

# Memorandum

Date: April 8, 2024

To: Members of Council

From: Anuneet Dhindsa, Coordinator, Council and Committee Services

Subject: Annual Accessibility Status Report for 2023

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.

A requirement under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations (IASR) of the AODA is the annual reporting of the measures taken by the Town to remove barriers and improve accessibility for persons with disabilities. 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 an overview of the initiatives and projects achieved under the 2018-2022 MYAP to promote accessibility within the community.

2018-2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan Milestones:

- Universal Design Policy

All new housing development applications must implement the Universal Design Policy to ensure accessible living options are available going forward. The Town of Caledon was amongst the first of Ontario municipalities to make this policy mandatory and incorporate it into new housing developments.

- Accessible Website and Web Content

Staff have been working towards getting the Town of Caledon website compliant with the Web Content Accessible Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA standard set within the IASR. The AA standard guideline exceeds the requirements of the AODA website compliance standard. This would require alternative descriptions to non-text media, closed captioning for audio and video media, and mindfulness of text and image size, orientation, color and contrast. Significant strides were taken in 2020 and 2021 with a redesign of the website undertaken and staff training taken on to create accessible documents for the website. The project is still underway with submission for certification aimed for Q4 of 2024.

- Service Standards Training

The Accessible Customer Service procedure is designed to address the accessible customer service standards outlined under the IASR of the AODA. Staff received training on the service standards during the Town's onboarding process. New employees are required to complete an e-learning module to understand the purpose of the AODA and learn about accessible customer service standards. Staff are required to sign and provide a form to People Services to confirm and track completion. Further, consistent with the AODA, as part of the Town's Procurement Strategy staff continue to consider accessibility features when developing bid documents and any contractors providing goods, services or facilities on behalf of the Town must complete the above noted accessibility training.

- 2022 Municipal and School Board Election

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. The Accessible Election Policy was updated to provide a comprehensive framework to ensure accessibility was considered at each step in the planning process. Alternative formats of voting to accommodate those with disabilities in both location and voting method were implemented. All voting locations had accessible voting equipment such as controllers, paddles, and the ability to vote curbside through their vehicle. Proxy voting was available for those that sought such accommodations. Staff were trained to provide service for all persons.

- Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) and Site Plan Reviews

As part of the Accessibility Advisory Committee's (AAC) mandate, site plan reviews have been reviewed by the AAC working group. When constructing new or redeveloping existing outdoor spaces on municipal property, the Town consults with the working group and Planning staff to ensure that accessibility provisions on site are maintained. The working group and staff review 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.

In 2023, the Town of Caledon AAC was invited to participate in the Region of Peel's working group Queen Street Corridor Study and Preliminary Study in Bolton where members had the opportunity to provide input. Additionally, members of the AAC were provided opportunity comment and provide feedback on the Mayfield West Phase II – Community Park Plan and the Caledon 410 Park Plan.

The Accessibility Advisory Committee advises Town Council on what can be done to make it easier for people with disabilities to use the Town's many programs and services. Members come from different backgrounds and abilities. Meetings are open to the public and are held at Caledon Town Hall.

### **2023 Compliance Report to the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility**

In December 2023, Legislative Services submitted the bi-annual Accessibility Compliance Report to the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility. Staff provided an overview of the accessible policies and procedures under the purview of the Town of Caledon including the Caledon Public Library Board compliance report, the Town's Accessibility Policy, Accessibility Customer Services Procedures, Accessible Election Procedure, and Accessibility Awareness training. Staff highlighted the 2018-2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan initiatives and plans to update it for the 2023-2027 term.

### **Conclusion and Next Steps**

In compliance with the AODA, this Annual Accessibility Status report has outlined actions taken to further reduce barriers and improve accessibility in the Town of Caledon. In May 2024, Council will see the 2023-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. In accordance with the Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility, staff will highlight on areas of improvement to eliminate outstanding accessibility requirements. Council will have an opportunity to review and provide comment on the new MYAP in conjunction with Council's own work plan. At the moment, passing the new MYAP remains the top project, followed by achieving accessible compliance for the Town's website.