



Annual Accessibility Plan 2025

Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee (HCAAC)

County of Huron

Email: accessibility@huroncounty.ca



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Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the County of Huron is situated on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, and Neutral peoples and is connected to the Dish with One Spoon wampum, under which multiple nations agreed to care for the land and its resources by the Great Lakes in peace. We also acknowledge the Upper Canada Treaties signed in regard to this land, which include Treaty #29 and Treaty #45 ½.

We recognize First Peoples' continued stewardship of the land and water and the historical and ongoing injustices they face in Canada. As a committee dedicated to fostering accessibility and inclusion, we acknowledge our responsibility to engage meaningfully with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples, reinforce our efforts toward reconciliation and uphold and value the traditions, rights, and contributions of Indigenous Peoples.

Chair's Address

People with disabilities often face barriers that limit their ability to work, shop, travel, and engage fully in their communities. One of the greatest strengths of the Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee (HCAAC) is our dedicated members, who are passionate about informing, educating, and inspiring our community to make Huron County accessible to all. Our committee is committed to providing comprehensive accessibility training to community members across various sectors in alignment with the [O. Reg. 191/11: Integrated Accessibility Standards](#).

We focus on:

- Customer Service
- General Requirements
- Human Rights
- Employment
- Information & Communication
- Design of Public Spaces

Training is tailored to job responsibilities. Facilities staff focus on Human Rights, General Requirements, and Customer Service, while management completes all modules. All stakeholders receive training on accessibility standards and assistive devices. Through training opportunities and resources, we aim to increase awareness and engagement and foster a deeper understanding of government legislation among entities—such as businesses, organizations, institutions, services, and facilities.

Governance

Our committee has successfully operated virtually since 2021. We appreciate the dedication and passion of all our committee members, who contribute to creating an inclusive society.

Thank you for your ongoing support and commitment.

Trevor Bazinet (he/him),

Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee Chair

Foreword

Accessibility is a cornerstone of an inclusive community, ensuring that every individual can participate fully in their community. Disability affects a growing number of Canadians. From 2017 to 2022, the disability rate increased across all provinces and most territories. There were most considerable increases in mental health-related disabilities (10.4% prevalence, +3.2 points), pain-related disabilities (16.7% prevalence, +2.2 points), and seeing disabilities (7.4% prevalence, +2.2 points; see [Infographic](#)). These trends emphasize the growing need for accessible environments and inclusive practices to accommodate the evolving needs of individuals with disabilities nationwide.

Huron County is dedicated to creating an inclusive and accessible community, ensuring everyone can engage fully in all facets of life. In line with this dedication, we introduce our 2025 Annual Accessibility Plan (AAP), detailing our strategic plan to identify, eliminate, and prevent barriers faced by individuals with disabilities in our County.

This plan reflects our dedication to meeting and exceeding the standards set by the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\), 2005, S.O. 2005, c. 11](#).

We encourage you to review this plan and join us in our commitment to championing accessibility. Please feel empowered to contact us with any questions, comments, or suggestions.

This report is available online ([click here](#)) and can be provided in various formats upon request. If your inquiry concerns our partner municipality, please contact them directly.

Together, we can make Huron County a place where everyone belongs.

Contact Information

Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee (HCAAC)

1 Courthouse Square

Goderich, ON, N7A 1M2

Telephone: 519-524-8394, ext. 3257

Email: accessibility@huroncounty.ca

Sahil Kaushal (he/they)

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) Specialist | Accessibility Coordinator
County of Huron

Email: skaushal@huroncounty.ca

Executive Summary

The 2025 Annual Accessibility Plan (AAP) of the Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee (HCAAC) reflects the County of Huron's ongoing commitment to building a more inclusive and accessible community. This plan outlines the achievements from 2024, highlights our strategic goals for 2025, and underscores our dedication to ensuring that Huron County continues to lead in accessibility and inclusivity.

In 2024, the HCAAC made significant strides in enhancing accessibility across the County. Key achievements included the development of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, thorough site plan reviews, and the continued success of the HCAAC Accessibility Awards. The HCAAC enhanced its collaborations with partner municipalities, businesses, and community groups, advocating for accessibility initiatives and exchanging best practices.

In 2025, the HCAAC aims to advance its achievements by concentrating on several significant goals. These consist of ongoing evaluations and recommendations regarding accessible spaces, strengthening ties with partner municipalities, and raising awareness about accessibility through events like National AccessAbility Week. Furthermore, the Committee will collaborate with County staff to revise its policies to ensure they meet accessibility standards and seek funding opportunities for new initiatives.

