



**St. Lawrence Parks Commission**  
**Multi-Year Accessibility Plan**  
**2021 to 2026**

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## **SLPC's Accessibility Commitment**

As an Agency of the Province of Ontario, reporting to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, the St. Lawrence Parks Commission (SLPC) is a revenue-generating tourism business offering cultural, educational, and recreational opportunities for residents of Ontario and visitors to the province through the presentation and interpretation of historic attractions and the development and operation of parks, campgrounds, scenic parkways, and recreational areas.

SLPC is committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence and believes in integration and equal opportunity, committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities while delivering exceptional customer service to guests and supporting all employees in realizing their full potential.

The Commission will ensure policies, procedures and practices are consistent with accessibility goals and the requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

SLPC built its plan following the Ontario Public Service Multi-Year Accessibility Plan; the established SLPC Customer Service Policy Statement; new and refreshed OPS corporate directives and policies that reinforce and embed accessibility criteria into business practices, and the OPS Statement of Commitment.

The OPS Statement of Commitment to Accessibility:

*“The OPS endeavours to demonstrate leadership for accessibility in Ontario. Our goal is to ensure accessibility for our employees and the public we serve in our services, products and facilities.”*

The SLPC Multi-Year Accessibility Plan has been created as a living document to create a road map for SLPC to meet Ontario's accessibility laws and remove accessibility barriers. The revised Plan (2021-2026) sets out accessibility accomplishments to date as well as strategies and actions to accomplish for the future.

## **Past Achievements to Remove and Prevent Barriers**

### **Customer Service**

Since the implementation of this standard in 2010, SLPC continues to meet its obligation under the AODA Customer Service Standard, employing either face-to-face training to all staff at annual orientations or through e-learning courses. SLPC's pledge to provide customer service in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities is posted on SLPC's external website and includes information on providing goods and services; use of service animals and support persons; notice of temporary disruption; staff training and customer feedback processes.

### **Information and Communication**

#### **Accessible Feedback, Alternate Formats and Communication Supports**

SLPC is committed to meeting the communication needs of people with disabilities. It has taken the following actions and measures to ensure compliance with this standard:

- Reviewing feedback mechanisms to ensure the ability to receive and respond to feedback in multiple ways from guests, employees and members of the public who have a disability. This includes the use of email, and online surveys, which will be provided in alternate formats, upon request.
- Producing accessible information to the public upon request, meeting their needs as soon as possible.

True to SLPC's commitment to continuously be better, focused on guests and providing recreational, tourism, cultural and educational opportunities to people of all abilities, SLPC continues to grow accessible programming each year as outlined below.

- In historic buildings with second floors that are not accessible, iPads provide guests with a visual tour of the upstairs areas which is complemented using dialogue from a costumed interpreter.
- Site maps are available at Upper Canada Village with detailed building descriptions in several languages including Braille.
- Specialized tours at Upper Canada Village, such as a tactile tour for those with sight loss, have been designed and can be adapted to accommodate a variety of needs.
- Kingston Pen Tours staff are trained and have tools to deliver tours which accommodate people with vision loss and hearing loss.
- Autistic guests or guests with sensory processing difficulties, are offered learning experiences in a comfortable and accepting environment at Upper Canada Village's ASD Sensory-Friendly Sunday Mornings. Sensory accommodations include schedule and itinerary suggestions, quiet

spaces, hands-on opportunities, and gentle social interactions with Village staff.

- At Fort Henry on Sensory Sundays, quiet rooms set up with a camping tent, wool blankets, and a barracks box containing various historic items are available in both the Advanced Battery and Lower Fort for those guests that require a quiet, enclosed space. Garrison Gauntlet is presented to allow children and parents to participate in a series of stations designed for interactive, sensory learning. A 30-minute sensory tour is also available and offers tactile stations throughout the tour route.
- Upper Canada Village and Fort Henry National Historic Site are recognized as Dementia Friendly Communities by the Alzheimer's Society of Ontario.
- Prior to launching events or other programming, historic sites undergo an accessibility inspection to identify potential hazards or inaccessible features and to adjust as necessary.

### **Accessible Meetings**

When hosting events, SLPC ensures physical access to meeting space is accessible to people with disabilities and the content and proceedings of the meeting are available in accessible formats upon request; recognizing that people with disabilities have different needs, they ensure meeting invitations and registration forms ask participants to identify any accessibility supports they require. Microsoft Teams meetings have built-in closed captioning.

### **Web Content**

SLPC launched its newly redesigned website, [www.parks.on.ca](http://www.parks.on.ca) in March 2022. It has been designed and built to be in compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0), Level AA.

### **Emergency and Public Safety Information**

SLPC is committed to providing guests with publicly available emergency information in an accessible way upon request. SLPC will work with guests on a case-by-case basis to determine how to meet their needs in a timely manner. This information is posted on SLPC's external website.

