



Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority

Accessibility Plan

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Contents

Executive Summary 3

1.0 Policy Statement 3

2.0 Background 3

2.1 The Legislation 3

2.2 Types of Disabilities 4

2.3 Overview of the Accessibility Standards 4

3.0 Description of the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority 5

4.0 Objectives and Commitment to Accessibility Planning 6

5.0 Barrier Identification 6

5.1 Barrier Identification Methodologies 6

5.2 Barriers Identified 7

5.3 Action Items 11

6.0 Plan Review and Communication Processes 11

6.1 Review and Monitoring Process 11

6.2 Communication of the Plan 11

Glossary of Key Terms and Definitions 12

Executive Summary

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* became law in 2005. The purpose of this Act is to improve opportunities for people with disabilities by identifying, preventing and removing barriers that may otherwise limit their abilities to fully participate in society. Accessibility simply means giving all people opportunities to participate fully in everyday life.

This is the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority's (NVCA) first Accessibility Plan, prepared to meet the requirements of the AODA. The plan describes measures the NVCA will take to remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities who use the facilities and services of the NVCA, including employees and members of the public. This report will focus on the NVCA's Tiffin Conservation Area and Administration office, our most widely used property.

The NVCA is committed to the continual improvement of accessible services, facilities and information.

1.0 Policy Statement

The NVCA is committed to having all members of our communities accommodated and included for equal participation and experiences in all environments. We are dedicated to creating a sustainable culture that continues to facilitate socially inclusive environments for continued success.

2.0 Background

2.1 The Legislation

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, also known as the AODA, which became law in June 2005, is intended to develop, implement and enforce mandatory accessibility standards in key areas of daily living. Standards have been developed in Customer Service; Information and Communications; Employment; and Transportation. In addition to these standards which have now been legislated, there remains one more standard to be enacted, the Built Environment standard. The accessibility standards apply to both private and public sector organizations across Ontario.

The purpose of the AODA is to:

- Develop, implement and enforce accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises by January 2025; and
- Provide for the involvement of persons with disabilities, of the Government of Ontario and of representatives of industries and various sectors of the economy in the development of the accessibility standards.

2.2 Types of Disabilities

When we think of disabilities, we tend to think of people in wheelchairs and physical disabilities—disabilities that are visible. But disabilities can also be non-visible and are not always apparent. The broad range of disabilities also includes vision disabilities, deafness or being hard of hearing, intellectual or developmental, learning and mental health disabilities. The AODA uses the same definition of “disability” as the Ontario Human Rights Code, which includes both visible and non-visible disabilities.

2.3 Overview of the Accessibility Standards

The AODA is made up of five Standards, each covering an aspect of daily living:

The **Accessibility for Customer Service Standard** (Ont. Reg. 429/07) was the first standard to be developed and released. This standard addresses business practices and training needed to provide better customer service to people with disabilities.

The **Integrated Accessibility Standards** (Ont. Reg. 191/11) brings together three standard areas into one Regulation: Information and Communications, Employment and Transportation.

- **Accessible Information and Communications** standard addresses the removal of barriers in access to information. The standards could include information being provided in person, through print, a website or other means.
- **Employment Accessibility** standard addresses paid employment practices relating to employee-employer relationships, which could include recruitment, hiring and retention policies and practices.
- **Accessible Transportation** standard is addresses aspects of accessible public transportation.

The **Accessible Built Environment Standard** focuses on removing barriers in both public spaces (trails, outdoor public eating areas, etc.) and buildings. **It is important to note that the standard for the design of these public spaces and buildings applies only to new construction or major changes to existing features.** However, the NVCA would like to ensure that we go above the requirements wherever possible.

3.0 Description of the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority

The Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority is one of 36 Conservation Authorities across Ontario under the umbrella organization of Conservation Ontario.

Our watershed is approximately 3700 sq. km, with jurisdiction in 18 municipalities, and is the source of watercourses that flow into Georgian Bay at Wasaga Beach, Collingwood and Severn Sound. It includes 35 km of Georgian Bay shoreline along the Wasaga Beach and Collingwood waterfront.

Our Vision:

Innovative watershed management supporting a healthy environment, communities and lifestyles.

Our Mission:

Working together to lead, promote, support and inspire innovative watershed management.

