

City of Mississauga

Corporate Report



<p>Date: January 29, 2021</p> <p>To: Chair and Members of General Committee</p> <p>From: Gary Kent, CPA, CGA, ICD.D, Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Financial Officer</p>	<p>Originator's files:</p> <hr/> <p>Meeting date: February 24, 2021</p>
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Subject

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan – 2020 Accessibility Annual Status Update

Recommendation

That the report dated January 29, 2021 from the Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Financial Officer entitled, "Multi-Year Accessibility Plan - 2020 Accessibility Annual Status Update" be received for information.

Report Highlights

- The goal of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) is to identify, prevent and remove barriers to make Ontario accessible by 2025
- Establishing a multi-year accessibility plan is a requirement under the AODA. The City's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2018-2022, describes the actions the City will take to meet AODA requirements. Cumulatively, 88% of the 64 commitments were completed by the end of year three (2020)
- The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan - 2020 Accessibility Annual Status Update highlights the City's completed 2020 initiatives which have identified and removed barriers to people of all abilities
- The 2020 MiWay Annual Accessibility Report highlights improvements made to the City's transportation system to ensure its services and operations are accessible
- The City achieved 100% compliance on a 2020 AODA Audit from the Government of Ontario
- The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the way the City operates but ensuring access to City programs and services for people with disabilities continues to be a priority and forms part of the City's commitment to accessible customer service

Background

Making our community accessible to everyone is both a vision and a goal. Accessibility impacts people's daily lives, families, careers and opportunities and we want to make it easier for everyone to participate more fully in our community. In Ontario, almost one in four people has a disability, which equates to about 173,600 Mississauga residents, and 43 per cent are also seniors. It is expected that this number will continue to rise given the aging population. To increase sustainability and enhance the quality of life in Mississauga, the City is committed to an inclusive community where all residents and visitors have access to City services, programs and facilities in a manner that is integrated and promotes dignity and independence.

The goal of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) is to identify, prevent and remove barriers to make Ontario accessible by 2025. To meet this goal, the Act outlines accessibility requirements so people of all abilities can participate in all areas of daily life. The requirements are applied under five standards:

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

Establishing a multi-year accessibility plan is a requirement under the AODA. The 2018-2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (Appendix 1) outlines the actions the City will take to meet its obligations under the legislation, prevent and remove barriers, and when it will do so. These achievements translate into improved accessibility in City programs, services and facilities for residents, visitors and employees. As our population ages, a more accessible City is more inclusive for everyone, including seniors and people with disabilities.

The City continues to encourage local businesses and organizations to meet accessibility requirements and prevent and remove barriers, however, the City has no official role in enforcing these requirements. Ensuring these requirements are met is the responsibility of the Ontario government.

Present Status

Every year the Facilities & Property Management Accessibility Planning & Compliance team provides an update on the accessibility achievements from the previous reporting year. The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan - 2020 Accessibility Annual Status Update (Appendix 1) highlights the City's completed 2020 initiatives which have improved accessibility for people of all abilities.

Meeting our commitments

Year three saw 88% of the 64 commitments in the City's five-year accessibility plan completed. These achievements translate into improved accessibility in City services, programs and facilities and demonstrate the City's commitment to making accessibility a part of everyday business and integrating it into the City's long-term plans.

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MYAP section	Number of commitments	% complete in 2020
General requirements and governance	9	8 (89%)
Customer service	6	*4 (67%)
Information and communications	11	9 (82%)
Employment	9	9 (100%)
Transportation	10	9 (90%)
Design of public spaces	19	17 (89%)
Total	64	56 (88%)

*The two outstanding customer service commitments will be completed in 2022.

In addition to updating the status of the City's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, this report highlights three key achievements by the organization in 2020: improving the accessibility of virtual meetings and events in response to COVID-19, launching an accessible website and the City receiving 100% compliance rating following an AODA Phase 2 Desk Audit from the Government of Ontario.

MiWay has also prepared the 2020 MiWay Annual Accessibility Report which is included as Appendix 2 and highlights the improvements made to the City's transportation system to ensure its services and operations are accessible to everyone.

