

Introduction

The City of Markham is committed to ensuring that all residents have full and equal access to its facilities, services and information. Accessibility makes it possible for people with all abilities to take advantage of everything Markham has to offer.

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005¹ (AODA) is the provincial legislation that provides direction for developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards that organizations must follow to meet standards of accessibility in the areas including information and communications, employment, transportation, design of public spaces and customer service. These laws and standards strive to make Ontario open to everyone by helping to reduce and remove barriers.

The City promotes accessibility by ensuring compliance with AODA. The City is reviewing and updating its multi-year accessibility plan for 2024. The plan will identify, remove, and prevent accessibility barriers across the organization by committing to specific initiatives and outcomes to ensure that people with disabilities can participate in the City's programs, services, facilities, public spaces, information and communication, and employment. The review and update of the multi-year accessibility plan will be completed in consultation with persons with disabilities and the Markham Accessibility Advisory Committee.

This accessibility status report highlights what we have accomplished and the actions taken to prevent and remove barriers for people with disabilities based on the City's 2020-2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. Additionally, we continue to identify, improve, and work on areas where we might not be compliant.

This report includes input from City staff and Markham's Accessibility Advisory Committee. It summarizes compliance outcomes that the City continues to perform within the requirements in the AODA and the IASR standards listed in the chart below. The achievements listed throughout the report show where the City went beyond the minimum requirements in the standards. The establishment of accessibility policies, accessibility plans, procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities and training are being implemented and will be identified in the upcoming Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

IASR Standards	Subject Matter Areas within the Standard
General	Establishment of accessibility policies
	Accessibility plans
	Procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities
	Training
Information and Communications	Accessible Formats and Communication
	Supports Emergency Procedures and Plans
	Accessible Websites and Web Content
	Public Libraries
Employment	Recruitment
	Notice to Applicants
	Accessible Supports for Employees
	Workplace Emergency Response
	Accommodation Plans
	Performance Management and Career Development
	Return to Work and Redeployment
Transportation	Duties of Municipalities and Taxicabs
Design of Public Spaces	Recreation Trails
	Outdoor Public Use Eating Areas
	Outdoor Play Spaces
	Exterior Paths of Travel
	Accessible Parking
	Obtaining Services
	Maintenance
Customer Service	Customer Service Policy
	Use of Service Animals and Support Persons
	Notice of Temporary Disruptions
	Feedback Process
	Training for Staff, etc.

Progress to Date

Information and Communications

The Information and Communications Standard under the IASR requires the City to communicate and provide information in ways that are accessible to people with disabilities. The standards require that accessible formats and communication supports be made available on request and cover such areas as websites, feedback processes, library materials and resources, and training.

Ongoing Services/Supports The City Provides To Meet IASR Information and Communications Outcomes:

- Inform the public of the availability of accessible materials and provides accessible formats and communication supports upon request.
- Ensure that City processes for receiving and responding to feedback are accessible to people with disabilities by providing or arranging for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports.
- Provide live streaming of Committee and Council meetings with closed captioning and includes meeting agendas and minutes in alternate formats.
- Ensure social media graphics are accessible, using descriptive captions, closed captioning and alternate text for content and photos.
- Offer hearing assistive devices for all Flato Markham Theatre performances and speakers at the box office to amplify voices for those who require them.
- Evaluate and remediates the City's website and web content to conform to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA and continue with the remediation of documents, e.g., PDFs and presentations.
- Offer the following information and programs and services at the libraries:
 - Library resources in various formats and languages to ensure collections are balanced, inclusive and accessible and continue to expand lending collections, accessibility tools and inclusive content.
 - Traditional large print books and eBooks allow those with visual impairment to adjust text size, colour and contrast of text during reading.
 - Audiobooks are available in digital format, on CD or in PlayAway formats.
 - Provide DAISY players support audiobook CDs in accessible formats and Wonderbooks, a picture book, in a self-contained audio player.
 - Offer in-library services for users with accessibility challenges including software that reads website content aloud (BrowseAloud), magnifies on-screen text (ZoomText) or converts print to speech and reads it aloud (Kurzweil Scanners).

Information and Communications Achievements:

- The City launched an updated version of its Virtual Assistant, providing users with 24/7 access to a broader range of topics anytime, anywhere and on any device. Users can find information on more than 100 City-related topics, and users who require more support can be seamlessly connected from the Virtual Assistant to a live customer service representative during regular business hours.
- Designed Elections Markham's online voting platform to conform to WCAG 2.0 Level AA standards, incorporated free embedded assistive software, and launched an online Voter Information Tool giving voters details about voting options and accessible services based on their address.
- Provided in-person ballot voting with paper ballots designed according to the CNIB Foundation's Clear Print Accessibility Standards.
- The libraries provided services for neurodiverse customers, including lending collections of sensory toys and educational aids for children, incorporating partnership-based programming to support customers with physical, mental and cognitive disabilities, and providing Cognitive Care kits to help individuals experiencing dementia and other neurological disabilities.

