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Town of Aurora

2023 Annual Accessibility Update

Corporate Services

Introduction

The Town of Aurora is dedicated to the continuous improvement of accessibility within the community, and achieving the goals set out by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (A.O.D.A). The development of the Town of Aurora's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2022 - 2026 illustrates how the Town will implement the legislative requirements of the A.O.D.A by identifying, removing, and preventing barriers for residents, employees, and visitors.

The plan is established in compliance with the requirements in the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (I.A.S.R). The plan is based on best practice research, input from the Town's 2018 - 2022 Accessibility Advisory Committee and Town staff, and is organized around the following standards:

- Customer Service
- Information and Communications
- Employment
- Transportation
- Design of Public Spaces

A.O.D.A Compliance

The A.O.D.A is the law that sets out a process for developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards that government, businesses, non-profits and public sector organizations must follow to become more accessible. These laws and standards are intended to make Ontario open to everyone by helping to reduce and remove barriers.

As a designated public sector organization the Town of Aurora is legally required to file an accessibility compliance report every two years. In 2023, the Town reported compliance with the Information and Communications Standard. The Town continues to work towards staying compliant with this standard for accessible websites and web content. The Town is working towards being a leader in this space and has worked with the Province of Ontario to ensure we meet the Information and Communications Standard.

2023 Accessibility Highlights

Customer Service

The Town of Aurora is committed to providing excellent customer service for all residents, employees and visitors with disabilities. The Customer Service Standard under the I.A.S.R requires the Town to provide accessible public services for people with disabilities and to ensure that policies and procedures are in place to support this requirement.

Customer Service Outcomes

- Continue to complete mandatory A.O.D.A training, including customer service training for staff, volunteers and third parties to gain resources and tools on how to better assist a customer with a disability.
- Receive and respond to feedback about in which goods, programs, services and facilities are provided to persons with disabilities.
- Continue providing accessible processes for receiving feedback.
- Continue providing service disruption notices in a timely manner.
- Continue to ensure that people with disabilities receive goods and services of the same quality and within the same timeline as others and benefit equally from customer service initiatives.

Customer Service Accomplishments

- Participation in various accessibility related activities including National AccessAbility Week and International Day of Persons with Disabilities.
- Continued offering of inclusion specific programs
 - 1:1 support offered for community programs
 - Tiered programming for aquatic lessons ranging from 1:1 support to integrated group programming
 - Individualized resources, kits and equipment provided for participants
 - Sensory/quiet spaces and equipment for programs and special events
 - Specific training for staff to work with children in all camps
- Continuation of Seniors Centre Without Walls (S.C.W.W) program to provide remote participation opportunities for residents, supporting vulnerable and isolated seniors and adults who may find it difficult to leave home for extended periods of time.
- Mapping our facilities for Accessibility through AccessNow.

Information and Communications

The Information and Communications Standard under the I.A.S.R requires the Town to communicate and provide information in ways that are accessible to people with disabilities. The Town of Aurora's Information and Communications Standard Policy was established to ensure digital accessibility in all services and information the Town provides to residents, employees and visitors.

Information and Communications Outcomes

- Ensuring that Town processes for receiving and responding to feedback are accessible to people with disabilities by providing or arranging for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports.
- Continue to arrange for accessible formats and communication supports by consulting with the person making the request to determine suitable accessible formats or communication supports in a timely manner at no additional cost.
- Continue to inform the public of the availability of accessible materials and provide accessible formats and communication supports upon request.
- Continue to evaluate and remediate the Town's website and web content to conform to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (W.C.A.G) in accordance with the timelines set out by the I.A.S.R.
- Continue to evaluate and remediate the Town's website and web content to exceed accessibility compliance requirements by providing the appropriate frameworks, tools, guidelines and training for all Town staff.
- Continue to ensure that the Town's website and web content incorporate the Information and Communications Standard Policy.
- Continue reformatting and building corporate templates to meet W.C.A.G 2.1 in accordance with the timelines set out by the I.A.S.R.
- Continue conducting reviews of the Town's Information and Communications Standard Policy and update to reflect current best practices in digital accessibility.