The 2025 AAP also emphasizes the importance of accountability and reporting. HCAAC is committed to regularly monitoring progress, providing updates to the County Council, and engaging with the community to ensure transparency and continuous improvement.

This plan reaffirms the HCAAC's mission to create a barrier-free Huron County where everyone can fully participate and enjoy all aspects of community life. By prioritizing accessibility in all County operations and collaborating with partners, the County of Huron is confident that the goals outlined in this plan will lead to meaningful and seminal developments.

HCAAC at a Glance



Huron County Map

The Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee (HCAAC) serves as the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) for Huron County, mandated by the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\), 2005, S.O. 2005, c. 11](#). HCAAC is dedicated to advising Huron County Council on the implementation of accessibility standards across the County's nine partner municipalities (see [Appendix](#) for HCAAC's objectives and priorities). Comprising primarily of individuals with disabilities, the committee plays a vital role in creating an accessible community by providing input on accessibility plans, site developments, and public spaces. Through education, consultation, and advocacy, the HCAAC ensures that Huron County remains inclusive and accessible for everyone.

1. [Ashfield-Colborne-Wawanosh](#)
2. [Bluewater](#)
3. [Central Huron](#)
4. [Goderich](#)
5. [Howick](#)
6. [Huron East](#)
7. [Morris-Turnberry](#)
8. [North Huron](#)
9. [South Huron](#)



Strategic Alignment

HCAAC is dedicated to ensuring that the County's operations are accessible and inclusive for all individuals.



Integrated Approach to Inclusion and Accessibility

In alignment with the County of Huron's commitment to inclusion and diversity, the Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee (HCAAC) embraces an integrated approach where accessibility is seamlessly woven into the broader framework of inclusion. Rather than being a standalone aspect, accessibility is a fundamental component of our overall Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) strategy.

This approach ensures that all initiatives and programs reflect HCAAC's dedication to creating a community where everyone can fully participate and thrive. By integrating accessibility into the IDEA lens, HCAAC strives to foster an environment where accessibility is not just an add-on but a core element of the County's inclusive practices and policies.



Intersectionality and Disability

Intersectionality highlights how various aspects of identity, such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, and disability, intersect and influence an individual's experiences. Disability is deeply intertwined with these factors, affecting how individuals experience barriers and discrimination. For example, a person's experience with disability can differ significantly based on their gender, race, or socioeconomic background.

By recognizing these intersecting identities, we can better understand and address the unique challenges faced by individuals with disabilities. This perspective guides our approach to creating inclusive environments, ensuring that our accessibility initiatives consider and accommodate the diverse needs of all community members. This approach helps us move beyond a one-size-fits-all model and fosters a more equitable and supportive community for everyone.

Reporting and Accountability

The Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee (HCAAC) is committed to ensuring transparency and accountability in enhancing accessibility across the region. To achieve this, the Committee adheres to a robust framework for monitoring progress, evaluating effectiveness, and reporting outcomes.

- **Regular Monitoring and Evaluation:** HCAAC reviews its initiatives and programs to assess their impact and effectiveness. This involves collecting feedback from stakeholders, analyzing data on accessibility improvements, and evaluating the progress of ongoing projects against established goals and standards.

- **Annual Reporting:** The HCAAC publishes an annual accessibility plan update to provide a comprehensive overview of its activities, achievements, and future goals. This report includes details on compliance with accessibility standards, progress on key projects, and any challenges encountered. It is made available to the public and shared with the County Council and partner municipalities to ensure accountability, transparency, and trust.
- **Public Engagement:** HCAAC encourages input from the community through various channels, including public meetings and feedback mechanisms. This engagement helps ensure that the Committee’s work is aligned with the priorities and perspectives of the community.
- **Accountability Framework:** HCAAC operates within a clear accountability framework, with defined roles and responsibilities for Committee members and subcommittees. Regular meetings are held to review progress, address issues, and adjust strategies and actions as needed.
- **Reporting to County Council:** HCAAC provides regular updates to the County Council, including detailed reports on accessibility initiatives and their outcomes. These updates help ensure that accessibility remains a priority within the County’s broader strategic goals and facilitates informed decision-making.

2024 Achievements

Public Accessible Spaces Simplified (PASS)

In 2024, HCAAC sponsored the PASS program, enabling free access to the educational content it generates for employees of the County of Huron and partner municipalities. This program emphasizes best practices for developing accessible environments. By ensuring this content is available, HCAAC fosters the advancement of accessible practices throughout the region and addresses a significant need for resources in accessible design.

