



**Upper Canada Growers Ltd.**

# **Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2024-2029**

**Current Update of Plan - October 2024**

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR).

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## Guiding Legislation

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) requires employers and organizations in Ontario to develop and implement Accessibility Standards as they relate to Customer Service, Employment, Information and Communications, Transportation and Design of public spaces (Built Environment). These requirements are to be phased in between 2005 and 2025.

### Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

#### [AODA, 2005](#)

The AODA is the overarching legislation aimed at making Ontario accessible to people with disabilities by 2025. It provides a framework for developing and enforcing accessibility standards to ensure that all Ontarians have equal access to services, facilities, and opportunities.

The AODA is enforced through various regulations and standards, including the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR). It mandates that businesses and organizations comply with accessibility requirements to improve access for people with disabilities.

### Integrated Accessibility Standards

#### [ONTARIO REGULATION 191/11](#)

The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) requires every employer with 50 or more employees to develop and post a multi-year accessibility plan on their website by January 1, 2014.

This regulation applies to the areas of Information & Communication Standards, Employment Standards, Transportation Standards, Design of Public Spaces Standards (Built Environment) and Customer Service Standards. Organizations are required to implement accessibility standards to ensure compliance with the legislation.

## Message from the CEO

At Upper Canada Growers Ltd., we are deeply committed to fostering an environment where everyone feels valued, included, and empowered. Accessibility is not just a regulatory requirement; it is a core value that aligns with our mission to provide exceptional services and create opportunities for all.

Our commitment to accessibility is reflected in our multi-year accessibility plan, which outlines our strategic approach to meeting and exceeding the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). This plan represents a significant investment in our future, as we work to ensure that our policies, practices, and facilities are accessible to everyone, regardless of their abilities.

Accessibility is vital to our organization because it embodies our values of respect, inclusivity, and excellence. By removing barriers and creating an inclusive environment, we not only enhance the experiences of our employees and clients but also strengthen our community and drive innovation.

The multi-year accessibility plan we are unveiling today is a testament to our dedication. It includes actionable goals and initiatives designed to improve accessibility in key areas such as information and communications, employment, public spaces, and customer service. Our plan is not static; it is a living document that will evolve based on feedback and progress.

I encourage each of you to engage with this plan actively and contribute to our accessibility goals. Your support is crucial in making our commitment a reality. Together, we can create a workplace and community where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Thank you for your continued dedication and support in making Upper Canada Growers Ltd. a leader in accessibility and inclusivity.

Sincerely,

Robert Haynes  
CEO & President  
Upper Canada Growers Ltd.

# Objectives of the Upper Canada Growers Ltd. Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Upper Canada Growers Ltd. is dedicated to treating accessibility as a long-term change initiative that involves employees. The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan describes the measures that Upper Canada Growers Ltd. will take to identify, remove and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities who utilize the facilities and services of Upper Canada Growers Ltd.

Annually a status report will be completed that will outline the progress taken towards implementing the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. An annual review of the plan will also be conducted that will incorporate updates as required. New identified priority action items will be incorporated into the plan as well as any legislative changes.

## Mission Statement

Upper Canada Growers Ltd. has a vision to be known as the leader in the industry by providing the best fruit tree quality possible to Canada.

## Statement of Commitment

Upper Canada Growers Ltd. 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 meeting our accessibility requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR).

# Strategies and Actions

## Accessibility Policy

Upper Canada Growers Ltd. is committed to maintaining an AODA policy. The policy includes an organizational statement of commitment and requirements for employees at all levels of the organization to meet the accessibility requirements for persons with disabilities in a timely manner.

### Actions Taken:

- AODA policy was developed and approved
- The AODA policy will be made available in an accessible format to customers requesting a copy of the policy

### Actions Planned:

- Continue to review the AODA policy at least every 3 years or whenever UCG's practices and/or procedures change to ensure it is up to date and all AODA requirements are integrated
- Continue to make the AODA policy available in an accessible format to customers requesting a copy of the policy

## Customer Service

Upper Canada Growers Ltd. is committed to providing accessible customer service to people with disabilities. This means that we will provide goods, services and facilities to people with disabilities with the same high quality and timeliness as others.

### Actions Taken:

- All employees, managers and senior managers have been trained on interacting with customers of all abilities and we maintain records of the training that is provided
- Assistive devices and service animals are permitted on all Upper Canada Growers Ltd. premises locations in areas where customers and visitors have access, unless the presence of service animals is restricted or prohibited in certain areas where specific laws or regulations apply, such as those related to food safety or health and hygiene standards
- Customers are informed when accessible services are temporarily unavailable

## Actions Planned:

- Continue to train new employees on accessible customer service
- Continue enabling customers and visitors to use assistive devices and welcoming the assistance of service animals and support persons
- Continue to communicate when accessible services are temporarily unavailable using methodologies appropriate for the circumstances
- Develop emergency procedures to ensure customers with carrying abilities are assisted in building emergencies
- Work to ensure all online forms are accessible
- Implement a web-based feedback process to help UCG better understand how well customer expectations are being met

## Information and Communications

Upper Canada Growers Ltd. is committed to making information and communication accessible to people with disabilities. The information we provide and the ways we communicate are key to delivering our programs and services to the public.