Information and Communications Accomplishments

- Continue to remediate documents from 2012 to 2022 to make available online. The Contractor provides all remediated documents to the Town in an accessible format which must meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (W.C.A.G) 2.1 level AA requirements.
- Continuous updating PDF documents on the Town's website to HTML formats, where possible.
- Continue conversion of PDF form to Web-based forms, where possible.

Employment

The Town of Aurora is committed to creating an inclusive environment with equality for all who work, live and play here. The Employment Standard under the I.A.S.R sets out accessibility requirements that the Town must follow to support the recruitment and accommodation of employees with disabilities.

Employment Outcomes

- Continue to ensure all employees and successful applicants with disabilities are informed of available supports and accommodations.
- Continue to ensure all applicants are informed of available accommodations during the recruitment, assessment, and the selection processes.

- Continue to consult with employees to provide and arrange for accessible formats and communication supports upon request.
- Continue to provide employees individualized workplace emergency response information upon request.
- Continue to maintain a return-to-work process and provide individual documented accommodation plans for employees with disabilities as required.
- Continue to ensure the needs of employees with disabilities considered for the purposes of performance management, career development, advancement, and redeployment.
- Continue preparing individualized accommodation and emergency response plans for Town employees with disabilities.
- Continue to conduct employee equity surveys to inform workforce planning priorities through data-informed decision making.

Employment Accomplishments

- Update emergency procedures for employees with disabilities.
- Continued rollout of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion strategic plan to staff.

Transportation

The Transportation Standard of the I.A.S.R sets out the requirements to prevent and remove barriers to make public transportation and related services more accessible. Both the Town of Aurora and the Regional Municipality of York share this Standard. York Region is responsible for and creates action items for removing barriers and specialized transportation services. While the Town is not responsible for all components of the Transportation Standard, the Town has obligations under the Duties of Municipalities and Taxi Cabs.

Transportation Outcomes

- Ensure that owners and operators of licensed taxicabs are prohibited from:
 - charging a higher fare or an additional fee for persons with disabilities than for persons without disabilities for the same trip.
 - charging a fee for the storage of mobility aids or mobility assistive devices.
- Ensure that owners and operators of taxicabs place vehicle registration and identification information on the rear bumper of the taxicab.
- Ensure that owners and operators of taxicabs make available vehicle registration and identification information in an accessible format to persons with disabilities who are passengers.

Transportation Accomplishments

- Continued to provide accessible shuttle buses and accessible parking for events, such as Aurora's Haunted Forest, by the Community Services department to create barrier-free parking and transportation opportunities.
- Accessible viewing area accompanied by accessible parking next to viewing area for Santa Under the Stars Parade provided at a variety of locations on Yonge Street, including indoors at the Aurora Public Library.

Design of Public Spaces

The Design of Public Spaces Standards of the I.A.S.R provides technical requirements that ensure newly constructed or redeveloped public spaces are designed to allow for people with disabilities to move through and use amenity spaces comfortably. In addition to these requirements, the Town must also comply with the Ontario Building Code's requirements for accessibility in the built environment, often exceeding the requirements through the application of the Town of Aurora Accessibility Design Standards.

Design of Public Spaces Outcomes

- Integrate the Town of Aurora Accessibility Design Standards to incorporate the requirements of the A.O.D.A., the I.A.S.R and the new Ontario Building Code requirements into one accessible document.
- Prioritize and retrofit existing built environment barriers at recreational trails, outdoor public use eating areas, outdoor play spaces, exterior paths of travel, accessible parking, and facilities.
- Improve the accessibility of public spaces and workplaces by incorporating accessible design during renovations and redevelopments of recreational trails, outdoor public use eating areas, outdoor play spaces, exterior paths of travel, accessible parking and facilities.
- Continue to prevent and remove barriers within Town recreational trails, outdoor public use eating areas, outdoor play spaces, exterior paths of travel, accessible parking and facilities using the new Town of Aurora Accessibility Design Standards.
- Maintain accessible elements in public spaces through monitoring and regularly planned preventative maintenance.
- Respond to temporary disruptions when accessible elements in public spaces are not in working order by notifying the public and prioritizing remediation.

Design of Public Spaces Accomplishments

- Ramps installed at the Aurora Seniors' Centre and Petch House to assist with Hello Spring event.
- Review and provide recommendations to all new developments based on the Town of Aurora Accessibility Design Standards.