

Credit Valley Conservation

December 2015



Credit Valley Conservation Accessibility Plan





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ABSTRACT

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) became law in 2005. Its purpose is to develop, implement and enforce accessibility standards to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises by January 1, 2025. Accessibility means giving all individuals equal opportunities to participate fully in everyday life activities.

Credit Valley Conservation's (CVC) first Accessibility Plan and was prepared in 2013 in order to meet the requirements of the AODA. The latest revision to the plan (December 2015) outlines measures CVC will take in 2016 and 2017 to identify, remove and prevent barriers for all individuals, including those with disabilities, who use CVC programs and services.

CVC is committed to continually improving the accessibility of its programs and services and will review this Accessibility Plan on an annual basis.

1.0. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Legislation

In 2005, the government of Ontario passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), which requires Ontario to be an accessible province by 2025. To assist all organizations in identifying, preventing and removing barriers to accessibility, the AODA was broken into the following accessibility standards:

- Customer Service
- Information and Communications
- Employment
- Transportation
- The Built Environment (Design of Public Spaces)

The accessibility standard for Customer Service came into effect in 2008. Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) was fully compliant by December 31, 2012. 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 its requirements are being phased in over a number of years. The standard for The Built Environment has been combined with the IASR and is now referred to as the Design of Public Spaces standard.

The intent of the AODA and the Ontarians with Disability Act (ODA) is to introduce a positive incremental change in Ontario, where Ontarians with disabilities have equal opportunities to participate in all areas of their daily life without barriers.

2.0. DESCRIPTION OF CVC

2.1 About CVC

CVC is an environmental agency working on behalf of regional and municipal governments with jurisdiction in the Credit River watershed. CVC was established in 1954 through the *Conservation Authorities Act* of the Province of Ontario. CVC is responsible for protecting, restoring and managing the natural resources of the Credit River watershed, other local watersheds that drain directly into Lake Ontario and a section of the Lake Ontario shoreline.

A watershed is an area of land that drains its rain or snowmelt into a body of water. The Credit River watershed is located in one of the most densely populated regions of Canada yet contains some of the most diverse landscapes in southern Ontario. The Credit River is almost 90 km long and meanders southeast from its headwaters in Orangeville, Erin and Mono, through nine municipalities, eventually draining into Lake Ontario at Port Credit, Mississauga.

CVC's specific responsibilities:

- Developing and maintaining programs that reduce the adverse effects of floods and pollution in order to protect life and property
- Contributing to municipal planning processes that help maintain clean water and protect communities from flooding
- Providing plan review and administers development permits
- Securing land to protect water quality and quantity, and species at risk and their habitats
- Providing opportunities for the public to learn about, respect and enjoy Ontario's natural environment on lands it owns or manages
- Collaborating with stewardship partners to rehabilitate degraded ecosystems
- Studying natural heritage features and conducting aquatic and terrestrial monitoring programs to guide best management practices and conservation programs
- Studying and monitoring water quality, water quantity and environmental quality generally

2.2 Vision

A thriving environment that protects, connects and sustains us.

Our vision is our desired end-state for our local environment and communities. It guides every aspect of our work by describing what is required to sustain our quality of life.

2.3 Mission

Together, it's our nature to conserve and our future to shape through the power of science, education, policy and leadership.

Our mission is our reason for being. It provides a path to achieve our shared vision.

2.4 Values

Our values guide our actions. They represent who we are as people and as an organization. They factor into every decision made at every level. As our organization evolves, our values remain a constant source of inspiration and guidance.

- *Leadership*
We lead by example. We inspire and empower the community and our partners.
- *Service*
We are responsive and professional in our interactions with the public, our partners and among ourselves.
- *Collaboration*
We work together and with our volunteers, partners and the community to achieve shared goals.
- *Accountability*
We are accountable to taxpayers, our partners and donors. Above all, we are accountable to the environment.
- *Integrity*
We are consistent, honest, ethical and make decisions based on the best available science.
- *Excellence*
We continually learn and improve to be the best we can be.
- *Innovation*
We encourage new and creative technologies and approaches.
- *Holistic Thinking*
We see the big picture and recognize the interconnectedness of elements that form larger systems.

- *Inclusiveness*
We value the diverse perspectives, work experiences, lifestyles and cultures that together inform the work we do.
- *Spirit*
We help each other, give back to the community and celebrate achievements.

