

Credit Valley Conservation

December 2013



Credit Valley Conservation Accessibility Plan





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ABSTRACT

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

This is Credit Valley Conservation's (CVC) first Accessibility Plan and was prepared in order to meet the requirements of the AODA. This multi-year plan outlines the measures that CVC will take during 2014 and 2015 to identify, remove and prevent barriers for all individuals, including those with disabilities, who use the programs and services offered by CVC.

CVC is committed to continually improving the accessibility of its programs and services and will review the 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 the year 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 the 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 experiencing barriers.

2.0. DESCRIPTION OF CVC

2.1 About CVC

CVC is a community-based environmental organization, dedicated to protecting, restoring and managing the natural resources of the Credit River watershed. Established by the provincial government in 1954, CVC is one of 36 Conservation Authorities in Ontario. As the primary scientific authority for the watershed, CVC works in partnership with municipal governments, schools, businesses and community organizations to deliver locally-based programs. These programs support water resource management, land management and acquisition, environmental advisory services, conservation area management, environmental stewardship and education, and natural heritage monitoring.

2.2 Vision

Having an environmentally healthy Credit River watershed for present and future generations.

2.2.1 Mandate

CVC's Mandate originates from section 20 of the Conservation Authorities Act (R.S.O. 1990, c. C.27) which states that a conservation authority is to:

“Establish and undertake, in the area over which it has jurisdiction, a program designed to further the conservation, restoration, development and management of natural resources other than gas, oil, coal and minerals.”

This means (as expounded in Section 21) that CVC, as the conservation authority for the Credit River watershed, is to understand the natural character of the watershed and embark on a program of conservation which includes:

- development regulations and permitting;
- oversight of water resources;
- ownership of sensitive land for protection,
- appreciation and recreation where compatible;
- stewardship initiatives with residents and landowners; and
- oversight of natural heritage.

2.2.2 Goals

CVC's program of conservation is addressed through five major goals:

- *Water Quantity*: to manage the hydrological system of the Credit River watershed in a manner that emulates natural processes while recognizing human needs.
- *Water Quality*: to protect and enhance the quality of surface and subsurface water for environmental and human uses.

- *Terrestrial and Aquatic Species, Communities and Ecosystems*: to protect, enhance and restore the ecological integrity of the Credit River watershed's natural features, functions and systems.
- *Natural Hazards*: to protect public safety and minimize property damage from natural hazards including flooding, erosion, wetlands and dynamic beaches.
- *Social and Economic*: to promote the social and economic health of the community through effective watershed management.

2.3 Core Operating Principles

- We recognize the inextricable link between human health and the natural environment.
- We maintain a watershed-scale perspective and consider implications of cumulative actions on the watershed as a whole.
- We recognize that healthy communities require a sustainable balance between economic, social and environmental priorities, interests and uses.
- We take a preventative, proactive and integrative approach to watershed management based on the principles of adaptive management. Where there is uncertainty, risk or irreversibility we are cautious and will err on the side of protecting the environment.
- We make decisions and take actions based on our accumulated knowledge, skills and experience. We work to continually improve our understanding of the watershed and how it functions.
- We subscribe to the belief that protection and restoration of watershed health is a broadly shared responsibility. We implement watershed management by working with partners and engage clients around shared interests and objectives. We strive for excellence in those relationships.
- We pursue practical approaches to the management of water, other natural resources and natural heritage based on the application of sound science, creativity and innovation.
- We promote ecologically sustainable development designs, practices, lifestyles and behaviour within urban and rural communities.
- We ensure that CVC's conservation areas are primarily managed for natural heritage protection, secondarily for appreciation, and thirdly for recreation opportunities.
- We have an important role in climate change mitigation and adaptation in the Credit River watershed.

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;
- Ensures reasonable efforts are made to ensure that service outcomes are the same for persons with disabilities as well as 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 will take the following steps to ensure employees are provided with the required training to meet Ontario's accessibility laws:

- CVC's new hire orientation program will be enhanced to include accessibility training for the Accessible Customer Service standard and the Integrated Accessibility Standards.
- 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 the 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 Standard

CVC is committed to meeting the communication needs of people with disabilities and will put measures in place to ensure that we create, provide and receive information and communication in a way that is accessible to people with disabilities.

4.4.1 Accessible Formats and Communication Supports

CVC is committed to providing materials in an accessible format 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 persons 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 communications 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. CVC will examine these processes to ensure the existing feedback processes are accessible to people with disabilities by the dates outlined in the Act.

4.4.3 Accessible Websites and Web Communication

CVC shall ensure that its websites and web content conforms 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 will take the following steps to make all new websites and content on those sites conform to WCAG 2.0, Level A by January 1, 2014, to the extent practicable:

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

CVC will develop a plan to ensure that all websites and content will conform to WCAG 2.0 AA by January 1, 2021.

4.5 Employment Standard

CVC is committed to fair and accessible employment practice and is dedicated to meeting the timelines as set out in the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR).

Upon completion of reviewing all employment practices, CVC will inform all current and new employees of the policies and procedures that are used to support employees with disabilities. CVC shall provide this information in a manner that takes into consideration an employee's accessibility needs due to a disability.

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

CVC will develop a formalized process for employees to request accessible formats and communication supports for information that is:

- Needed in order to perform the employee's job
- Generally available to employees in the workplace

CVC will ensure the process includes consulting with the employee making the request to determine the suitability of an accessible format or communication support.

4.5.3 Recruitment

CVC is committed to reviewing all policies and practices in respect to recruitment, hiring and interviewing as per the requirements under the standards.

CVC will also:

- Develop a method to notify employees and the public about the availability of accommodation for applicants with disabilities in its recruitment process.
- When a selected applicant requests accommodation, CVC will consult with the applicant and provide or arrange for the provision of a suitable accommodation that takes into account the applicant's disability.
- When making offers of employment, CVC will notify successful candidates of policies for accommodating employees with disabilities.

4.5.4 Individual Accommodation Plans for Employees

CVC will develop a formal process for the development of documented individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities. This process shall include:

- Employee participation in the Individual Accommodation Plan.
- 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 in the manner in which it will be done.
- If denied, the method of 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 will develop and have in place a return to work process for employees who have been absent from work due to a disability and require a disability-related accommodation in order to return to work. Such processes will be documented and will outline the steps in which CVC will take to help facilitate the return to work and include the individual accommodation plan as necessary. CVC will also include if required, individualized workplace emergency response plans.

4.5.6 Performance Management, Career Development and Advancement, and Redeployment

CVC will examine its current practices to ensure that they take into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities and individual accommodation plans when managing performance, when providing career development and/or advancement opportunities or when deploying an employee.

4.6 Design of Public Spaces

CVC will ensure it meets the Accessibility Standards for the Design of Public Spaces when building new structures or during major renovations to public spaces in accordance with the schedule set out in the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR).

Additional Information

CVC recognizes that providing an accessible and barrier-free environment for Ontarians is a shared effort. Copies of this plan are available to staff and members of the public on 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