

City of Kingston
2018-2022
Multi-Year
Accessibility Plan



CITY OF KINGSTON

2018-2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

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Table of Contents

- 1.0 Executive Summary 2
- 2.0 Legislative Background 2
- 3.0 Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee (MAAC) 2
- 4.0 Council’s Commitment to Accessibility Planning 4
- 5.0 Barriers 5
- 6.0 Planned Strategies and Actions for the Identification, Removal and Prevention of Barriers (2018-2022) 5
 - 6.1 Customer Service 6
 - 6.2 Clear and Accessible Communications 8
 - 6.3 Accessible Employment 10
 - 6.4 Transportation 11
 - 6.5 Enhancing Accessibility of Our Public Spaces 12
 - 6.6 Demonstrating Accessible Procurement 13
- 7.0 Conclusion 14

1.0 Executive Summary

The Integrated Accessibility Standards (Ontario Regulation 191/11 under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA), requires the City of Kingston to develop a Multi-Year accessibility plan and to review it at least once every five years. An accessibility plan outlines what steps a municipality will take to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility. As such, in 2013, the City of Kingston established its first Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2013-2017.

The 2018-2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan is designed to complement and to be an extension of past plans and accessibility updates. This document includes strategies which will help make the City of Kingston more accessible to all its residents and visitors ensuring the accessibility standards under the AODA are fully implemented by 2025.

2.0 Legislative Background

In December 2001, the Province of Ontario passed the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (ODA). This legislation was intended to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities. The Act required all municipalities to assist in the identification, removal and prevention of accessibility barriers.

In 2005, the province introduced the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. The purpose of the Act is to “develop, implement and enforce accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities in respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises on or before January 1, 2025”.

Standards under this legislation were established with the assistance of a Standard Development Committee which included persons with disabilities, as well as representatives of industries and organizations to which the standard is intended to apply. Standards were developed in Customer Service, Information & Communications, Employment, Transportation and the Design of Public Spaces (Built Environment).

3.0 Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee (MAAC)

The AODA states that every municipality having a population of not less than 10,000 shall establish an Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) and that a majority of the members of the committee shall be persons with disabilities. Kingston established an AAC in 2003 and it consists of fifteen members, including one Council representative.

The Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee's (MAAC) key responsibilities and activities are defined under the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* and are replicated in the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* as:

- Identifying barriers;
- Providing Council and staff with recommendations for remediation of barriers;
- Providing comments on site plans they select for review; and
- Providing recommendations to the city concerning public education associated with municipal accessibility.

Prior to 2015, MAAC operated with three Working Groups (Built Environment, Communication & Employment and Transportation) to explore specific issues. These working groups were important to address the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) regulations as they became available between 2010 and 2015.

In order to move forward and utilize the expertise of MAAC members as effectively as possible, in February 2015 the Transportation and Communication & Education working groups were disbanded and a new working group was formed called "Awareness and Education". In addition, the mandate of the Built Environment Working Group was updated.

The mandate of the Built Environment Working Group is:

- To advise MAAC on the requirements of Ontario Regulation 191/11 Part IV.1 Design of Public Spaces Standard;
- To review in a timely manner the site plans and drawing described in Section 41 of the *Planning Act*;
- To provide at least one member of the working group to be part of any MAAC project team initiated by staff involving a building, structure or premises, or part of a building, structure or premises that the city purchases, constructs or significantly renovates or enters into a new lease;
- To advise MAAC on the City of Kingston Facility Design Standard (FADS); and
- To provide a written update to MAAC on a quarterly basis on the work of the working group.

The mandate of the Awareness and Education Working Group is:

- To enhance public awareness about accessibility through the development and delivery of public events and campaigns including the annual Access Awards on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities; and

- To provide educational opportunities for staff beyond the legislated training requirements to enhance their understanding and improve customer service skills.

4.0 Council's Commitment to Accessibility Planning

The City of Kingston is committed to increasing and enhancing accessibility to its programs, services and facilities. The city has moved steadily towards providing a higher level of accessibility to its services, programs and infrastructures. Commitments from Council, city staff and the MAAC are leading the city to ensure its services and infrastructure is accessible to all residents and visitors, regardless of their ability. The goal is to incorporate accessibility as a part of everyday life and maintain it as a core element to city services.