2.5 Goals

CVC has eight overarching goals that guide its work:

1. Plan for an environmentally sustainable future
2. Safeguard people, property and communities from hazards
3. Manage a healthy, resilient environment through protection, restoration and enhancement
4. Develop and share scientific knowledge and innovative approaches that advance decision-making and lead to on-the-ground action
5. Connect communities with nature to promote environmental awareness, appreciation and action
6. Promote land uses, development approaches and infrastructure that factor in the importance of the natural environment to society, the economy and the well-being of residents
7. Ensure that Credit Valley Conservation is a well-managed, sustainable and service-driven organization
8. Expand partnerships and build new business models to increase organizational resilience and capacity

3.0. STATEMENT OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT TO ACCESSIBILITY

CVC is committed to implementing, maintaining and enhancing accessibility with respect to employment and use of all CVC services, programs and facilities for all persons with disabilities in a manner that:

- Respects their dignity, independence and is sensitive to their individual needs
- Makes sure reasonable efforts are made to ensure that service outcomes are the same for persons with disabilities and those without disabilities
- Allows persons with disabilities to benefit from the same services as those without disabilities, in a timely and similar manner considering the nature of the service and accommodation required

CVC is also committed to:

- Continuous improvement to access facilities and services for employees and members of the public with disabilities
- Providing accessible customer services
- Annually reviewing the accessibility plan and incorporating elements of accessibility into all future projects and activities

4.0 ACCESSIBILITY AND CVC

4.1 Training

CVC will provide training to employees, volunteers and other third-party service providers on Ontario's accessibility laws and on the Ontario Human Rights Code as it pertains to persons with disabilities. Training will be provided in a way that best suits the duties of employees, volunteers and third-party providers.

CVC takes the following steps to ensure employees are provided with the required training to meet Ontario's accessibility laws:

- CVC's new hire orientation program includes accessibility training for Accessible Customer Service Standards and Integrated Accessibility Standards. The content of this orientation and training includes, but is not limited to:
 - A review of the purposes of the AODA and requirements of the standards
 - How to interact and communicate with persons with disabilities (various types), including those with assistive devices, a support person or a service animal
 - A review of the Ontario Human Rights Code
 - What to do if an individual with a disability is having difficulty accessing CVC goods or services
 - Information about CVC's policies and procedures pertaining to the provisions of CVC services to persons with disabilities
- Training shall occur as soon as possible after an employee is hired or when changes are made to accessibility policies or programs
- Training shall also occur when an employee moves to another role which may warrant additional accessibility training
- Training records indicating dates of completion will be kept on file

4.2 Procuring or Acquiring Goods, Services or Facilities

Accessibility criteria and features shall be considered when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities, except where it is not practical to do so. When it is not practical to do so, CVC shall document and provide an explanation, upon request.

4.3 Kiosks

CVC shall consider accessibility for persons with disabilities when designing, procuring or acquiring self-service kiosks and shall incorporate accessibility criteria and features when designing, procuring or acquiring self-service kiosks.

4.4 Information and Communications Standards

CVC is committed to meeting the communications needs of people with disabilities and will ensure that we create, provide and receive information and communications in ways that are accessible to people with disabilities.

4.4.1 Accessible Formats and Communication Supports

CVC is committed to providing materials in accessible formats or communication supports to persons with disabilities, upon request. If such a request is made CVC will:

- a. Consult with the individual making the request to determine a suitable format or support that takes into account the person's accessibility needs
- b. Determine whether or not the accessible format or communication support is available
- c. Provide the information, where available, in a timely manner
- d. If CVC staff are unable to convert the requested information or communication, they will provide an explanation to the requestor as to why the materials are not convertible and provide a summary of the information to the requestor
- e. Charge the standard fee, if any, for the information

Note: This does not apply to information and communication that CVC does not control directly or indirectly through a contractual relationship.

4.4.2 Feedback

CVC currently has processes in place for receiving and responding to feedback and will ensure that the processes are available to persons with disabilities by providing or arranging for accessible formats and communication supports, upon request.

4.4.3 Accessible Websites and Web Communication

CVC shall ensure that its websites and web content conform to the World Wide Web Consortium's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), in accordance with the schedule set out in the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR).

CVC has taken the following steps to make all new websites and content on those sites conform to WCAG 2.0, Level A to the extent practicable (implemented before January 1, 2014):

- a. All new CVC websites were and continue to be assessed and evaluated for accessibility to ensure conformance with WCAG 2.0 Level A.
- b. All CVC web content was and continues to be assessed and evaluated for accessibility conformance (WCAG 2.0 Level A).

