



TORONTO ZOO ACCESSIBILITY PLAN 2020-2025

1. Introduction

In 2005, the government of Ontario passed the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (the "AODA")*. It is the goal of the Ontario government to make Ontario accessible by 2025. The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations ("IASR") under the AODA require that effective 2013-01-01, the Toronto Zoo establish, implement, maintain and document a multi-year accessibility plan which outlines the organization's strategy to prevent and remove barriers for persons with disabilities and to meet its requirements under the IASR.

In accordance with the IASR, the Toronto Zoo will:

- Post this plan on our website (www.torontozoo.com);
- Report on the progress of implementation of this plan;
- Provide this plan in an accessible format, upon request; and
- Review and update this plan at least once every five years.

2. Statement of Commitment

The Toronto Zoo is committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in integration and equal opportunity. The Toronto Zoo is committed to the principles outlined in the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and to meeting the needs of people with disabilities, in a timely manner, through the implementation of the requirements of the Act.

3. Accessibility Standards for Customer Service

Since 2010-01-01, the Toronto Zoo has been in compliance with the Accessible Customer Service Regulation under the AODA, and will continue to comply with that regulation from 2020-2025.

The Toronto Zoo is committed to excellence in serving all guests, including people with disabilities. The Zoo aims to provide programs and services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of guests with disabilities. The following measures have been implemented by the Toronto Zoo with respect to the Customer Service Regulation:

- Ensuring all employees and volunteers who deal with the public and all employees involved in the development and approval of customer service policies, practices and procedures, are trained to provide the best possible customer service to all guests, including persons with disabilities;
- Providing training to staff on various assistive devices that may be used by guests with disabilities, e.g. wheelchair loading device on Zoomobile;

- Training is tracked and recorded;
- Providing fully accessible telephone service, offering to communicate with the public by TTY if telephone communication does not meet their needs;
- Allowing guests with service animals to access the Zoo under certain conditions, that balance health and welfare considerations for the Zoo's animals;
- Providing a support person accompanying a person with a disability with free admission to the Zoo;
- Alerting guests with disabilities of any temporary disruption of services or access to facilities;
- Continuing to welcome and encourage feedback from persons with disabilities through multiple communication channels;
- An "Accessibility" page has been added to the website www.torontozoo.com, to communicate the Toronto Zoo's accessibility policies and guidelines. Guests seeking further information are directed to a staff member for assistance. The Toronto Zoo is pleased to offer individualized assistance with advance notice;
- Providing guests with a Guest Accessibility and Going to the Zoo Social Story. A social story is a downloadable resource designed to enhance your zoo experience with valuable insights, support, and helpful information, tips, and visual cues for guests with diverse accessibility needs;
- Providing Guests with a Toronto Zoo Sensory Map. This map identifies Headphone Zones and Quiet Areas to help our guests prepare for a visit;
- Providing guests with a KultureCity Sensory Bag free of charge upon request. Guests can request a sensory bag from our Accessibility Hub;
- Providing Guests with the option of a Toronto Zoo Adventure Access Pass upon request/ The Adventure Access Pass supports guests and members who may have significant trouble standing/waiting in line to access the ride or adventure at a future time without waiting based on the current wait-times on site;
- Providing guests with complimentary wheelchair rentals for the duration of their visit.

4. Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation

Under the IASR, there are a number of requirements to prevent and remove barriers for persons with disabilities. The Toronto Zoo is committed to meeting these requirements, as explained below. Some of the requirements apply to Zoo guests and the general public while other requirements are specific to Zoo employees and volunteers.

4.1 Accessible Emergency Information

The Toronto Zoo will provide public emergency procedures, plans and public safety information to the public upon request, in an accessible format with appropriate communication supports. The Zoo has an Emergency Management Plan (EMER-001) to ensure that all necessary measures are taken for the protection and safety of its employees, guests and assets. This document is available upon request. Public safety and emergency information is posted at the Toronto Zoo and on the Zoo's website, as appropriate and as determined by the situation.

Timeframe: Implemented.

Where the Toronto Zoo is aware that an employee has a disability and that there is a need for accommodation, individualized emergency response information will be provided, if necessary, given the nature of their disability.