The City of Kingston will continue to review existing and develop new corporate policies, practices and procedures in relation to the AODA requirements (as amended). MAAC will be consulted on any new policies and procedures that are created related to the AODA.

The City of Kingston, both as an employer and service provider, is committed to barrier free access and will:

- 1 Take a leadership role in setting an example to the business, institutional and volunteer sectors in terms of access and integration, employment equity, communications, recreation, transportation, housing and education.
- 2 Identify and remove barriers and gaps in existing facilities and services.
- 3 Continually improve the level of accessibility of municipal facilities, programs and services.
- 4 Collaborate with MAAC in the design, development and operation of new and renovated municipal facilities and services.
- 5 Ensure the provision of quality services to all members of the community with disabilities.
- 6 Provide resources and support in accordance with the Plan.
- 7 Promote accessibility within the community.

5.0 Barriers

The intent of the Plan is to prevent, identify and remove barriers. Barriers are obstacles that stand in the way of people with disabilities preventing them from doing many of the day-to-day activities that others take for granted. A barrier is anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of a disability. The traditional definition of a barrier used in the context of accessibility has been expanded to include obstacles beyond physical boundaries. There are several other categories of barriers to consider, such as:

Physical Barriers: Features, buildings or spaces that restrict or impede physical access. For example, a doorway that is too narrow to accommodate entry by person in a motorized scooter.

Communication Barriers: Obstacles with processing, transmitting or interpreting information. For example, print on a brochure that is too small to read or documents not available in alternative formats.

Attitudinal Barriers: Prejudgments or assumptions that directly or indirectly discriminate. For example, assuming that a person who has a speech impairment can't understand you.

Technological Barriers: Occurs when technology cannot or is not modified to support various assistive devices and/or software. For example, a website that does not provide for increased text size or contrast options.

Systemic Barriers: Barriers within an organization's policies, practices and procedures that do not consider accessibility. For example, listing a driver's license as an employment qualification for an office position may prohibit persons with visual impairments from applying.

6.0 Planned Strategies and Actions for the Identification, Removal and Prevention of Barriers (2018-2022)

The 2018–2022 multi-year plan is based on best practice research, as well as input from employees, the municipal accessibility advisory committee, accessibility stakeholders and the public. It is organized around the following standards and general requirements of the AODA.

The five standards are:

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

The general requirements are:

- Procurement
- Training

These priorities include strategic recommendations from the Committee and the public that will help guide the City of Kingston as it continues to plan for future accessibility initiatives, which are outlined below:

6.1 Customer Service

The Accessible Customer Service Standard under the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation requires the city to provide accessible public services for people with disabilities and to ensure that policies and procedures are in place to support this requirement. Accessible customer service means dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity for all people.

Outcome:

- An accessible city that includes ensuring people with disabilities receive quality goods and services in a timely manner, supported by effective policies, procedures, tools and resources that promote accessibility in customer service.

Policies and Practices

- Review the Accessible Customer Service Policy, Accessibility Standards Policy and identify opportunities to reinforce and promote requirements that enhance accessible customer service.
- Examine and address potential barriers at public spaces.

- Ensure that in the case of planned or unplanned service disruptions, notice is provided explaining the reason for the disruption, estimated duration, and any alternative facilities or services available.
- Ensure processes for receiving and responding to feedback regarding customer service practices are, upon request, accessible for persons with disabilities.
- Ensure the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) are included in all Service Level Agreements entered into with the City of Kingston.
- Review best practices related to Cultural Programming and identify community needs related to accessible programming and pricing for the performing arts and museums and heritage related programming, and make recommendations specific to the Grand Theatre, Grand OnStage, Kingston City Hall, Pump House Steam Museum and MacLachlan Woodworking Museum.

Training

- Ensure that all employees continue to complete mandatory training in a variety of formats, including in-class, events, and e-learning, on Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation requirements and disability-related obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

2018–2022 Commitments:

- Customer Feedback Mechanisms

Monitor current customer feedback mechanisms and explore new ways of capturing the feedback from persons with disabilities with the new Customer Relationship Management system (go-live in Q2 2018).

- Ensure feedback processes are accessible to persons with disabilities.
- Provide new tools to allow increased participation of persons with disabilities in the city's public engagement process. An online public engagement pilot project was introduced in September 2017.

