



# County of Haliburton Multi-Year JOINT ACCESSIBILITY PLAN 2023 - 2027



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**COUNTY OF HALIBURTON  
2023-2027 JOINT ACCESSIBILITY PLAN**

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## Message from County Council

Haliburton County is a community where all people have equal opportunity to live, visit, raise a family, work, and retire. Our County thrives when everyone is respected, supported, able to contribute, and able to access public services and spaces, information, and programs.

Throughout Ontario, approximately 2.6 million people – or one in four citizens – have a disability. We know that in Haliburton County, as our population ages, the number of people with disability in our society will increase. It has always been important to work toward a more accessible and inclusive community by identifying, removing, and preventing barriers for those of us with disability and for those of us who will experience a disability in the future.

The Council of the County of Haliburton is committed and guided by the four core principles of Accessibility - Dignity, Independence, Integration and Equal Opportunity - and supports the full inclusion of persons with disabilities as set out in the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and its Standards.

The 2023-2027 Joint Accessibility Plan details some of the strategies and actions we know we can take to help ensure that we meet the needs of people with disability in a timely and considerate manner. We welcome feedback from all members of our community at any time throughout the year to help us get it right.

We are grateful for the ongoing, thoughtful input of the Joint Accessibility Committee – a group of councillors, staff and community members including people with lived and living experience – who are actively working to further accessibility and inclusion in our community through advice, advocacy, and meaningful recommendations.

We are fully committed to working together to make our community one where we can thrive and enjoy life to the fullest extent possible.

## **Introduction**

All persons deserve the right to perform the tasks of daily living within their communities while utilizing County and Municipal buildings, properties, or events.

Accessibility and inclusion are fundamental to the quality of life and well-being of every citizen of the County of Haliburton.

The County of Haliburton and the Municipalities it includes has therefore created a Joint Accessibility Committee. This committee shall aid and advise in the development of guidelines to help create a barrier-free society enhancing the lives of all within the County. These guidelines shall take into account the diverse needs of all our residents to make our communities safe, convenient, welcoming, and comfortable for all.

As we incorporate the expertise and knowledge of people with personal experiences with disability into policies, programs and services and include the Joint Accessibility Committee in the development and evaluation of strategy initiatives, the County of Haliburton is determined to continue achieving greater accessibility in our community.

With the passing of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) under *the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*, the County and its member municipalities have updated this multi-year plan to assist in implementing policies, practices, procedures, and training, and to identify and evaluate projects to remove barriers.

This plan will be reviewed and updated at least annually and may be amended from time to time as best practices are identified and opportunities for improvement arise.

## **Accessibility Achievements**

The 2023-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan builds on the County's past efforts and accomplishments in improving accessibility.

Some highlights of the progress achieved under the Municipality's 2018-2022 Plan include:

### **County of Haliburton**

- Expanded access to council and committee meetings by integrating system components to broadcast a hybrid model of in-person and online livestreams
- Together with member municipalities, implemented internet and/or telephone voting capabilities for municipal and school board elections
- Created a policy to enforce only accessible PDFs posted on both iCompass and the County website
- Incorporated accessibility standards into the County's Procurement Policy
- Rebuilt the County website to be fully accessible

### **Algonquin Highlands**

- Built new washrooms and entrance way with automatic door openers and accessible ramp at municipal office
- Built new accessible washroom at Stanhope Fire Hall
- Created new website with focus on improved content, communication and accessible content
- Installed new accessible outdoor privies, pathways and pavilion at Oxtongue Lake Community Centre
- Installed accessible picnic tables throughout township-owned parks

### **Dysart et al**

- Built fully accessible Welcome Centre with universal and accessible washrooms
- Built new skateboard park and increased accessible parking in parking area
- Built new accessible port-a-potty at parks and community centres throughout township
- Installed new solar lighting along pathways and improved trails in compliance with the Design of Public Spaces Standards
- Installed accessible beach mat at Rotary Beach

### **Highlands East**

- Constructed a washroom with shower to be barrier-free at the Cardiff pool change house

- Installed automatic door openers at Gooderham and Cardiff libraries
- Installed new section of concrete sidewalk at Lloyd Watson Centre and the municipal office, sloped for accessibility
- Installed a ramp and widened door at Cardiff storage facility
- Stabilized the roadway at Cardiff ball diamond

### **Minden Hills**

- Designed accessible access during renovation of Minden Hills Community Centre
- Installed accessibility signage at Minden Hills ballpark washrooms
- Adjust serving counter height in kitchen of Minden Hills Community Centre to meet accessibility requirements
- Installed automatic door push button at Cultural Centre Gallery Building
- Completed assessment of walking trails, boat ramps, playgrounds

These initiatives are in addition to regular and ongoing accessibility improvements.