Timeframe: Implemented.

4.2 Training

The Toronto Zoo will provide training to employees and volunteers on Ontario's accessibility laws and on the Human Rights Code as it relates to people with disabilities. Training will be provided in a way that best suits the duties of employees and volunteers. Training records will be maintained.

The Toronto Zoo has taken the following initial steps to ensure employees and volunteers are provided with the training needed to meet Ontario's accessibility laws:

- For new staff, online training is provided through online modules and is required training for all staff to complete during their onboarding;
- Volunteers receive their training through the Zoo's Learning & Engagement Branch.
- Contractors on the Zoo site receive training through their employer;
- Requirements for successful contractors/successful bidders to ensure that all its employee or agents receive training about the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities are included in bid documents;
- The Toronto Zoo has also implemented access to the KultureCity Sensory training and Inclusive Venue Training Certificate for all staff and volunteers.

Timeframe: Implemented and ongoing

4.3 Procuring or Acquiring Goods, Services or Facilities

The Toronto Zoo is committed to incorporating accessibility considerations into our procurement processes. We ask potential suppliers to tell us about the accessible options they offer.

In accordance with the IASR, the Toronto Zoo will:

- Adhere to a procurement process that uses accessibility criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities, except where it is not practicable to do so;
- Provide an explanation, upon request, when it was decided not to incorporate accessibility features;
- Ensure the needs of people with disabilities are considered when designing, procuring or acquiring self-service kiosks. A kiosk means an interactive electronic terminal, including a point-of-sale device, allowing the user to access one or more services.

Timeframe: Implemented.

The Toronto Zoo is in the process of developing a bid document manual for each Toronto Zoo employee purchasing a good or service to consider and apply the appropriate accessibility criteria prior to the purchase of goods, services or in the construction process.

4.4 Information and Communications

The Toronto Zoo is committed to meeting the communication needs of people with disabilities. We will provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities, upon request. Accessible formats may include, but are not limited to, large print, recorded audio and electronic formats, Braille and other formats used by persons with disabilities.

The following steps have been taken to ensure compliance in meeting information and communication needs:

- Consult with the person making the request to determine the suitability of the accessible format or communication support;
- Provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports in a timely manner at a cost no more than the regular costs charged to other persons.

Timeframe: Implemented and ongoing.

The Toronto Zoo website now conforms with WCAG 2.0, Level A. The following steps were taken to ensure that the Zoo's website meets the requirements of WCAG 2.0, Level A:

- A site refresh was completed and is now compliant with the above noted standard;
- AODA compliance is included as one of the criteria in selecting technology vendors for new website development initiatives.

Timeframe: Implemented.

4.5 Education

The Toronto Zoo operates a number of education programs where participants register in advance. These include day camps, overnight programs, school programs / tours, and other public programs. Learning experiences are designed to consider everyone's needs and be accessible by all.

Toronto Zoo also produces a number of educational resources which are available online on the Zoo's website for educators and students to download/access. For educational resources offered in print, these materials will also be provided in accessible or conversion-ready formats upon request.

Additionally, the Toronto Zoo delivers Zoo School, a Grade 11 Biology University Preparation (SB13U) course, for which we are authorized by the Ministry of Education to grant credits. The Toronto Zoo is committed to ensuring this program is compliant with the IASR standards and has undertaken to provide:

- Educational resources/print materials for Zoo School in an accessible format upon request;
- Course program descriptions/requirements in an accessible format upon request;
- Program instructors are provided with accessibility awareness training;

- Any future Ministry-certified programs delivered by the Toronto Zoo will also comply with the IASR standards.

Timeframe: Implemented.

4.6 Employment

The Toronto Zoo is committed to fair and accessible employment practices that attract and retain talented employees with disabilities. This includes providing accessibility in each phase of the employment process for both internal and external applicants.

The following steps have been taken to ensure compliance in employment practices:

- A review and modification of existing recruitment policies, procedures and processes;
- Specifying that accommodation is available for applicants with disabilities on job postings and on the website;
- Advising candidates when the interview is being scheduled that accommodation is available;
- If a candidate requests accommodation, consulting with the candidate to arrange for suitable accommodation that takes into account the candidate's needs;
- Advising successful candidates in the Employment Terms form and Offer of Employment letter that the Toronto Zoo has accommodation policies for employees with disabilities.

