

Ontario Science Centre 2020-25 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

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INTRODUCTION

The Ontario Science Centre (the Centre) understands the importance of ensuring accessibility for our employees and the public we serve, and are committed to delivering services in alignment with our vision, mission, purpose and ambition.

The Centre's accessibility plan is inextricably tied to our commitment to Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism. Compliance with the AODA and alignment with the Accessibility Plans of the Ontario Public Service (OPS) are vital to ensuring inclusivity for all; however, there is much work to be done beyond these goals. Through our exhibits, programs and other content, the Centre strives to foster a positive environment that is physically and psychologically welcoming. As a trusted, established fixture across several intersecting communities, we recognize our responsibility to question the status quo, create inclusive, inspiring experiences and pave the way forward for other institutions.

The Centre's 2020-25 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan builds on prior work and is aligned with the over-arching commitments outlined in the OPS 2017–2021 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. This plan has been created in consultation with persons with disabilities and will be reviewed annually by the Centre's accessibility working group.

The Centre's plan is organized around the following general requirements and standards as defined in the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (O. Reg. 191/11) under the AODA.

The general requirements are:

- Accessibility Plans
- Procurement
- Training

The accessibility standards applicable to the Centre are:

- Customer Service
- Information and Communications
- Employment
- Design of Public Spaces

An accessible Ontario Science Centre means...

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- Persons with disabilities receive quality goods and services in a timely manner.
- Information and communications are available in accessible formats to all Centre employees, clients and customers.
- Persons with disabilities are able to participate fully and meaningfully as Centre employees.
- There is greater accessibility into, out of, and around the Centre's facilities and public spaces.
- Centre employees are able to continually identify barriers to accessibility and actively seek solutions to prevent or remove them.

MESSAGE FROM DR. PAUL KORTENAAR, CEO, ONTARIO SCIENCE CENTRE

The Ontario Science Centre is committed to being an inclusive, accessible and engaging organization. As an Agency of the Government of Ontario, we're dedicated to the principles of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA): dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity and are required to develop multi-year accessibility plans to help make Ontario accessible by 2025.

We have made significant strides towards becoming a fully accessible organization over the last few years. Recent highlights include:

- A new process to receive and respond to feedback on how services are provided to persons with disabilities, and ensuring that feedback processes are accessible to persons with disabilities.
- Ensuring that accommodation is available throughout the recruitment process, and communicating this to staff and the general public.
- Ensuring that employees are aware of employment accommodation policies, including a comprehensive process for developing individualized employment accommodation plans.
- Compliance with all applicable requirements for the design of public spaces standard under the IASR.
- Continuation of monthly Sensory Friendly Saturday programming in partnership with the Geneva Centre for Autism. This program is delivered to the general public and geared towards individuals on the autism spectrum.

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- Written exhibit information is kept between 3 - 6 feet reading height, and is assessed for contrast, legibility, and text size, in alignment with internal accessible design considerations.

The Senior Leadership of the Centre has prioritized this multi-year plan not just because it is the law but because it is the right thing to do and it makes good business sense. Science and innovation thrive on a diversity of approaches and perspectives so we need to ensure that all members of our community are able to participate fully in the offerings of the Ontario Science Centre. If we are to truly be the Ontario Science Centre, we must remove the barriers to make our organization accessible both onsite and online for the approximately 2.6 million citizens of the province with disabilities who are our guests, partners and colleagues.



Paul Kortenaar, PhD
CEO, Ontario Science Centre

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OUR 2020–2025 PRIORITIES AND COMMITMENTS

This five year accessibility plan includes both new and continuing priorities and commitments that will help the Centre work towards identifying, removing and preventing barriers for persons with disabilities. Our multi-year commitments reflect our commitment to implement and monitor compliance with the AODA.

General Requirements

Key Outcome

Centre staff are able to identify barriers to accessibility, in policies, programs, services and facilities, and actively seek solutions to prevent or remove them on a continuing basis throughout the organization.

Commitments

The Centre will continue to ensure compliance and enhance commitments under the general requirements as follows:

Accessibility Plans

- Establish an internal accessibility working group.
- Accessibility plans will be established, reviewed and updated in consultation with persons with disabilities and the accessibility working group.
- Ongoing organization-wide accessibility reviews of our policies, programs, services and facilities.