Updated Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP)

The MYAP was updated to incorporate new goals, strategies, and timelines to enhance accessibility across the County. This comprehensive revision introduced specific action items and implementation strategies to address emerging accessibility considerations. The

updated plan reflects current accessibility standards and aligns with provincial legislation, ensuring that the County's initiatives are effective and compliant with legal requirements.

HCAAC Awards

The nomination process for the HCAAC Accessibility Awards underwent a significant transformation to enhance accessibility and improve user experience. This revision sought to facilitate submissions, allowing individuals and organizations to participate more easily. Key updates feature simplified application forms, clearer criteria, and better support for both nominators and nominees. These changes were effectively conveyed through multiple media platforms, resulting in a rise in nominations and greater community involvement.

Accessible Tourism Initiative

This initiative, spearheaded by HCAAC, focuses on identifying and cataloging accessible spaces throughout the County, such as parks, trails, and other public spaces. By listing these locations on the County's tourism website, HCAAC aims to make it convenient for residents and visitors to find and enjoy accessible amenities. This effort will enhance the inclusivity of the County's tourism offerings and promote greater awareness and accessibility within the community. In spring 2025, the Site and Plan Review Subcommittee will begin evaluating municipal spaces as part of this tourism initiative.

Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Space Review

The County's Planning Department has created an innovative guide for EV charging stations that prioritizes accessibility to enhance user experience for everyone. In collaboration with HCAAC, the Planning Department examined the guide focusing on the placement, design, and accessibility of these stations. This guide is the first of its kind in the area, establishing an essential resource for making EV infrastructure accessible to individuals with disabilities. It offers recommendations on accessible layouts, signage, and user support.

AccessSLED Incentive Program

HCAAC initiated the AccessSLED program to provide vital funding to the community for accessibility improvements. In 2024, efforts were made to ensure that the program aligns with the needs of grassroots entities and is sustainable. This included identifying community

outreach as part of the communication strategy and pursuing additional funding from the Government of Canada to expand the program's impact. AccessSLED is set to launch in March 2025.

National AccessAbility Week

To honour National AccessAbility Week (May 26 - June 1, 2024), HCAAC organized events to highlight accessibility concerns and encourage inclusive practices. These events featured media campaigns focused on educating the public and nurturing a culture of accessibility in the community.

Goderich Downtown Renovation

HCAAC was invited to review Goderich's downtown renovation plans and provide expert input on integrating accessibility considerations into the redevelopment project. This review involved assessing various aspects of the renovation plans, including pedestrian pathways, accessible parking, and public spaces, to ensure that they meet accessibility standards and are inclusive of all individuals. HCAAC's feedback aimed to enhance the accessibility of the downtown area, contributing to a more inclusive and welcoming environment for residents and visitors.

2025 Goals

Launch AccessSLED in March 2025

Roll out the AccessSLED program to the public, using a multi-channel media strategy to maximize awareness and engage a broad audience. The launch will feature informative programming, partnerships with local stakeholders, and collaboration with partner municipalities to maximize the uptake.

Enhance Accessibility in Public Spaces

Proactively encourage public entities to request accessibility audits by highlighting the value of inclusivity and community engagement. Conduct these audits based on demand and share helpful resources to support ongoing accessibility enhancements throughout the County.

Advance the Accessible Tourism Initiative

Develop and feature a list of accessible municipal sites on the County's tourism [website](#). Collaborate with the Economic Development team and partner municipal departments to encourage and implement accessible practices, laying the groundwork for a more inclusive and welcoming tourism experience.

Strengthen Collaboration with Community Stakeholders

Foster stronger collaboration with community organizations, advocacy groups, and other stakeholders to advance accessibility goals. Participate in joint projects and share resources to address common accessibility challenges. Establish regular communication with community partners to ensure ongoing partnership and effective coordination on accessibility initiatives.

Promote Accessibility Awareness and Education

Organize educational programs and workshops for County and municipal personnel to raise awareness about accessibility considerations and promote best practices. Leverage media campaigns to highlight successes, share impactful stories, and educate the community about the importance of accessibility and inclusion. There will be a focus on training volunteers on the AODA Customer Service Standard.

Closing

As we reflect on the progress and goals set for the coming year, HCAAC remains unwavering in its commitment to fostering an inclusive and accessible community. Guided by the principles of diversity, equity, intersectionality, inclusion, and belonging, we recognize that the achievements of 2024 have established a strong foundation. Our 2025 goals are designed to build upon this progress, addressing emerging needs and advancing accessibility in impactful ways.