### **Training**

All new staff are trained on Accessible Customer Service as part of the new hire onboarding and training program, including Ontario's accessibility laws and Human Rights

Code as it relates to people with disabilities. Learning can be achieved through formal and informal methods. Informal may include the use of email communications, staff meetings or lunch and learns. SLPC considers and implements tailored training specific to the duties of employees and volunteers, where applicable, and as described below.

Specialized training has been given to staff within Historic Sites (Upper Canada Village, Fort Henry, and Kingston Pen Tours) to support Accessible History programming and ASD Sensory Friendly Sundays. On an ongoing basis, various sites across SLPC engage in training provided by organizations such as CNIB, Canadian Hearing Society, Alzheimer's Society of Ontario, and Autism Ontario. This training reinforces knowledge for many employees, while providing the tools for enhances skills for new employees.

## **Employment**

Following the OPS mandate, SLPC is committed to inclusive and accessible employment practices. The organization has taken the following steps to ensure they accomplish its goal:

- Job ads are in plain language; offered in alternative formats upon request and include information for applicants on how to request accommodation or assistance.
- Applicants invited to participate in an assessment process (such as an interview or testing) and who require accommodation, are directed to discuss their needs with the Human Resources department.
- In 2021, SLPC participated in an Inclusive Hiring Practice review by a third party, recommendations from that review suggestions were implemented in 2022.
- Successful candidates will be made aware of our policy for accommodation in their offer letter.
- SLPC follows OPS policies and best practices related to employment accommodation. There are robust processes in place for developing individual accommodation plans and return-to-work strategies for employees that have been absent due to a disability or require an employment accommodation to continue meaningful employment.
- During the performance management process, career development and job changes Alternate formats such as large print or verbal reviews can be provided during the performance management process.
- Accommodation needs will be considered when career development, job reassignment and succession planning opportunities are available.

Managers and supervisors have been trained in the OPS Policy on Preventing Barriers in Employment, Employment Accommodation, and the OPS Employment Policy, all of which incorporates the goals of AODA.

Workplace information is accessible in alternate formats, upon request, for employees with disabilities. Providing an alternate format will be completed in consultation with the individual making the request to ensure the most appropriate form of support or format can be supplied.

Information on the organization's policies on supporting employees with disabilities is shared with staff and new hires.

SLPC has communicated with all staff to offer accommodation for any requirements they may have in a workplace emergency. Human Resources will assist managers and employees in creating a plan to ensure that an employee with an identified disability stays safe in an emergency by ensuring they have an individualized emergency response plan outlining the type of assistance they may require in such a situation. This messaging is communicated on an annual basis to ensure all employees are aware of this assistance.

### **Procurement**

SLPC follows the OPS Procurement Policies and Procedures. Procurement directives, tools and guidelines have been updated to meet new accessibility standards. Accessibility considerations are now part of the procurement process, which SLPC follows. Where applicable, SLPC specifies accessibility criteria that is required to be met and provides guidelines for the evaluation of proposals in respect to those criteria.

### **Kiosks**

The Discovery Centre at Upper Canada Village is designed to educate visitors on the Canadian history that each attraction has to offer. It utilizes interactive kiosks which have been built and designed to meet the requirements of people with disabilities. Features include touch screens, voice-activated equipment, and structural accessibility features to allow for wheelchair access and clear access paths. Kiosks also exist in the Internment Exhibit at Fort Henry. These are built and designed to be accessible to wheelchairs and offer an interactive experience.

### **Design of Public Spaces**

All public sector organizations are required to make new or redeveloped public outdoor spaces more accessible. The goal is to ensure that guests, staff, and visitors can move freely, unrestricted by barriers in both the interior and exterior of our facilities. SLPC will ensure compliance with the standards under Design for Public Spaces when building new or making major changes to existing areas.

SLPC has both preventative and emergency maintenance procedures in place for accessible sections of public spaces.

Many of SLPC's special events take place outdoors. A proactive approach is taken towards accessibility with these events including safety and accessibility tours prior to and

during events with follow-up actions. Accessibility improvements also form part of capital asset assessments conducted across SLPC, taking the necessary steps to address any issues that have been identified through this process.

To date, the following accessible features and programming are offered at SLPC:

- The first floor of all buildings at Upper Canada Village are equipped with accessible ramps and iPads.
- Upper Canada Village offers horse drawn carry-all and miniature train rides that are wheelchair accessible.
- The patio area at Battery Bistro and venue rental spaces at Fort Henry National Historic Site are accessible.
- Wheelchairs designed for outdoor terrain are available to borrow at all historic sites.
- Support persons are admitted free of charge.
- Upper Canada Village offers Accessibility Nights during fall event Pumpkinferno and winter event Alight at Night on designated evenings so that individuals who cannot walk the site can participate in a driving tour. Fort Henry also offer accessible tour options during Pumpkinferno and will continue to expand on those in coming seasons.
- New gender-neutral washrooms are available at Fort Henry.
- Fort Henry National Historic Site introduced accessibility shuttles in 2019 for evening events such as Sunset Ceremonies, Cadence, and Tattoo. The initiative was the result of customer feedback and has been met with an overwhelmingly positive response. The shuttle transports patrons from the main parking lot to their seats in the Lower Fort, returning patrons to the main parking lot at the conclusion of the show.
- Fort Henry continues to make strides towards improving accessibility for all guests including modifying transitions between rooms for ease of access for assistive mobility devices, as well as renovating existing washroom facilities with fully accessible features.

