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**Report To:** General Government Committee

**Date of Meeting:** March 3, 2025      **Report Number:** CAO-002-25

**Authored by:** Jeannette Whynot, Accessibility Coordinator

**Submitted By:**

**Reviewed By:** Mary-Anne Dempster, CAO

**By-law Number:**      **Resolution Number:** GG-088-25

**File Number:**

**Report Subject:** 2024 Annual Accessibility Update

### Recommendations:

1. That Report CAO-002-25, and any related delegations or communication items, be received;
2. That the Report CAO-002-25, be placed on the Municipal website to meet the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* requirements; and
3. That all interested parties listed in Report CAO-002-25 be advised of Council's decision.

## Report Overview

The [Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulations](#) (IASR) requires Municipalities to prepare and publish an annual status report on their AODA Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) progress. This annual accessibility update provides a summary of the Municipality's progress and commitment to ensure compliance with all five standards and associated requirements.

### 1. Background

- 1.1 The Accessibility Coordinator oversees the Municipality's compliance with the AODA and acts as a resource for all municipal service areas. The Accessibility Coordinator collaborates with municipal departments to address accessibility concerns and ensures that Clarington continues to make strides towards becoming a barrier-free community.
- 1.2 Under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) Clarington is required to develop a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) that outlines how the Municipality will meet its obligations under the legislation and remove barriers for people with disabilities.
- 1.3 This Annual Accessibility Update highlights the progress of the accessibility portfolio in 2024 but is not intended to be an inventory of every accomplishment.

### 2. Clarington Accessibility Advisory Committee (CAAC)

- 2.1 The Clarington Accessibility Advisory Committee (CAAC) is a citizen committee legislated under Part VII of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA). The Committee is vibrant, engaged, and extremely passionate about their work. Meetings are either virtual, or hybrid format, in support of removing barriers and ensuring flexibility for members.
- 2.2 The CAAC welcomed two new members to the committee after their terms of reference was updated and their membership was increased from 6 to 8 citizens. As required by the AODA, at least 50% of citizen members identify as a person with a disability.
- 2.3 The CAAC nominated Canadian Tire Bowmanville for the Durham Region Accessibility Awards for their commitment to accessible customer service. Members of the CAAC along with the Accessibility Coordinator, attended the Joint AAC Forum and Accessibility Awards night at the Audley Recreation Centre in Ajax.
- 2.4 The CAAC and its Site Plan Subcommittee continue to review site plans and Municipal projects as required by the AODA (parking meter, museum). They provide invaluable

advice on key initiatives and other legislated requirements undertaken by the Municipality.

2.4.1. The CAAC reviewed the South Bowmanville Recreation Centre (SBRC) plans twice and will continue to provide feedback to the project team as the plans progress.

2.4.2. The CAAC provided feedback on the Diane Hamre Recreation Centre (DHRC) outdoor skating rink.

2.4.3. The CAAC was consulted and provided feedback on the Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan.

2.4.4. The CAAC was consulted and provided feedback on the Active Transportation Master Plan.

2.5 In partnership with the Municipality, CAAC members attended Bowmanville's MapleFest and AppleFest, and the South Courtice Arena Outdoor Amenity Launch.

### **3. 2024 Staff Updates**

#### **Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP)**

3.1 The [2024-2028 MYAP](#) was approved by Council on March 25, 2024 through resolution [GG-029-24](#).

3.2 The updated MYAP reaffirms Clarington's ongoing commitment to accessibility and outlines how the Municipality will expand beyond the minimum standards of the AODA and its Standards. The MYAP is a roadmap to creating a more accessible, inclusive and equitable community for everyone, especially people with disabilities. The goals laid out in the plan translate to increased opportunities for people with disabilities in our community.

#### **New Municipal Accessibility Initiatives in 2024**

3.3 To increase the accessibility of our support person policy, [Clarington became a participating organization](#) with Easter Seals Canada's [Access2 Card Program](#). By accepting Access2 cards we have made it easier for people with disabilities to attend our programs with their support person.

3.4 The new outdoor accessible fitness area at South Courtice Arena was completed and opened to the public in September. The first of its kind in Clarington, this space features accessible rubberized surface and is suitable for people of all abilities, including

wheelchair users. This new community amenity was funded in part by the Government of Canada's Healthy Communities Initiative.

- 3.5 Staff also finalized the Clarington Accessibility Design Standards (CADS). The CADS will ensure new municipal facilities, and applicable renovation projects, are accessible, inclusive and meet the needs of our diverse community.
- 3.6 Clarington introduced a new internal IDEA and Accessibility Award, as part of the Clarington Staff Recognition and Award Program, to celebrate staff who are champions of building equitable, diverse, inclusive and accessible work environments.
- 3.7 Clarington's community engagement website, Clarington Connected, features the Userway Accessibility Widget. Clarington Connected is an AODA complaint website, however the Accessibility Widget allows users to further customize their experience. The widget was used approximately 2500 times in 2024.
- 3.8 The Municipality partnered with the Region of Durham and the lower-tier municipalities to share a survey on accessible taxi service in the region. This collaborative project resulted in excellent data that will be used to remove barriers and increase access to wheelchair accessible taxis throughout Durham.
- 3.9 Recognizing that not all disabilities are visible and that small changes can have a large impact on the community, [Clarington partnered](#) with Crohn's and Colitis Canada's GoHere washroom app to help people find public washrooms on the go. The GoHere app aims to make life easier for people living with inflammatory bowel diseases by listing washrooms that are open to the public.