HCAAC sincerely appreciates the ongoing support and collaboration from the community. Together, we are advancing towards a more inclusive and accessible Huron County.

As we progress on this journey, we remain dedicated to accountability, transparency, active engagement, and ongoing improvement and invite all stakeholders to participate.

Appendix

Priorities for HCAAC Objectives Mandated by Legislation

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and Annual Updates

In compliance with the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\), 2005, S.O. 2005, c. 11](#), and the [O. Reg. 191/11: Integrated Accessibility Standards](#), the County of Huron is required to develop and maintain a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. This plan outlines strategies for identifying, preventing, and removing barriers for people with disabilities over five years.

- **HCAAC Responsibility:** The Accessibility Coordinator will annually review and update (if needed) the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. Following County Council approval, the revised plan will be posted on the County’s website.
- **Council Responsibility:** The County Council will approve and submit the updated plan to the Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility. The County Clerk will ensure the plan is shared with the CAO and Senior Management Team for implementation. Local Municipal Councils will also approve and implement the plan.
- **HCAAC Municipal Working Group:** Representatives will present the plan to their Councils for approval and post it on their respective municipality websites.

Timeline Targets: The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan shall be reviewed every five years, and updates shall be posted annually. The County Council shall approve it by January 1st of each year, and partner municipalities’ Councils shall also approve it by the same date.

Annual Accessibility Plan

The County of Huron is required to create and publish an Annual Accessibility Plan under the [AODA](#). This plan will include the County’s goals and achievements from the previous year.

- **HCAAC Responsibility:** The Accessibility Coordinator will develop the Annual Accessibility Plan in consultation with the HCAAC and County staff, presenting it to the committee by December each year.
- **Council Responsibility:** The County Council will approve and submit the plan to the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

- **HCAAC Municipal Working Group:** Representatives will present the plan to their Councils for approval and post it on their respective municipality websites.

Timeline Targets: The Annual Accessibility Plan shall be approved by the County Council and partner municipalities’ Councils by January 1st of each year.

Alignment of Both Plans

The goals outlined in the Annual Accessibility Plan should align with those of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

- **HCAAC Responsibility:** The Annual Accessibility Plan will be posted on the County’s website following County Council approval.
- **Council Responsibility:** The County Clerk will ensure the plan is implemented across all departments and shared with local municipalities.
- **HCAAC Municipal Working Group:** The Annual Accessibility Plan will be posted on partner municipalities’ websites once approved.

Timeline Targets: The plans will be aligned with the Annual Accessibility Plan and updated with the Multi-Year Plan.

Review of Building Plans for Renovation, Construction, Purchase, Lease, and Exterior Site Plans

[AODA](#) requires timely reviews of building plans to ensure accessibility for renovations, new constructions, and exterior site plans.

- **HCAAC Responsibility:** The Site and Plan Review Subcommittee will review sites and plans to provide feedback.
- **Council Responsibility:** The County Council will ensure that partner municipalities understand their duty to request reviews before purchasing, constructing, or leasing properties.

Municipal Working Group: Representatives will inform their staff and share reviewed site plans with building officials.

Timeline Targets: Reviews will be conducted on an ongoing basis.

Provide Accessibility Information to the County and Partner Municipalities

Provide updates and information on accessibility directives and regulations per [AODA](#).

HCAAC Responsibility: The Accessibility Coordinator will gather feedback on the proposed regulations, work with the Directive and Regulation Review Subcommittee to identify concerns, and ensure compliance.

Council Responsibility: The Accessibility Coordinator will regularly update the County Council on regulatory requirements and the County's preparedness.

Municipal Working Group: Representatives will inform their respective staff and provide feedback on regulatory requirements.

Timeline Targets: Updates and feedback will remain ongoing.

Objectives Driven by HCAAC and Community

Enhancing Community Engagement and Information Sharing

Advance the Committee's vision of promoting accessibility across Huron County by building relationships with all stakeholders, including the County Council, partner municipalities, entities, and community members. Develop and distribute information on new legislation and offer educational opportunities.

Initiatives:

- Host webinars and presentations on accessibility for local stakeholders.
- Provide regular updates to the County Council.
- Review and recommend improvements for municipal facilities.
- Execute annual National AccessAbility Week programming.

Timeline Targets: Ongoing

HCAAC Awards

Recognize entities and individuals who excel in creating barrier-free access and promoting accessibility in the community.

