



Joint Annual Accessibility Status Report 2025

A summary of Elgin County and its Local Municipal Partners accomplishments towards
inclusion and accessibility in 2025

Elgin County and Local Municipal Partners Joint Annual Accessibility Status Report 2025

Objectives and Purpose

This is the County of Elgin and its Local Municipal Partners (LMPs) Annual Accessibility Status Report update. In 2015, Elgin County released its second Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (Ontario Regulation 191/11). The plan outlined the County's strategy to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility, which includes how to meet requirements under the AODA.

In 2021, the County released its first Joint Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP), which includes the County of Elgin and its seven Local Municipal Partners' accessibility progress, goals and timelines for the next five years. As a result of the MYAP becoming a joint effort, it allowed the Annual Accessibility Status Reports to become streamlined and collaborative rather than requiring each LMP to create their own.

This Status Report includes the accessibility initiatives that were completed in 2025 to implement the strategy outlined in the Joint Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

The purpose of this Status Report is to make the public aware of Elgin County and its LMPs' progress with accessibility implementation and to prevent and remove barriers and meet requirements under the AODA and IASR.

Compliance Reporting

Elgin County filed their seventh Accessibility Compliance Report in 2025. For the 2025 report, Elgin County was able to claim compliance and continues to work on maintaining web compliance and document accessibility.

Commitment Statement

The County of Elgin and its LMP's statement of commitment establishes the vision and goals for the Municipalities to meet the legislated accessibility requirements. The statement of commitment is publicly available on the County website, accessibility policy and Joint MYAP.

The County of Elgin and its LMPs are committed to identifying, eliminating and preventing barriers and improving accessibility for people with disabilities in a manner that respects dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity.

The County of Elgin and its LMPs recognize the diverse needs of all of our residents and customers and will respond by striving to provide goods, services and facilities that are accessible to all.

The County of Elgin and its LMPs are committed to being responsive to the needs of all of our residents and employees. In order to meet the needs of people with disabilities the Municipalities will:

- Ensure policies address dignity, independence, integration and provide for equal opportunity for people with disabilities
- Allow people with disabilities to use their own personal devices to obtain, use or benefit from the services offered by the County and LMPs
- Accommodate the accessibility needs of people with disabilities to ensure they can obtain, use, or benefit from the County and LMPs goods, services, programs and facilities
- Communicate with people with disabilities in a manner that is considerate of the person's disability

The County of Elgin and its LMPs will promote accessibility by ensuring that compliance is met for all regulations made under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005. In order to ensure that timelines are met, The County and its LMPs will establish, implement and maintain a Joint Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. The plan will outline the County and its LMPs strategy to prevent and remove barriers to people with disabilities. The plan will be updated on an ongoing basis, as needed, to ensure it remains current and aligns with the IASR.

Continuous Achievements in Accessibility

- The County of Elgin and its LMPs focus on removing barriers which may exist in our buildings and facilities, while ensuring that new buildings, leases, and renovations do not create any new barriers
- Elgin County/Central Elgin Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee continues to meet and review accessibility initiatives
- The County of Elgin and its LMPs continue to comply with the requirements of the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* including continuing to train staff, volunteers and third parties who interact on behalf of the Municipalities on an ongoing basis
- All library branches continue to provide accessible materials and communication supports upon request. In addition, the libraries have several accessible materials and resources available including but not limited to: large print books, audio books, CELA Library loan access, electronic materials with zoom features, hand-held magnifiers as well as ZoomText with large print keyboards

- Continue to review customer feedback and take appropriate action
- The County of Elgin and its LMPs are continuously looking into new accommodation options for people with disabilities
- Use of technology such as eScribe to ensure that Council agendas and minutes are completely accessible as well as maintaining website compliance achieved
- Continue to explore and monitor potential funding opportunities for the built environment relating to accessibility under the Enabling Accessibility Fund, Ontario Trillium Foundation, Canadian Tire Jumpstart and Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program

Highlights of 2025

The County of Elgin accomplished the following in 2025:

- Held the first AccessAbility Week for Staff, highlighting different departments work with Accessibility and provided staff education sessions.
- Submitted the 2025 Accessibility Compliance Report
- Completed an Accessibility Desk Audit
- Installation of exterior book bins at Straffordville Library and Dutton Library for the return of library materials that are barrier-free
- Installation of barrier-free reading gardens at the Elgin County Heritage Centre, Straffordville Library and West Lorne Library
- Relocation of Archives' public reference room and staff offices to the 4th floor of the Elgin County Administration Building to enhance public accessibility utilizing recently installed elevators. Public service will be launched from the new space as soon as March 2026.
- Expansion of mobile library service to add Age Care (Aylmer) and Royal Oak (Fingal) retirement residences in addition to existing service to Terrace Lodge and Elgin Manor long-term care homes.
- Implementation of more accessible Library front-end catalogue software was completed in 2025.
- Several Library digital resources have added improvements to accessibility features in 2025.
- Participation in the Indigenous Reads program annually and branches offered programming and events as part of National Truth and Reconciliation Day.
- Participation in MI Understanding and MI Friends children's mental health support programs.