CVC will develop a plan to ensure that all CVC websites and CVC web content conform to WCAG 2.0 AA by January 1, 2021. This plan will include the following actions, to the extent practicable:

- a. All new CVC websites shall be assessed and evaluated for accessibility to ensure conformance with WCAG 2.0 Level AA.
- b. All CVC web content is assessed and evaluated for accessibility conformance (WCAG 2.0 Level AA).

4.5 Employment Standard

CVC is committed to fair and accessible employment practice and is dedicated to meeting the requirements under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR).

4.5.1 Workplace Emergency Response Information

CVC is committed to providing all customers, clients, members of the public and external partners with emergency information in an accessible format upon request. CVC will also provide an individualized emergency response plan for any employee who has a disability, where individual information is necessary and the employee has expressed the need for assistance.

CVC shall provide, upon request, all existing public emergency plans, procedures and public safety information in an accessible format or with appropriate communication supports in a timely manner.

4.5.2 Accessible Formats and Communication Supports for Employees

When requested by an employee with a disability, CVC will work with them to make workplace information accessible in a way that meets their needs. This means providing the information in an accessible format or with communication supports suited to the individual needs of the employee. Workplace information can be information that is:

- Needed in order to perform the employee's job
- General and available to all employees in the workplace

CVC will consult with the employee making the request to determine the suitability of an accessible format or communication support.

4.5.3 Recruitment

CVC will accommodate candidates with disabilities, upon request, during all stages of the recruitment and selection process. If a job applicant requests accommodation, CVC will consult with them and make practical adjustments that best suit their needs. When making offers of employment, CVC will notify successful candidates of our policies for accommodating employees with disabilities.

4.5.4 Individual Accommodation Plans for Employees

CVC currently has in place a formal process for the development of documented individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities. This process includes:

- Employee participation in the Individual Accommodation Plan
- A means by which an employee will be assessed on an individual basis
- Timelines for the provisions of accommodation
- A manner in which CVC can request an evaluation or assessment by an outside medical professional or other expert, at the expense of CVC, to assist in determining if the accommodation can be achieved and how
- The steps that CVC will take to protect the privacy of the employee's personal information
- Means of providing the accommodation plan in a format that takes into consideration the employee's accessibility needs
- Frequency in which the Individual Accommodation plan will be reviewed and updated and the manner in which it will be done
- If denied, the reasons for denial will be provided to the employee

If requested, Individual Accommodation Plans will include all information regarding accessible formats and communication supports provided by CVC. They should also include, if required, individualized workplace emergency response plans.

4.5.5 Return to Work

CVC has in place a return to work process for employees who have been absent from work due to a disability and require disability-related accommodation in order to return to work. This process is outlined in CVC's Return to Work and Accommodation policy. When facilitating the return to work process, individual accommodation plans and individual workplace emergency response plans will be developed and/or considered as necessary.

4.5.6 Performance Management, Career Development and Advancement, and Redeployment

CVC takes into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities and individual accommodation plans when managing performance, providing career development and/or advancement opportunities or when deploying an employee.

4.6 Design of Public Spaces

CVC is committed to greater accessibility for persons with disabilities in public spaces wherever possible. As such, CVC is dedicated to meeting the requirements of the Design of Public Spaces standard. However, CVC recognizes the inherent limitations of the natural landscapes found throughout the watershed that may in some cases, limit the ability to remove all barriers to accessibility. CVC will communicate with the public which built features meet accessibility requirements and ensure that where practical do so any new or re-developed public space is in accordance with the schedule set out in the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR). To meet the requirements, CVC will ensure the following:

1. CVC will consult with an accessibility committee and people with disabilities when designing or redeveloping public spaces
2. CVC will design and maintain public spaces to meet the requirements of the Design of Public Spaces, unless it is required to meet other regulatory and/or environmental objectives
3. Reasons for an exception to the requirements will be documented by CVC in a transparent manner

Additional Information

CVC recognizes that providing an accessible and barrier-free environment for Ontarians is a shared effort. Copies of this plan are available for staff and members of the public via CVC's website. For more information on CVC's accessibility program, please call 905-670-1615 or email cvc@creditvalleyca.ca.

*Alternative accessible formats of this document are available upon request