



Staff Report

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

Report To:	General Government Committee	
Date of Meeting:	February 28, 2022	Report Number: CSD-005-22
Submitted By:	George Acorn, Director of Community Services	
Reviewed By:	Mary-Anne Dempster, CAO	By-law Number:
File Number:		Resolution#: GG-127-22
Report Subject:	2021 Annual Accessibility Update	

Recommendation:

1. That Report CSD-005-22 and any related communication items, be received;
2. That Report CSD-005-22 be placed on the Municipal website; and
3. That all interested parties listed in Report CSD-005-22 be notified of Council's decision.

Report Overview

This report is the Municipality of Clarington's annual update on the measures taken during 2021 to improve accessibility in our community and to report on the progress made under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA).

As outlined in this report, the Municipality is committed to providing the financial and staff resources needed to address necessary accessibility improvements to municipal services and spaces for the collective benefit of staff, our community partners and our residents.

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:
 - Customer Service
 - Information and Communications
 - Employment
 - Transportation
 - Design of Public Spaces
- 2.2 The Design of Public Spaces Standard focuses on removing barriers in areas not covered by the Ontario Building Code (OBC) such as playgrounds, on and off-street parking, recreational trails, and service counters. It applies to new construction or reconstruction of existing spaces. It does not require organizations to retrofit to be compliant.
- 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 monthly 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 2022. Virtual meetings offer Committee members greater flexibility and does eliminate any transportation or weather-related barriers.
- 3.2 Each member of the CAAC is a volunteer except for the Council representative. The majority of CAAC membership is held by persons with disabilities. The CAAC is supported by the Accessibility Coordinator in the Community 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 2021, the CAAC reviewed approximately 20 site plan applications and three municipal projects for barriers to accessibility. This is a role the Committee takes seriously and takes pride in knowing they have helped contribute to a more accessible Clarington by advising applicants to exceed minimum accessibility standards.

Accessibility Governance

- 3.5 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 moved from Legislative Services to Community Services in 2021. This aligns with our commitment to support diversity in our workplace and community by coordinating these resources within one Department.

- 3.6 To ensure Clarington continues to meet, or exceed, the requirements of the AODA, the Coordinator continues to stay informed about legislation and participates in accessibility networks such as the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals (ONAP) and with other Accessibility Coordinators in Durham Region through attendance at quarterly coordinators meetings.
- 3.7 The Accessibility Coordinator is also a member of the Durham College Accessibility Coordinating Committee, the Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Community of Practice, and the Newcomers Accessibility Council (a partnership between Toronto East Quadrant Local Immigration Partnership [TEQ LIP] and Durham Local Immigration Partnership [DLIP]).
- 3.8 The Accessibility Coordinator provides 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.
- 3.9 The Accessibility Coordinator is also responsible for finding and applying for grants that address accessibility. In 2021, several grants were applied for. So far, one was successful, three were not and one is still outstanding.
- 3.10 As required under the AODA, the Municipality must submit an Accessibility Compliance Report to the province bi-annually. The Municipality was required to submit this report by December 31, 2021. The Accessibility Coordinator is responsible for ensuring the report is submitted on-time and accurately reflects the state of accessibility in Clarington. The report was submitted on December 14, 2021, and indicated full compliance with the AODA and its Standards.

Summary of Accessibility Activities

Activity	Number of Occurrences
Clarington Accessibility Advisory Committee Meetings	11
AODA Training to Individuals (staff, volunteers)	38
Accessible Document Training to Individuals (staff)	3
Site Plans Reviewed	20
Municipal Projects Reviewed	3

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

- 3.12 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.
- 3.13 The Purchasing Department continues to include accessible design, features and criteria when purchasing goods, services, or facilities. If the Municipality was not able to purchase accessible goods, services or facilities, the Municipality gave an explanation as to why upon request.
- 3.14 In 2021, the Municipality added additional wording in its procurement agreements to ensure documents and reports received by contracted vendors meet our accessible document expectations. This addition gives the Municipality the power to sign off on documents as meeting our accessibility requirements prior to accepting them and closing out the contract.

Information and Communications – Website

- 3.15 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.
- 3.16 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 encourage them to contact us, and we work with them to find a suitable accessible format. Every public document includes information to request it in an accessible format.
- 3.17 In 2021, we removed BrowseAloud from our municipal website once the newly updated website was relaunched in the Fall. The updated municipal website has built-in accessibility features that replace the features of BrowseAloud.

Accessible Documents

- 3.18 In support of accessible documents for our website, throughout 2021 we continued to provide training to municipal staff on how to create accessible Word documents.
- 3.19 The Municipality remains dedicated to making both internal and external documents accessible and continues 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

- 3.20 Clarington remains 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.
- 3.21 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.
- 3.22 In 2021, the Municipality received a grant from the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA) to support a job placement for youth who experience barriers to employment. Through the [CPRA Youth Employment Experience](#) grant, we received \$10,568.54 for a summer camp position to support a youth with a disability in accessing meaningful employment. Leveraging our relationships with the Abilities Centre and Participation House, we were able to find excellent candidates for the opportunity of Inclusion Counsellor Assistant. Clarington's story was featured in a [CPRA article](#), which highlighted our success at the National level.

Transportation

- 3.23 The Region of Durham is responsible for public transportation within Clarington. Metrolinx (GO Transit) also provides transportation services through Clarington.
- 3.24 The Accessibility Coordinator and the CAAC continue to advocate for accessible transportation options within our communities where appropriate.