- **Municipal Election Accessibility**

Ensure that coordination of the 2018 municipal election includes accessibility considerations, some of which may include:

- Evaluation of all voting locations to ensure that the location is fully accessible and provides barrier free access to voters, candidates and workers.
 - Production of election materials using simple, easy to understand language and the availability of information regarding the election in a number of communication formats
- **Community accessibility partnerships.**

Continue outreach program to educate agencies, businesses and the broader private sector about the AODA and the importance of identifying, preventing and removing barriers/challenges faced by people with disabilities.

- **Accessible Programming**

Continue development of accessible and inclusive recreational and cultural programming opportunities.

- Annual recognition of Celebrating Accessibility Awards
- Actively promote the need for accessibility awareness training to business, professional and service communities – i.e. make presentations to Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Kingston, etc.

6.2 Clear and Accessible Communications

The Information and Communications Standard under the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation requires the city to communicate and provide information in ways that are accessible to people with disabilities.

Outcomes:

- Enhanced accessibility as it relates to communication supports, formats and websites and web content.

- City staff has the tools and resources to effectively develop information and communications in accessible formats.

By delivering information and communications in accessible formats to all city employees, clients and customers, the city will support the effective delivery of services.

2018–2022 Commitments:

Standards and Resources

- Develop and update standards and guides for accessible digital, marketing and media content in the city.
- Develop, provide and promote resources, using a variety of communications and training formats, including in-person sessions, guides, tutorials and testing methodology and tools, through a centralized repository for staff seeking advice and guidance related to accessible documents (i.e. PowerPoint, Excel, Word, use of PDFs, etc.).
- Communication campaigns through the use of various channels to raise awareness of the removal of barriers within the City of Kingston.
- Review best practices for Museums and Heritage-Related Programming and identify community needs related to museums and heritage-related programming and make recommendations specific to Kingston City Hall, Pump House Steam Museum and MacLachlan Woodworking Museum.

Web Platforms

- Continue to implement the website to ensure it is accessible, and will provide templates and guidance to staff on accessible web content.
- Ensure that on January 1, 2021, the city's website and content conforms with WCAG 2.0 Level AA.
- Use accessibility checking tool to automatically test the website's accessibility repeatedly over the years.
- Develop and distribute an accessible document guide to cover the basics and act as a reference to ensure compliance from city departments and third party contractors

- An accessible document guide for employees which covers the basics and would act as a reference will be developed.

Digital Services

- Ensure that digital services are designed with accessibility at its core, striving for all users to have equal access to information and functionality.

Forms

- Ensure all forms that are included in the city's repository are accessible by 2022.

Notices

- Provide consistent notices in public spaces, and online notifications to the public regarding accessible formats and communications support, upon request.

6.3 Accessible Employment

The Employment Standard under the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation sets out accessibility requirements that the city must follow to support the recruitment and accommodation of employees. This includes preparing individualized emergency response information for persons with disabilities and making employment practices and workplaces more accessible for new and existing employees with disabilities.

Outcomes:

- City efforts will align with the province's employment strategy for people with disabilities to ensure that more people with disabilities are employed, engaged and advancing in the city.
- Accommodation practices will be reviewed to ensure people with disabilities are able to participate fully and meaningfully as city employees.

2018–2022 Commitments:

Policies

- Continue to regularly review our human resources policies to prevent or remove systemic employment barriers, ensure they are compliant with legislation and reflect best practices.

Recruitment

- The City will develop a diversity and inclusion workforce/recruitment strategy. The City will continue to participate in Disabilities Mentoring Day each October.
- The City will establish partnerships with organizations to establish an outreach strategy for accessible recruitment process options.

Learning and Development

- Promote principles and practices of respectful workplaces through training and resources that help:
 - Improve managers' ability to intervene in workplace conflict, including potential harassment and discrimination.
 - Promote employee responsibilities for contributing to respect in the workplace.
- Ensure all materials, activities and learning methods for leadership programs and other corporately developed programs are in accessible formats, or will be made accessible upon request, to support the professional development and advancement of all employees.

6.4 Transportation

The Transportation Standard under the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation sets out the requirements to prevent and remove barriers to public transportation.

