

Annual Multi Year Accessibility Plan Report

City of Guelph

Date: 2018

Introduction

Continually striving to improve the experience of people with a disability who live, work, and visit our community will be an ongoing goal for staff. Guelph is a leader in the municipal sector when it comes to accessibility. The culture of the organization has changed considerably in the past few years making accessibility considerations a standard practice.

Training and implementing the Corporate Accessibility Policy and the Multi Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) has provided staff with the knowledge and guidance to “ensure a well-designed, safe, inclusive, appealing and sustainable city.” Building on knowledge and experience will continue to enhance City of Guelph status as a municipal leader in accessibility.

Achievements

As we wind down one plan and launch the next MYAP we reviewed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) requirements to find areas that the City can excel in, as in, go above and beyond the requirements.

Beyond the required training, ongoing evaluation of the City’s accessible services, programs and facilities by Accessibility Services throughout this past year assisted in identifying potential education and awareness opportunities. This review helped staff ensure compliance with the legislation and keep the topic of accessibility front and center throughout the organization.

The Customer Service standard and the Information and Communication standards have been a focus over this past year as staff developed and began to deliver communication training to customer service staff. This training is based on communicating with a person who has Aphasia due to a brain injury. Aphasia was selected for this training as it is a communication disorder that makes it hard to use words. It can affect a person’s speech, writing, and ability to understand language.

While there are different types of Aphasia, depending on which part of the brain is impacted by the injury (for example from a Stroke or accident) enough communication skill aimed at completing a transaction at a customer service counter can be facilitated with 90 minutes of training. Staff excelled in this training. They were able to not only able to identify when to offer the use of the communication tools, but also demonstrated through practice in the class that they were able to carry out a transaction typical to their service counter. It’s believed that Guelph is the first municipality to offer this service.

Challenges and Improvements

The cost of implementing this type of legislation varies depending on the requirement and the service area of the corporation. Each service area with specific requirements has included the implementation costs in their budgets.

For example, Engineering Services includes the tactile warning safety indicators (tactile warning plates), required in the AODA for specific curb ramps, in their Linear Infrastructure Standards, a series of drawings and specifications. As well, they and Operations now allow for this additional construction costs in their budgets.

Conclusion

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) requirement that the City is reviewing and researching as we prepare for the next plan include:

- Design of Public spaces standards and how we can exceed these by engaging the Accessibility Advisory Committee and with the use of the 2015 Facility Accessibility Design Manual, a document that in several instances exceeds the accessibility requirements in the Ontario Building Code (OBC), a Canadian Standards Association (CSA), and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).
- Information and communications standard focuses on websites and communications. Website requirements are very clearly described; however, communications are not. We will research this as we prepare for the next MYAP.
- Compliance with the Transportation standard is always ongoing, with technology changes and growing demand for the service. Guelph Transit will continue to engage both the City's Transit Advisory Committee and the Accessibility Advisory Committee as they work to exceed the AODA requirement where possible.

For an accessible version of this document, questions or feedback, please contact accessibility@guelph.ca or 519-822-1260 or TTY 519-826-9771