



Ontario
College of
Teachers

Ordre des enseignantes
et des enseignants
de l'Ontario

Interim Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

In Accordance with the Regulation 191/11,
Integrated Accessibility Standards



This Interim Multi-Year Accessibility Plan renews the College's commitment to continued compliance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) and provides an update on the recent initiatives deployed to meet its requirements. A final and forward-looking Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will follow this interim version and will be published in the fall of 2024.

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Introduction

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act:

- the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) became law in Ontario in June, 2005. Its purpose is to make Ontario barrier-free by 2025 by developing, implementing and enforcing standards for accessibility related to goods, services, facilities, employment, accommodation, and buildings.
- the organizations subject to the AODA include “any agency, board, commission, authority, corporation or other entity established under an Act”. As a result, the AODA and its subsequent regulations apply to the Ontario College of Teachers (the “College”).

Regulations Under the Authority of the AODA:

- the government identified five areas to develop accessibility standards in the form of regulations under the AODA. These five areas are:
 1. Customer Service
 2. Employment
 3. Transportation
 4. Information and Communications
 5. Built Environment (refers to access to, from and within buildings, and outdoor street spaces such as pedestrian access routes and signal systems).
- Regulation 429/07, *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service*, was enacted in July 2007 under the AODA to focus on the first area, customer service. The College met the compliance obligations as required under this regulation ahead of the January 1, 2012 deadline.

- Regulation 191/11, *Integrated Accessibility Standards* was enacted under the AODA in June 2011 and addresses the remaining areas noted above.

Regulation 191/11, Integrated Accessibility Standards:

- Regulation 191/11 establishes the accessibility standards for each area: information and communications, employment, transportation and public spaces. The transportation standards are not applicable to the College.
- the standards set out in this regulation are not a replacement or a substitution for the requirements established under the *Human Rights Code*.
- under Regulation 191/11, the College is required to establish, implement, maintain and document a *Multi-Year Accessibility Plan* which outlines the College’s strategy to prevent and remove barriers and meet its obligations under the regulation.

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan:

- this *Multi-Year Accessibility Plan* outlines the related policies and actions the College has or will have in place to benefit the full range of persons with disabilities
- whether an individual's disability is apparent or not, everyone will continue to be treated with courtesy and respect when they interact with the College
- this plan is available on the College's website, staff intranet and in an accessible format upon request
- the College will review this multi-year accessibility plan on a five-year cycle to ensure its ongoing relevance.

Accessibility Reports:

- the College submits accessibility reports in accordance with the AODA. These reports, filed every three years, outline the College's compliance with relevant accessibility standards in the Act and regulations.

The College Commitment:

- the College supports the full integration and inclusion of persons with disabilities as outlined in the AODA and supports the Ontario government's goal to make the province barrier-free by 2025
- the College is committed to full compliance with the regulations established under the AODA, including Regulation 429/07, *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service* and Regulation 191/11, *Integrated Accessibility Standards*
- the College is a professional organization committed to providing high quality service to its members, its employees and to the public. The College will continue to treat every person with courtesy and respect

- employees will engage with College members, fellow employees and the public in a manner that acknowledges the nature of an individual's disability and respects a person's desire for independence, dignity, and equal opportunity.

Regulatory Requirements

Accessible Emergency Information

The College is committed to providing employees, volunteers and clients with publicly available emergency information in an accessible way upon request. Emergency information includes prepared emergency procedures, plans or public safety information.

The following measures are in place to ensure emergency information is available to all persons at the College:

- emergency information and procedures have been posted on emergency exit doorways on all floors, including public access floors. It is also available on the College's staff intranet and in an accessible format upon request
- the College's Health and Safety Policy for employees agrees to ensure that legislated measures and best practices prescribed by federal, provincial and municipal legislation, along with the safe work practices and protocols set forth by the College, are adhered to at all times. This policy is available on the College's staff intranet.

Self-Service Kiosks:

- College staff involved in decision-making related to self-service kiosks are knowledgeable of the AODA requirements
- software used in the self-service kiosks is compliant with the AODA requirements by offering accessibility options such as larger font and visuals.

Training

The College provides training on the requirements of the accessibility standards in Regulation 191/11 and on the *Human Rights Code* as it relates to people with disabilities to:

- all employees and volunteers
- all persons who participate in developing the organization's policies
- all other persons who provide goods, services or facilities on behalf of the organization
- all staff who begin employment with the College, as part of their onboarding process
- Council members who participate in developing the organization's policies, on an as-needed basis.