## **Strategies and Actions Moving Forward (2022-2026)**

Below are projects, improvements, and/or programs SLPC plans to accomplish over the life of this plan.

### **Customer Service**

SLPC will continue to provide customer service in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities, following all Ontario Public Service best practices and standards.

New staff will continue to receive mandatory accessibility training as part of the onboarding process.



Partnerships with organizations such as CNIB, Canadian Hearing Society, Alzheimer's Society of Ontario, and Autism Ontario will continue and provide staff with skill sets to deliver enhanced programming.

### **Information and Communications**

SLPC will continue to provide information in ways that are accessible to people with disabilities.

SLPC's website, is compliant with WCAG 2.0 Level AA and has been developed with a lens to accessibility.

Key reports published will continue to be in accessible formats.

### **Employment**

Recommendations from the Inclusive Hiring Practices review will be incorporated into recruitment tools.

SLPC will continue to follow OPS policies and procedures with respect to inclusive and accessible employment practices which will include recruitment, performance management and employee accommodations.

### **Procurement**

SLPC will continue to follow OPS procedures with regard to procurement and will continue to ensure that relevant criteria are included

### **Design of Public Spaces**

Beginning in 2022, the following projects are planned:

- Fort Henry will install an elevator to improve accessibility to the balcony level museum exhibits, evening, and overnight programming by summer of 2022.
- Mille Roches Beach is undertaking design work for a pending redevelopment, which will include paths linking accessible features such as parking, washroom/change rooms, picnic tables, and beach mobility mats.
- Floating beach wheelchairs, which are designed to transition users from hard surfaces across sand and into the water, will be in service at Mille Roches Beach and Brown's Bay beaches for the 2022 season.
- In 2022, upgrades to the sea wall at Brown's Bay will be completed which will include ramps to allow for wheelchair access to the water.
- In 2022/23, a new canteen/changeroom building will be constructed at the Brown's Bay Beach site. The building is designed to be gender neutral and fully accessible.

A similar design for a new canteen/changeroom building at the Mille Roches Beach site has also been developed.

- SLPC will work with the Ontario Trails Council to plan a trail upgrade at the Upper Canada Migratory Bird Sanctuary, creating a 1.2km AODA compliant trail loop with boardwalks.

## **Measuring Results**

### **Accessibility Reporting**

Accessibility Compliance Reports are submitted as required, to the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario, which regulates compliance for all organizations in Ontario. These reports will assess our progress against the accessibility requirements. To date, SLPC has had successful compliance reviews.

### **Review of Feedback**

Feedback obtained from guests and staff will be used to evaluate progress and integrate this information, where feasible, into ongoing accessibility planning. Primary sources of feedback are through comment cards at some special events, one-on-one conversations with Guest Relations agents and informal surveys performed by a variety of SLPC staff.

Feedback is also regularly solicited by engaging specific organizations such as CNIB, Canadian Hearing Society, Alzheimer's Society of Ontario, Autism Ontario, and various local long-term care organizations. These organizations are invited to SLPC attractions to evaluate the level of accessibility offered and any suggestions for improvement are implemented wherever possible. This activity is particularly valuable because it ensures that SLPC is fully aware of weaknesses in the actualization of the accessibility plan, giving an opportunity to take action to improve.

### **Review of our Multi-year Plan**

Revisions and adjustments will be made to this plan on an annual basis or as required when there are changes or accomplishments to highlight. This plan has been updated to include achievements and key objectives to December 2021 as well as strategies and actions for the future.

## **Conclusion**

Accessibility involves everyone and it takes a commitment from employees at all levels to accomplish. SLPC is committed to ensuring that guests with disabilities receive accessible goods, services and facilities with the same quality and timeliness as others. As an employer, SLPC is committed to ensuring we provide equal access to employment

opportunities, accessible, safe workplaces and that we meet the accommodation needs of employees who require it.

## **Feedback**

SLPC welcomes feedback and input to ensure they continue to reduce or eliminate barriers. Feedback on how well those expectations is being met can be given through the following avenues:

By e-mail: [feedback@parks.on.ca](mailto:feedback@parks.on.ca)

In Writing: St. Lawrence Parks Commission  
13740 County Rd 2 Morrisburg Ontario K0C 1X0  
Attention: Human Resources Department

By Phone: Heather Kearney, Manager, Corporate Communications and Guest Relations Unit  
(613) 930-8102

**Alternate formats of this document are available upon request.**