



Staff Report

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Report To:	General Government Committee		
Date of Meeting:	March 4, 2024	Report Number:	LGS-006-24
Submitted By:	Rob Maciver, Deputy CAO/Solicitor		
Reviewed By:	Mary-Anne Dempster, CAO	Resolution#:	
Authored By:	Jeannette Whynot, Accessibility Coordinator		
File Number:		By-law Number:	
Report Subject:	2023 Annual Accessibility Update		

Recommendations:

1. That Report LGS-006-24, and any related communication items, be received;
2. That the Report LGS-006-24 be placed on the Municipal website to meet the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) requirements; and
3. That all interested parties listed in Report LGS-006-24 be advised of Council's decision.

Report Overview

The [Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulations \(IASR\)](#) outlines a requirement for Municipalities to provide an annual status report. The report is intended to report on measures taken to develop, implement and maintain policies governing how the Municipality of Clarington achieves or will achieve accessibility through meeting its requirements outlined in the IASR.

There are five standards that support the creation of an accessible province by 2025:

1. Customer Service Standards
2. Information and Communications Standard
3. Employment Standard
4. Transportation Standard
5. Design of Public Spaces Standard

This accessibility annual status update provides an update on the Municipality of Clarington's progress and commitment to ensure compliance with all five standards and associated requirements.

1. Clarington Accessibility Advisory Committee (CAAC)

- 1.1 The Clarington Accessibility Advisory Committee (CAAC) is a citizen committee legislated under Part VII of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). In 2023, a new CAAC was established following the 2022 municipal election. The Committee is vibrant, engaged, and extremely passionate about their work. Meetings are either virtual, or hybrid format, in support of removing barriers and ensuring flexibility for members.
- 1.2 The CAAC meets quarterly, or at the call of the Chair. The CAAC received onboarding training and developed goals for their term. Additionally, they nominated a local business for the Durham Region Accessibility Awards for their commitment to accessibility.
- 1.3 The CAAC and its Site Plan Subcommittee continue to review site plans and Municipal projects integral in providing advice on key initiatives and other legislated requirements undertaken by the Municipality. With changes to the Planning Act, the number of site plans reviewed was lower than in previous years, having reviewed approximately 15 in 2023 in comparison to 30 in 2022.

- 1.4 The CAAC attended a flag raising to recognize and promote National AccessAbility Week in May. Additionally, they attended AppleFest in collaboration with the Diversity Advisory Committee and the Anti-Black Racism Task Force, to promote accessibility and inclusion in our community. While at AppleFest CAAC members promoted Treat Accessibly to remind our community that with simple changes they can offer all children an inclusive trick-or-treating experience.

2. 2023 Staff Updates

Accessibility Coordinator Role

- 2.1 The Accessibility Coordinator acts as a resource for all municipal service areas and monitors compliance with the AODA. In 2023, the Accessibility Coordinator moved from the Corporate Performance in the Office of the CAO to the Clerk's Division of Legislative Services. Additionally, the Accessibility Coordinator began reporting to the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Anti-Racism (IDEA) Officer.
- 2.2 The Accessibility Coordinator oversees all the Municipality's legislative requirements under the AODA, including training of all new staff. This training focuses on providing accessible customer service, knowledge of municipal accessibility policies, and the Ontario Human Right Code (OHRC) as it relates to people with disabilities.

Research Initiatives

- 2.3 In collaboration with Ontario Tech University, the Accessibility Coordinator worked with a Capstone student group to better understand how the municipality can further its Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Anti-Racism and Accessibility (IDEAA) work. The students offered suggestions for 'stop, start, continue' in relation municipal policies and initiatives on IDEAA.
- 2.4 In collaboration with Trent University, the Accessibility coordinator collaborated with another student group on research related to IDEAA initiatives in Clarington. Through their research they were able to suggest vendors for continuing education opportunities to support the IDEAA portfolio, in addition to providing recommendations for changes to policies, practices and procedures in Clarington.

Community Initiatives

- 2.5 In 2023, the Municipality partnered with Treat Accessibly to promote inclusive trick-or-treating in our communities. The Municipality promoted Treat Accessibly through its social media in the week leading up to Halloween, and the Accessibility Advisory Committee handed out 500 postcards with information on how to make Halloween more accessible during AppleFest. 200 free Treat Accessibly lawn signs were available at each library branch for houses who wanted to indicate that they would be an accessible trick-or-treating stop.