Training is provided in a way that best suits the duties of employees, volunteers and other individuals.

Information and Communications

The College is committed to meeting the communication needs of people with disabilities.

College Website (AODA compliance criteria)

In alignment with the College's commitment to accessibility, the College is working on the development of a new public website, set to be operational by June 2025. This site will be built with robust web accessibility standards, including AODA compliance criteria as a foundational baseline.

Upgrading the website will enhance user experience with a modern design and improved functionality. The upgrade process will include assessment and remediation of non-compliant and out of date content, ensuring alignment with current AODA standards, increased reliability, and a more robust platform for managing content.

Since January 1, 2024, the College has been working towards making all internet websites and web content conform with AODA compliance criteria. Initially aiming for Level A compliance, the College has since shifted focus to achieve Level AA compliance, in line with updated requirements and enhanced accessibility goals.

To accomplish this goal, the College is implementing a comprehensive long-term plan that includes key initiatives such as:

- implementing an accessibility overlay on the public website to help users with disabilities access and navigate the content effectively (launched in June 2024)
- ongoing training for College staff who develop and manage web content, focusing on creating accessible documents and effectively utilizing assistive technologies
- continuous engagement with both on-site contractors and external consultants to audit the College's websites and provide recommendations for improving accessibility, particularly for PDF content remediation
- active involvement with internal and external stakeholders to leverage their knowledge and user experience
- periodic training sessions led by external-experts to keep web design, development, and production staff updated with the latest web accessibility standards and techniques
- utilization of advanced accessibility software tools to assess, evaluate, and monitor web content for compliance with AODA standards.

The College is dedicated to ongoing monitoring and development to ensure that the new website not only adheres to AODA compliance criteria but also evolves with emerging accessibility guidelines. This commitment includes enhancing the clarity of web content language and ensuring

comprehensive accessibility of the website, web content, and associated web-based applications. External experts will continue to play a crucial role in assessing and verifying the overall accessibility of the College's digital resources, reinforcing the commitment to inclusivity and excellence.

Feedback

The College's processes for receiving and responding to feedback are accessible to persons with disabilities:

- it includes features such as:
 - TTY telephone access
 - accessible counters and reception area features such as available seating, appropriate clearance for mobility aids and devices
 - College staff trained to provide services compliant with the AODA customer service accessibility standards for persons with disabilities.
- where the College responds to feedback received, the written response is developed in a format accessible to persons with disabilities. College staff responsible for the development of responses are trained in the formatting of accessible documents. For verbal responses to feedback, College staff in the service centre are trained to provide services compliant with the AODA customer service accessibility standards for persons with disabilities
- where an accessible format is requested for a feedback response, College staff will consult with the recipient to ensure the accessible format is appropriate
- the availability of accessible formats and communications supports to persons with disabilities will be noted on the College's website and in the reception area.

Accessible Formats and Communication Supports

The College ensures that members of the public with disabilities are provided with accessible formats and communication support when requested by:

- outlining the process for requesting an accessible format and/or communication support on the College's website
- consulting with the individual making the request to confirm the suitability of an accessible format or communication support
- providing or arranging for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities in a timely manner, and at a cost (where applicable) similar to that charged to other persons
- regularly updating the College Style Guide to reflect accessibility considerations and best practices, where applicable, in the development of College documents
- using and continually optimizing an internal checklist for the production of documents related to Additional Qualifications to produce PDFs that are compliant with AODA standards.

Employment Standards

The College is committed to fair and accessible employment practices for its employees. The College practices reflect accessible employment standards to meet Ontario's accessible laws.

The College adopted two policies to identify, remove and prevent barriers and increase accessibility for persons with disabilities: the Accessibility Policy for Employment Standards (which includes the Individual Accommodation Plan) and the Return to Work Policy.

Accessibility Policy for Employment Standards

During recruitment, assessment and selection processes, the College will accommodate people with disabilities upon request, by:

- posting employment opportunities internally and externally to reflect the College's commitment to the AODA and the availability of accommodation for applicants with disabilities in the recruitment process
- offering accommodation to applicants selected for participation in an assessment or selection process, upon request, in relation to the materials and processes used. The College consults with the applicant to provide or arrange for the provision of a suitable accommodation commensurate with their accessibility needs due to disability
- updating the signed employment agreement between a new employee and the College to include the College's commitment to the AODA principles and reference the College's policies for accommodating employees with disabilities
- updating the College's Employee Handbook, given to all new employees and available on the intranet, to include accommodation policies for employees with disabilities.

