



## Staff Report

If this information is required in an alternate accessible format, please contact the Accessibility Coordinator at 905-623-3379 ext. 2131.

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<b>Report To:</b>	<b>General Government Committee</b>	
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	January 25, 2021	<b>Report Number:</b> LGS-005-21
<b>Submitted By:</b>	Rob Maciver, Director of Legislative Services	
<b>Reviewed By:</b>	Andrew C. Allison, CAO	<b>By-law Number:</b>
<b>File Number:</b>		<b>Resolution#:</b> GG-062-21
<b>Report Subject:</b>	2020 Clarington Accessibility Annual Status Update	

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### Recommendations:

1. That Report LGS-005-21 be received;
2. That Report LGS-005-21 be placed on the Municipal website; and
3. That all interested parties listed in Report LGS-005-21, and any delegations, be notified of Council's decision.

## Report Overview

This Report is the Municipality of Clarington's annual update on the measures taken during 2020 to improve accessibility in our community and to report on the progress made under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA).

## 1. Background

### Statement of Commitment

- 1.1 The Municipality of Clarington is committed to ensuring that people of all ages and abilities enjoy the same opportunities when they live, work, play, visit and invest in our community.
- 1.2 We promote an inclusive, caring and respectful community where programs, services and facilities are available to everyone. Our goal is to make Clarington a barrier-free community and each year we come closer to achieving that goal.

## 2. Accessibility Legislation in Ontario

### *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*

- 2.1 The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* sets out a road map for an accessible Ontario by 2025. The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) has been created as part of the Act to provide rules that businesses and organizations in Ontario need to follow to identify, remove and prevent barriers. In addition to the General Requirements, the IASR contains mandatory and enforceable standards in five key areas:
  - Information and Communications
  - Employment
  - Transportation
  - Design of Public Spaces
  - Customer Service
- 2.2 The Design of Public Spaces Standard focuses on removing barriers in areas not covered by the Ontario Building Code such as playgrounds, on and off-street parking, recreational trails, and service counters. It applies to new construction or re-construction of existing spaces. It does not require organizations to retrofit in order to be compliant.

### Ontario Building Code (OBC)

- 2.3 The OBC regulates the minimum building standards for the construction of all new buildings that undergo a significant renovation. The Code includes requirements for minimum accessibility within buildings.
- 2.4 The OBC was amended to include enhancements to accessibility in buildings. As of January 1, 2015, most new construction and extensive renovations will be subject to updated accessibility requirements. Existing buildings, where no work is planned, are not affected by these new requirements.

### Accessible Canada Act

- 2.5 As explained in [Report CLD-017-19](#), the Municipality is also guided (although not directly governed) by the *Accessible Canada Act* which aims to benefit everyone, especially persons with disabilities through the realization of a Canada without barriers on or before January 1, 2040. While the Municipality of Clarington is not directly impacted by the passage of the Accessible Canada Act, we will continue to monitor its progress for best practices and opportunities for removing barriers in our communities.

## 3. Accessibility Annual Status Update

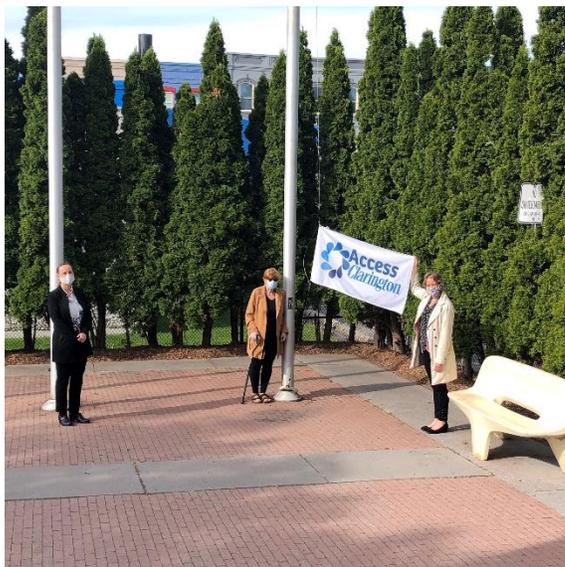
### Clarington's Accessibility Advisory Committee

