario.

**Quality and compliance assurance:** Lanark County shall launch a process to ensure that existing and new regulatory requirements are implemented and maintained. This internal quality assurance and audit process shall help us maintain long-term and systemic organizational change.

**Feedback and Responsiveness:** Notwithstanding the requirements under the Customer Services Standard, encouraging feedback from staff and customers is an important part of our evaluation process. Lanark County are developing a strategy

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to engage key groups, including those representing people with disabilities.

**ACCESSIBILITY COMPLIANCE GOALS**

In order to meet and sustain compliance, Lanark County shall revise policies or developed new ones with accessibility in mind. Policies and guiding principles not only help staff ingrain accessibility into everyday activities, but also help ensure that compliance activities are communicated and delivered in a consistent way across the County.

Compliance with the AODA needs to be kept to the forefront, so ongoing maintenance and quality controls are needed. Support tools such as checklists and guides shall be available to enable compliance audits. This system shall help ensure compliance with the legislation and keep the issue of accessibility as a priority.

Accessibility as an organizational priority has been successful through strong leadership and strong organizational commitment. Managers and staff have accessibility performance commitments which are part of the performance evaluation program.

Increased awareness of barrier-free guidelines for new builds, major retrofits and lease agreements. Lanark County shall continue to develop strategies for addressing infrastructure barriers. Lanark County is ready to implement requirements of AODA Built Environment Regulation.

Municipalities must file their official compliance report with the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario. In order to do this, the Diversity Office collects each ministry’s individual report and then submits its report to the Deputy Minister of Government Services /Secretary of the Management Board of Cabinet. The compliance report is then filed with the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario.

**EDUCATION AND AWARENESS**

Implementing education and awareness is ongoing to provide staff the knowledge, skills and tools they need to meet and exceed compliance requirements. Lanark County staff has a broad range of functions and roles. For that reason, training is adapted to suit the type of work, the work location, and the type of involvement staff may have with accessibility. Training topics include what is a disability, statistics, alternate accessible formats and providing a service with keeping

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accessibility in mind. A variety of training materials, resources and best practices have been developed as a result, and are shared across the organization. Also corporate communications materials shall be provided that assists managers and staff to better understand their regulatory responsibilities and what they need to do to comply with the AODA.

## **PROGRESS AND PLANS FOR THE FUTURE**

The following outlines our commitments and our progress in meeting accessibility standards in ten key areas:

- Customer Service
- Information and Communications
- Policies and Plans
- Emergency Information
- Training
- Self Service Kiosks
- Procurement
- Employment
- Transportation
- The Built Environment

## **PLAN AND POLICIES**

Lanark County is committed to develop and review every 5 years or whenever necessary the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan for the County. A Policy shall be created to consolidate all of the Accessibility Standards into one comprehensive document. Including the Standards under the IASR, Customer Services Standards Policy adopted in 2009 and the Built Environment Standard once enacted.

Lanark County accessibility documents shall be provided in an accessible format upon request and to be posted on the County website.

## **CUSTOMER SERVICE**

Lanark County is committed to providing service in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. Lanark County are also committed to giving people with disabilities the same opportunity to access our

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goods and services and allow them to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way as other customers.

The Customer Service Standards policy and procedures applies to all County employees, including full-time, part-time, and temporary employees, summer students and co-op placements and persons acting on behalf of the County (e.g. consultants, contractors)

Lanark County is in compliance with the Customer Service Standards of the AODA enacted as of January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008. The Customer Service Standards' policy, procedures, and training program were completed. Ongoing training is provided and incorporated into the orientation session for all new hires with the commitment to provide additional training when changes occur. As part of the overall training and education a guidebook and brochure including the feedback form were developed and made available to all staff and councillors. The Lanark County Guidebook clarifies mandatory requirements under the standard for customer service, and shares good practices. It is posted on the website for easy access by its employees and the public.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS**

Lanark County is committed to meeting the communication needs of people with disabilities. Lanark County shall consult with people with disabilities to determine their information and communication needs.

