

The City of Woodstock's Annual Status Report of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan



2022

A summary of Woodstock's accomplishments towards inclusion in 2022 and looking ahead to 2023. In compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

**Annual Status
Report
Accessibility Plan**

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Background and Purpose

The purpose of this status report is to report on the City of Woodstock's progress with regards to the 2018-2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan to prevent and remove barriers and meet requirements under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA). The **City of Woodstock's 2018-2022 Municipal Accessibility Plan** can be found online at:

<https://www.cityofwoodstock.ca/en/resourcesGeneral/PDFs/Clerks/Accessibility/2018-2022-Multi-Year-Accessibility-Plan-Final-accessible.pdf>

Since 2022 marks the final year of the current Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, the development of a new 2023-2027 plan is now underway. Consultation with the public and the City's Accessibility Advisory Committee will be undertaken to allow the public to have the opportunity to participate in a review and to provide feedback on the Plan in accordance with Section 4(2) of *O. REG 191/11 (The Integrated Accessibility Standards)*. The new Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will be presented to Council in the Spring of 2023.

The City's Vision and Commitment to Accessibility:

- To promote public awareness and sensitivity towards all persons with disabilities;
- To encourage co-operation between all service and interest groups;
- To identify and document relevant matters and concerns;
- To create a community that provides opportunities for barrier-free access to transportation, programming, recreation, and other City services;
- To embrace the concept of universal design to include both persons with disabilities and the aging population;
- To ensure that policies and practices are maintained in relation to the development and redevelopment of services and facilities that incorporates persons with disabilities and aging population statistics;
- To ensure that the City receives the maximum economic benefits from building an accessible City;
- To encourage public participation and civic engagement in community accessibility matters.

The City of Woodstock is committed to promoting a barrier-free City for employees, citizens and all who live, work, visit, and invest in Woodstock. With regards to the Multi-Year Accessibility plan, the City is proud to present its findings and report on the development of strategies to remove and prevent any and all future barriers for people with disabilities and the aging population.

The Legislation

The Government of Ontario created the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*, with the aim to ensure accessibility practices were implemented to fully allow individuals to participate in their communities. It required all municipalities to produce an annual accessibility plan, to consult with people with disabilities on the planning, make the plan available publicly, and create an Accessibility Advisory Committee.

In 2005, the Government of Ontario committed to the development of five accessibility standards under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*. The purpose of AODA is to develop, implement and enforce accessibility standards to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities by the year 2025. These standards outline the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers so that people with disabilities will have more opportunities to participate in everyday life.

The *O.REG 191/11: Integrated Accessibility Standards* regulation is comprised of five (5) standards. This is now law and requirements are being phased in each year:

- ◆ The **Information and Communications Standard** will help Ontario businesses and organizations make their information more accessible.
- ◆ The **Employment Standard** will help Ontario businesses and organizations make accessibility a regular part of their recruitment, hiring and supporting of employees with disabilities.
- ◆ The **Transportation Standard** will make travel more accessible in Ontario.
- ◆ The **Design of Public Spaces Standard** will make it easier for persons with disabilities to move through, use, and enjoy our community public spaces.
- ◆ The **Customer Service Standard** will make it easier for persons with disabilities to obtain services, and have their needs met accordingly.

For more information on this legislation, please visit aoda.ca

Highlights of 2022

The list below highlights the planned accessibility action items for 2022 that were outlined in the 2018-2022 Multi-Year Plan as well as additional items that were added in the 2021 Status report. These items are a representation of the City's commitment in striving towards a barrier-free City. If a requirement has been completed in a previous year, it has not been listed here.

Planned Action Items and Status

- ◆ **Southside Aquatic Centre to undergo renovations that will increase accessibility throughout the facility:** The planned upgrading of Southside's changerooms has been postponed to 2024. An accessible sidewalk was installed from the emergency exit on the pool deck to the parking lot. Previously this was an undeveloped pedestrian ground path that was not accessible.
- ◆ **Six-foot-wide pathways from the city sidewalks to the play feature at William Gray Park:** Complete.
- ◆ **Remove old play equipment at West End / Sudsworth Park and design new equipment with accessible features:** The old equipment has been removed. Replacement playground equipment will not be installed as the recreation facility needs study did not identify a need in these areas.
- ◆ **Evaluate trail system at Burgess Park:** Rest areas and information points have been completed to provide better access to the park. Benches, spaced approximately 500 metres apart, were added along Youth Start Trail and Burgess Park Trails, as well as Herbert Milnes Park Trail.
- ◆ **Woodstock Art Gallery installation of an adult change table in the 3rd floor family room:** This project is to carry forward and will be rolled into the forthcoming redevelopment of the 4th floor.
- ◆ **Training key members of each department in creating accessible documents and web content:** Complete.
- ◆ **Remediating the City of Woodstock website:** On-going.
- ◆ **Creation of accessible executive summaries of revenue statements:** Complete.
- ◆ **Inclusion of 6-foot-wide pathways from the city sidewalks to play features in Edgewood Park and Park Row Park tennis courts:** The pathway was installed at Edgewood Park in 2022. Park Row Park has been postponed as there are paving projects that will take priority for 2023 and 2024.
- ◆ **Six-foot-wide pathways from the city sidewalks to play features at Springbank Park:** Complete.