- 3.1 The Clarington Accessibility Advisory Committee (CAAC) is a citizen committee that acts as an advisory body for Council. Its mandate is to advise on the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to people with disabilities in municipal programs, services, initiatives and facilities. The CAAC meets on a monthly basis and while in-person meetings were restricted due to COVID-19, the Committee was able to conduct virtual meetings using the Microsoft Teams platform and will continue to do so into 2021.
- 3.2 Each member of the CAAC is a volunteer with the exception of the Council representative. The majority of CAAC membership is held by persons with disabilities. The CAAC is supported by the Accessibility Coordinator in the Legislative Services Department.
- 3.3 The CAAC's term coincides with Council's term. Following the 2018 Municipal Elections, a new CAAC was formed and will work within its mandate until 2022. The 2018-2022 CAAC members bring a wide range of personal and professional experiences and perspectives related to the challenges faced by people with disabilities. They provide invaluable advice and support as we continue to work toward a barrier-free Clarington.

3.4 Under the AODA, the Municipality is required to consult with the Accessibility Advisory Committee when new developments and municipal projects are being planned. In 2020, the CAAC reviewed approximately 12 site plan applications and 7 municipal projects for barriers to accessibility. This is a role the Committee takes seriously. They take pride in knowing they have helped contribute to a more accessible Clarington by advising applicants to exceed minimum accessibility standards. In 2020, the CAAC recognized the efforts taken by Clarington's Site Plan Review team to consider accessibility in various municipal projects and presented them with an Accessibility Award as Honorable Mention at the 2020 Clarington Accessibility Awards Night.

3.5 In 2020, the Accessibility Advisory Committee also:

- Collaborated with the Municipality of Clarington on social media campaigns to recognize National AccessAbility Week and the International Day for Persons with Disabilities.
- Raised the Access Clarington flag for National AccessAbility Week.



- Provided feedback on new signage for the Clarington Public Library Bowmanville Branch.
- Shared thoughts on making paths and trails more accessible with the Clarington Active Transportation and Safe Roads Advisory Committee.
- Provided input to a survey conducted by the Region of Durham regarding accessibility of regional services.
- Provided input to Clarington's Ward Boundary Review.

- Hosted a virtual event to recognize businesses and organizations the Committee nominated for a Durham Regional Accessibility Award. Committee members then distributed certificates to the Accessibility Champions throughout Clarington. (See photos below).



### Accessibility Governance

- 3.6 The Accessibility Coordinator acts as a resource for all municipal service areas and facilitates compliance with the AODA. In accordance with Council's approval of the recommendations from the Grant Thornton organizational review, the Accessibility Coordinator position will move from Legislative Services to Community Services in 2021. This will align our commitment to support diversity in our workplace and community by coordinating these resources within one Department.

- 3.7 To ensure Clarington continues to meet, or exceed, the requirements of the AODA, the Coordinator continued to stay informed about legislation and participated in accessibility networks such as the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals (ONAP) and other Accessibility Coordinators in Durham Region through attendance at quarterly coordinators meetings. Since June 2020, some of the duties of the Accessibility Coordinator have been shared by staff in Community Services and Legislative Services as we prepare for the full transition to the Community Services Department in 2021.
- 3.8 The Coordinator provided legislated, mandatory training for all employees and volunteers on providing accessible customer service to people with disabilities, the IASR and the Human Rights Code as it relates to people with disabilities, as required under the AODA. While in-person training was affected initially by COVID-19, online resources and virtual sessions were quickly offered to continue to meet this requirement.
- 3.9 In the absence of the Accessibility Coordinator, the Community Development Coordinator stepped in as the staff liaison to the Clarington Accessibility Advisory Committee and facilitator of site plan and municipal project reviews by the Site Plan Review Sub-Committee, as well as acting as primary contact person for accessibility questions from staff and public, and submission of grant applications.

**Summary of Accessibility Activities**

Activity	Number of Occurrences
Clarington Accessibility Advisory Committee Meetings	9
AODA Training to individuals (staff, volunteers)	20
In Person Accessible Document Training to individuals (staff)	16
Site Plans Reviewed	12
Municipal Projects Reviewed	7

- 3.10 The Municipality of Clarington continues to monitor and update its accessibility policies as necessary.