Employment

The City of Markham is committed to an inclusive workplace where equity, diversity and inclusion are celebrated, and all employees can develop to their full potential with respect, dignity and freedom from discrimination. The City utilizes inclusive, accessible, and barrier-free employment practices and establishes a workplace that reflects and supports the diversity of our community. The Employment Standard under the IASR provides accessibility requirements that the City must follow to support the recruitment and accommodation of employees with disabilities.

Ongoing Services/Support The City Provides To Meet IASR Employment Outcomes:

- Inform applicants of accommodation planning and support available throughout the recruitment and candidate selection process.
- Advise new and current employees with disabilities of available resources, equipment and other accommodation supports as needed.
- Ensure new and current employees are aware and can access Workplace Medical Accommodation planning supports. The Workplace Medical Accommodation Standard includes occupational and non-occupational injuries, return to work, stay at work and redeployment considerations.
- Maintain an Early and Safe Return to Work process and provide and update documented individualized Workplace Medical Accommodation Plans as required.
- Inform employees absent from work or redeployed of the Workplace Medical Accommodation planning supports.
- Ensure the needs of employees with disabilities are considered in workplace space planning, performance management, career development, advancement, and redeployment.
- Develop individualized plans with new and current staff who may require assistance during an emergency.
- Provide workplace emergency response training to all staff, including guidance to those who may require assistance during an emergency.
- Maintain our corporate scent-reduction policy to address environmental sensitivities.

Employment Achievements:

- Supervisor Health & Safety Due Diligence training has been revised to include training on the Performance Manager's role to support staff with disabilities in

Emergency Response, Workplace Medical Accommodation and Early and Safe Return to Work.

- A Workplace Medical Accommodation Standard, flowchart, summary sheet, supporting resources, and aids have been developed.
- In partnership with the Ted Rogers School of Management Diversity Institute, the Markham Diversity Action Plan was launched, representing the City's strategic priorities which include attracting, developing, promoting and retaining diverse talent and promoting an inclusive work environment.

Transportation

The Transportation Standard of the IASR sets out the requirements to prevent and remove barriers to make public transportation and related services more accessible and to make it easier for everyone to travel in Ontario. The City of Markham and the Regional Municipality of York share responsibility regarding the transportation standard. York Region is responsible for and creates action items for removing barriers and specialized transportation services, while the City has obligations under the Duties of Municipalities and Taxi Cabs.

Ongoing Services/Supports The City Provides To Meet IASR Transportation Outcomes:

- Collaborate with external agencies, including York Region and York Region Transit, to improve accessibility to regional transportation and York Region Transit infrastructure.
- Develop citywide transportation policies and secondary policies to support and protect enhanced transportation facilities and standards accommodating people of all ages and abilities.
- Mandate that owners and operators of licensed taxicabs, limousines and personal transportation companies are prohibited from charging a higher fare or an additional fee for persons with disabilities, charging a fee for the storage of mobility aids or mobility assistive devices and refusing service.

Transportation Achievements:

- Completed the Markham Active Transportation Master Plan that prioritizes accessibility and promotes users of all ages and abilities to shift to more active modes of transportation.
- Members of Markham's Accessibility Advisory Committee attended the 2023 York Region Transportation Master Plan Focus Group and provided recommendations to improve accessible transportation.

Design of Public Spaces

The Design of Public Spaces Standards of the IASR includes requirements focused on removing barriers in public spaces such as trails, outdoor play spaces and exterior paths of travel. This standard provides technical requirements that ensure newly constructed or redeveloped public spaces are designed to allow people with disabilities to move through and use amenity spaces comfortably. In addition to these requirements, the City must comply with the Ontario Building Code's (OBC) requirements for accessibility.

Ongoing Services/Supports The City Provides To Meet Design of Public Spaces IASR Outcomes :

- Continue to remove barriers and improve the accessibility of public spaces and workplaces within the City's recreational trails, outdoor public use eating areas, outdoor play spaces, exterior paths of travel, accessible parking and facilities using the updated Markham Accessibility Design Guidelines which incorporates IASR and OBC requirements.
- Improve access and accessibility to recreational trails, outdoor public-use eating areas, outdoor play spaces, exterior paths of travel, accessible parking and facilities through inspections, replacement and renovations as required.
- Maintain accessible elements in public spaces through monitoring, inspections and audits.
- Conduct reviews of planning applications to ensure compliance with Markham's Accessibility Design Guideline, which includes IASR standards and OBC requirements.
- Markham's Accessibility Advisory Committee continues to be involved in the review of City site plans and projects.