Procurement

- Incorporate accessibility design, criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities, except where it is not practical.
- Accessibility procurement standards will be included in procurement training for new and existing employees as appropriate to their job duties to educate them on their obligations under the AODA.
- Additional resources, such as templates, sample accessibility language and guidelines, will also be available to help staff understand and embed accessibility requirements at all stages of procurement.

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Training

- Mandatory training will be offered to all employees related to: the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR); the AODA; Accessibility Standards for Customer Services Regulation; the Ontario Human Rights Code; OPS policies, practices and procedures on the provision of services to persons with disabilities.

ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS

Customer Service

Key Outcome

Centre staff are able to identify barriers to accessibility, in policies, programs, services and facilities, and actively seek solutions to prevent or remove them on a continuing basis throughout the organization.

Commitments

The Centre will continue to ensure compliance and enhance commitments under this Standard as follows:

Policies and Practices

- Review and update the Ontario Science Centre Accessible Customer Service Policy that describes how the Centre will provide customer service and access for people with disabilities. As an agency of the Government of Ontario, the Centre will continue to follow the OPS Accessible Customer Service Policy and Common Service Standards.
- Increase management and employee awareness of relevant corporate policies and guidelines.

Use of Service Animals and Support Persons

- Continue to welcome service animals and support person that accompany person with disabilities to Centre premises in accordance with the Ontario Science Centre and Ontario Public Service Accessible Customer Service Policies.

Notice of Temporary Disruptions

- Prepare a documented procedure that sets out the steps to be taken in connection with a temporary disruption which is to be shared with any person upon request. The documented procedure will outline roles and responsibilities, level of detail to be shared with the public and any legal obligations.

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- Provide public and staff with notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption of service or inaccessibility of facilities used by persons with disabilities, by placing such notices at all public entrances and service counters, and by sending an all-staff email. If the disruption is anticipated to be longer than 4 hours, the Centre will post an announcement on our website informing customers of the location, duration and alternative solutions.

Feedback Process

- Review the process for receiving and responding to feedback to enhance how we provide service to people with disabilities.
- Continue to offer multiple feedback options including in person, by telephone/call relay, in writing, by email or by any other communication technology as required.

Format of documents

- Provide consistent notices and online notifications to the public regarding accessible formats and communications support, upon request.

Information and Communications

Key Outcome

Information and communications are available in accessible formats or with necessary supports to staff and customers.

Commitments

The Centre will continue to ensure compliance and enhance commitments under this Standard as follows:

Accessible formats and communication supports

- Develop, provide and promote resources, using a variety of communications and training formats, including in-person sessions, guides, tutorials and testing methodology and tools, through the Centre and OPS repository for staff seeking advice and guidance related to accessible documents (e.g., PowerPoint, Excel, Word, use of PDFs, etc.).

Web Platform

- Develop a new public facing website that meets WCAG 2.0 level AA guidelines by January 2021.

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Digital Services and Social Media

- Develop a checklist to ensure that digital services and social media are accessible and based on official AODA guidelines (<https://www.aoda.ca/accessible-digital-design/>).
- Ensure that digital services and offerings are designed with accessibility at the core, striving for all users to have equal access to information and functionality.

Emergency and Public Safety Information

- Review emergency procedures, plan and safety information that is available to employees and the public and is available in accessible formats, upon request.
- Offer emergency response plans to employees that may need help in an emergency due to a permanent or temporary disability.

Wayfinding/Signage

- Utilize universal design principles in wayfinding to take into account all the human senses (not just sight) and all modes of travel (not just walking) in both the design and maintenance of wayfinding and signage.
- Incorporate a combination of strategies for wayfinding (e.g. the physical feel of changes on the walking surface, the use of contrast in colour and brightness, tactile signs/maps, audible cues, etc.).
- Develop a user guide for use within the organization which outlines requirements specific to signage for people with disabilities in order to providing accessible alternatives, so that all staff and customers may be served in a manner that respects their dignity and independence.

Education & Public Programming

- Develop, provide and promote resources, using a variety of communications and training formats, including in-person sessions, guides, tutorials and testing methodology and tools, through the Centre and OPS repository for anyone seeking advice and guidance related to accessible documents.

