

2016 Accessibility Annual Status Update

Statement of Commitment

The Municipality of Clarington is committed to ensuring that people of all ages and abilities enjoy the same opportunities when they live, work, play, visit and invest in our community.

We promote an inclusive, caring and respectful community where programs, services and facilities are available to everyone. Our goal is to make Clarington a barrier-free community and each year we come closer to achieving that goal.

About the 2016 Annual Status Update

This report is the Municipality of Clarington's annual update on the measures taken during 2016 to improve accessibility in our community and to report on the progress made under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA).

Accessibility Legislation in Ontario

Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA)

In 2001, the Government of Ontario created the ODA. The ODA requires public sector organizations (the provincial government, municipalities, hospitals, educational institutions and public transportation service providers) to undertake activities aimed at reducing and eliminating barriers for people with disabilities. It also required municipalities with populations over 10,000 to appoint an Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC), develop annual accessibility plans and seek the advice of AACs on certain matters.

On December 1, 2015 the Government of Ontario rescinded the sections of the ODA that applied to Municipalities. This was done to streamline accessibility requirements and remove duplicated requirements. As a result of these changes, the Municipality of Clarington no longer has obligations under the ODA.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)

The AODA sets out a road map for an accessible Ontario by 2025 with mandatory and enforceable standards in five key areas:

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

The Customer Service Standard became law (Ontario Regulation 429/07) on January 1, 2008. The Municipality of Clarington has complied with this Standard since January 1, 2010.

On July 1, 2016, the Government of Ontario made several changes to the Customer Service Standard, which required the Municipality to update its Accessible Customer Service Policy. One important change that occurred during this update was that the Customer Service Standard was moved into the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR). As a result of this change, all five standards now reside under one regulation.

The IASR also includes standards for: Information and Communication, Employment, Transportation, and the Design of Public Spaces.

The Design of Public Spaces Standard focus on removing barriers in areas not covered by the Ontario Building Code such as playgrounds, on and off-street parking, recreational trails and service counters. It applies to new construction or re-construction of existing spaces. It does not require organizations to retrofit in order to be compliant.

Ontario Building Code (OBC)

The OBC regulates the minimum building standards for the construction of all new buildings and buildings that undergo a significant renovation. The Code includes requirements for minimum accessibility within buildings.

The OBC was amended to include enhancements to accessibility in buildings. As of January 1, 2015, most new construction and extensive renovations will be subject to updated accessibility requirements. Existing buildings, where no work is planned, are not affected by these new requirements.

Clarington's Accessibility Advisory Committee

The Clarington Accessibility Advisory Committee (CAAC) is a citizen committee that acts as an advisory body for Council. Its mandate is to advise on the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to people with disabilities in Clarington.

The CAAC's term coincides with Council. Following the 2014 Municipal Elections, a new CAAC was formed and is working within its mandate until 2018. Each member of the CAAC is a volunteer, with the exception of the Council representative. The CAAC is supported by the Accessibility Coordinator and the Clerk's Department.

The current CAAC members bring a wide range of personal and professional experiences and perspectives related to the challenges faced by people with disabilities. They provide invaluable advice and support as we continue to work toward a barrier-free Clarington.

In 2016, the CAAC reviewed 18 site plan applications and 5 municipal projects for barriers to accessibility. Having the CAAC review site plan applications is a core requirement of the AODA and one that the Committee takes seriously. They take pride knowing they have helped contribute to a more accessible Clarington by advising applicants to exceed minimum accessibility standards.

In 2016, the CAAC also:

- Updated their Terms of Reference

- Created a new logo and re-developed marketing materials

- Attended AppleFest and handed out over 500 brochures and hundreds of pieces of promotional material.

Accessibility Governance

In 2015, Council approved a full-time Accessibility Coordinator position in response to the growing demands of the AODA and its Standards. The Accessibility Coordinator acts as a resource for all service areas and facilitates compliance with the AODA. The Coordinator keeps informed about legislation and participates in accessibility networks such as the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals (ONAP).

The Coordinator also liaises with the other Accessibility Coordinators in Durham through a quarterly coordinators meeting. In addition, the Accessibility Coordinator sits on the Durham

Regional Transit's Specialized Services Appeals Panel. This panel hears eligibility appeals for Specialized Service, as required under the AODA.

