

Memorandum

Date: April 4, 2023

To: Members of Council

From: Patrick Trafford, Deputy Clerk, Records and Information Services, Corporate Services

Subject: Annual Accessibility Status Report for 2022

In 2005, the government of Ontario passed the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA). The purpose of the AODA is to benefit all Ontarians by implementing standards to achieve accessibility across the province by January 1, 2025. Pursuant to the legislation, this requires actively preventing and removing barriers for those with disabilities to ensure access to goods, services, facilities, employment, premises and buildings.

To promote and work towards achieving accessibility in Caledon, the 2018-2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) was adopted by the Town. The MYAP outlines various strategies to improve accessibility, consistent with the AODA. The purpose of this memo is to provide a status update on the progress achieved towards the goals of the MYAP in 2022 and highlighting Town initiatives to promote accessibility within the community.

2022 Municipal and School Board Election

The *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* (MEA) includes several responsibilities for the Town Clerk to ensure that an election is accessible. In planning and implementing the election, staff took action to identify, remove and prevent barriers. These actions align with the goals of the MYAP as it outlines several key areas to be considered which are crucial for a successful election.

The current MYAP speaks to Accessibility Policies for the Town being reviewed and updated regularly. In early 2022, the Town's Accessible Election Policy was revised based on best practices of other municipalities who held by-elections since the last 2018 municipal election. Staff presented the new policy to the Town's Accessibility Advisory Committee and included their feedback. This resulted in a fully updated Accessible Election Policy which provided a comprehensive framework to ensure accessibility was considered at each step in the planning process.

Accessibility training for those hired for election purposes is specifically noted as a goal within the MYAP in addition to accessible customer service training. Extensive training was provided for all staff that participated in the election including a review of key accessibility aspects. For example, election workers were made aware of the requirements of the AODA and related Integrated Accessibility Standards.

Further, to ensure appropriate customer service, election staff were trained on respectful ways to interact with persons with disabilities as well as support persons. Finally, during training staff were advised that service animals were permitted in voting locations, consistent with the goal of the MYAP that services animals are allowed in all Town premises.

The MYAP identifies that the design of public spaces where services are provided must be accessible. This was taken into consideration in selecting voting locations. For example, staff conducted inspections of all new voting locations which had not been used in a previous election. A checklist was used to ensure a comprehensive review of items such as door width for scooters and wheelchairs, adequate lighting, availability of power door operators and accessible washrooms. During the inspections, staff confirmed that accessible parking was available at all locations. Layout maps of each location were developed which included 2 metres of clearance between voting stations to provide adequate space for wheelchairs and scooters.

The MYAP requires that information be provided in alternate formats as necessary to accommodate those with disabilities. Similarly, it is crucial for the election to offer alternate voting methods to ensure those with disabilities can participate. Throughout the election, all voting locations had accessible voting equipment available. This provided various options to cast a ballot such as using a controller, paddles for limited dexterity or a sip and puff device. Further, where an individual could not enter a voting location due to disability, curbside voting was provided where a ballot was brought to their vehicle consistent with the Accessible Election Policy. Finally, voting by proxy was available where an individual could not attend a voting location.

Based on the above, numerous barriers were identified, removed and prevented to ensure that the Town's 2022 Municipal and School Board Election was accessible. This achieved progress towards various goals set out by the MYAP. As required by the MEA, the [2022 Post-Election Accessibility Report](#) was completed and posted on the Town's website to provide full details for the public.

Development Application Review Process

An important goal of the 2018-2022 MYAP is to ensure that the Design of Public Spaces Standards within the AODA are applied throughout the Town. To achieve this, for more than a decade staff have been reviewing all site plans and plans of subdivision from an accessibility perspective to incorporate appropriate design for sidewalks and walkways, accessible parking spaces as well as outdoor play spaces and parks.

Previously, these reviews were completed by staff within the Legislative Services Division. However, in 2022 this process was transferred to the Town's Planning Department. As Planning manages the site plan and plan of subdivision review processes, including accessibility allows for a more comprehensive consideration throughout. Further, several Planning staff with broader technical expertise are now responsible as compared to one individual in Legislative Services previously. This permits a more in depth and technical consideration and continues to achieve the goal set out within the MYAP.

Accessibility Advisory Committee Recruitment

Pursuant to the AODA the Town must establish an Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC). The Committee is responsible to provide advice on the requirements and implementation of accessibility standards and review site plans for accessibility compliance. Following the 2022 Municipal and School Board Election, staff advertised for and recruited Members of the ACC for the 2022-2026 Term of Council. Orientation for the Members of the AAC was completed on February 13, 2023.

Conclusion and Next Steps

In compliance with the AODA, this Annual Accessibility Status report has outlined action taken throughout 2022 to further advance the Town's 2018-2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. In February 2023, the Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility notified various municipalities across the province of outstanding accessibility requirements. Through 2023 the Town must complete a new Multi-Year Accessibility Plan to guide the next five years. Further, in consultation with Communications staff, a timeline has been set for achieving accessibility compliance for the Town's website. These two important aspects will be key focuses in 2023.