- Monthly visits and partnership with Oneida Friendship Resource Centre.
- Active membership on the Elgin-St. Thomas Age Friendly Committee led by Southwestern Public Health Unit and leading to provincial designation as an Age-Friendly Community
- Chair yoga at Springfield and Belmont
- Official designation for Elgin County Library as a Dementia Friendly Community Organization in January 2026 and Alzheimer Awareness month. Each Library branch has a sticker at the entrance reflecting the designation.
- Continued work to audit the library's physical collection by employing a summer student through Young Canada Works. In 2025, 7,000 items were assessed relative to DEI criteria and specifically diversity measures and in the areas of content, author(s), and character(s) in the material.
- Further development of "Healthy Brain Kits" collection to support all levels of brain health and in partnership with the Alzheimer Society Southwest Partners.
- The Library continues to review and update our accessible materials collections available, including visual accessibility devices (Smartlux, Optelec) and accessible audio players (Daisy CDs and players and Yoto cards and players), and are planning the development of a new accessible audio player collection from CELA – the Envoy Connect – device for 2026.
- Installation of directional and interpretive signage adjacent to mural "Oneida Settlement Journey, 1840" at Elgin County Heritage Centre.
- Sidewalk replacement at Bobier Villa in the secure Courtyard
- Sidewalk replacement at the front of the Building at Elgin Manor
- New Cupboards installed in three of the four Activity Rooms, one section of the counter in all three rooms are wheelchair accessible
- Sidewalk and concrete pat replacement at Terrace Lodge in the Adult Day Program Courtyard
- Creation of a new staff outdoor area which includes a new fence, sidewalk and concrete pad complete with furnishings
- New planning suite created at the Administration Building on the third floor which includes a new door operator and automatic lighting controls.

Elgin County / Central Elgin Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee (JAAC) reviewed and provided consultation on:

- The JAAC planned and co-hosted the AccessAbility Open House with the City of St. Thomas on September 26, 2025 at the Joe Thornton Community Centre.
- Heard Community members concern around sidewalk accessibility and community heritage signage

The Municipality of Bayham accomplished the following in 2025:

- Completed construction on the Port Burwell Marine Museum washrooms that now include two accessible stalls
- Completed an accessibility audit which resulted in upgrades to two parking lots to properly delineate the accessible stalls (updating signage and laneway space)
- Updated our accessibility request form and made accessible on the Bayham website
- Constructed an additional 30 m sidewalk and ramp to the Straffordville Library
- Constructed an additional 200 m of 1.5 m sidewalk and tactile plates surrounding Port Burwell School
- Maintaining accessibility standards on the Bayham website
- Continuous training to staff and elected officials
- Completed the filing of the 2025 compliance report

The Municipality of Central Elgin accomplished the following in 2025:

- Added diverse and inclusive images across marketing and promotional materials.
- Continue to ensure closed captioning for all live-streamed meetings.
- Provides opportunities for community members to be heard and participate in decision-making processes, such as JAAC.
- Offer car-side Commissioner of Oaths for individuals who aren't able to easily access the municipal office.
- Provide training to respectful workplace in 2025.
- Updated the HRP 1.20 - Workplace Harassment, Discrimination and Violence
- Continue to change language in policies to be gender neutral.
- Procurement continues to support AODA compliance by maintaining accessible procurement practices, including ensuring that RFP and Tender templates contain current AODA requirements and accessible deliverable language.

- Accessibility was enhanced at Little Beach when additional Mobi-mats were installed
- A life jacket lending program was implemented on Main Beach
- Sidewalk Capital Project along the South side of Caesar Rd in Belmont plus sidewalk repairs throughout the Municipality
- The Accessible washrooms being made available all year long at the Port Stanley Visitor Centre
- A swing extension to accommodate the very young at Union Street Park in Belmont
- Lighting installed on the Turvey Park Trail, Lynhurst
- Completed the 2025 Compliance Report
- Updated the Accessibility Policy and finalized in 2026.
- Remove signature requirement on the website feedback form, as it could be a barrier.

The Township of Malahide accomplished the following in 2025:

- Review and update Accessibility Policy (scheduled for 2026)
- Accessibility training modules added to SafetyHub to support automated record tracking and refresher training to be rolled out for existing employees annually, new employees receive full AODA training.
- Procurement Policy update in 2025
- Residents can attend meetings either virtually or by phone and meeting recordings are made available online
- Provide corporate training for administrative staff on website accessibility and creating accessible documents.
- Continue to update and revise policies as needed to meet AODA and IASR requirements
- Emergency Workplace Response for Employees with Disabilities - update together with Accessibility Policy (scheduled for 2026)
- Accommodations process forms
- Accommodation Statement on Job Posting Notices
- Accessible format options provided to candidates throughout the recruitment process
- Engineered Wood Fibre (EWF) installed in 2018 at the playground area in Port Bruce, in 2024 at MCP, SDCH, Mill Street park and Wonnacott park, providing significant upgrades to the previous surface
- Hard surface walking path installed at MCP in 2018 and at SDCH in 2023

The Township of Southwold accomplished the following in 2025:

- Reviewed and updated the Accessibility Policy
- Continue to digitize TOMRMS filing system
- Continued training on accessibility to staff to ensure compliance
- Continued staff training regarding WCAG 2.0 Level AA Compliance
- Continue to make changes to the Township website and Facebook page to ensure compliance with WCAG 2.0 Level AA Compliance
- Developing New Parks and Trails Master Plan complying with all accessibility requirements
- Installed new accessible signed at Fingal Heritage Park
- Completed construction on new Fire Hall and Public Works Building which included accessible access points and washrooms
- Updated Joint Health and Safety Committee
- Reviewed Health and Safety Policies
- Completed 2025 AODA Desk Audit
- Completed 2025 Accessibility Compliance Report

Availability of the Plan and Status Report

The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and Annual Accessibility Status Reports can be accessed through Elgin County's website on the [Accessibility Page](https://www.elgincounty.ca/accessibility/):

<https://www.elgincounty.ca/accessibility/>

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Accessible formats and/or communication support(s) are available upon request.