



STAFF REPORT

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF COBOURG

Corporate, Finance, and Legislative Standing Committee

Report to: Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and Councillors
From: Yasmyn Belle, Accessibility and EDI Coordinator
Standing Committee Date: January 11th, 2024
Report Number: **LS-2024-003**
Council Meeting Date: January 31st, 2024
Subject: **2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan Progress Report**

If you require this information in an alternate format, please contact the Accessibility Coordinator at accessibility@cobourg.ca or at 905-372-4301 ext.4305

1. Recommendation:

THAT Council accepts this Multi-Year Accessibility Plan Progress report for information purposes;

FURTHER THAT Council directs staff to provide this report to the Accessibility Advisory Committee to help guide the goals for the 2024 calendar year.

2. Executive Summary:

Multi – Year Accessibility Plan - The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) legislation along with the Town's Multi – Year Accessibility Plan (2020 –2024) works towards the provincial goal of a fully accessible Ontario by 2025. The plan consists of short-, medium- and long-term goals, with many actions running on an ongoing timeline to ensure accessibility in town services, infrastructure, policies, and within the organization. As we approach the renewal of the plan, the next year will focus on accomplishing as many of the 55 actions for the Town of Cobourg as possible, with many already being started or completed. The town focuses on 6 areas of improvement: people, procedures, best practices, communication, technology, and transit

3. Background

This report provides an update to the Accessible Advisory Committee on the actions taken to improve accessibility in the community and outlines the progress made in accordance with the 2020-2024 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. The goal of this plan is to strive for a barrier-free Cobourg and meet requirements under the 'Act' by the end of 2024. This plan and report were made in conjunction with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*.

There are three (3) core systems in place to ensure that the goals of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan are being met.

Accessibility Advisory Committee – The provincially mandated AAC committee provides recommendations to council and their initiatives related to accessibility.

- The role of the AAC is to provide sound advice and recommendations to the Cobourg Municipal Council on matters relating to the goal of ensuring that individuals with disabilities shall be assured access to basic services available in the community.
- Benefits of lived experience feedback includes:
 - Personal knowledge about the world is gained through direct, first-hand involvement in everyday events rather than through representations constructed by other people.
 - People who have been closest to the problem have the most experience with it, can elevate real concerns, devise the most pointed solutions, and engage community support.
 - Leads to an equitable workplace, quality improvement, staff development and community engagement.

Feedback and Reporting System – The Town invites the public to provide feedback regarding the accessibility of our goods, services and facilities through an online form, by mail, or by e-mail.

Town Hall's Commitment – by working with the Legislative Services department, we create a holistic and collaborative approach to accessibility.

4. Discussion:

2023 Achievements and Progress

In our commitment to fostering a truly inclusive environment, we have made significant strides in various aspects throughout the 2023-2024 term. Key accomplishments include:

- **LEAD Completion:** The implementation of LEAD has provided the Town of Cobourg with a comprehensive understanding of gaps in accessible and inclusive best practices. This assessment covers staff support, policies, and procedures.

- **Strategic Planning:** LEAD's insights will play a pivotal role in shaping the 2024-2028 Town of Cobourg Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, ensuring a strategic and proactive approach to accessibility.
- **National Accessibility Awareness Week:** The successful execution of a campaign and event during this week engaged the community in identifying accessible barriers using sponsored accessible devices from Motion Cares Peterborough.
- **Community Grant Projects:** Four community grant project submissions, totaling \$167,000, were pursued. Notably, a \$100,000 grant was approved for enhancing accessibility in Victoria Hall and Victoria Beach Washrooms. Another grant is pending approval for supporting an inclusive event guide and county-wide training program lead by the Town of Cobourg.
- **Website Accessibility:** Ongoing efforts to remediate the Town of Cobourg websites aim to provide both an accessible interface and the production of fully accessible documents.
- **Highlighting Achievements:** The Campground and Marina were highlighted in Summer 2023 for its accessible recreation services.
- **Accessible Standards Guide:** The initial draft of the Town of Cobourg Accessible Standards Guide has been created. This guide encompasses best practices in accessible document creation, building standards, and an inclusive event guide ensuring a comprehensive and integrated approach to accessibility.

The Ontario government is legally obligated to ensure the accessibility of the province for over 2.6 million people by 2025. In alignment with this commitment and aspiring to be leaders in Accessibility and Equity, the Legislative Services department at the Town of Cobourg has initiated accessibility initiatives for the 2024-2025 period.

2024 Next Steps

Accessibility Advisory Committee Responsibilities: The town will uphold the duties outlined by the Accessibility Advisory Committee as mandated by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). This includes advising the council on accessibility standards, reviewing site plans, and fulfilling other functions specified in the regulations.

