	THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF COBOURG	
COBOURG	**STAFF REPORT**	
TO:	Mayor and Council Members	
FROM: TITLE:	Jamie Kramer, CHRP, CCIP™ Accessibility Coordinator	
DATE OF MEETING:	October 26, 2020	
TITLE / SUBJECT:	The Town of Cobourg's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2020 to 2024	
REPORT DATE:	October 16, 2020	File #: File Number

1.0 STRATEGIC PLAN

Pillar – PEOPLE - The Town supports and cares for the social and physical well-being of its citizens.

The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan falls under **Action #5: Invest in programs, services, and infrastructure to make Cobourg more accessible**. All work has been done in consultation with the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

- Review and update the Town of Cobourg's Accessibility Policy.
- Develop and Implement a continuation of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.
- Implement the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and provide an annual report to Council on the progress.

2.0 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The initial draft was created with the assistance of the Chair of the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

A draft was sent to the Accessibility Advisory Committee for their October 21st, 2020 meeting.

A draft is being provided to the Mayor and members of Council on October 26th to provide insights and suggestions.

A draft will be provided to the public on EngageCobourg from October 27th until November 13th to provide insights and suggestions for moving forward.

All suggestions and recommendations will be used to create the final draft of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan which will come before Council prior to the end of 2020.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council review the memo from the Accessibility Coordinator for information purposes; and

FURTHER THAT Council review the revised version of the Accessible Customer Service Policy and provide input, as necessary; and

FURTHER THAT Council review the revised version of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy and provide input, as necessary; and

FURTHER THAT Council review the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2020 to 2024 for the Town of Cobourg and provide input, as necessary; and

FURTHER THAT Council direct Staff to begin broad public engagement with residents of Cobourg on the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2020 to 2024; and

FURTHER THAT Council direct Staff to bring forward a final version of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2020 to 2024 to a future Council meeting prior to the end of 2020.

4.0 ORIGIN AND LEGISLATION

On June 13, 2005, the 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 *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* 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, and

5. **Design of Public Spaces**, to help organizations make new and redevelopment 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. Implementation for both public and private sectors is to be phased in over time to achieve the objectives of a fully accessible province by 2025.

While the last pieces of implementation occur before 2025, the legislation will remain as law, with the need for the Town of Cobourg to remain in compliance with the AODA and the Integrated Standards. Further, there may be updates to the AODA and/or the Integrated Standards near 2025, especially as some of the standards are using compliance metrics that have since changed. For example, there is a newer international standard for website compliance (WCAG 2.1 came into effect in 2018 and there is a draft of WCAG 2.2).

In addition, the Government of Canada passed the *Accessible Canada Act* and is developing the Standards, which may impact how Ontario adapts their understanding of accessibility in the future.

5.0 BACKGROUND

This report is for information and to receive feedback from Town Council on the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2020 to 2024 prior to public engagement.

A draft version of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2020 to 2024 has been attached as Appendix A for Council review and input.

The Accessibility webpage on the Town of Cobourg's website has been updated to reflect new information on an ongoing basis.

This report, and the attached documents, are the requirements for the Town of Cobourg to be in compliance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, 2005.

6.0 ANALYSIS

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

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).

The draft Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2020 to 2024 begins the process of meeting those legislative requirements. The current draft version takes into consideration:

- Legislative requirements,
- Accessibility Advisory Committee priorities, and
- Feedback gathered from residents of the Town of Cobourg.

Staff is requesting that Council provide input into the draft, including priorities, timeframes, and further action items. Staff is requesting that if an action item could be amalgamated into the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy, that Council makes note of this as well.

Accessibility Policies

In addition to the newly update Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, the Accessibility Coordinator also updated the two policies that are required by the AODA:

1. Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy (LEG-ADM17), and
2. Accessible Workplace and Customer Service (HR-AP-A12).

These policies have been attached as **Appendix B** and **Appendix C**, respectively. These policy updates ensure that the Town of Cobourg remains in compliance with the legislation and that the public has the most up-to-date and accessible information.

The Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy has been updated to outline the new requirements under the Customer Service Standard and Design of Public Spaces Standard.

Prior to the hiring of an Accessibility Coordinator, the Accessible Workplace Policy was a Human Resources policy; however, this has changed and been updated. The Accessibility Coordinator is now responsible for the refinement and implementation of this policy. The Accessible Workplace Policy has changed to be the “Accessible Workplace and Customer Service Policy” to combine the Policy and Procedure aspects. This allows the public to have access to all the necessary information to understand how the Town of

Cobourg will best meet their needs of customer service as well as meet the requirements under the Integrated Accessibility Standards.

While currently a draft, once approved, both of these policies will be available on the website on the Accessibility webpage for the public to view and understand, especially prior to their visit to Town facilities. Further, Staff will receive communications and/or training on the updates to the policies as appropriate. Revisions will occur on an annual basis, or when new legislation is introduced that affect them. Revisions that are more involved than editing typos, dates, names, titles, etc. will be brought to Town Council for approval.

Staff is requesting that Council provide input into the drafts of the Accessibility policies.

7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/STAFFING/BUDGET IMPACT

While there is no cost to implementing a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, including the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan that has been presented here, 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.

It is understandable that with COVID-19, there may be restrictions on budgetary considerations; however, accessibility is a compliance issue as well as a human rights issue.

Staff is proposing that for the year 2021, Council direct Staff to bring forward accessibility costs on a project by project basis. After an initial year of determining the best course of action for budgets, staff will bring forward further budgetary issues as well as what is necessary for the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan in the coming years.

The work would be conducted by the Accessibility Coordinator in tandem with other departments, the Accessibility Advisory Committee, Council, and other stakeholders and rights holders, as necessary.

As the work spans over the course of five (5) years, there is a need for a continuous staffing to oversee the work to be done under the broad scope of accessibility.

8.0 CONCLUSION

Staff are encouraging Council to provide input into the future of accessibility at the Town of Cobourg by providing revisions and insight into the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2020 to 2024, the Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy, and the Accessible Workplace and Customer Service Policy.

9.0 AUTHORIZATION ACKNOWLEDGMENT (SENIOR MANAGEMENT/CAO)

Jamie V. Kramer

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