Employment

Key Outcome

Employees with disabilities are engaged and able to participate fully and meaningfully in their employment.

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Commitments

The Centre will continue to ensure compliance and enhance commitments under this Standard as follows:

Recruitment

- Continue to adhere to the hiring directives, policies, and best practices defined by the OPS, which are designed to prevent or remove systemic barriers in recruitment and employment practices.
- Continue to apply the OPS Recruitment Inclusion Lens and barrier-free principles into all recruitment processes. This helps managers and recruiters to identify, mitigate, and eliminate potential biases and barriers and be more inclusive in all aspects of the recruitment process. The Centre will also reinforce inclusive hiring practices through manager and employee training on the use of this lens.
- Continue to inform candidates throughout the recruitment process about the availability of accommodation.
- Update the onboarding process to incorporate more resources and information on accessibility.

Learning and Development

- Track and monitor completion of mandatory training for new and current staff on foundational training on Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation requirements and standards and disability-related obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code.
- Share and promote resources and training to support excellence in accessible customer service.
- Continue to build accessibility awareness through participation in e-courses and in-class training for managers, such as training to respond to the needs of employees with an illness, injury, and/or disability through a Duty to Accommodate course.
- Promote use of the OPS Inclusion Lens, which is an internal analytical and educational tool designed to support users in developing and delivering inclusive, equitable, accessible, and responsive initiatives.
- Leverage executive champions as mentors in career development for staff from under-represented groups, including persons with disabilities, through the OPS Diversity Career Champions Program.

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- Continue to communicate corporate learning opportunities and tools/resources available to employees as related to providing accessible service and developing accessible experiences/products.
- Continue to incorporate inclusion commitments to management and staff performance plans and continue to partner with the OPS on inclusion and accessibility related initiatives and programs.
- Continue to promote principles and practices of respectful workplaces through OPS training and resources that help:
 - Improve managers' ability to intervene in workplace conflict, including potential harassment and discrimination.
 - Promote employee responsibilities for contributing to respect in the workplace.
 - Support employees to address low intensity rude or disrespectful behaviours that erode productivity, engagement, teamwork, diversity and service.

Employee Support

- Review the individualized emergency response procedures. This includes the identification of evacuation buddies and a designated waiting area for those that require assistance in the event of a building evacuation.
- Continue to provide timely and effective employment accommodation for persons with disabilities to allow equal participation in the workplace in a way that is responsive to their unique circumstances.
- Create a dedicated accessible workspace that can be made available to any staff member at any time in the event of mechanical or accessibility disruptions (i.e. elevator(s) not available, etc.).
- Continue to provide support to employees in the area of mental health and wellness through sharing a wide range of supports, training and resources and information on the Employee Assistance and Family Program.

Design of Public Spaces

Key Outcome

There is greater accessibility into, out of and around Ontario Science Centre facility and public spaces.

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Commitments

The Centre will continue to ensure compliance and enhance commitments under this Standard as follows:

Public Spaces

- When constructing or renovating our facilities, all features, such as elevators, doors, washrooms, parking, and furnishings, will be fully accessible as outlined in the Ontario Building Code's barrier-free design requirements and internal OPS Guidelines for Barrier-free Design of Ontario Government Facilities.
- Continue mandatory accessibility training on the Ontario Building Code, Design of Public Spaces standard, and the Ontario Human Rights Code for staff involved with capital project planning, design and construction or major renovation.
- Continuously improve the physical accessibility of our service related elements and facility by removing barriers and providing accessible alternatives, so that all staff and customers may be served in a manner that respects their dignity and independence.

Exhibit Design & Fabrication

- When constructing or refreshing our exhibits, all features will be fully accessible as outlined in the Ontario Science Centre's Exhibition Accessibility Standards (2017).

CONCLUSION

As the Ontario Science Centre continues to identify, prevent and remove accessibility barriers, it is important for us to monitor and report on the progress and results in meeting the commitments in our five-year accessibility plan.

The Centre's status reports will be released annually and shared with the public and Centre employees.

The Centre's compliance report will also be submitted to the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario.

Contact Us

For general inquiries or to request an alternate format of this plan, please contact us via email at accessibility@ontariosciencecentre.ca or phone 416-696-1000 (toll free 1-888-696-1110).