



Town of Newmarket
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2019-2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and Annual Status Update for 2019 Staff Report to Council

Report Number: 2019-100

Department(s): Legislative Services

Author(s): Andrew Walkom, Legislative Coordinator

Meeting Date: October 15, 2019

Recommendations

1. That the report entitled 2019-2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and Annual Status Update for 2019 dated October 15, 2019 be received; and,
2. That the 2019-2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan be approved; and
3. That staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

Purpose

This report accompanies the 2019-2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and Annual Status Update for 2019 and provides Council with an overview of the development of the Plan. The report details the legislative background of the Plan, the Town's efforts to date to comply with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act (AODA) and the plans to continue compliance to the 2025 goal set by the AODA.

Background

In 2013, the Council of the Town of Newmarket approved the first Multi-Year Accessibility Plan in accordance with the requirements of the AODA. The goal of a Multi-Year Plan is to provide strategies to meet the compliance deadlines set by the AODA.

In accordance with the requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) regarding a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, the Plan has been

published to the Town's website and a status update has been prepared each year. This update to the Multi-Year Plan is also required by the IASR, as a review is required every five years.

Discussion

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan Progress

Since the creation of the first Multi-Year Accessibility Plan in 2013, a number of deadlines for the compliance with the AODA have passed. These deadlines include a number of the requirements of the Information and Communications Standard and Design of Public Spaces Standard. The Town's action plans to meet these standards have been detailed in Appendix C of the Multi-Year Plan.

The format of the Multi-Year Plan has been updated to comply with accessible document guidelines. The document has been reformatted so that it is more easily readable by screen-reading software. The formatting through tables has been replaced with headings, which allows users of screen readers to navigate through the document more easily.

Future Deadlines for Compliance

Only one future date remains on the IASR implementation timeline, which relates to the Information and Communications standard. The regulation requires that by January 1, 2021, all internet websites and web content must conform with WCAG 2.0 Level AA. The current Town of Newmarket website was launched in 2014, and was designed to adhere to WCAG 2.0 and AODA Level A and Level AA. The Multi-Year Plan details further strategies to comply with this timeline for web content.

Potential Legislative Changes

Accessible Canada Act

In June 2018, parliament was introduced with the Accessible Canada Act, a Bill that proposes changes to federally regulated entities such as:

- The government of Canada and parliament
- The Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Canadian Forces
- Crown corporations (VIA rail, the Bank of Canada, Canada Post)
- Federally regulated private sectors

The purpose of this legislation is to make Canada barrier-free in the above-noted areas on or before January 1, 2040. At the time this report was written, date(s) for which the Act would come into force were not announced.

2019 Legislative Review of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005

In 2018, The Honourable David C. Onley, Lieutenant Governor, was appointed to review the AODA. This was the third review of the AODA since its passing. The report produced by this review is extensive and suggests the need for wide-ranging amendments to AODA, including the development of new accessibility standards. The report has been presented to the Ontario government for its review. At this time, it is uncertain if any action will be taken by the provincial government regarding these proposed changes to AODA. Staff will continue to monitor any possible amendments to AODA or further legislation which could affect the Town's accessibility requirements.

Review of the Information and Communications Standards – Information and Communications Standards Development Committee

In addition to the review of the AODA as a whole, a review of the Communications Standards was completed by the Information and Communications Standards Development Committee of the provincial government, in line with the requirement to review these standards within five years of their implementation. The report includes both wide-ranging recommendations for changes to the Communications Standard, as well as “a new model to transform and modernize the regulatory approach to accessibility in Ontario.” As with the previously discussed review of the AODA, it is uncertain whether the provincial government will proceed with any of the Committee's recommendations. Staff will continue to monitor any potential future amendments to the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation. Public consultation for the review is open until October 18, 2019.

Conclusion

Staff will continue to implement the strategies described in the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and proceed towards the 2025 goal as set out by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

As required by the IASR, the updated Plan will be published to the Town website in an accessible format. Annual updates will continue to be produced and the Plan will be reviewed and updated in 2023 in accordance with the IASR requirements. Finally, staff will submit the 2019 Accessibility Compliance report to the province by December 31, 2019.

Business Plan and Strategic Plan Linkages

This report aligns with Council's Strategic Pillar regarding Extraordinary Places and Spaces (priority focus on Mulock Property): Creating an environment for an engaged, accessible and inclusive community. The Plan aligns with the Town's vision of being a community that is Well Beyond the Ordinary.

Consultation

The development of this Multi-Year Plan occurred through wide collaboration across the Corporation, primarily through the Accessibility Working Group. This Working Group consists of members from departments across the Corporation, as well as Central York Fire Services and the Newmarket Public Library.

The Newmarket Accessibility Advisory Committee was consulted throughout the update to the Multi-Year Plan and assisted with the updates. The Committee was also instrumental throughout the implementation of the Multi-Year Plan throughout the period since its creation in 2013. The projects and initiatives of the Committee are detailed in Appendix B of the Multi-Year Plan. The Committee endorsed the draft Multi-Year Plan at its September 19, 2019 meeting.

Human Resource Considerations

None.

Budget Impact

None.

Attachments

Attachment 1 - 2019-2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Appendix A to Multi-Year Plan: 2019 Annual Status Update

Appendix B to Multi-Year Plan: Newmarket Accessibility Advisory Committee 2013-2018 Projects

Appendix C to Multi-Year Plan: IASR Implementation Plan

Approval

Kiran Saini, Deputy Town Clerk

Lisa Lyons, Director of Corporate Services/Town Clerk

Esther Armchuk, Commissioner of Corporate Services

Contact

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