- 3.11 The Municipality of Clarington's [Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2018-2023](#) outlines the initiatives the Municipality has taken to ensure compliance with AODA. Additionally, the Plan outlines how the Municipality will continue to meet its legislated obligations under AODA and address the needs of our growing community as we work towards a fully accessible and inclusive community. The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan is posted on the Clarington website.
- 3.12 The Purchasing Department continues to include accessible design, features and criteria when purchasing goods, services or facilities. In 2020, the wording in the purchasing documents was reviewed, and updated, to ensure clarity around accessibility requirements, including accessible documents. If the Municipality was not able to purchase accessible goods, services or facilities, the Municipality gave an explanation as to why, upon request.

### **Information and Communications – Website**

- 3.13 The Municipality of Clarington website complies with WCAG 2.0 Level AA, an achievement the Municipality met well before the January 1, 2021 deadline prescribed by the AODA.
- 3.14 Staff across all departments continue to work hard to ensure everything on the website is in an accessible format. In some situations, we have not been able to post content that is in an accessible format. Where something is not accessible to a person, we encouraged them to contact us and we worked with them to find a suitable accessible format. Every public document includes information to request it in an accessible format.
- 3.15 Our website features BrowseAloud. This feature has several helpful tools that make our website even more accessible such as: toolbar downloads, text magnifier, highlighting, reading out loud and language translation. For 2020, the BrowseAloud feature was used 629 times. In 2021, our new municipal website will be redesigned and will have enhanced built-in accessibility features that will replace BrowseAloud.

### **Accessible Documents**

- 3.16 In support of accessible documents for our website, throughout 2020 we continued to provide training to municipal staff on how to create accessible Word documents.
- 3.17 The Municipality remained dedicated to making both internal and external documents accessible and continued to make great strides in providing documents in an accessible format. We continue to encourage individuals who find a document inaccessible to contact us via phone or email to request it in an alternative format.

## **Employment**

- 3.18 The Municipality of Clarington remained committed to accessible and equitable hiring practices and continued to meet its Employment Standards obligations under the AODA. All job postings included a statement about the availability of accommodations for applicants with disabilities during the recruitment process.
- 3.19 Successful candidates are informed, through their offer of employment, that accommodations are available for people with disabilities. All employees are informed of policies regarding job accommodations. The Municipality continued to provide workplace and emergency response information in accessible formats to employees who require it.
- 3.20 The Community Services Department launched a pilot project, in partnership with the Participation House Durham Region, to offer employment opportunities to people with developmental disabilities. While the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent facility closures have impacted this pilot project, it was a successful initiative and will be continued when our facilities re-open to the public.

## **Transportation**

- 3.21 The Region of Durham is responsible for public transportation within Clarington. Metrolinx (GO Transit) also provides transportation services through Clarington.
- 3.22 In 2020, the Region of Durham revised its service delivery to an on-demand system in many areas of our community and expanded some routes along Highway 2 connecting Courtice and Bowmanville. The Accessibility Advisory Committee invited representatives from Durham Region Transit to one of their virtual meetings to learn more about the service change and advocate for accessible service.
- 3.23 Service Ontario locations were impacted through the COVID-19 pandemic as well. Staff communicated accessibility and customer service concerns with Ministry staff related to the service outlet in Clarington (Bowmanville). This conversation is ongoing, however some improvements have been noted in terms of recognition of the accessibility challenges.

## **Design of Public Spaces**

- 3.24 The Municipality of Clarington continued to ensure that all new, and redeveloped, public spaces complied with the requirements of the Design of Public Spaces Standard. This means that new and redeveloped parks, trails, parking lots, service counters and paths of travel were designed to make things easier for everyone – people with disabilities, seniors and families – to use and enjoy public spaces. Where accessible requirements are not met in any Municipal project, staff continue to work together to ensure that any deficiencies identified are corrected in a timely and appropriate manner.

- 3.25 In 2020, our Public Works Department provided accessibility improvements in the form of tactile plate installation which was made to the parking lot at the Garnet B. Rickard Recreation Complex.