Optimal Work Location Policy

On September 11, 2023, the College adopted an Optimal Location Work Policy to reflect the reduced frequency of staff presence in the building. This policy introduces new opportunities to optimize current office space through a phased reorganization planning process. Over the next three years, the College will implement significant renovations to adopt a hoteling workstation model, designed to champion accessibility. The renovations will be carried out by contractors selected through a rigorous competitive process, with a strong emphasis on

adherence to AODA requirements. The remodeled office space aspires to exceed AODA stipulations, presenting an exemplary model of an inclusive physical workspace that:

- incorporates universal design principles to create an environment that is navigable and usable by all individuals, regardless of ability.
- accommodates individuals with mobility impairments with fully accessible restrooms outfitted with grab bars and hands-free faucets.
- supports individuals with sensory sensitivity by including quiet spaces to minimize noise disruption.

Accordingly, all newly renovated workspaces will be designed to be accessible to individuals with disabilities; should additional accommodation be required by any employee, the College remains committed to facilitating this process. To ensure clarity and accessibility for all employees, the College's Accessibility Policy for Employment Standards includes requirements to:

- inform employees of the policies used to support employees with disabilities, including policies on the provision of job accommodations that take into account an employee's accessibility needs due to disability
- provide this information to new employees as soon as practicable after they begin their employment and providing updated information to all employees whenever there is a change to existing policies on the provision of job accommodations

Performance Management

The College took the following steps to ensure the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities are taken into account when using performance management, professional development and redeployment processes:

- the College’s policies related to performance management, professional development and redeployment are outlined in the Employee Handbook available to all employees on the staff intranet and to new employees during their orientation. These policies were updated to take individual accommodation plans, where they exist, into account
- the College will consider the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities, including documented individual accommodation plans, during the performance management process
- where the College offers career development, advancement opportunities, job-shadowing or redeployment/reassignment to employees with disabilities, the accessibility needs of the employee as well as any existing individual accommodation plans will be taken into account.

Individual Accommodation Plans:

The College introduced a written process to develop documented individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities:

- the College policy for developing individual accommodation plans reflects a participatory process involving the employee requesting accommodation, College staff, and if required, external medical evaluations
- the Individual Accommodation Plan Policy includes information involving required accessible formats and communications supports for information that is needed to perform that employee’s job and information that is generally available to employees in the workplace, individualized emergency response information if required, and any other accommodation provided under the plan
- the College will provide individualized emergency response information to employees who have a disability as required, and where the College is aware of the need for

accommodation. This information may be shared with a person designated to provide assistance to the employee during an emergency situation

- the College’s Health and Emergency Planning Policy provides alternatives for employees with disabilities during emergency evacuation situations
- the Individual Accommodation Plan Policy includes the steps taken to protect the employee’s personal information and the frequency with which the individual accommodation plan will be reviewed.

Return to Work Policy

The College developed a written return-to-work process for employees who have been absent from work due to disability and require disability-related accommodation to return to work.

The Return to Work Policy:

- outlines the steps to be taken to facilitate the return of employees who were absent because their disability required them to be away from work
- includes the use of individual accommodation plans.

Design of Public Spaces

The College will meet the Accessibility Standards for the Design of Public Spaces when building or making major modifications to public spaces. As applicable to the College, public spaces include:

- outdoor paths of travel, like sidewalks, ramps, curb ramps designed for pedestrian travel and not covered under Regulation 350/06 made under the *Building Code Act*
- service-related elements like service counters and waiting areas.

The College requires that any contract to newly construct or redevelop outdoor paths of travel or service-related elements reflect the requirements of Regulation 191/11.

The College has put the following procedures in place to prevent service disruptions to its accessible service-related elements:

- the service counters and waiting areas at the College's offices on 101 Bloor Street West are accessible to individuals using mobility aids/devices
- the service counters at the Margaret Wilson Library and book return drop-box are accessible to members and employees with disabilities
- in the event of a service disruption, the public will be notified via the College's website and signs at the College's office.

Questions about this Multi-year Accessibility Plan?

Questions regarding this plan can be directed to the College's Client Services Unit:

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