Expanded Awareness Campaigns: The town aims to amplify the National Accessibility Awareness Week (NAAW) and International Day of Persons with Disabilities campaigns, fostering increased awareness and understanding.

Continuous Consultation on Capital Projects: Ongoing engagement in consultations related to capital projects, including beach access, town facility upgrades, new build proposals, and the Emergency Plan for the Town of Cobourg.

Accessible Transit Education: Sustained efforts in accessible transit education, ensuring ongoing awareness and understanding within the community.

Input on Downtown Accessibility: Providing input on accessibility concerning the Downtown Business Improvement Area (DBIA) and downtown sidewalks, contributing to the creation of an inclusive urban environment.

Policy Enhancements: Revision of existing and new policies and procedures to incorporate inclusive language, fostering an environment that reflects diverse needs.

Implementation of Accessible Standards Guide: The town will implement the Town of Cobourg Accessible Standards Guide, integrating policies that support the incorporation of best practices in accessibility.

Community Feedback Procedures Revision: A comprehensive review and revision of community accessible feedback procedures to ensure inclusivity and responsiveness.

Snow Removal Program Proposal: Proposing a snow removal program specifically designed for seniors and individuals living with disabilities, addressing unique accessibility challenges during winter at a reduced fee/

2025 – 2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan:

The 2019-2024 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan is set to conclude on December 31st, 2024. The Town of Cobourg will collaboratively develop the 2025 – 2029 Plan in consultation with the Accessibility Advisory Committee, people with disabilities, members of the public, and staff. This plan will build upon the achievements of the previous period, serving as a roadmap for continued compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). The town is dedicated to actively removing barriers and enhancing accessibility for individuals with various disabilities, contributing to the creation of an inclusive and accessible community.

5. Financial Impact and Budget

As of the date this report was written, \$18,339 was spent on accessibility-based services and infrastructure in the 2022-2023 term. This does not include capital budget projects such as the Marina Washrooms, the Beach mat, or the Accessible Boat Launch.

6. Relationship to Council's Strategic Plan Priorities 2023 to 2027 and beyond:

- Thriving Community
- Service Excellence
- Sustainability

7. Public Engagement:

Public engagement is crucial when it comes to the implementation of accessible services and infrastructure. In addition to the feedback and motions received from the provincially mandated Accessibility Advisory Committee, direct community feedback served as a driving force of several accessible upgrades and changes around the Town of Cobourg in the 2024-2025 year.

- **Victoria Hall Accessibility Audit:** Conducted a thorough audit of Victoria Hall, offering detailed recommendations to achieve the highest standard of accessibility throughout the building.
- **Accessible Dock Pilot Installation:** Successfully initiated a pilot installation of an accessible dock at West Beach, enhancing waterfront accessibility for all.
- **Accessible Beach Mat Purchase:** Procured over 50 feet of accessible beach mat, undergoing an in-water trial period, with plans for continuation in 2024 to ensure enhanced beach accessibility.
- **Marina Washrooms Renovation:** Completed the renovation of Marina washrooms, incorporating upgraded accessibility features, including the installation of an adult changing table.
- **Parking By-Law Revision:** Revised the Parking By-Law to introduce a lower-rate monthly accessibility parking pass. This pass enables residents to park in any spot across the Downtown and Waterfront area, promoting inclusivity.
- **Transit Accessibility Report:** Produced a comprehensive Transit Accessibility Report, offering suggestions for system improvements within the upcoming contract, ensuring a more accessible public transportation system.
- **Accessible Halloween Project:** Implemented an Accessible Halloween Project, fostering inclusivity during festive events and celebrations in partnership with REMAX.
- **Responsive Community Engagement:** Handled over 30 accessibility-related community inquiries through the accessibility@cobourg.ca email and phone number, maintaining a response time of less than 48 business hours between January and December 2023.

Sections 4.5 and 4.6 of the Terms of Reference by-laws (008-2019) outline the requirement for Advisory Committees of the Town of Cobourg to submit an Annual report and Work Plan. In addition to the annual report, all advisory committees submit their monthly meeting minutes to the Council for review to ensure a clear and consistent line of communication on initiatives and progress throughout the year.

8. Attachments:

Attachment 1 – Multi Year Accessibility Plan 202-2024

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan Progress Report.docx
Attachments:	- Multi Year Accessibility Plan 2020-2024 (Remediated).pdf
Final Approval Date:	Jan 3, 2024

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Brent Larmer, Municipal Clerk / Director of Legislative Services - Jan 3, 2024 - 9:43 AM

Tracey Vaughan, Chief Administrative Officer - Jan 3, 2024 - 11:25 AM