Lanark County shall follow universal design principles and best practices when developing, implementing and maintaining information and communications strategies and products. This includes websites, intranet sites, communications materials, telephone communications and face-to-face interactions.

Achieving compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines-based (WCAG) commitments in the Information and Communication section of the IASR (Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation) to ensure websites are accessible for all.

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Developing guidelines and best practices for creating accessible documents for common desktop applications such as MS Word, Excel and PowerPoint.  
Ensuring that information, including emergency procedures, plans, and public safety, is readily available in a variety of alternate formats such as large print, HTML and tagged PDFs.

Developing a training strategy to ensure that staff, partners and stakeholders have the knowledge, tools and technical advice to create accessible materials.

Lanark County shall take the following steps to make ensure existing feedback processes are accessible to people with disabilities upon request by **January 1, 2015**:

Lanark County shall take the following steps to ensure the organization provides information and communicates in an accessible manner about its goods, services or facilities to people with disabilities on request by **January 1, 2015**:

- Identify all types of communication and services where accessibility regulations apply.
- Identify accessibility solutions that the organization shall use for each type of communication and service identified.
- Implement technology accessibility solutions.
- Develop procedures such that in the event accessible formats and supports are required, the organization is able to consistently provision what is required (ex. via technology based or via manual accessibility solutions).

Technology solutions may include but is not limited to:

- Developing document templates that help ensure accessibility in its initial form (minimum font size, color, font type) as well as maximize the ease of convertibility. (ex. tags, captions, font type etc.)
- Using Operating System Accessibility Features.
- Using 3<sup>rd</sup> party conversion services.
- Non-technology based solutions may include options such as verbally reading or using sign language to communicate information.
- Develop procedures to ensure staff provide accessibility formats in a manner

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that is consistent with policy. (ex. timely, in consultation with requestor, etc.)

- Train staff on policies and procedures.
- Notify public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports.

Lanark County shall take the following steps to make all internet websites and web content conform to international standards for web-site accessibility:

- Implement updates to internet websites and web content to conform to WCAG 2.0, Level A by January 1, 2014 except where meeting the requirement is not practical. (as defined in the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation)
- Implement updates to internet websites and web content to conform to WCAG 2.0, Level AA by January 1, 2021, other than,
  - success criteria 1.2.4 Captions (Live), and
  - success criteria 1.2.5 Audio Descriptions (Pre-recorded).

## **EMERGENCY INFORMATION**

Lanark County is committed to providing the customers and clients with publicly available emergency information in an accessible way upon request. Lanark County shall also provide employees with disabilities with individualized emergency response information when necessary.

## **TRAINING**

Lanark County shall provide training to employees, volunteers and other staff members on Ontario's accessibility laws and on the Human Rights Code as it relates to people with disabilities. Training shall be provided in a way that best suits the duties of employees, volunteers and other staff members.

Lanark County shall take the following steps to ensure employees are provided with the training needed to meet Ontario's accessible laws by **January 1, 2015**:

- Lanark County shall incorporate relevant training as it relates to people with disabilities during employees mandatory training sessions.

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- Lanark County shall inform new hires during their orientation of the Ontario’s accessibility laws and on the Human Rights Code as it relates to people with disabilities.
- Lanark County shall inform and train when necessary changes to the Lanark County Policies and Procedures as it relates to people with disabilities.

**SELF SERVICE KIOSKS**

Lanark County shall ensure employees consider the needs of people with disabilities when designing, procuring or acquiring self-service kiosks by **January 1, 2014**:

**PROCUREMENT**

Lanark County is committed to fair and accessible procurement practices and incorporate accessibility criteria and features in all procurement/purchasing policies and procedures. It is important that procurement processes are inclusive and all vendors are aware of the need to provide accessible goods and services.

Availability of accessibility options is a high priority in the procurement process. The vendor community is aware of and understands the need to demonstrate leadership in removing barriers for persons with disabilities.