COVID-19 and People with Disabilities

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have resulted in many changes to the way the City operates as an organization. It has also had a disproportionate effect on vulnerable populations and people with disabilities. Ensuring access to City programs and services for people with disabilities continues to be a priority and forms part of the City's commitment to accessible customer service. To help facilitate access, the City created a COVID-19 information webpage and used its social media platforms to notify and share information with the community.

In response to the pandemic, the Mayor has provided public health information related to COVID-19 through weekly virtual press conferences. To ensure these press conferences are accessible, the City provides ASL interpreters, closed captioning and provides information from the press conferences in alternate formats upon request. Additionally, all Council meetings have been held virtually since the start of the pandemic and have included closed captioning to improve their accessibility.

Continuing to provide programs and services has the majority of staff working from home and meeting with colleagues and residents virtually. Working and meeting remotely has exposed accessibility challenges for people with disabilities such as the accessibility of meeting platforms, captioning videos for events and the accessibility of websites and web content. These challenges and the solutions staff have been developing will extend beyond the timeframe of this report and help shape accessibility at the City moving forward.

Launching an accessible website

One of the City's goals is to increase the availability of accessible information for residents, visitors and employees. Launching and maintaining a website that is accessible and usable for everyone is a key step in the City's plan to meet this goal. Making the City's website accessible ensures that people with visual, hearing, motor and cognitive difficulties can understand and effectively use our content and services through assistive technology, such as screen readers, screen magnification software and navigation assistance. Ensuring everyone can use the City's website allows us to serve as many people as possible.

When developing the City's new website, rigorous evaluation was done throughout the development process to identify accessibility issues and address them. In addition to automatic assessments to review the website and test accessibility, staff also consulted with the AAC and hosted individual testing sessions with AAC members. Some of the features incorporated to make the website accessible include:

- Providing text alternatives for non-text content like images
- Making content easy for people to see and hear through larger, clearer text and ensuring good colour contrast
- Ensuring the website is easy to navigate using just a keyboard and making information easy to find
- Using plain language and ensuring content is easy to understand
- Making the website adaptable so it can be used with different devices, browsers and assistive technologies
- The new site was released in stages starting in 2019 and completely replaced the old site in September 2020

Staff continue to monitor accessibility levels with automation software, using the data to improve accessibility in future software release cycles.

Successful provincial accessibility audit

In 2020, the City filed a successful accessibility compliance report with the Government of Ontario. The report indicated the City was compliant with all AODA legislated requirements to-date. In the year following the submission of a compliance report, the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility conducts Phase 2 Audits on approximately one-third of public sector organizations, which are selected at random, to confirm they are in compliance with the AODA.

On November 17th, the City received a notice of audit focusing on seven regulatory requirements:

1. Accessibility Advisory Committee
2. Accessibility policies
3. Multi-year accessibility plan
4. Procurement and self-service kiosks
5. Training

6.Accessible feedback

7.Accessible employment policies

The requested information was provided to the ministry by the December 2nd deadline. On January 4th, 2021, the City received confirmation from the ministry that the audit was concluded and the City had demonstrated 100% compliance.

Council and the public are able to track the City's progress through annual status reports and compliance reports to the province every two years. The City is compliant with all requirements to-date, filing successful reports in 2013, 2015, 2017 and most recently in 2019. The City's next provincial compliance report will be filed in 2021.

Conclusion

This report provides a status update on the 2020 initiatives to implement the City's multi-year accessibility plan. Annual status updates are posted on the City's website in an accessible format.

In three years, the City has completed 88% of its 64 commitments in our 2018-2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. We know that more progress is needed in order to make the City a more accessible organization that helps people with disabilities participate fully in their life and work. Forging new partnerships and innovative ways of working will enable the City to remove more barriers and continue driving towards becoming a more accessible employer and service provider.

Attachments

Appendix 1: Multi-Year Accessibility Plan - 2020 Accessibility Annual Status Update

Appendix 2: 2020 MiWay Annual Accessibility Report



Jeff Jackson, Director of Finance and Treasurer on behalf of
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