Design of Public Spaces Achievements:

- Updated the Markham Accessibility Design Guidelines to ensure the guidelines reflect the latest IASR and OBC legislative changes and best practices. This document is available on the [City's website](#).
- Received a \$4.7 million grant for the modifications throughout numerous City facilities to provide touchless applications. Touchless applications include automated doors with wave sensors, light switches, faucets, toilet flushers, etc.
- Received a \$100,000 federal grant for accessibility upgrades at the Civic Centre, including the installation of an accessible chapel podium, handrails

and colour-contrasting nosing on the treads of steps, modifications to the cash service counter, etc.

- Developed an Age-Friendly Design Guideline to provide design guidance for both public and private development that is implemented through a development review of planning applications and includes recommendations related to limited mobility and access to services.
- Continue work on a four-year retrofit project to bring eighty-one outdoor play spaces to comply with the firm and stable ground surfaces guidelines of the IASR and provide access ramps, additional pathways and curbs.

Customer Service

The City of Markham is committed to being responsive to the needs of all its residents and visitors. To do this, we must recognize the diverse needs of all of our residents and visitors and respond by striving to provide goods, services and facilities that are accessible to all. The Customer Service Standard under the IASR requires the City to provide accessible public services for people with disabilities and to ensure that policies and procedures are in place to support this requirement.

Ongoing Services/Supports The City Provides To Meet IASR Customer Services Outcomes:

- Ensure that people with disabilities receive goods and services of the same quality and within the same timeline as others and benefit equally from customer service initiatives.
- Deliver accessible City events by including a designated accessible viewing area for the Canada Day Celebrations event, using a stage with an accessible ramp and lift.
- Arrange additional accessible parking areas for City events.
- Provide accessible shuttle buses for City events.
- Offer winter windrow removal services for seniors and individuals with disabilities and assisted waste collection services to residents with disabilities.
- Accept the Access-2-Card and provide a complimentary ticket for a support person.
- Offer inclusion-specific programs:
 - Relaxed performances have been programmed at the Flato Markham Theatre to provide a safe and sensory-friendly atmosphere for those on the spectrum to enjoy theatre performances.
 - One-to-one summer camp inclusion staff or families are welcome to provide their inclusion support person for participants.
 - Program inclusion volunteers.
 - Upon request, educational tours and studio activities are adapted or designed to meet participant needs and classroom learning goals.
 - Adapted registered programs such as art therapy workshops for children ages 7 to 12 with ADHD/ADD.
 - Other supports include: reducing group sizes, providing experienced staff, adapted or specialized/modified art materials, and technology such as iPads to support individuals with limited fine motor skills.
- Update and ensure staff training on the AODA and IASR requirements by including training modules for each IASR standard for staff to gain resources and tools to assist people with a disability better.

- Continue to post temporary service disruption notices promptly.
- Support accessible processes for receiving feedback.

Customer Service Achievements:

- Provided Elections Markham's Home Visit Program to allow in-home voting.
- The Fire Department's cadet program for teens with special needs is anticipated to return this year since the program was put on hold during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Markham Small Business Centre (MSBC) will continue participating in quarterly meetings organized by Community Living York South to learn about new accessibility-focused programming and introduce MSBC Entrepreneurship programs to attendees. MSBC will continue to cross-promote these community accessibility and entrepreneurship programs on the City's social channels.

Conclusion

The City of Markham is currently working on updating the next Multi-Year Accessibility Plan that will be available in 2024. The new plan will outline how the City will maintain compliance with the legislative requirements and continue working towards being barrier-free. The City is actively recruiting Accessibility Advisory Committee members. If you are interested in volunteering for a position on the committee, please send a request for an application to the contact information options below.

Let Us Know What You Think

We welcome your feedback. Let us know if you have any questions or feedback about the programs highlighted in this Status Report and any accessibility matters in general.

To request a copy in another format or to send us your comments or questions, please contact us at the City of Markham:

Email: customerservice@markham.ca

Mail: Contact Centre
Markham Civic Centre
101 Town Centre Boulevard
Markham, Ontario, L3R 9W3

Phone: 905 477 5530

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We want to thank the Town of Aurora for inspiring this reporting format.

¹ Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, S.O. 2005, c. 11