



STAFF REPORT

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF COBOURG

Corporate, Finance, and Legislative Standing Committee

Report to: Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and Councillors
From: Charlotte Gick, Legislative Coordinator - Accessibility
Standing Committee Date: November 28, 2024
Report Number: LS-2024-024
Council Meeting Date: December 18, 2024
Subject: **Extension of 2020-2024 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan**

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

1. Recommendation:

WHEREAS the Committee adopt the following recommendation and refer to Regular Council for final approval.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council extend the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan for 2020-2024 for an additional year to 2025, with a new four year plan to be submitted in 2025 for 2026-2030; and

FURTHER THAT Council direct Staff to begin broad public engagement with the residents of Cobourg and the Accessibility Advisory Committee on the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2026-2030.

2. Executive Summary:

As required by Ontario Regulation 191/11-Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR), this Staff Report will provide Council and the public with the Town of Cobourg's progress with regards to the 2020-2024 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan to prevent/ remove barriers and meet requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

In addition, Staff are requesting that Council extend the Multi Year Accessibility Plan (“Plan”) to 2025 to allow for a comprehensive review to be completed for the 2026-2030 Plan. The Plan helps and is a legislative requirement for the Town of Cobourg to meet the policy commitments under the AODA and improve overall accessibility. It is the roadmap to help the Town remove identified accessibility barriers.

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, we require further time to complete appropriate community outreach and review. The report will also outline the proposed work plan for 2025.

3. Background

On June 13, 2005, the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (“AODA”) received Royal Assent and is now law. The AODA requires the Government of Ontario to work with the disability community and the private and public sectors to jointly develop standards to be achieved within stages of five (5) years or less, leading to an accessible Ontario in twenty (20) years, or by 2025. The aims of this act were realized through accessibility standards setting items to be addressed.

The AODA was enacted to serve as a framework for the establishment of accessibility in five (5) different areas:

1. Customer Service, to help remove barriers for People with Disabilities so they can access goods, services, or facilities.
2. Information and Communications, to help organizations make their information accessible to People with Disabilities.
3. Transportation, to make it easier for everyone to travel in the province.
4. Employment, to help making hiring and employee support practices more accessible.
5. Design of Public Spaces, to help organizations make new and redevelopment of outdoor public areas accessible.

The standards support the principles of the AODA to ensure dignity, integration, independence, and equal opportunity and each standard has specific timelines for implementation. The AODA is in place for the purpose of ensuring that people with disabilities are not discriminated against.

Part of the requirements for the Town of Cobourg to be compliant with the AODA is to have a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. In accordance with O. Reg. 191/11, s. 4 (1). the Integrated Accessibility Standards, the Town of Cobourg must:

- Establish, implement, maintain and document a multi-year accessibility plan, which outlines the organization's strategy to prevent and remove barriers and meet its requirements under this Regulation.
- Post the accessibility plan on their website, if any, and provide the plan in an accessible format upon request; and
- Review and update the accessibility plan at least once every five years.

In addition, the Town of Cobourg must:

- Establish, review and update their accessibility plans in consultation with persons with disabilities and if they have established an accessibility advisory committee, they shall consult with the committee. O. Reg. 191/11, s. 4 (2).
- Prepare an annual status report on the progress of measures taken to implement the strategy referenced in clause (1) (a), including steps taken to comply with this Regulation; and
- Post the status report on their website, if any, and provide the report in an accessible format upon request. O. Reg. 191/11, s. 4 (3); O. Reg. 413/12, s. 3 (1).

4. Discussion:

2025 Workplan

Consultation for the plan will occur in the Spring/Summer of 2025 with final approval anticipated in the fall. The update will include a review of:

1. Legislative requirements and best practices
2. Accessibility Advisory committee priorities and;
3. Feedback gathered from residents, Council and Staff of the Town of Cobourg.

Legislative Requirements and Best Practices

The province recommends the following approaches to consider:

- **Consult the experts:** Consult people with disabilities throughout this process, people with disabilities are often knowledgeable about removing barriers that affect them.
- **Allocate resources:** Estimate the human, financial, and technical resources needed and available

- **Assign Responsibility:** Decide which employee or department will lead your efforts to meet each commitment.
- **Decide on a timeline:** Develop a work schedule that aligns with compliance deadlines for Ontario’s accessibility laws and your organizations priorities .
- **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.

5. Financial Impact and Budget

While there is no cost to extending the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan there are financial implications to ensuring an accessible Cobourg. Many of the issues and complaints raised by the Accessibility Advisory Committee and other members of the public were with regards to transportation, infrastructure, and communications – all of which require resources, either human or financial, to ensure that they are accessible

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 will serve as a driving force in the review and update for the 2026-2030 plan

8. Attachments:

Attachment 1 – Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2020-2024

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Extension of 2020-2024 multi year Accessibility plan.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Nov 21, 2024

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

Brent Larmer - Nov 21, 2024 - 2:09 PM

Tracey Vaughan, Chief Administrative Officer - Nov 21, 2024 - 2:09 PM