

Memorandum

Date: January 27, 2025

To: Members of Accessibility Advisory Committee

From: Alexandra Sheppard, Legislative Specialist, Corporate Services

Subject: Annual Accessibility Status Report for 2024

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. The purpose of this memo is to provide an overview of progress and initiatives accomplished by the Town in 2024 under the 2023-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

2023-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

To promote and work towards achieving accessibility in Caledon, the 2023-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) was adopted by Town Council on May 21, 2024. The MYAP was designed to be an extension of past plans and includes forward-thinking strategies which will help Caledon achieve its goal of becoming a barrier-free, fully accessible municipality. Through the initiatives outlined in the plan, Town staff, together with the Town's Accessibility Advisory Committee, continue to ensure accessibility is a priority throughout the Corporation and the community.

Accessibility Advisory Committee Updated Terms of Reference

The Town revised its Accessibility Advisory Committee's Terms of Reference in September 2024, amending the Committee structure to no longer restrict composition to five (5) members. Removing the limitation aimed to support community participation and allow qualified and interested individuals to sit on the Committee at any time. The revisions encourage greater representation and diversity while strengthening the Committee's voice in removing barriers and improving accessibility in the Town.

Improvements to Educational Resources and Brochures

The Accessibility Advisory Committee selected Initiative 2 – Educational Resources of its 2023-2027 Committee Work Plan as a priority in 2024. A Pamphlet and Brochure Working Group was established to assist in fulfilling the Committee’s goal of updating the Town’s educational materials to target local businesses and promote the idea that accessibility makes good business for all. Looking to 2025, the Committee will work with the Mayor’s Office to identify opportunities to distribute the new education materials. A partnership with the Age-Friendly Advisory Committee will also proposed to be established to create supplementary educational materials relevant to both groups.

National AccessAbility Week

National AccessAbility Week took place from May 26 to June 1, 2024. A National AccessAbility Week Working Group was formed in April 2024 to strengthen community engagement and promotion for the event. Key highlights from the 2024 National AccessAbility week include a Mayoral Proclamation to bring awareness and highlight the Town’s support of the Accessibility Advisory Committee and commitment to achieving a barrier-free Caledon. The Committee also collaborated with the Town’s Communications department to create a campaign featuring stories of community members and bring awareness to Committee initiatives.

Invisible Disability Awareness

Invisible disability awareness was another key priority for the Accessibility Advisory Committee in 2024. The Committee formed a working group at its September 9, 2024 meeting with the primary purpose of raising awareness, education, and inclusivity of individuals with invisible disabilities. Four recommendations came out of the working group for Council consideration, including: consultation with Parks and Recreation staff to ensure invisible disabilities are accommodated within the inclusivity framework, updating the AAC webpage to become a resource center for identifying invisible disabilities, a proclamation of December 3, 2024 as International Day of Persons with Disabilities, and exploring partnerships with local school boards on invisible disability awareness initiatives for youth within the community. The Accessibility Advisory Committee will continue working with Town staff in 2025 to achieve the recommendations provided by the working group.

Conclusion and Next Steps

In compliance with the AODA, this Annual Accessibility Status report has outlined actions taken to further advance the Town’s 2023-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. As outlined in the 2025 Accessibility Advisory Committee’s Work Plan, focus on community outreach and improving and promoting accessibility awareness education materials will remain key initiatives throughout 2025.

ATTACHMENTS

None