Initiative: Execute HCAAC awards programming annually.

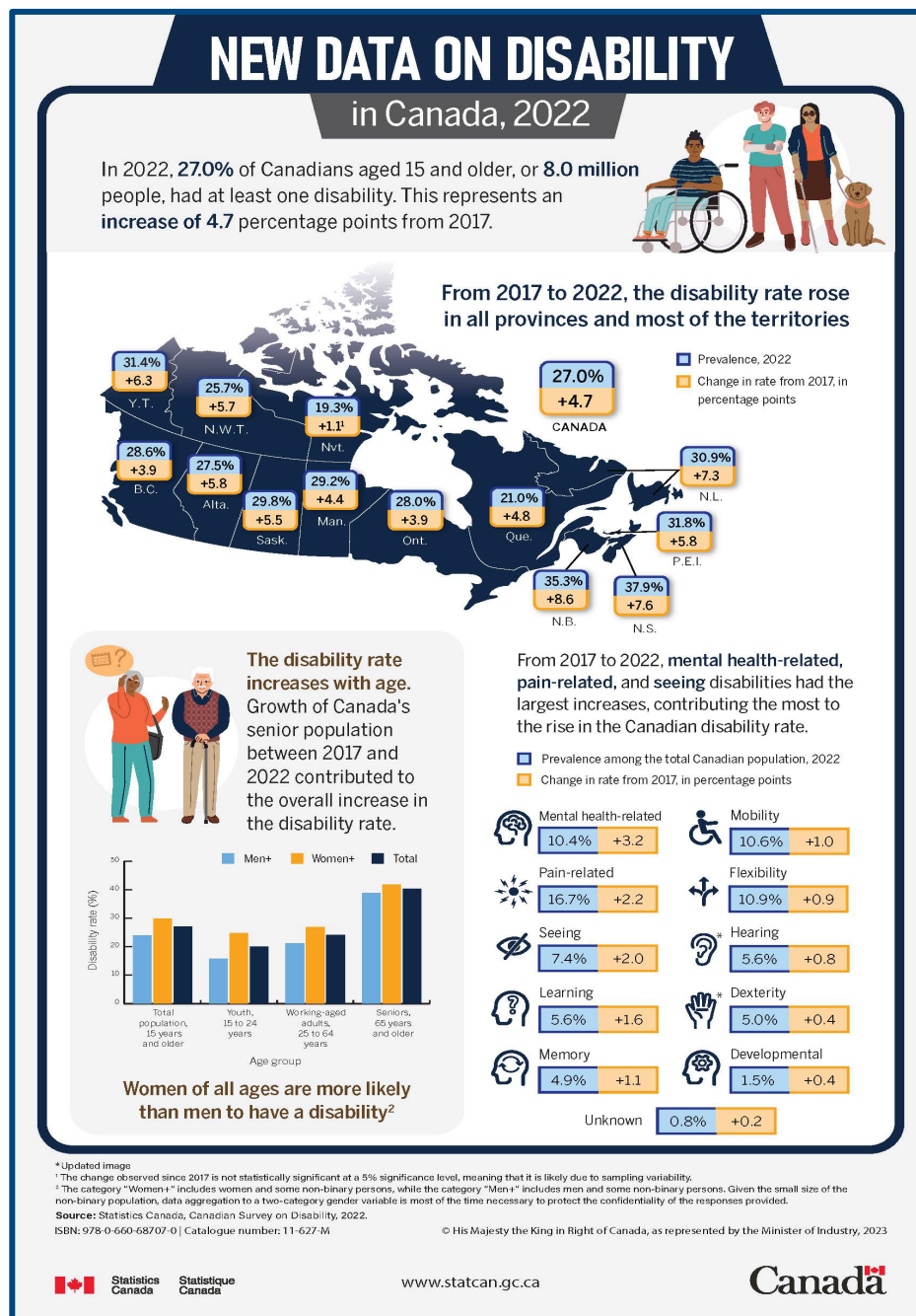
Community Participation

Encourage local events to incorporate accessibility into their operations.

Initiative: Provide resources to facilitators to encourage adherence to accessibility standards and promote inclusive practices.

Timeline Targets: Coordinate with local events throughout the year

Infographic



Source: Canada. Statistics Canada. "A Demographic, Employment and Income Profile of Canadians with Disabilities Aged 15 Years and Over, 2017." ISBN: 978-0-660-68707-0.

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2023063-eng.pdf?st=gyJ2u1Yn>

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