



# Joint Annual Accessibility Status Report 2021

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A summary of Elgin County and its Local Municipal Partners accomplishments towards inclusion and accessibility in 2021

# Elgin County and Local Municipal Partners Joint Annual Accessibility Status Report 2021

## Objectives and Purpose

This is the County of Elgin and its Local Municipal Partners (LMPs) Annual Accessibility Status Report update. In 2015, Elgin County released its second Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (Ontario Regulation 191/11). The plan outlined the County's strategy to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility, which includes how to meet requirements under the AODA.

In 2021, the County released its first Joint Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP), which includes the County of Elgin and its seven Local Municipal Partners' accessibility progress, goals and timelines for the next five years. As a result of the MYAP becoming a joint effort, it allowed the Annual Accessibility Status Reports to become streamlined and collaborative rather than requiring each LMP to create their own.

This Status Report includes the accessibility initiatives that were completed in 2021 to implement the strategy outlined in the Joint Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

The purpose of this Status Report is to make the public aware of Elgin County and its LMPs' progress with accessibility implementation and to prevent and remove barriers and meet requirements under the AODA and IASR.

## Compliance Reporting

Elgin County and its LMPs filed their fifth Accessibility Compliance Report in 2021 with the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility.

## Commitment Statement

The County of Elgin and its LMP's statement of commitment establishes the vision and goals for the Municipalities to meet the legislated accessibility requirements. The statement of commitment is publicly available on the County website.

The County of Elgin and its LMPs are committed to eliminating barriers and improving accessibility for people with disabilities in a manner that respects dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity.

The County of Elgin and its LMPs recognize the diverse needs of all of our residents and customers and will respond by striving to provide goods, services and facilities that are accessible to all.

The County of Elgin and its LMPs are committed to being responsive to the needs of all of our residents and employees. In order to meet the needs of people with disabilities the Municipalities will:

- Ensure policies address dignity, independence, integration and provide for equal opportunity for people with disabilities.
- Allow people with disabilities to use their own personal devices to obtain, use or benefit from the services offered by the County and LMPs.
- Accommodate the accessibility needs of people with disabilities to ensure they can obtain, use, or benefit from the County and LMPs goods, services, programs and facilities.
- Communicate with people with disabilities in a manner that is considerate of the person's disability.

The County of Elgin and its LMPs will promote accessibility by ensuring that compliance is met for all regulations made under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005. In order to ensure that timelines are met, The County and its LMPs will establish, implement and maintain a Joint Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. The plan will outline the County and its LMPs strategy to prevent and remove barriers to people with disabilities. The plan will be updated on an ongoing basis, as needed, to ensure it remains current and aligns with the IASR.

### Continuous Achievements in Accessibility

- The County of Elgin and its LMPs focus on removing barriers which may exist in our buildings and facilities, while ensuring that new buildings, leases, and renovations do not create any new barriers.
- Elgin County/Central Elgin Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee continues to meet and review accessibility initiatives.
- The County of Elgin and its LMPs continue to comply with the requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation including continuing to train staff, volunteers and third parties who interact on behalf of the Municipalities on an ongoing basis.
- All library branches continue to provide accessible materials and communication supports upon request. In addition, the libraries have several accessible materials and resources available including but not limited to: large print books, audio books, CELA Library loan access, electronic materials with zoom features, hand-held magnifiers as well as ZoomText with large print keyboards
- Continue to review customer feedback and take appropriate action.
- The County of Elgin and its LMPs are continuously looking into new accommodation options for people with disabilities.

- Use of technology such as eScribe to ensure that Council agendas and minutes are completely accessible as well as maintaining the website compliance achieved.
- Continue to explore and monitor potential funding opportunities for the built environment relating to accessibility under the Enabling Accessibility Fund, Ontario Trillium Foundation, Canadian Tire Jumpstart and Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program.

## Highlights of 2021

- Creation of the first Joint Multi-Year Accessibility Plan between the County of Elgin and its LMPs
  - Conducted a public survey to get feedback from the public and people with disabilities to be incorporated into the new Joint MYAP
  - Collaborated with the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee on the creation of the new Joint MYAP
- WCAG 2.0 Level AA compliance requirements met by many of the LMPs
  - Is a result of website redevelopments that took place in 2020 and 2021 for many of the LMPs
  - Started using WAVE Browser Extension for screening websites to maintain compliance with the WCAG 2.0 Level AA requirements
- Enabling Accessibility Fund (Federal grant opportunity for funding up to \$100,000) application support provided to several LMPs
- Elevator renovation project in County Administration Building began in November 2021
- Ministry for Seniors & Accessibility Compliance Audit support provided to multiple LMPs
  - Compliance was achieved by those that were audited
- Completion of the Accessibility Compliance Report for the County of Elgin and all LMPs
  - Several LMPs reported yes to being compliant with Question 14 pertaining to the WCAG 2.0 Level AA web accessibility
- Elgin County/ Central Elgin Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee reviewed and provided consultation on:
  - County Administration Building Elevator Addition and Washroom Renovations project
  - The Joint Multi-Year Accessibility Plan
  - Accessible Parking on Furnival Road in Rodney
  - The Reconstruction at the Hamlet of Richmond

- Implementation of Return to Work Process and Return to Work Plan for the County of Elgin in response to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic
- The Municipality of West Elgin was a Recipient of Enabling Accessibility Grant to provide a new completely accessible washroom as part of the Municipal Office Renovations
- The Municipality of West Elgin installed a completely accessible playground in Miller Park in conjunction with West Lorne Optimists and the Ontario Trillium Grant
- The Municipality of West Elgin applied for the Enabling Accessibility Fund – Mid Sized projects for the Improving Community Accessibility Project which includes a number of updates to community facilities including the pool, recreation centre, arena, public washrooms and trail system.
- Municipality of Central Elgin and Township of Malahide now includes their Temporary Service Disruption Procedure in on-boarding training for staff
- Municipality of Dutton Dunwich residents can now attend meetings virtually or by phone
  - Meeting recordings can be made available upon request
- Municipality of Dutton Dunwich applied for a grant to upgrade website to an eSolutions platform and provide an online residential portal and self-service opportunity
- Municipality of Dutton Dunwich hired an assistant to ensure continuity of accessible scanned content to the website
- Municipality of Dutton Dunwich reviewed their Accommodations Policy
- Town of Aylmer provided basic training on website accessibility and compliance with the WCAG 2.0 Level AA requirements
- Town of Aylmer secured a Covid-19 Resiliency Fund to make renovations to Town Council Chambers that will aim to improve social distancing as well as accessibility
- Township of Southwold completion of new accessible playground and pavilion at the Shedden Open Space Park
- Municipality of Bayham was a recipient of an ICIP COVID Resiliency grant for \$107,000+ for sidewalk improvements in Vienna
  - Sidewalks were completed in May/June 2021
- Municipality of Bayham was a recipient of an ICIP Community, Culture and Recreation grant for expansion of the Straffordville Community Centre
  - Design includes accessible meeting room and washrooms, and an accessible outdoor walking path around the grounds
- Completion of the Straffordville Library Accessible Lift in the Municipality of Bayham

## Availability of the Plan and Status Report

The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and Annual Accessibility Status Reports can be accessed through Elgin County's website on the [Accessibility Page](#):

<https://www.elgincounty.ca/accessibility/>

## Contact Information

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Accessible formats and communication support(s) available upon request.