Accessibility Improvements Above and Beyond the Original Plan

Information Technology:

- ◆ Added Monsido web software used for scanning and inventorying the City's website documents to provide a catalogue of documents enabling a review of accessibility.
- ◆ Ongoing training of staff members in creating AODA accessible Word and PDF documents.
- ◆ On-going use of accessibility tool to scan the City of Woodstock website for accessibility issues.

Art Gallery:

- ◆ Added a suite of 6 i-pads and a tour guide app to our roster of accessibility engagement pieces.
- ◆ The tour guide app can be downloaded and used on a phone or tablet. It includes features such as audio and making the screen larger so a user can read the text at any font.

Clerk's Department:

2022 Municipal and School Board Election

The City of Woodstock was committed to taking measures to identify and remove accessibility barriers that might have existed through the voting process and at polling locations. The following measures were taken to remove and prevent barriers during the 2022 Municipal and School Board Election:

- ◆ An election location Accessibility Checklist was created and completed for each voting location to ensure barriers were identified and removed.
- ◆ Chairs were placed in the hallways of voting locations, so individuals were able to sit if there was a line-up.
- ◆ Any voting location that did not have automatic power-assist doors, had the doors propped open so any individual using a mobility aid could freely access the voting space.
- ◆ Service animals were permitted at all voting locations.
- ◆ Letter sized magnifiers were made available at all voting locations.

- ◆ None of the Election Day polls had stairs at the location entrance and all have wide doors, ensuring a person using a mobility device had access to the location.
- ◆ Voters were able to cast their ballots at any of the five voting locations on voting day. This 'vote anywhere' method assisted all voters by providing the opportunity to vote at the most convenient location.
- ◆ When casting ballots, electors could have an election staff member, or a support person(s) assist with reading the ballot aloud and/or marking the ballot.
- ◆ To allow an elector with a disability to vote, election staff attended an elector anywhere within the area designated as the voting place.
- ◆ Advance polls as well as the Goff Hall poll on Election Day were configured with an accessible voting terminal used by voters who required assistance to mark their ballot. The accessible voting terminal provided accessibility to those voters who were unable to navigate a paper ballot and manually marking device such as a pen. A standard ballot was issued to the voter and inserted into the voting terminal. The accessible voting terminal confirmed votes selected for voter verification and generated a marked paper ballot with a mark that is indistinguishable from a ballot marked by hand to ensure voter secrecy. The accessible tabulator then fed the ballot into the tabulator as per standard procedure.
- ◆ Election staff also visited Woodingford Lodge, Park Place, Oxford Gardens, Caressant Care, Cedarview Retirement, and Woodstock Hospital on Election Day. Residents of these facilities had the opportunity to cast their ballots in an accessible space without leaving their residence.
- ◆ An elector with a disability that is homebound or otherwise unable to go to a Voting Location had the opportunity to appoint another person to act as a voting proxy to cast a ballot on their behalf.
- ◆ All voting locations were accessible by Transit and Para-Transit during all hours in which polls were open.
- ◆ Free public transit was provided on October 24, 2022, to encourage and make it possible for more residents to vote.
- ◆ Accessible formats and communication support for all election material was available upon request.
- ◆ In accordance with Regulation 429/07 Customer Service for persons with disabilities, all election staff were provided training on the following:
 - Assistive Devices;
 - Service Animals;

- Support Persons;
- Communication and Terminology;
- Notice of Service Disruption; and
- Feedback

Cowan Park Sportsplex:

- ◆ Converted PDFs and non-accessible documents from webpages into accessible formats.

Library:

- ◆ Converted documents and webpages into accessible formats.

Small Business Enterprise:

- ◆ Ensured website content and educational videos are AODA compliant.