Our Guiding Principles:

We are committed to carrying out our responsibilities, providing services to our customers and working with our partners in a professional, accountable, responsible and dedicated manner. We are:

- **an adaptive organization** – constantly striving to improve; committed to anticipating change and thinking strategically.
- **a "can-do" organization** – collaborative, decisive and efficient, committed to finding solutions that work for all.
- **a science-based organization** – committed to using the best available watershed science and knowledge to inform decisions.
- **a professional organization** – authentic and credible, respectful of all and receptive to the ideas of others.
- **an open organization** – approachable, committed to customer service excellence, honest, open, transparent and effective.
- **a responsible organization** – trustworthy, committed to fiscal prudence and the responsible use of resources.

4.0 Objectives and Commitment to Accessibility Planning

This report describes the measures that the NVCA will take during the coming years to identify, remove and prevent barriers for all people, including those with disabilities who use the facilities and services of the NVCA.

The NVCA is committed to:

- Continuous improvement of access to facilities and services for employees and members of the public with disabilities.
- Providing accessible customer service.
- The participation of people with disabilities in the development and review of its annual accessibility plans.
- Annually reviewing the accessibility plan and incorporating elements of accessibility into all future projects and activities, including establishing an accessibility line item in the Annual Board Approved Budget.

5.0 Barrier Identification

5.1 Barrier Identification Methodologies

Methodology:

Staff Meetings

Accessibility legislation and barrier identification was discussed at Senior Management, Human Resources and other meetings. These meetings gave various departments an opportunity to discuss legislative requirements and brainstorm accessibility initiatives specific to their department.

Conservation Area Site Visits

Several NVCA Conservation Areas were visited by the Lands team to review accessibility barriers. We have prioritized our properties and have put the Tiffin Centre at the top of the list. This document focuses primarily on this property.

Independent Living Services of Simcoe (ILSSC) Consultation

Member of Independent Living Services attended the Tiffin Centre to review the barriers on our main property. They gave many good suggestions that will be incorporated throughout this document.

5.2 Barriers Identified

The following barriers and possible corrective actions have been identified:

Administration Centre

Barrier	Barrier Type	Strategies for Removal or Prevention	Where we are at
Customer service	Attitudinal/ Organizational	All current employees have received training in accessibility standards for customer service. Training will be ongoing for new employees or as needed when new practices or policies are implemented.	This has been completed. All new employees receive training and all training is updated when new practices or policies are implemented.
Procurement of goods, services or facilities	Organizational	Review procurement and purchasing practices to incorporate accessibility criteria and requirements. Educate staff on these requirements. Research options when acquiring point-of-sale (POS) devices and other types of self-serve kiosks.	All procurements going through tenders, RFP's and RFQ's are now in an accessible format and have the statement - "If you require this document in an alternative format please contact NVCA". We do not have POS or self-serve kiosks at this time.
Entry Doors	Physical/ Architectural	While the doors are accessible as is, it was noted that having automatic doors will increase the accessibility for visitors.	Automatic doors put on the Jose building. Due to the building structure of the Hix building it is not possible at this time to convert those. A doorbell option is being reviewed.
Main lobby	Physical/ Information/ Communication	Assess current layout of the main lobby (i.e. furniture placement, etc.). Where feasible, make improvements to increase accessibility.	This has been completed. The front layout of the lobby is more accessible and open.

Information Systems, Technology and Communications Departments

Barrier	Barrier Type	Strategies for Removal or Prevention	Where we are at
Current NVCA website not compliant with accessibility standards	Technology	Currently evaluating design of website and working with County of Simcoe (our hosting partner) to get website updated (2014 launch anticipated)	The NVCA website has been updated and is currently in compliance with accessibility standards. Staff are now reviewing the older documents that are attached within the website to make them compliant.
Readability of printed Materials (i.e. brochures, tabloids, minutes, forms)	Information/Communication	Educate staff on creating accessible documents. Research alternatives and redesign new printed materials to make them accessible with Verdana font. Provide alternative accessible formats when requested.	All NVCA documents are now created using Verdana font. By the end of 2016, all staff will be educated in creating accessible documents. We will provide alternative accessible formats when requested.