## **Section 1 – Past Achievements to Remove and Prevent Barriers**

### **Customer**

The County of Haliburton and its member municipalities are committed to barrier-free access and thus have worked and will continue to work towards the following:

1. Take a leadership approach in achieving and setting an example to the business, institutional and volunteer sectors in terms of access and integration, employment equity, communication, recreation, transportation, and housing.
2. Establish a process to identify and eliminate barriers in existing services and facilities.
3. Actively encourage input from all segments of the community in the design, development and operation of the new and renovated county/municipal services and facilities.
4. Provide resources and support to implement this policy.

A barrier is anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society, and includes environmental barriers; communication barriers; attitudinal barriers; technological barriers and systemic barriers.

### **Service**

The County of Haliburton and its member municipalities provide goods and services to people with disabilities, with particular consideration of the following areas:

#### **Communication**

The County of Haliburton and its member municipalities communicates with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability. They are committed to training staff on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.

The County of Haliburton and its member municipalities are committed to providing fully accessible telephone service to our customers. They are committed to training staff to communicate with customers over the telephone in clear and plain language, to speak clearly and slowly and to tailor their responses as much as possible in support of the individual.

The County of Haliburton and its member municipalities communicate with customers by other means as required, including relay service or e-mail, if telephone communication is not suitable to their communication needs or is not available. Relay services are provided by your local provider such as Bell or Rogers.



## **Assistive Devices**

The County of Haliburton and its member municipalities are committed to serving people with disabilities who use assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from our goods and services. They are committed to training staff with various assistive devices that may be used by customers with disabilities while accessing our goods or services.

The County of Haliburton and its member municipalities work to ensure that staff know how to use the assistive devices which are available on our premises, including electronic door openers and elevators.

## **Billing**

The County of Haliburton and its member municipalities are committed to providing accessible invoices to all of our customers. For this reason, invoices are provided in large print or by e-mail, upon request. Any questions customers may have about the content of the invoice are answered in person, by telephone or e-mail.

## **Use of Service Animals and Support Persons**

The County of Haliburton and its member municipalities are committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal, in the areas of our premises that are open to the public and other third parties. They are committed to training all staff, volunteers and others dealing with the public in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

The County of Haliburton and its member municipalities are committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person is allowed to enter the municipal buildings with his or her support person. At no time is a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person prevented from having access to his or her support person while on municipal property.

## **Notice of Temporary Disruption**

The County of Haliburton and its member municipalities provide customers with notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities. This notice includes information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available. The notice is placed at all public entrances and service counters on our premises, as well as on the respective municipal website.

## **Training**

The County of Haliburton and its member municipalities are committed to training all employees, volunteers and others who deal with the public or other third parties on their behalf, and all those who are involved in the development and approvals of customer service policies, practices, and procedures.

Accessible customer service training is provided as part of new employee orientation, in a timely manner after staff commence their duties. Staff are also trained on policies, practices and procedures that affect the way goods and services are provided to people with disabilities. This training continues on an ongoing basis when changes are made to these policies, practices and procedures.

The ultimate goal of the County of Haliburton and its member municipalities is to meet and surpass customer expectations while serving all people, including those with disabilities. Comments regarding how well those expectations are being met are welcome and appreciated.

## **Employment**

The County of Haliburton will continue to notify employees, potential hires and the public that accommodation can be made during recruitment and hiring. The County of Haliburton and its member municipalities provide workplace accommodations to staff under the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*. The legislation protects people from discrimination and harassment because of past, present and perceived disabilities. Examples of these accommodations could include modifying the recruitment process, the terms and conditions of employment, providing individualized workplace emergency response information to employees, and/or making adjustments in the workplace. These adjustments could include change in work locations as well as assistive devices such as height adjustable desks for improved access.

## **Procurement**

The County of Haliburton and its member municipalities purchase goods and services with accessibility in mind. For example, photocopiers at most worksites have accessible features, such as touchscreens which move in order to allow access for people in wheelchairs, and the choice to increase font size on the touchscreen. When procuring third party services, the County ensures that the firm provides accessible customer service and that their staff have had proper accessible customer service training.

## **Section 2 – Strategies and Actions**

### **Customer Service**

The County of Haliburton and its member municipalities are committed to providing accessible customer service to people with disabilities. This means that we will provide goods and services to people with disabilities with the same high quality and timelines as others.

In order to comply with the Customer Service Standard, Haliburton County and its member municipalities will continue to be committed to:

- Take people's disabilities into account when communicating with them.
- Familiarize staff with assistive devices available to people with disabilities.
- Provide billing information to customers in alternate formats, upon request.
- Allow service animals and support persons to remain with people with disabilities in all service areas which are open to the public.
- Provide notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities.
- Train new staff.
- Provide ongoing training on any changes.
- Provide multiple ways to offer feedback on our services and any barriers we might need to address.