Lanark County is committed to integrating accessibility into procurement policies, procedures and practices by:

- Conducting regular reviews and updates of procurement-related directives, policies, procedures and standards.
- Consulting with key stakeholders, advisory groups and vendors on promoting awareness of accessibility issues.
- Embedding accessibility requirements into the procurement process.
- Understanding fully the scope of service or product required.
- Knowledge & Experience of Proponent, Associates and Sub-contractors.
- Evaluation, Minimum Accessibility Requirements.
- Language suitable for the procurement of specific goods or services.
- Conducting reviews to ensure compliance and continuous improvement in procurement practices.
- Reviewing feedback on the procurement process and taking appropriate

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action as needed.

## **EMPLOYMENT**

The process of finding, getting and keeping a job must be inclusive and accessible in order to build an effective workforce at Lanark County.

Lanark County shall be an employer of choice that enables and encourages persons with disabilities to participate fully in all aspects of the organization.

Lanark County is committed to inclusive and accessible employment practices that attract and retain talented employees with disabilities. Lanark County has demonstrated the principles of Ontario's Human Rights Code and has developed and implemented policies that support accommodation and address non-discrimination and harassment allegations.

Lanark County is committed to fair and accessible employment practices.

Lanark County shall take the following steps to notify the public and staff that, when requested, shall accommodate people with disabilities during the recruitment processes and when people are hired:

- Notify public and employees about availability of accommodation during recruitment.
- During recruitment shall notify applicant at assessment stage that accommodation is available on request.
- Consultation with the applicant regarding provision of accommodation.
- Notify successful candidates of accommodation policies.
- Inform employees of policies that support employees with disabilities, including job accommodations.

Lanark County shall take the following steps to develop and put in place a process for creating individual accommodation and return-to-work plans for employees that have been absent due to a disability:

- Have in place a Duty to Accommodate Persons with Disabilities Policy and an established Procedure to address requests for workplace accommodations due to disability.

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- Have in place an Early and Safe Return to Work policy and established Procedure for return to work for absence due to disability.

Lanark County shall take the following steps to ensure the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities are taken into account if using performance management, career development and redeployment processes:

- Take into consideration the individual accessibility needs of an employee and individual accommodation plans when implementing these processes.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

Lanark County does not provide public transportation nor does it regulate taxis.

## **BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

Lanark County strives to be a leader in developing the built environment and plans are underway to incorporate accessibility retrofits into facilities when renovations are undertaken.

It is expected that the AODA's built environment standard shall require accessibility features to be incorporated into newly constructed facilities and those that need significant renovations.

Lanark County shall continue to model best practices when undertaking accessibility retrofits of existing facilities.

Lanark County shall consider accessibility when negotiating accommodation leases from the private sector, efforts are made to enhance accessibility in facilities used by County employees.

## **LANARK COUNTY'S PLEDGE**

The Lanark County Multi-Year Plan is our pledge so that our accessibility goals are met. Staff must use reasonable efforts to ensure that policies, programs and services, including procedures and practices established to provide accessible service to persons with disabilities.

The principle of respecting the dignity of persons with disabilities means treating them as customers who are as valued and deserving of high quality and timely

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service as any other customer. Persons with disabilities are not treated as an afterthought or forced to accept lesser service, quality or convenience. The delivery of goods and services must take into account how persons with disabilities can effectively access and use them.

The provision of goods or services must be integrated so that persons with disabilities may benefit from the same services, in the same place and in the same or similar way as other customers. Integration means that policies, programs, services, practices and procedures are designed to be accessible to everyone, including persons with disabilities.

Equal opportunity means that persons with disabilities have the same access as others to obtain, use and benefit from goods or services.

**This plan shall be reviewed every 5 years and amended as needed.**

#### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

For more information on this accessibility plan, please contact Leslie Drynan at:

- Phone: (613) 267-4200 ext. 1502
- Email: [ldrynan@lanarkcounty.ca](mailto:ldrynan@lanarkcounty.ca)

Accessible formats of this document are available free upon request by contacting the above.

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