Timeframe: Implemented.

The Toronto Zoo will take the following steps to implement a process for developing individual accommodation plans and return-to-work policies for employees that have been absent due to a disability:

- Ensure there is a written process for the development of documented individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities;
- The existing policy on Early & Safe Return to Work (PER-008) has been updated to ensure compliance with IASR.

Timeframe: Implemented

The Toronto Zoo will ensure the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities are taken into account when the Toronto Zoo is using performance evaluation, career development and redeployment processes. The Zoo will undertake to review existing policies on employee performance appraisals to ensure compliance with IASR.

Timeframe: Implemented.

4.7 Accessibility Standards for the Built Environment

The Accessibility Standards for the Built Environment focus on removing barriers in two areas: public spaces and buildings. Enhancements to accessibility in buildings will happen at a later date through the Ontario Building Code (OBC), which governs new construction and renovations in buildings. Accessibility standards regarding public spaces are part of the IASR and therefore this section addresses the Toronto Zoo's compliance with accessibility in public spaces.

The Toronto Zoo is committed to greater accessibility, in compliance with existing laws and standards, when adding new or making major modifications to public spaces. In the context of the Toronto Zoo, public spaces include but are not limited to: public pathways, restaurants and picnic areas, rest areas, public indoor spaces, outdoor play spaces, parking lots, queuing areas, and guest service counters.

The following steps have been taken to address accessibility issues on the Toronto Zoo site:

- Public washrooms are in the process of being renovated to meet OBC Barrier Free Access Standard. To be completed by 2024.
- Automatic operators will be installed on all interior doors accessed by the public by 2024
- African Rainforest Pavilion, Indian Rhino Pavilion and Malayan Woods Pavilion have all been renovated to comply with OBC Barrier Free Access Standard;
- In 2012 a feasibility study was completed on six outdoor visitor pathways to determine how these sites comply with current accessibility standards including: AODA, the OBC, and the City of Toronto's Accessibility Design Guideline. The study looked at possible design options to bring existing pathways into conformance with current standards and recommendations for moving forward. The Zoo is in the process of renovating these six outdoor areas and will be finished by 2025;
- Preventative and emergency maintenance of the accessible elements in the Zoo's public spaces;
- In the event of a temporary disruption to services or facilities, the public are notified of the service disruption and alternatives available;
- A site-wide building condition assessment is was undertaken in 2021, which will identify AODA deficiencies for correction by 2025. For example: door operators, door handles, etc.

As public spaces at the Toronto Zoo are renovated or newly built, the IASR Built Environment Standards will be reviewed to ensure compliance.

Timeframe: Implemented and ongoing.

Procedures for Maintenance of Accessible Elements

To ensure accessible elements are maintained, routine checks & annual maintenance are completed for all accessible elements on site. This includes, but is not limited to, accessible ramps, pathway slopes, automatic door entries, fixed seating areas, waiting areas & outdoor play spaces.

Procedures for Dealing with Temporary Disruptions of Accessible Elements

In the event that an accessible element is affected, procedures are put in place to ensure accessibility for our guests is upheld. This is addressed by means of temporary ramp systems, waiting/eating area set-up, re-directed pathway routes, clear visible signage, and manned building access assistance. Prompt repairs are made to limit the duration of any temporary installation. This disruption will be communicated by the branch involved at the Zoo to our Strategic Communications team who will then ensure that this disruption is added to the alerts on our website and evaluates whether broader communication via social media or media notices is warranted. The communication will be updated with comprehensive details on the duration, location, purpose of the disruption and alternative arrangements that will be in place during the disruption.

Timeframe: Implemented and ongoing.

For More Information

For more information on this Accessibility Plan, please contact Guest Relations Manager at 416-392-5932 or by e-mail at info@torontozoo.ca.

Accessible formats of this document are available upon request, please email info@torontozoo.ca or call Guest Relations at 416-392-5932.