2018–2022 Commitments:

Transit

- Implement service recommendations identified in the Kingston Transit 2017 – 2021 Business Plan to improve convenience, frequency and reliability.
- Construct bus stops in accordance with the city's bus stop design guidelines. An annual public meeting will be held to ensure that members of the public have an opportunity to participate in a review of the Transit section of the city's accessibility plan and that they are given the opportunity to provide feedback on the Transit section of the accessibility plan.

- Implementing any requirements arising from the 2016 Review of the Accessibility Transportation Standards.

Accessible Taxicabs

- Identify progress made toward meeting the need for on-demand accessible taxicabs. Review bi-annually; subsequent actions to be documented within the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

6.5 Enhancing Accessibility of Our Public Spaces

The Design of Public Spaces Standard under the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation requires the city to ensure that newly-constructed or significantly renovated public spaces are accessible.

The city also complies with the Ontario Building Code's requirements for accessibility in the built environment. The city has Facility Accessibility Design Standards (FADS) which requires city owned and leased (city occupied) new or renovated spaces to meet universal design standards where possible.

Outcome:

- Greater accessibility to city facilities and public spaces.
- A planning program that reviews accessibility requirements related to site plan development for municipal facilities, site plan development for design of public spaces and development of Request for Proposal document.

2018–2022 Commitments:

Standards

- Facility Accessibility Design Standards

Infrastructure Planning and Projects

- Continue to prioritize accessibility in every element of the infrastructure projects at city owned facilities and properties.
- User groups will be engaged during infrastructure project planning, design and implementation stages.

- Ensure that accessibility is addressed in the negotiation of new leases and lease renewals for city occupied spaces where possible.
- Continue to implement the “Step Safe” Program (accessible sidewalks) – a public reporting process for trip hazards for identification and /or action.
- Ensuring access to sidewalks through the installation of curb cuts, placement of sidewalks in highly travelled areas (especially those in close proximity to a bus stop/shelter) and regular sidewalk maintenance.
- Enhancing pedestrian safety through the use of adequate lighting (specifically at bus stops/shelters), by providing more visual cues and information to pedestrians through the use of signage, through the continued installation of accessible crosswalks with audio, visual and tactile cues and in high traffic locations, and by ensuring colour contrasts are present in crossovers and on stairs located inside and outside municipal facilities and buildings.
- The continued creation of accessible parking spots, ensuring that there are a sufficient number of accessible parking spots wide enough to accommodate larger accessible vehicles (i.e. van with a descending side ramp).
- Leverage technology to provide visitors to Kingston City Hall with alternative access to spaces within the building that may be difficult to access using virtual reality tools.
- Ensure all public art projects comply with the Ontario Building Code’s requirements for accessibility in the built environment and align with Facility Accessibility Design Standards (FADS), where possible.
- Improve accessible routes, playgrounds, buildings as part of approved capital works program

6.6 Demonstrating Accessible Procurement

Under the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation, the city is required to incorporate accessibility design, criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities, except where it is not practicable to do so.

Outcomes:

- A procurement program for the city that considers the needs of people with disabilities at all stages of the procurement process to help ensure that goods and services at city facilities are accessible.

2018–2022 Commitments:

Directives, Guidelines and Practices

- Continue to communicate to vendors their obligations to meet accessibility requirements.

Training

- Continue to ensure that accessibility criteria are incorporated in procurement processes and platforms. Training and additional resources, such as templates, sample accessibility language and guidelines, will also be available to help staff understand accessibility requirements and how to embed accessibility at all stages of procurement.

7.0 Conclusion

This plan, which identifies strategic priorities and opportunities for improving accessibility, will provide focus and assist in guiding the organization as we work together to ensure that all citizens can participate. Ensuring compliance with the AODA standards is fundamental to working towards the goal of achieving a fully accessible Ontario by 2025.

The City of Kingston would like to express its gratitude to the members of the City of Kingston's Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee for their commitment to enhancing the accessibility of our municipal programs, services and facilities and addressing the identification, prevention, and removal of barriers to persons with disabilities. Thank you for your invaluable time, comments, suggestions, and dedication.

For more information regarding accessible municipal programs, services and facilities, please visit the City of Kingston's website:

<https://www.cityofkingston.ca/residents/accessibility>, or contact us at 613-546-0000 or by email at contactus@cityofkingston.ca