- 2.6 In May, the Municipality of Clarington added sensory kits to each of its eight fire trucks, a first-of-its-kind project in Ontario. The kits contain items that can help regulate sensory input such as noise-cancelling headphones, sunglasses, and fidget items. Autism Home Base Durham provided training to all of Clarington's firefighters, so they can support our neurodivergent and autistic community members.
- 2.7 The Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility highlighted Clarington's sensory kit project in their July 2023 AODA Toolbox newsletter. This newsletter highlights AODA requirements, offers resources and shares best practices/initiatives from across the province.

Staff Training

- 2.8 During National AccessAbility Week, the Municipality partnered with the Abilities Center to offer a lunch and learn for staff. This lunch and learn was a panel discussion where people with lived experience with disability were able to share their experiences with staff.
- 2.9 New employees will continue to be trained in accordance with the AODA. Employees who require job-specific accessibility training will be provided it, upon request.

Public Spaces

- 2.10 The Municipality continues to work on the accessible outdoor fitness equipment project. For logistical reasons, the site was moved from Soper Creek Park to South Courtice Arena. It's expected completion date is summer 2024.
- 2.11 The Municipality received \$100,000 from the Government of Canada's Enabling Accessibility Fund to make accessibility improvements at Tyrone Community Centre. The project is expected to be completed in 2025.

Public Consultation

- 2.12 In preparation for an updated Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP), the Municipality launched a public consultation survey during National AccessAbility Week in May 2023. This survey allowed residents to share feedback about accessibility in Clarington. The Municipality also consulted with the CAAC to gather their feedback. The updated MYAP will be presented to Council in March 2024 for approval.

Compliance

- 2.13 Every two years the Municipality is required to file an Accessibility Compliance Report with the Government of Ontario. This report was filed in December 2023 and indicated full compliance with the AODA and its Standards.

Networking

- 2.14 The Accessibility Coordinator continues to be an active member of the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals (ONAP). In 2023, the Accessibility Coordinator attend two ONAP Conferences and actively participated in resource and information sharing amongst accessibility colleagues.
- 2.15 In 2023, the Municipality of Clarington became a collaborator/member of the Canadian Accessibility Network (CAN). CAN is a national collaboration to advance accessibility for persons with disabilities through Research and Innovation, Education and Training, Policy, Employment and Community Engagement.

3. 2024 Initiatives and Work Plan

- 3.1 Clarington's updated Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) will be presented to Council in Spring 2024. This updated plan will guide accessibility initiatives in Clarington over the next 5 years and will ensuring on-going compliance with the AODA and its Standards.
- 3.2 The Accessibility Coordinator will continue to support and educate staff on creating accessible documents, how to incorporate accessibility through their daily work, and respond to request for information in an alternative format.
- 3.3 The Accessibility Coordinator and the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Anti-Racism (IDEA) Officer will continue to work collaboratively to ensure both portfolios continue to work together in a complimentary way.
- 3.4 The Municipality will continue to seek out partnerships with disability organizations, collaborations, and external funding opportunities. Additionally, the Accessibility Coordinator will continue to collaborate with colleagues and share successful initiatives, like the Mobility Device Charging Stations.
- 3.5 The Municipality will continue to work with Trent and Ontario Tech Universities as a community partner in their Capstone courses.
- 3.6 Two additional facility audits will be conducted by the Rick Hansen Foundation in 2024. The recommendations from these audits will form the basis for future facility improvements. Additionally, these audits will be used to create "shovel ready" projects that better position staff to take advantage of funding opportunities and increase the opportunity for success.
- 3.7 Staff will continue to leverage national awareness events like National Accessibility Week (NAAW) to celebrate and recognize accessibility in Clarington, and to bring awareness to the importance of a barrier-free Municipality.

4. Financial Considerations

4.1 Not Applicable.

5. Strategic Plan

5.1 The 2023 Annual Status Update supports the Connect Pillar of Clarington's Strategic Plan by working to create a diverse, equitable and inclusive community.

6. Concurrence

Not Applicable.

7. Conclusion

This report provides an update on achievements regarding accessibility in 2023, as outlined in the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and regulated requirements in the AODA. The main goal in this portfolio is to work towards an accessible and equitable Clarington. With the valuable contributions of staff, Clarington's Accessibility Advisory Committee and the ongoing support of Council, there will be many more accomplishments seen over the next several years.

Staff Contact: Jeannette Whynot, Accessibility Coordinator, jwhynt@clarington.net

Attachments:

Not Applicable

Interested Parties:

The following interested parties will be notified of Council's decision:

Clarington Accessibility Advisory Committee