Tiffin Conservation Area

Barrier	Barrier Type	Strategies for Removal or Prevention	Where we are at
Entrance signage	Physical/ Architectural	Clear and distinct signage is in place but the position of the sign announcing the Tiffin Centre is somewhat obstructed by trees. Consider moving signage closer to roads	Trees have been removed to provide clearer line of sight. Additional signage has been moved to be more visible.
General signage throughout Tiffin Centre	Physical/ Architectural	Post appropriate signage throughout area to not only direct visitors to appropriate locations, parking, make them aware of the fee (how much, where to pay, etc.) but to also note what is accessible. Also to update the signage in the early bird parking to more updated and useful information.	This has all been completed with new signage and new parking fee structures/signs.
Washrooms and change rooms	Physical/ Architectural	Post universal signage to direct people to accessible washrooms and stalls. Where feasible, make improvements to existing washroom facilities to make them accessible or build/place portable accessible facilities in locations that currently do not have any.	This is complete. Washrooms in both the Hix and Jose building have been updated and are fully accessible. The outhouse washrooms are also accessible.

Barrier	Barrier Type	Strategies for Removal or Prevention	Where we are at
Picnic areas	Physical/ Architectural	Conduct a detailed review of the barriers at picnic areas and shelters. Improve accessibility as needed at each location.	This is completed at the group campground. The entire area is accessible. Trails are now also accessible.
Entry doors at Jose Building	Physical/ Architectural	While the doors are accessible as is, it was noted that they are quite heavy and there is a high threshold that needs to be lowered. Having automatic doors will increase the accessibility for visitors.	Automatic doors have been installed as previously mentioned.
Trails	Physical/ Architectural	Review trail systems; promote accessible trails through website and printed documents; work towards improved trail accessibility through ensuring brush cut down and other methods. Change wood chip covered pathways to a harder packed surface.	Most of our trails are accessible and are marked as such on the website. There is one that is not as of yet and is still being reviewed. The wood chip coverage has been removed and replaced with a harder packed surface. Brush cut down has occurred along the trails.

5.3 Action Items

- Key aspect of improving accessibility will continue to be training and education of staff to ensure they have the knowledge and tools necessary to assist persons with disabilities. The NVCA will continue to provide training and strive to ensure services are provided to all persons in an accessible manner.
- Continue to build elements of accessibility into all practices, procedures and policies.
- Ongoing identification of barriers and development of the accessibility plan.
- Post universal accessibility signage to direct people to accessible facilities (i.e. washrooms, parking, trails, etc.). Incorporate this information into the website.
- Complete reviews of accessibility services to ensure compliance
- Implement signage on other NVCA properties as appropriate

6.0 Plan Review and Communication Processes

6.1 Review and Monitoring Process

The NVCA will continue to identify barriers and review progress on removal and development of barrier prevention strategies. NVCA clients are encouraged to provide Accessibility Feedback available on the NVCA [website](#) or by contacting the NVCA at 705-424-1479.

The accessibility plan will be updated at least once every five years.

6.2 Communication of the Plan

Copies of this plan are available to Board Members, staff and members of the public on the NVCA website. Alternative accessible formats will be available upon request.

7.0 Glossary of Key Terms and Definitions

BARRIER as defined by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communication barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice. There are many kinds of barriers. Some are visible, but many are not visible.

Type of barriers	Examples
<p>Attitudinal barriers are those that discriminate against people with disabilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • thinking that people with disabilities are inferior • assuming that a person who has a speech impairment cannot understand you
<p>Information or communications barriers happen when a person cannot easily understand information.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • print is too small to read • websites that cannot be accessed by people who are not able to use a mouse • signs that are not clear or easily understood
<p>Technology barriers occur when a technology cannot be modified to support various assistive devices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a website that doesn't support screen-reading software
<p>Organizational barriers are an organization's policies, practices or procedures that discriminate against people with disabilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a hiring process that is not open to people with disabilities
<p>Architectural and physical barriers are features of buildings or spaces that cause problems for people with disabilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hallways and doorways that are too narrow for a person using a wheelchair, electric scooter or walker • counters that are too high for a person of short stature • poor lighting for people with low vision • doorknobs that are difficult for people with arthritis to grasp • parking spaces that are too narrow for a driver who uses a wheelchair • telephones that are not equipped with telecommunications devices for people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing

BARRIER-IDENTIFICATION METHODOLOGIES are processes or practices used to determine what barriers exist, where barriers exist and any other information. Examples of barrier identification methodologies may include: customer feedback surveys or questionnaires, and discussions with employees or members of the public.

DISABILITY MEANS as defined by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, is:

- Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;
- A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- A learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- A mental disorder; or
- An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.