### **Grant Applications**

- 3.10 Five accessibility grant applications were submitted to various funding programs throughout 2024. The Municipality is currently awaiting decisions on those applications; successful applications will be included in the 2025 update.
- 3.11 In late 2023 the Municipality received \$100,000 from the Government of Canada's Enabling Accessibility Fund to make accessibility improvements at Tyrone Community Centre. Improvements include the installation of an accessible washroom at the front of the building, a universal washroom at the back of the building and new accessible doors within the facility. This project is on track and will be completed before the end of 2025.

### **National AccessAbility Week (NAAW)**

- 3.12 National Accessibility Week is an annual education opportunity; in 2024 both internal and external communications and engagement took place. Due to the Veteran's Square

construction in 2024, there was no National AccessAbility Week (NAAW) flag raising; this will return in 2025.

- 3.13 Staff participated in Easter Seals Red Shirt Day and raised \$120 for the charity.
- 3.14 Autism Home Base hosted an open house for municipal staff to tour their facility, try different activities and learn about their programming and organization.
- 3.15 The CAAC, in partnership with Clarington Library Museums and Archives (CLMA), hosted Canadian children's author Heather O'Connor. O'Connor was invited to read her debut book, [Fast Friends](#), at the Bowmanville library branch. Approximately 100 local students from two elementary schools listened to O'Connor read her book and participate in an interactive workshop on inclusion.
- 3.16 Inclusive colouring/workbooks were distributed to four Clarington elementary schools in support of NAAW. Approximately 550 books were distributed amongst 16 Kindergarten and Grade 1 classes in Courtice, Bowmanville and Newcastle.

### **Training**

- 3.17 The Accessibility Coordinator oversees all the Municipality's legislative requirements under the AODA, including training of all new staff. This training focuses on providing accessible customer service, knowledge of municipal accessibility policies, and the Ontario Human Right Code (OHRC) as it relates to people with disabilities.
- 3.18 The Accessibility Coordinator continues to offer accessible document training to staff who require it. Additionally, the Accessibility Coordinator offers 1:1 support to staff who have accessible document questions or require additional support.
- 3.19 The Accessibility coordinator retained the Abilities Centre, to provide members of Council accessibility and disability training in support of Council's Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Anti-Racism and Accessibility Training Plan.
- 3.20 The Accessibility Coordinator organized a hands-on training and resource development workshop facilitated by Kinark Autism Services for camp supervisors and inclusion support staff. Staff created a variety of communication tools to support campers who require inclusion support and learned practical ways to implement them.

### **Networking**

- 3.21 The Accessibility Coordinator continues to be an active member of the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals (ONAP). In 2024, the Accessibility Coordinator attended two ONAP Conferences and actively participated in resource and information sharing amongst accessibility colleagues.

- 3.22 The Accessibility Coordinator is an active member of the Durham College Accessibility Coordinating Committee. As a community-based representative on the committee, the Accessibility Coordinator brings valuable insight to the group and supports the College's goal of being accessible. The Accessibility Coordinator also continues to be a member of the Newcomer Accessibility Council (NAC), a partnership between the Durham Local Immigration Partnership and the Toronto Easy Quadrant Local Immigration Partnership.
- 3.23 In 2024 the Accessibility Coordinator joined the Rick Hansen Accessibility Professional Network. This professional network offers continuing education and resources, while bringing accessibility professionals from a variety of backgrounds together.
- 3.24 The Municipality of Clarington continues to be a collaborator/member of the Canadian Accessibility Network (CAN). CAN is a national collaboration to advance accessibility for persons with disabilities through Research and Innovation, Education and Training, Policy, Employment and Community Engagement.

## **4. 2025 Initiatives**

- 4.1 The Accessibility Coordinator will continue to expand support and training for staff on creating accessible documents, how to incorporate accessibility into their daily work and respond to requests for information in an alternative format.
- 4.2 The Municipality will continue to seek out partnerships with disability organizations, collaborations, and external funding opportunities through Grant Administration.
- 4.3 Staff will continue to leverage national awareness events like National Accessibility Week (NAAW) to celebrate and recognize accessibility in Clarington.
- 4.4 Adult change tables will be installed at Garnet B. Rickard Recreation Complex, Allan Strike Aquatic Centre and Courtice Community Centre. Additionally, upgrades to the universal accessible change room at Diane Hamre Recreation Centre (DHRC) will occur in 2025.
- 4.5 The Municipality will begin offering new skating aids that are inclusive and accessible to people with disabilities.
- 4.6 The Municipality will launch a new program to support neurodivergent staff members by offering tools and resources to support them in the workplace.
- 4.7 The Accessibility Coordinator, CAAC and CLMA will continue to partner to offer programming to support people with disabilities in the community. Plans are underway to host a disability tax credit workshop, children's author visit and a new NAAW event.

- 4.8 In collaboration with all lower-tier municipalities in Durham, Clarington will review its Vehicles for Hire By-Law with a goal to increase access to accessible taxis in Clarington and across the Region.
- 4.9 As required by the AODA, the Municipality will submit an Accessibility Compliance Report to the Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility before December 31, 2025.

## **5. Financial Considerations**

Not Applicable.

## **6. Strategic Plan**

- 6.1 The 2024 Annual Status Update supports the Connect Pillar of Clarington's Strategic Plan by working to create a safe, diverse, inclusive and vibrant community.

## **7. Climate Change**

Not Applicable.

## **8. Concurrence**

Not Applicable.

## **9. Conclusion**

It is respectfully recommended that the 2024 Annual Accessibility Update Report be received for information.

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Attachments:

Not Applicable

Interested Parties:

List of Interested Parties available from Department.