

STAFF REPORT

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF COBOURG



Report to:	Mayor and Council Members	Priority:	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Low
Submitted by:	Jamie Kramer, Accessibility Coordinator, Legislative Services, jkramer@cobourg.ca	Meeting Type:	Open Session <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Closed Session <input type="checkbox"/>
Meeting Date:	June 21, 2021		
Report No.:	Corporate Services-067-21		
Submit comments to Council			

Subject/Title: National AccessAbility Awareness Week 2021 Final Overview

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council accept this report from the Accessibility Coordinator for information purposes.

1. STRATEGIC PLAN

- **Pillar #1:** People: The Town of Cobourg supports and cares for the social and physical well-being of its citizens.
- **Pillar #3:** Partnerships: The Town of Cobourg engages in strong, sustainable public private partnerships to improve the quality of life for everyone.
- **Pillar #4:** Programs: The Town of Cobourg provides efficient and effective corporate, community, business, and recreational services for its residents, businesses, and visitor.

2. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The public were invited to participate throughout the week's events.

3. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report to provide information about the events that took place during National AccessAbility Awareness Week for the Town of Cobourg (May 30th to June 5th).

By hosting events throughout Accessibility Awareness Week, we began to fulfil two (2) of the action items in the Town of Cobourg's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, 2020 to 2024:

1. Continue to proclaim Accessibility Awareness Week on an annual basis.

2. Use Accessibility Awareness Week to encourage learning and education.

4. ORIGIN AND LEGISLATION

On April 26, 2021, Town Council approved the following resolution:

WHEREAS at the Committee of the Whole Meeting on April 19, 2021, Council considered a Memo from the Accessibility Coordinator regarding National Accessibility Awareness Week 2021;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council proclaim Accessibility Awareness Week from May 31st to June 4th, 2021, and;

FURTHER THAT Council hang the banner created by the Chair of the Accessibility Advisory Committee at Victoria Hall throughout Accessibility Awareness week, and;

FURTHER THAT Council provide a budget of \$2,500 to secure a keynote speaker related to Accessibility to kick off the event, with these funds allocated from the Legislative Services approved budget under Training/Courses and;

FURTHER THAT Council participate in different events throughout the week, to the best of their availability and schedule.

5. BACKGROUND

National AccessAbility Week (NAAW) runs from May 31st to June 4th, 2021 and is an opportunity:

- to celebrate the valuable contributions of persons with disabilities, and;
- to recognize the efforts of individuals, communities and workplaces that are actively working to remove barriers to accessibility and inclusion.

We all benefit from a society and an economy without barriers to inclusion. When persons with disabilities can participate in all aspects of society, including accessing employment, resources and services, it enriches Cobourg's, Ontario's, and Canada's economy.

In light of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Town of Cobourg is helping Canadians with disabilities maintain their health, safety and dignity. To this effect, this year's celebration activities for NAAW were virtual, to reflect public health instructions.

The Town of Cobourg in partnership with the Cobourg Accessibility Advisory Committee created programming that will help end social isolation to bring persons with disabilities together while also providing opportunities for the public to learn and engage on topics related to accessibility.

Over the course of the week, eleven (11) events were held with over 150 unique participants throughout the week. Many residents came to a variety of the events, especially those that were communicated via social media or press release.

6. ANALYSIS

During National AccessAbility Awareness Week, the Town of Cobourg hosted eleven (11) events. We had over 150 unique participants sign-up for the events throughout the week.

The events with the highest level of participants were:

- The Keynote Address on Monday, May 31st with Benoit Huot (76 unique sign-ups), and;
- The Closing Event on Friday, June 4th with Minister Qualtrough (68 unique sign-ups).

The documentary movie sessions had the next highest amount of participants with an average of twelve (12) participants per session watching the full movie. On average, there were twenty-five (25) unique sign-ups per event and approximately ten (10) to fifteen (15) participants in each event.

The events that took place on Thursday seemed to have more participants than the others, with the exception of the keynote and closing events.

The Town of Cobourg thanks and appreciates all the Town Staff and Community Organizations who participated throughout the week, especially during the session on Wednesday, June 2nd that highlighted the resources the Town provides and other organizations in the community. The full replay of this video can be found on the website at www.cobourg.ca/accessibility.

There was a lot of positive feedback from people about Sue Caron's, the Chair of the Accessibility Advisory Committee's, poem and visuals. Many people thought that not only did it highlight the struggles of everyone during COVID-19, but it shone a light on issues that some people may not think about – including feeling alone or isolated. Similar feedback was sent about the video that Sue prepared around accessible built environment and living spaces.

In addition, there was a tremendous amount of feedback around the positives of the keynote address that was provided by Benoît Huot. Many emails that were received talked about the passion and presence that Benoît had about discussing resilience, perseverance, and having fun in all that you do.

Further, the Town of Cobourg thanks the Honourable Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion of Canada, for helping us close out the week's events and reiterating that accessibility and awareness are not a "one week" event, but rather something that continues throughout the year.

The hope for next year's National AccessAbility Awareness Week is that it will be in person and we can use the information and resources prepared by Sue Caron and the Accessibility Advisory Committee to "Walk the Wheel" in the Downtown area to showcase the issues surrounding the Built Environment and how we can work to improve the accessibility downtown.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/BUDGET IMPACTS

The total cost for National AccessAbility Awareness Week was \$4,055, including Benoît's speaker fees (and HST, which will be refunded to us) and a sponsored advertisement on Facebook highlighting the keynote address and other events taking place through the week.

These amounts were taken from the appropriate budgets and there are no additional fees for the Town of Cobourg.

8. CONCLUSION

The events that took place during National AccessAbility Awareness Week 2021 were a success thanks to the dedication of the Accessibility Advisory Committee, Town Council, community organizations, and Town Staff who participated. More awareness events around accessibility will be coming in the future to provide context around additional elements of accessibility and how we can all help to create a more inclusive and accessible Cobourg.