Hastings Highlands

Beautiful By Nature



2025 Annual Accessibility Status Report

Introduction

The Municipality of Hastings Highlands is committed to creating inclusive programs and services, served by a diverse workforce, that meet the needs of our growing and changing community. By removing barriers to services and programs and in the workforce, we recognize the strength that comes with difference, embracing new ideas and perspectives. This commitment to diversity and inclusion will be realized through processes that engage and support employees and create enhanced customer experiences for the community we serve.

In 2018, Council approved the Municipality of Hastings Highlands Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (2018-2022) to identify, prevent, and remove barriers in Municipal programs and services for people with disabilities. In 2023, Council approved the new Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (2023-2027) which builds on the success of the previous plan, outlining new and continued initiatives to meet and exceed its legislated obligations to identify, prevent and remove barriers for people with disabilities.

You will find updates on the actions taken in 2025 to meet the requirements of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) and in support of our 2023-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.



Accessibility Highlights in 2025

The Municipality of Hastings Highlands is committed to meeting the five standards set out by AODA regulations to give people with disabilities inclusive access to our community and all the services available. The five standards include:

1. Customer Service Standard
2. Information and Communication Standard
3. Employment Standard
4. Transportation Standard
5. Design of Public Spaces Standard

Outlined below are the 'Accessibility Highlights in 2025' for each of the above five standards.

General Accessibility

The Municipality continues to integrate accessibility considerations into its procurement processes. During 2025, standard procurement language was enhanced to reinforce contractor and service provider responsibilities regarding accessibility compliance and employee accessibility training where applicable.

Customer Service Standard

Hastings Highlands Accessible Customer Service Policy (Bylaw 2018-084) outlines how the Municipality will comply with the Customer Service regulations under AODA by addressing the following:

- The provision of goods and services to people with disabilities
- The use of assistive devices by people with disabilities
- The use of service animals by people with disabilities
- The use of support people by people with disabilities
- Training
- Customer feedback regarding the provision of goods and services to people with disabilities; and
- Notice of availability and format of documents

Highlights for 2025 – Accessible Customer Service

- Hastings Highlands continues to provide customers with a number of options to connect with staff or attend appointments by telephone, email, web conference, or in person to ensure that municipal services remain accessible to all members of the community regardless of ability
- Members of the public continue to be encouraged to request information or communications supports in alternate formats.
- New Staff, Council, and Volunteers receive mandatory accessibility and customer service training through 4S Occupational Health & Safety Advisory Services to

- support compliance with the AODA and promote accessible service delivery
- The Municipality continues to welcome and receive feedback from residents regarding accessibility and the provision of municipal services.

Information and Communication Standard

Highlights for 2025 – Information and Communication

- Municipal staff continue to maintain and update the Municipal website in accordance with accessibility requirements and participate in ongoing training opportunities and webinars provided by GovStack related to website accessibility, digital communications, and accessible document creation
- The Municipality continues to provide information in both print and electronic formats and encourages members of the public to request alternate formats or communication supports where required
- Staff have continued to develop and implement fillable electronic forms to improve accessibility and public access to municipal services
- Those who require information published by the Municipality in an alternate format are continuously encouraged to contact the Municipality, so that we can work to provide them with the information they need in a format that's accessible to them
- Staff follow a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the Municipal website and social media to support the creation of accessible digital content. The procedure provides a consistent framework for ensuring that information shared through digital channels is inclusive and aligns with applicable accessibility standards and best practices.
- During 2025, the Municipality implemented the Municipal 511 (M511) platform to enhance public access to municipal information. The platform provides timely information regarding road conditions, emergency and planned road closures, special weather events, fire bans, half-load restrictions, and municipal events. Information is shared through multiple channels, improving access to important public information for residents, visitors, emergency services, transportation providers, partner agencies, and the media.

Council/Committee Meetings

Meetings continue to be livestreamed and recorded through the Municipality's YouTube channel. Viewers may utilize closed captioning and playback features which help improve accessibility and public participation regardless of ability. Telephone and written participation options continue to be available where applicable

Employment Standard

The Municipality strives to address accommodation at every stage of the recruitment and selection process. The availability of accommodation is advertised in all job postings and volunteer advertisements. This includes advertisements and postings for all Committees of Council including the Library Board.

Staff and Volunteers are trained to provide accessible customer service and have a variety of skills/resources to meet the various accommodation requests of candidates.

Highlights for 2025 – Employment

- New staff and volunteers continue to receive accessibility and customer service training as part of onboarding through 4S Occupational Health & Safety Advisory Services
- The Municipality continues to include accommodation language in recruitment materials and remains committed to providing barrier-free recruitment and selection processes
- Web-based interview and meeting platforms continue to be utilized where appropriate to support accommodation and accessibility needs of applicants and participants
- New Staff and Volunteers are trained in accessibility and customer service as soon as possible after hiring, to ensure that even their earliest interactions are grounded in providing accessible, respectful customer service to individuals with varying abilities

Transportation Standard

Design of Public Spaces Standard

Highlights for 2025 – Design of Public Spaces Standard

- Following an accessibility compliance audit, the Municipality undertook accessibility improvements at Kamaniskeg Lake Lookout Park to address accessibility requirements relating to outdoor public-use eating areas and access routes Accessibility enhancements completed during 2025 included:
  - Installation and designation of accessible parking spaces and accessible parking signage
  - Improvements to parking areas, access routes, and pathway design to provide a more accessible route to the lookout and gazebo area
  - Installation of an accessible picnic table and modifications to the outdoor eating area to improve accessibility for individuals using mobility devices
  - Improvements to accessible pathways and site design to better meet AODA and IASR requirements.
  - Public consultation opportunities were provided through the Municipality's "Have Your Say Hastings Highlands" initiative, which invited feedback regarding the proposed accessibility upgrades and redevelopment plans for the site.

    The redevelopment was designed to improve accessibility, visitor safety, and public enjoyment while ensuring that people of all abilities can access and enjoy this important municipal public space.

    The Municipality will continue to incorporate accessibility considerations into the design, maintenance, and redevelopment of public spaces to enhance access, independence, and inclusion for people with disabilities. Accessibility improvements completed at Kamaniskeg Lake Lookout Park in 2025 reflect this ongoing commitment.

Your Feedback is Important to Us!
To request a copy of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan or Status Report in another format, please contact us:
Phone: (613) 338-2811 ext. 277
Email: clerk@hastingshighlands.ca
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Hastings Highlands
Beautiful By Nature

OUR VISION

"An enviable community, with a progressive vision and financial stability, prepared for the future."

OUR MISSION

"To provide a community that is Beautiful by Nature for all residents and visitors to thrive, prosper and enjoy life."

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- *We Care*
- *We're All in This Together*
- *Welcome Home*



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