Transit:

- ◆ Began the planning process for upgrading to solar powered lit bus stops in 2023. The move to solar will allow customers to find their stop in dark conditions and to be seen by the bus driver.
- ◆ Two solar powered bus shelters were installed to provide increased night-time visibility, comfort, and protection from the weather.
- ◆ Improvements were made to the transit pages on the City of Woodstock website to advance customer navigation to pertinent and timely information and comply with AODA requirements.
- ◆ An accessible lead-hand van was added to the transit fleet to assist customers that miss connections with other buses.
- ◆ Initiated additional step/method/process of clearing ice and snow from bus stops making them more accessible.

Treasury:

- ◆ Ensured website information and documents are AODA compliant.

Looking Ahead to 2023

As the current Multi-Year Accessibility Plan concludes in 2022, the City of Woodstock is diligently preparing for the next five years. All City departments have developed accessibility projects that will be compiled in the 2023-2027 Accessibility Plan. These various endeavors will ensure that the City of Woodstock remains in compliance with the regulations stated in the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. As per the AODA, the City will conduct a public consultation session for the new multi-year plan in the year 2023.

Accessibility Feedback Policy

The City has a system for managing, evaluating and taking action on customer feedback regarding the City's delivery of accessible goods or services. Feedback may be provided either:

- ◆ In person at any City of Woodstock facility
- ◆ Via email to accessibility@cityofwoodstock.ca
- ◆ Via telephone at 519-539-2382 ext. 2503

All feedback will be investigated, forwarded to the appropriate personnel, responded to, documented, and tracked within seven (7) days. Feedback will be accepted in accessible formats and with other communication supports as required.

Continuous Achievement in Accessibility

General:

- ◆ The City has an **Accessibility Advisory Committee (WAAC)** that provides insight on matters regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers.
- ◆ All departments inform the Clerk's Department of changes to facilities or services which increase accessibility so that the annual update reports can remain current documents.
- ◆ Evacuation procedures are in place for persons with disabilities at municipal facilities.

Information and Communications:

- ◆ The City can be contacted for access to accessible formats or communication supports.
- ◆ The City provides resources and education to the public on accessibility issues faced by persons with disabilities.

Employment:

- ◆ The City continues to train all new staff, volunteers, contractors and any other third parties who interact with the public on the City's behalf about the requirements of the *Integrated Accessibility Standards, O.REG 191/11* and the *Customer Service Regulation, 429/07*.
- ◆ The City continues to uphold employment equity policies and procedures.

Transportation:

- ◆ The City continues to provide a transit system that respects people's dignity and offers equal service to everyone, including those with a disability.
- ◆ Fare and hours of service parity between the conventional and specialized transit services exist. There is never a charge for Support Persons for persons with disabilities or for storing mobility aids.

Design of Public Spaces:

- ◆ An Accessibility Advisory Committee member is designated as the site plan reviewer to ensure accessibility is considered when reviewing site plan approvals.
- ◆ When planning sidewalks and walkways, the City implements accessibility features such as curb cuts, ramps, grate design and location and grade elevations as per the City's approved Accessibility Technical Guidelines.
- ◆ Designated accessible parking spaces are created at municipal facilities.

Customer Service:

- ◆ The City offers customer service to accommodate persons with disabilities.
- ◆ The City documents all accessibility related policies and makes them available to the public.
- ◆ The City provides proper training/orientation for all persons on the best practices to use when serving persons with disabilities.

Methodologies

Review of Current Activities to Identify Barriers

A review of current activities to identify barriers is ongoing with the goal of creating policies and procedures to prevent future barriers from being created, as well as viewing the identified ones as opportunities for improvement. Barriers will be addressed on an ongoing basis and public feedback is encouraged.

Monitoring Progress and Audit Function

The purpose of an annual review of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan is to evaluate whether targets are being met and to adopt a plan to meet current expectations. The Staff Accessibility Advisory Team and the Accessibility Advisory Committee meet in May of each year to discuss the current year's Accessibility Plan and to consider the upcoming year's accessibility capital budget. An annual public meeting must be held involving persons with disabilities to review and collect feedback on the Plan and the annual status report. This includes consultation on services provided by conventional and specialized transit along with Parks & Recreation.

Communication of Plan

The availability of the Multi-Year Municipal Accessibility Plan and any Status Reports are approved by City Council. Additionally, plans and reports are posted on the [City of Woodstock website](#).

Conclusion

The City of Woodstock is committed to continuously addressing accessibility barriers and to being progressive in developing innovative solutions to accessibility matters. We believe in integration and equal opportunity and are committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. The City recommends that the Province provides Accessibility Funding to assist municipalities in the implementation of barrier-free services and facilities.

For more information on the City of Woodstock's 2022 Status Report, contact us:

- ◆ By phone 519-539-2382 ext. 2503
- ◆ Via email at accessibility@cityofwoodstock.ca