Design of Public Spaces

- 3.25 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.
- 3.26 Three playgrounds were replaced in 2021. The newly installed playgrounds incorporate accessibility features such as transfer points, accessible swings (where swings are available), wood fiber surfaces, and sensory play features, among others.
- Glenabbey Park, Courtice
 - Penfound Park, Courtice

- Westside Park, Bowmanville

These locations also received improvements to their paved pathways and shade structures, where available.

- 3.27 In 2021, the Municipality received an Inclusive Communities Grant from the Government of Ontario in the amount of \$58,760. Through this grant, the Municipality was able to install mobility device charging stations along our recreational trails. This groundbreaking initiative removes barriers to recreation for people who use electric mobility devices, such as wheelchairs and scooters.
- 3.28 This project will be completed in 2022 as we continue to install additional units. Staff have received a lot of positive feedback about the charging stations and look forward to promoting the units once they have all been installed.
- 3.29 In 2021, the Municipality's Public Works Department offered recreational trail snow clearing for the first time. This was in response to the increased demand for winter trail maintenance because of COVID-19 and the community's desire to have safe ways to remain active throughout the winter. Approximately 12 km of recreational trails were maintained, and it is expected to continue in 2022 as well.

Accessible Customer Service

- 3.30 In 2021, the Municipality launched a language translation service to ensure we can meet the growing needs of our community. This service supports American Sign Language (ASL) and more than 240 languages. Staff can access the translation service through a toll-free number and video-on-demand app, which supports ASL translation, for in-person customer service.
- 3.31 Staff can also use a conferencing feature during phone inquiries to get a translation on the line to help facilitate telephone conversations. Most municipal facilities have been equipped with iPads, or other equivalent devices, to support ASL requests and support accessible customer service.
- 3.32 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.
- 3.33 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.

Leading Equitable and Accessible Delivery (LEAD)

- 3.35 In Fall 2020, the Abilities Centre in Whitby offered the Municipality of Clarington the opportunity to participate in the LEAD process. The Abilities Centre is a national LEAD facilitator and has worked with organizations across Canada. The Municipality of Clarington embraced the process as the first government entity to participate in this initiative.
- 3.36 The LEAD project in Clarington began in Spring 2021. A LEAD Working Group was formed, which included representatives from the Diversity and Inclusion Staff Team, Senior Leadership Team, Council Liaisons to the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) and Diversity Advisory Committee (DAC), and two community representatives – both who are members of the AAC and DAC.
- 3.37 The LEAD Working Group was guided through a facilitation process to identify focus areas, support a rationale for the work that we are doing, and develop action items to support the work plan. The facilitation process took a close look at the nine themes of the LEAD toolkit. These are Leadership, Structure, Governance, Strategy, Financial Management, Supplier-Partnership Management, People Management, Program and Service Delivery, and Facility and Technology Supports.
- 3.38 The result of this work is an Improvement Plan. The Improvement Plan identifies a guiding principle related to each of the nine themes. There are recommended projects to support the principle, with outcomes and supporting action items that will help us to reach success in each of these themes.
- 3.39 Information about LEAD and a summary of the Improvement Plan recommendations were shared with Council in [Report CSD-003-22](#).

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 Throughout 2022, 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:
- Begin to implement the recommendations of the LEAD Improvement Plan, with the support of the CAO, Senior Management, and the Community Development Coordinator – Diversity and Inclusion.

- Continue to seek opportunities for synergies with Clarington's Diversity Advisory Committee and Diversity portfolio.
- Continue to support and educate staff on creating accessible documents.
- Respond to requests for information in an alternative format.
- Consult with the Clerk's Division on election accessibility.
- Accessibility upgrades for Council Chambers during Summer Recess in 2022. A change to the Chair and Clerks desks, moving them from two to one level with accessible ramps leading up to them. Also, accessible furniture will be added to the public gallery area.
- Continue to budget annually for the completion of accessibility audits for all municipal buildings. The recommendations arising from these audits form the basis for future improvements that are incorporated into our capital and operating budget planning.
- Support the CAAC in their mandate and work-plan goals.
- Build on the success of National AccessAbility Week (NAAW) in 2021 and offer an even larger variety of events to celebrate and recognize accessibility in Clarington.
- Continue advocating for greater accessibility within the community.
- Continue to seek out funding opportunities that support accessibility and inclusion. Currently working on an application for a sensory garden in collaboration with the Library and Museum team.
- Continue developing Clarington's Universal Design Standards.
- Continue to review and update Municipal policies through a diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility lens.
- 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.
- Respond to public inquiries related to accessibility.
- Monitor accessibility trends, themes and actions at the grassroots, provincial and federal levels.
- 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.
- Explore assistive technology and devices to improve access to municipal facilities, programs, and services.

5. Concurrence

5.1 Not Applicable.

6. Conclusion

6.1 It is respectfully recommended that the 2021 Clarington Accessibility Annual Status Update report be received for information and be placed on the Municipal website.

6.2 Although this report illustrates significant work completed in 2021, much work remains to be done, to achieve the overall goal of creating an accessible Ontario for 2025. Staff, with the valuable contributions of Clarington's Accessibility Advisory Committee, and the ongoing support of Council, are confident we will see many accomplishments over the next few years.

Staff Contact: Lee-Ann Reck, Manager, Client Services, 905-623-3379 ext. 2508 or
lreck@clarington.net.

Attachments:

Not Applicable

Interested Parties:

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

Clarington Accessibility Advisory Committee