### **Information and Communications**

The County of Haliburton and its member municipalities are committed to making our information and communications accessible to people with disabilities. Staff will make every effort to create, provide and receive information and communications in ways that are accessible to people with disabilities. Initiatives to this end include:

- The County of Haliburton Public Libraries arrange for the provision of accessible information. The public is notified of this availability with signs posted at library branches.
- Accessible formats and communication supports will be made available to the public, upon request.
- The municipal websites will be redeveloped with all web content meeting the WCAG 2.0.

## **Employment**

The County of Haliburton and its member municipalities are committed to fair and accessible employment practices. They are committed to:

- Consult with the applicant and provide or arrange for the provision of a suitable accommodation that takes into account the applicant's disability, if a selected applicant requests an accommodation.
- Notify successful applicants of the policies for accommodating employees with disabilities.
- Inform employees of municipal policies which support employees with disabilities, including but not limited to, policies on the provision of job accommodations that take into account an employee's accessibility needs due to a disability.
- Make employees aware of any changes to existing job accommodation policies that take into account an employee's accessibility needs due to a disability.
- Consult with employees with disabilities who request accessible formats and communication supports to determine suitable format and supports.
- Have documented individual accommodation plans in place for employees with a disability.
- Have a return-to-work process in place for employees who have been absent from work due to a disability and require disability-related accommodations in order to return to work. Such processes will be documented and will outline the steps that it will take to facilitate the return to work and include an individual accommodation plan.
- Take into account the accommodation needs and/or individual accommodation plans of employees when using performance management processes, when providing career development and advancement information and when redeploying employees.

## **Transportation**

The County of Haliburton and its member municipalities do not currently provide public transit or licensed taxi services. Accessible transportation is available to qualifying Dysart et al residents through the Municipality of Dysart et al. Accessible transportation is also available throughout the County through private services and community service organizations. The County of Haliburton and its member municipalities acknowledge the vital role these organizations play in supporting accessible transportation within our communities. New initiatives undertaken by the County and its member municipalities will consider appropriate accessible measures.

## **Procurement**

The County of Haliburton and its member municipalities are committed to accessible procurement processes. They will:

- Follow the Procurement Policy which includes their commitment to including accessible criteria or features in the procurement process, except where it is not practicable to do so.
- Consider accessibility from the outset of the procurement process.
- Consider accessibility over the entire lifecycle of the good, service or facility, so that the end result is robust and adaptable enough to be accessible in the future.
- Set out basic requirements around asking suppliers to demonstrate their knowledge of accessibility as it relates to their goods, services, or facilities when tendering.

## **Training**

The County of Haliburton and its member municipalities are committed to providing training in the requirements of Ontario's accessibility laws and the Ontario Human Rights Code as it applies to people with disabilities. They commit to:

- Train all employees, volunteers and policy developers on the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation and the Ontario Human Rights Code as it applies to people with disabilities.
- Train new employees, volunteers, and policy developers as part of their orientation program, as soon as practicable.
- Provide additional training to all employees, volunteers, and policy developers if any changes are made to the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation Policy.
- Provide specific training to staff who create documents for the website on how to create accessible documents.
- Maintain a record of the dates when training is provided and the number of individuals to whom it was provided.

## **Design of Public Spaces**

The County of Haliburton and its member municipalities are committed to meeting accessibility laws when building or making major changes to public spaces. They are committed to:

- Follow the Design of Public Spaces standard when building or making any changes to exterior paths of travel, rest areas, ramps, stairs, curb ramps and depressed curbs.

- Install accessible pedestrian signals which meet the requirements of the Design of Public Spaces standard when new pedestrian signals are being installed or existing pedestrian signals are being replaced at a pedestrian crossover.
- Provide the number of accessible parking spaces at new or renovated municipal service locations, in keeping with the numbers set out in the Design of Public Spaces standard.
- Determine the best location for the accessible parking spaces in relation to providing the greatest access to accessible entrances.
- Meet all of the requirements of the Design of Public Spaces standard when constructing new or replacing existing service counters.
- Provide accessible seating when constructing a new waiting area or redeveloping an existing waiting area.
- Notify the public at the site and on the municipal website if there is a disruption to any of these services.

### **Review and Monitoring**

- Staff at the County and across member municipalities will monitor progress made on the proposed actions contained within the Plan and provide an annual status report to Council. Appendix A below - a list of proposed actions - will be updated annually to identify progress and completion status as part of the annual status report. Some actions may be subject to Council approval of respective budgets.
- The County, with support of the Joint Accessibility Committee, will review and update this Plan at least once every five (years) with the understanding, as legislative requirements change, that the priorities contained within the Plan may also change. Any necessary changes shall be identified through the annual status report.

**Detailed Initiatives:**

- Included in this plan as Appendix A the County of Haliburton and its member municipalities have identified detailed projects and programs to be undertaken between 2023 and 2027, to meet or exceed the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and to remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities.