



Essex Region Conservation Authority Accessibility Plan 2021-2025

Message from the CAO/Secretary Treasurer

The Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA) strives to meet the needs of its employees and customers with disabilities and is committed to removing and preventing barriers to accessibility.

Our organization is committed to fulfilling our requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. This accessibility plan outlines the steps we are taking to meet those requirements and to improve opportunities for people with disabilities. This plan demonstrates how ERCA will play its role in making Ontario an accessible province for all Ontarians.

Since ERCA first introduced its Accessible Customer Service Policy in 2011, all staff and key volunteers have been trained in this policy, with annual refresher training undertaken. As well, ERCA has significantly improve accessibility with a new and accessible Heritage & Conservation Centre at the John R. Park Homestead, as well as improving parking lots and trails for accessibility. Currently, ERCA is collaborating with the County of Essex Accessibility Advisory Committee on WE Check Trails – an imitative to identify any barriers to trail participation.

Over the coming years, we will continue to strive to prevent and remove barriers and promote equal access and participation for all.

Sincerely,

Tim Byrne, CAO/Secretary-Treasurer

Statement of Commitment.

The Essex Region Conservation Authority is committed to ensuring equal access and participation for people with disabilities. We are committed to treating people with disabilities in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence.

We believe in integration, and we are committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner. We will do so by removing and preventing barriers to accessibility and by meeting our accessibility requirements under Ontario's accessibility laws.

Past Achievements to Prevent and Remove Barriers

The following is a list of past initiatives designed to prevent and remove barriers to create an accessible Ontario.

Accessible Customer Service:

- Continue to deliver ERCA's Accessible Customer Service training to all new employees and volunteers – Ongoing since 2011
- Review front service counter to ensure compliance with accessible customer service best practices – 2015
- Post Accessibility Feedback process to ensure ease of feedback for persons with disabilities – ongoing since 2012
- Ensure Service Disruptions that could affect accessibility are posted in compliance with ERCA's Customer Service Policy – ongoing since 2013

Information and Communications

- Re-format website to ensure compliance with World Wide Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines – website updated in 2018. Ongoing improvements continue to be made.
- Develop practices to provide information and communications in alternative formats if requested by a customer and where practicable to do so – ongoing since 2013.
- Review our corporate type font and signage policy to ensure adherence to CNIB best practices standards or other as appropriate – 2020.

Employment

- Training of all employees in ERCA's Integrated Accessibility Standard Policy- ongoing since 2015.
- Employee Orientation training includes evacuation and other safety plans are communicated with employees with disabilities in a manner that takes into account their need for accommodation – ongoing annually since 2015.

- Training for new staff and students includes AODA Customer Service Training, IASR: Information and Communication Standards and Employment Standards Training as well as Understanding Human Rights (AODA).

Ongoing Training and Awareness

- Participate in ongoing training activities to ensure compliance with legislation – ongoing since 2011.

Built Environment

- Created a new accessible educational and visitor space at the John R. Park Homestead Heritage and Conservation Centre – 2021.
- Improved parking accessibility at the John R. Park Homestead Conservation Area – 2021.
- Improved accessibility at the shoreline trail at the John R. Park Homestead Conservation Area – 2021.
- Repaved roads and hardened parking surface at Holiday Beach Conservation Area – 2020.
- Improved boardwalk accessibility at Holiday Beach Conservation Area – 2019.
- Improved boardwalk and trails at Maidstone Conservation Area, and widened and resurfaced trails at Devonwood Conservation Area – 2018.
- Created the Cypher Systems Group Greenway in accordance with accessibility guidelines – 2017.
- Renovations to the Essex County Civic Centre where the ERCA offices are located provided significant improvements to customer accessibility – 2015.
- A new Eco-Washroom was constructed at Holiday Beach Conservation Area and improves accessibility for customers at this location – 2015.
- Added trails and boardwalks designed and built to accessible standards, and added new ramps at Hillman, Holiday, and the John R. Park Homestead – 2014, 2015

Strategies and Actions 2021 – 2025

The following represents ERCA's Strategic Actions planned over the next five years to prevent and remove barriers to create an accessible Ontario.

Accessible Customer Service:

- Continue to deliver ERCA's Accessible Customer Service training to all new employees and volunteers – Ongoing.
- Ensure assistive devices are available per ERCA's policy and confirm front-line staff have training upon when these should be offered. Also, ensure staff are trained in Telephone Relay Service or similar as appropriate – Ongoing.

- Ensure appropriate information indicates that alternative forms are available, such as brochures, annual reports and other corporately produced communications materials. – Ongoing.
- Ensure public documents received from third parties comply with accessibility guidelines - Ongoing
- Review ERCA's Integrated Accessibility Standard Policy as part of a suite of policy reviews – 2022.
- Review and Update Accessibility Feedback process to ensure ease of feedback for persons with disabilities – 2021.
- Ensure Service Disruptions that could affect accessibility are posted in compliance with ERCA's Customer Service Policy – ongoing since 2013

Information and Communications

- Train employees on how to create accessible documents in WORD and PDF formats- 2021
- Invest in software to remediate historical documents and ensure new documents completed in an accessible format – 2021
- Continue to improve website to comply with World Wide Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and remediate past documents where practicable. Concurrently, advise that documents can be made available in an alternative format upon request. – Ongoing
- Update signage guidelines and ensure compliance with CNIB Best Practices – 2022.
- Continue to develop practices to provide information and communications in alternative formats if requested by a customer and where practicable to do so – ongoing.

Employment

- Continue to train employees as appropriate on accessibility standards and on the Human Rights Code as it pertains to persons with disabilities – ongoing.
- Continue to train employees in ERCA's Integrated Accessibility Standard Policy – ongoing.
- Continue practices and procedures to notify internal and external job applicants and existing employees that accommodations for disabilities will be provided upon request at any time during the course of their employment – ongoing.
- Continue to ensure workplace information, including employee evacuation and other safety plans, are communicated with employees with disabilities in a manner that takes into account their need for accommodation – ongoing
- Review ERCA's existing Human Resources policies, procedures and practices to ensure:

- Appropriate support of employees with disabilities
- Process for consultation with employees with disabilities
- Process for developing accommodation plans – 2022

Emergency Public Safety Information

- Update flood warnings to ensure it is issued in a format that is easily convertible to alternate formats upon request – 2021.

Procurement

- Incorporate accessibility criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities and services – 2021-2025.

Self-Serve Kiosks

- Ensure future installation of self-serve kiosks have regard for accessibility considerations – 2021 – 2025.

Ongoing Training and Awareness

- Participate in ongoing training activities to ensure compliance with legislation - 2021 – 2025.

Design of Public Spaces

- Ensure that all new or redeveloped outdoor public spaces such as trails and parking lots meet or exceed AODA outdoor built standard; including:
 - Recreational trails and beach access routes accessible
 - Outdoor public use eating areas
 - Outdoor play spaces accessible
 - Exterior paths of travel
 - Off-street parking lots accessible
 - Maintain accessible elements of public spaces
 - Signage
- Ensure that all trails are properly labeled in accordance with AODA standards -2021 – 2025.

Ongoing Consultation

- Work with the County of Essex Accessibility Committee on the WE Check the Trails initiative to improve trail accessibility along the Greenway system – 2021.
- Continue to consult with the Essex County Accessibility Advisory Committee on accessibility matters requiring consultation – 2021 -2025.

Reporting

- Prepare annual updates on what has been done to achieve this Accessibility Plan – 2021 – 2025.

For More Information

For more information on this Accessibility Plan, please contact:

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