2016 Accomplishments

Quick Facts

Activity	Number of occurrences
Clarington Accessibility Advisory Committee meetings	8
Accessible document training sessions	13
Site plans reviewed	18
Municipal projects reviewed	5
Number of Specialized Transit appeals heard	~40
AODA training sessions	10
Public inquiries	7
Staff requests for accessible document assistance	~27
Public feedback on accessibility	5
Requests for information in an alternative format	2

Customer Service Standard

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service came into effect in 2008. The Municipality of Clarington has been in compliance with this Standard since 2009. In 2016, the Government of Ontario updated this standard. As a result of these changes, the Municipality has updated its Accessible Customer Service Policy. Staff and volunteers will be provided updated training on the changes to this policy in 2017.

We recognize that providing accessible customer service is an ongoing effort and that we can always do better. We continue to train all new employees and volunteers on Accessible Customer Service.

General Requirements

The Municipality of Clarington's Multi-Year Accessibility plan is posted on the Clarington website. This plan outlines the steps we will take to meet our obligations under the AODA. In partnership with the Clarington Accessibility Advisory Committee, we will review and update this plan in 2017 to make sure we are meeting or exceeding our obligations under the AODA.

Training on the IASR and the *Ontario Human Rights Code* continues to be given to new staff and volunteers. Accessibility training continues to play an important role in new employee orientation.

The Purchasing Department continues to include accessible design, features and criteria when purchasing goods, services or facilities. If the Municipality is not able to purchase accessible goods, services or facilities, the Municipality will give an explanation as to why, upon request.

Information and Communications

1. Website

In 2015, the Municipality re-launched its website. The website was completely redesigned to be user-friendly and accessible. The new website and the content on it complies with WCAG 2.0 Level AA, an achievement the Municipality met well before the January 1, 2021 deadline prescribed by the AODA.

Staff across all departments continue to work hard to ensure everything on the website is in an accessible format. In some situations we are not able to post content that is in an accessible format. If something is not accessible to someone, we encourage them to contact us and we will work with them to find a suitable accessible format.

Our website continues to feature BrowseAloud. BrowseAloud has a number of helpful tools that make our website even more accessible such as: highlighting, reading out loud, and language translation. It had 3723 speech requests and 2843 toolbar loads between December 2015 and November 2016.

2. Accessible Documents

In support of accessible documents for our website, municipal staff received training on how to create accessible Word 2013 documents throughout 2016. The Accessibility Coordinator continues to train and support staff that need help creating accessible documents.

The Municipality continues to make great strides in providing documents in an accessible format. We encourage individuals who find a document inaccessible to contact us via phone or email to request it in an alternative format.

Employment

The Municipality of Clarington is committed to accessible and equitable hiring practices and continues to meet its Employment Standard obligations under the AODA. All job postings include a statement about the availability of accommodations for applicants with disabilities during the recruitment process.

Successful candidates are informed, through their offer of employment, that accommodations are available for people with disabilities. All employees are informed of policies regarding job accommodations. The Municipality continues to provide workplace emergency information to employees who require it.

Transportation

The Region of Durham is responsible for transportation within Clarington. Metrolinx (Go Transit) also provides transportation service through Clarington.

All feedback regarding transportation is shared with Durham Regional Transit and/or Metrolinx. The Accessibility Coordinator frequently liaises with Durham Regional Transit on issues relating to accessible public transportation in Clarington. The Accessibility Coordinator also serves as an Appeals Panel member for Durham Regional Transit's Specialized Service appeals.

Design of Public Spaces

As of January 1, 2016, the Municipality was required to comply with the requirements of the Design of Public Spaces Standard. In 2015, the Municipality reviewed the Standard and developed strategies for ensuring all new and redeveloped public spaces are compliant with the requirements beginning in 2016.

Although the Municipality is not required to retrofit public spaces under this Standard, we will continue to proactively make accessibility improvements. We will work towards creating a barrier-free Clarington by removing barriers and exceeding our legal requirements whenever possible.

Next Steps

Throughout 2017, the Municipality of Clarington will continue to work towards meeting, maintaining, and exceeding its obligations under the AODA and its Standards. In keeping with our goal of becoming a barrier-free community we will:

- Review and update our Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, in collaboration with the AAC.
- Respond to requests for information in an alternative format.
- Continue conducting accessibility audits on municipal facilities.
- Update current accessibility policies and perform a gap analysis of missing policies.
- Provide current staff and volunteers with updated information on changes to our accessibility policies and continue providing accessibility training to all new staff and volunteers.
- Continue to review by-laws to ensure they are consistent with the principles of the AODA and that they meet or exceed the minimum Standards required under the AODA.
- Collaborate with the Clarington Board of Trade and contribute monthly to their newsletter.
- Monitor accessibility trends, themes and actions at the grassroots, provincial and federal levels.

Continue advocating for greater accessibility within the community.