- 3.26 Throughout 2020, the Clarington Public Library – Bowmanville Branch underwent significant renovations through their Bowmanville Branch Accessibility Redesign. The goal was to create a more flexible space that better serves the needs of our community and library members. Upgrades included:

- Replacement of the main entrance
- Removal of slate flooring throughout the atrium and stairs to a more accessible flooring
- Construction of a universal washroom
- Some work on the Mezzanine washrooms

- 3.27 Some accessibility upgrades were performed at some playground locations. These included replacement of sand with wood fibre which provides a more accessible and level surface with no or minimal transition, and paved pathways were added where none existed previously. Where paved pathways existed, their surface was replaced for increased accessibility. These playgrounds include:

- Gatehouse Parkette
- Landerville Park
- Moyse Park
- Orono Park (included the addition of an accessible swing)
- Soper Creek Park (included the addition of some audible play features)
- Wallbridge Park

3.28 An accessible on-street parking spot was added in Newcastle at the south east corner of King Avenue and Mill Street in 2020 (outside of the Shoppers Drug Mart building). In response to resident concerns about additional accessible on-street parking in the downtown Newcastle area, staff and the Committee worked together to review options and work towards solutions. Conversations will continue, in consultation with Clarington's Accessibility Advisory Committee, to establish a plan that identifies and prioritizes needs for on-street accessible parking in this, and other, locations across Clarington.

### **Customer Service**

3.29 The Municipality of Clarington continues to comply with the Customer Service Standard. When accessing goods, services and facilities provided by the Municipality, individuals may use their assistive devices. Guide dogs and service animals may be used in all areas/premises that are open to the public, unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law. People with disabilities can access their support person/worker when accessing Municipal goods, services and facilities.

3.30 In January 2020, we began live and archived webstreaming, with Closed Captioning, of Council, General Government Committee and Planning and Development Committee meetings. This implementation subsequently benefitted engagement of our community and uninterrupted conduction of Council business once the pandemic restricted our operations. Council and Committee meetings received over 4,000 views throughout 2020.

3.31 As well, more online options created in 2020 for services including marriage ceremony requests and marriage license applications, which provides greater accessibility for our residents to engage with us from their own space.

3.32 In 2020, as we addressed COVID-19 protocols and building reopening, accessibility was considered to ensure our buildings and services remained accessible while maintaining mandated guidelines. For example, accessibility was considered when:

- Designing signage in the form of decals for physical distancing measures
- Development of traffic flow patterns and use of elevators throughout the municipal buildings
- Acknowledgement that some of our customers may not be able to wear a mask due to medical concerns.

3.33 We continue to train all new employees and volunteers on Accessible Customer Service, including how to communicate with people with disabilities in a manner that considers their abilities. We will work with the person to determine what methods of communication work best for them.

- 3.34 We will continue to explore best practices for accessible customer service and investigate assistive technologies that can assist staff in providing accessible customer service to our residents and visitors.

## **4. Next Steps**

- 4.1 Throughout 2021, the Municipality will continue to work towards meeting, maintaining and exceeding its obligations under AODA and its Integrated Accessibility Standards. In keeping with our goal of becoming a barrier-free community we will:
- Explore the opportunity to develop Clarington's Universal Design Standards.
  - Continue to seek opportunities for synergies with Clarington's Diversity Advisory Committee and Diversity portfolio.
  - Respond to requests for information in an alternative format.
  - Continue to support and educate staff on creating accessible documents.
  - Enhance the integration with facility / building services for accessibility of municipal buildings.
  - Continue conducting accessibility audits on Municipal buildings and facilities.
  - Continue to review and update accessibility policies and perform a gap analysis of missing policies.
  - Provide current staff and volunteers with updated information on changes to our accessibility policies and continue to provide accessibility training to all new staff and volunteers.
  - Continue to review by-laws and policies to ensure they are consistent with the principles of the AODA and that they meet or exceed the minimum Standards required under the AODA.
  - Respond to public inquiries related to accessibility.
  - Continue to collaborate with the Clarington Board of Trade and local BIAs.
  - Monitor accessibility trends, themes and actions at the grassroots, provincial and federal levels.
  - Continue advocating for greater accessibility within the community.
  - Continue to seek out funding opportunities that support accessibility and inclusion.

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- Explore assistive technology and devices to improve access to Municipal facilities, programs and services.
  - Complete the installation of an elevator at the Orono Town Hall for increased accessibility as funded through the Enabling Access Fund.
  - Pending approval through the Inclusive Communities Grant Program, install mobility device charging stations on paths, trails and in parks in Clarington.

## **5. Concurrence**

5.1 This report has been reviewed by the Clarington Accessibility Advisory Committee.

## **6. Conclusion**

It is respectfully recommended that the 2020 Clarington Accessibility Annual Status Update report be received for information and be placed on the Municipal website.

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Attachments:

Not Applicable

Interested Parties:

The following interested parties will be notified of Council's decision:

Accessibility Advisory Committee