We will incorporate accessibility requirements under the IASR information and communication standard to ensure that its information and communications systems and platforms are accessible and they meet the needs of persons with disabilities.

Upper Canada Growers Ltd., upon request, consult with the person requesting the information and provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and/or communication supports in a timely manner and at a cost that is no more than the regular cost charged to other persons.

There are situations where accessible formats and communication supports may not be provided. These situations include when:

- it is not technically possible to convert a document to an accessible format. In this case,
- we will explain why and provide a short summary
- the information comes from another organization
- we do not control the information
- the information is found on products or product labels

If we determine that information or communications are unconvertible, we will provide the person requesting the information or communication with:

- an explanation as to why the information or communications are unconvertible
- a summary of the unconvertible information or communications

### **Actions Taken:**

- Implemented our accessible customer service feedback process. Feedback can be provided in multiple formats including phone and email

### **Actions Planned:**

- Develop processes to ensure information can be made accessible to people with disabilities upon request
- Continually improve accessibility of our information and communications by reviewing feedback received and conducting accessibility audits to identify accessibility barriers and striving for barrier removal

## **Employment**

We are an equal opportunity employer committed to inclusive and accessible employment practices. Upper Canada Growers Ltd. will accommodate employees with disabilities on an individualized basis as their needs relate to:

- Recruitment, assessment and selection
- Accessible formats and communication supports for employees
- Workplace emergency response information
- Documented individual accommodation plans
- Return to work process
- Performance management
- Career development and advancement
- Redeployment

### **Actions Taken:**

- Job applicants who are selected for an interview and/or testing will be notified that accommodations are available, upon request. Processes have been established to consult with any applicant who requests an accommodation in a manner that takes into account the applicant's unique abilities

### **Actions Planned:**

- Continue addressing barriers to recruitment
- Continue to accommodate employees
- Ensuring that all eLearning modules are accessible and meet WCAG 2.0 Level AA standards
- Develop a workplace accommodation policy that includes documented processes and information on accommodating employees with varying abilities



## Training

Upper Canada Growers Ltd. will ensure that every employee is provided with training in accordance with the AODA and IASR and in accordance with the Human Rights Code as it pertains to persons with disabilities.

Every staff member in accordance with their duties will be trained on the AODA and IASR as soon as is practicable after hire/assignment. Employees will receive further training on any policy or regulatory changes.

Electronic records including the date on which employees received the training will be kept in accordance with the requirements of the AODA/IASR standards.

### Actions Taken:

- All employees have taken the required AODA training
- AODA training has been added to the onboarding/orientation training
- Mandatory training continues to be provided to all new employees
- All employees, managers and senior managers understand how to interact with customers of varying abilities

### Actions Planned:

- Institute a refresher training cycle at least every three years or as changes occur to ensure knowledge remains current

## Design of Public Spaces

Upper Canada Growers Ltd. will incorporate accessibility design, criteria and features when procuring or redesigning any space owned or leased by the organization.

We will schedule quarterly inspections of all accessible features (off-street parking lots, restrooms, signage) to identify wear and tear or malfunctions. Routine maintenance will be conducted on these spaces. We will provide training for maintenance staff on the importance of accessibility and best practices for maintaining accessible features. This training will include recognizing and addressing potential issues before they affect accessibility.

In the event of emergency maintenance, there will be designated staff responsible for prioritizing and addressing reported failures. Where feasible, backup systems will be established for essential accessible features to ensure continued access (e.g., moving parking spaces while lot is being maintained/repaired).

Clear, visible signage will be posted to inform the public about temporary disruptions to accessible features, including:

- Directions to alternative access routes.
- Contact information for further assistance.

### **Actions Planned:**

- Install push automatic door openers at main office
- Create a zero step entrance at the front of main office

## **Accessible Formats and Communication Supports**

Upper Canada Growers Ltd. is committed to making information and communication accessible to people with disabilities. The information we provide and the ways we communicate are key to delivering our services to the public.

We will incorporate accessibility requirements under the IASR information and communication standard to ensure that our information and communications systems and platforms are accessible and they meet the needs of persons with disabilities.

## **Feedback Process**

Upper Canada Growers Ltd. encourages feedback about its accessibility, including customer service, its website, employment practices, etc. Feedback can be submitted using an online request form, available at: <https://www.uppercanadagrowers.ca/wholesale-contact-us>.

Feedback can also be made in writing, by telephone, or email to:

Upper Canada Growers Ltd.  
921 Concession 2 Road  
Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON L0S 1J0

Tel: (289) 646-0737

Email: [info@uppercanadagrowers.ca](mailto:info@uppercanadagrowers.ca)

Human Resources or a delegate will review the customer feedback, investigate the situation, try to resolve it and provide a response within 14 business days of receiving the information.