



# Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (2023 – 2028)

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This Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, spanning from 2023 to 2028, outlines how the Art Gallery of Hamilton (“AGH” or “the Gallery”) is responding to and going beyond our legislated obligations to identify, prevent and remove barriers for persons with disabilities.

This plan builds on the policies and actions previously implemented by the gallery in the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (2017-2022) developed in compliance with the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA-IASR).

## Introduction and Statement of Commitment

The Art Gallery of Hamilton believes in equal opportunity and is committed to providing a barrier-free environment that allows all people to maintain their independence and dignity. As an organization, we respect and uphold the requirements set forth under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (2005) and its associated Regulations and strive to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities in a timely and effective manner.

## Past Achievements to Remove and Prevent Barriers

The AGH has been in compliance with the AODA Customer Service Standard since January 1, 2012. In complying with this standard, we undertook the following initiatives:

- Posted the AGH Accessibility Policy (Enhancing Visitor Experience for People with Disabilities), which includes a description of the Customer Service Standard and the AGH Statement of Commitment to Accessibility, on the AGH website.
- Developed and delivered a comprehensive training program for all AGH staff and volunteers on the AODA Customer Service Standard, the Gallery’s commitment to accessibility and our policies regarding visitors with disabilities.
- Integrated this training into the ongoing orientation program for all new staff and volunteers.

In the Multi Year Accessibility Plan (2017 – 2023) the AGH implemented and upheld the requirements set forth under *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (2005), including;

- Provided training to any new staff, board members, volunteers and other individuals representing the Gallery on Accessibility Standards and the Human Rights Code as it relates to people with disabilities.
- Supported the use of assistive devices, both personal and Gallery provided.
- Ensured that commonly requested information is available in suitable accessible formats and with communication supports. The following information is available in accessible formats:
  - AODA policies and required documentation (Accessibility Policy, Statement of Commitment, etc.).
  - All current exhibition didactics, handouts and gallery maps.
  - Emergency Procedures, plans or public safety information.

- Feedback documents
- Provided visitors, upon request, publicly available emergency information in an accessible format or with communication supports
- Provided opportunity for feedback through various channels
- Launched a new website in 2017 that met WCAG 2.0 level AA International Standard for website accessibility.
- Ensured the needs of employees with disabilities are considered in our employment practices through the following measures:
  - All employees are aware of our policies for supporting employees with disabilities.
  - Applicants are informed of our ability to accommodate disabilities at every step of the recruitment process.
  - Individual return to work plans, accommodation plans and workplace emergency response plans are prepared and reviewed on an annual or as needed basis.
  - Performance management processes consider the accessibility needs of employees and are provided in accessible formats.
  - Career development and advancement or redeployment opportunities will consider any accessibility needs of employees who have disabilities.

In 2021 the Art Gallery participated in the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification process. We received a rating score of 67% and were deemed RHF Accessibility Certified. Since that time, we have been actively implementing the identified improvements to increase our rating score and achieve a higher rating level. Some of the changes made include;

- Esthetic updates to public spaces including visual markers on the lower lobby ramp and colour-contrast strips added to glazed walls and doors.
- Installed stair-chair evaluation equipment in the main stairway to assist with emergency evacuations of individuals unable to use the stairs
- Additional wayfinding signage throughout the building
- Updated, or refurbished elevators where necessary to improve accessibility including mirrors, and railings.

## Strategies and Actions Planned (2023 – 2028)

### Accessible Emergency Information

The AGH will continue to provide visitors, upon request, publicly available emergency information in an accessible format or with communication supports. We will work to provide emergency information on the website

We also provide, upon request, a personalized safety plan for any employee who has a disability.

### Training

Additional, in-house, training will be developed which will focus on AGH specific supports, procedures, and programs. Training will be deployed to front of house staff and volunteers to ensure we always provide seamless service to all visitors.

We continue to update our training programs in response to changes to the AODA legislation and standards that apply to the AGH operations.

## **Information and Communication**

The AGH is committed to meeting the communication needs of people with disabilities. We ask for feedback on information and communication needs from our visitors, employees and volunteers.

## **Accessible Formats and Communication Supports**

The AGH is committed to providing alternate means of communications, when requested, at no additional charge.

The AGH will continue to ensure that commonly requested information is available in suitable accessible formats and with communication supports. We will work to expand the offerings beyond the core information. Employees and volunteers have access to this information through a central file on the shared resource drive. We also ensured that the AGH is providing consistent information to the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports through a variety of formats, including the website, display screens and print materials.

The AGH website [www.artgalleryofhamilton.com](http://www.artgalleryofhamilton.com) will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it continues to conform with the WCAG 2.0 level AA International Standard for website accessibility.

Third party and in house website developers for AGH website and any other future sites/pages will continue to receive instructions to maintain WCAG 2.0 AA level compliance with the goal of meeting WCAG 2.1 standards.

## **Employment**

The AGH is committed to equitable, fair and accessible employment practices. We ensure the needs of employees with disabilities are taken into account in our employment practices through the following measures:

- All employees are aware of our policies for supporting employees with disabilities, including accommodation supports, accessible formats and communication supports. Policies are posted and are reviewed on an annual basis.
- Recruitment – Applicants are informed of our ability to accommodate disabilities at every step of the recruitment process (job posting, interview communication and offer letter).
- Individual return to work plans, accommodation plans and workplace emergency response plans are prepared and reviewed on an annual or as needed basis.
- Performance management processes take into account the accessibility needs of employees and are provided in accessible formats.
- Career development and advancement or redeployment opportunities will take into account any accessibility needs of employees who have disabilities.

On a semi-annual basis the AGH AODA Committee will conduct a full evaluation of the workplace to review current practices, compliance updates, and any feedback forms.

## **Design of Public Spaces & Self Serve Kiosks**

The “Welcome Project” launched in 2023, focused on accessibility and esthetic updates to the Visitor Service desk, Café, and AGH Shop, in line with Accessibility Standards for the Design of Public Spaces.

The Art Gallery of Hamilton is currently considering expansion and renovation. The AGH will ensure that the Gallery meets or exceeds all accessible building requirements in any new building development.

The AGH will keep accessibility top of mind in designing exhibitions and programs, with the aim of creating an AGH specific accessible exhibition and program design guideline. This will be built on international standards such as the Smithsonian Guidelines for Accessible Design.

The AGH does not currently use self-service kiosks but will ensure to consider the needs of people with disabilities when designing, procuring or acquiring self-service kiosks in the future.

The Gallery will continue to meet the Accessibility Standards for the Design of Public Spaces with any future projects in the applicable public spaces, specifically exterior paths of travel (sidewalks, ramps, stairs, curb ramps, rest areas).

### **Other Projects**

We will continue to implement changes highlighted in the RHFAC report including the following;

- Update passenger elevator cabs to include mirrors on the rear wall, allowing people in a wheeled mobility device to see what is behind them (part of the “Welcome Project”)
- Upgrade exit signs to international symbol (green running man)
- Paint emergency exit doors in a contrasting colour to ensure high visibility
- Look at ways to improve options for low visibility visitors including textured floor markings, increase used on brail, descriptive audio tours, etc.

The Art Gallery of Hamilton will continue to review current practices, make any necessary compliance updates and follow-up on feedback received.

We look forward to working with Gallery visitors, staff, volunteers and the public to continue making the AGH an accessible and welcoming destination and workplace for all individuals.

For more information on the AGH Accessibility Plan or to obtain the plan in accessible formats, please contact:

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