

# 2015 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 as 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 2015 Annual Status Update

This report is the Municipality of Clarington's annual update on the measures taken to improve accessibility in our community and to report on the progress made under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA).

## Accessibility Legislation in Ontario

### Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA)

In 2001, the Government of Ontario enacted 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.

### 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.

The next four Standards – Information and Communication, Employment, Transportation and the Design of Public Spaces – are all part of the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation or IASR (Ontario Regulation 191/11). The requirements for this Standard will be phased in over time between 2011 and 2021.

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.

### **Ontario Building Code (OBC)**

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.

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.

### **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 bi-monthly 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.

## 2015 Accomplishments

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

In 2015, the Municipality of Clarington initiated a pilot program to better assist customers with disabilities at the Municipal Administrative Center. The Municipality purchased an iPad that will serve as an assistive communication device. The iPad will help break down communication-based barriers, ensuring accessible and equitable customer service for everyone.

### Integrated Accessibility Standards 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. We will review and update this plan in 2016 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. Accessibility training continues to play an important role in new employee orientation.

In 2014, the Corporate Services Department updated its purchasing criteria to include accessible design, features and criteria. The result of this criteria is that Clarington is purchasing the most accessible goods, services and facilities available. If the Municipality is not able to purchase accessible goods, services or facilities, the Municipality will give an explanation, upon request.

## Information and Communications

### 1. Website

The Municipality of Clarington launched its new website in 2015. 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. We are working hard to ensure everything on the website is in an accessible format, however there are some situations where these requirements prove to be very challenging. We encourage individuals to contact us through phone or email if something is not accessible to them. We will work with each requestor to find an alternative format.

The new website also features BrowseAloud. It includes a number of helpful tools that make our website even more accessible such as: highlighting, reading out loud, and language translation.

### 2. Accessible Documents

In order to produce accessible documents for our website, municipal staff received training on how to create accessible documents using software features. 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.

### 3. Accessible Presentations

The Municipality of Clarington is committed to exceeding its obligations under the AODA whenever possible. To illustrate this commitment, we have developed Presentation Guidelines for Delegations to Committees and Council. The goal of these guidelines is to ensure presentations are accessible to everyone.

These guidelines have been designed to assist delegates who use PowerPoint when presenting to Committee or Council. The guidelines have requirements for colour combinations, font size and images, among other items.

## Employment

The Municipality of Clarington is committed to accessible and equitable hiring practices. 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.

In 2015, the Municipality of Clarington updated its taxi by-law. The by-law was updated to ensure it is consistent with the requirements of the AODA and its Standards.

### Design of Public Spaces

Beginning in 2016, the Municipality will have additional accessibility requirements under 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.

In 2015, steps were taken to initiate the development of universal design guidelines for municipal facilities. The goal of these Standards is to provide an inclusive, user friendly and accommodating built environment through design and the careful use of materials and equipment. It reconciles legislative changes with respect to accessibility and incorporates recent ergonomic research from the United States, lessons learned and best practices from other Ontario municipalities and organizations. All of the design requirements use universal design principles as the core principle.

The Municipality has committed to becoming a barrier-free community. In keeping with this commitment, the use of the Universal Design Standards will become mandatory for all new construction, additions, renovations and capital replacements at municipally

owned buildings, including leased buildings and temporary structures. It will become a valuable resource as we work towards removing barriers. We expect to have these guidelines adopted and approved in 2016.

### Other Important Accessibility Achievements

#### 1. Facility Updates

**Newcastle & District Recreation Complex** received a number of accessibility enhancements in 2015. A motorized transfer lift was added to the accessible change cubicle in the family change room. A full accessible water wheelchair was purchased and an accessible transfer lift to the whirlpool was added. In addition, two additional barrier-free parking spaces were added at the south-west corner of the parking lot.

**The Courtice Community Complex** purchased second accessible water wheelchair and added four accessible parking spaces near the front entrance. The fire alarm system was upgraded to include both audio and visual announcements.

**The Alan Strike Aquatic and Squash Centre** (formerly the Clarington Fitness Centre) re-opened to the public in September, 2015 and features a number of accessibility upgrades. A fully accessible water wheelchair and transfer lifts for the pool and whirlpool were added. This major renovation also saw the installation of an elevator, automatic door openers throughout the facility, accessible washrooms, accessible change areas, showers, and changing tables. Universal Design principles were considered during all phases of the project, including design and procurement.

**The Beech Centre** received a new barrier-free emergency exit route. This update provides visitors of the Beech Centre with two barrier-free exits in case of an emergency.

**Courtice Library Branch** underwent a major renovation in 2015. The expanded and renovated library space will serve all residents including persons with accessibility requirements. Barrier free access has been enhanced by the removal of doors from the entrance way and the installation of a barrier-free family washroom. Library collections have been lowered to enhance accessibility. Signage for the public was created to provide clarity and address accessibility considerations. Universal Design principles were considered during all phases of the project, including design and procurement.

#### 2. Barrier-Free Parking Spaces

In 2015, the Operations Department refreshed 8 barrier-free parking stalls. These updates were done in consultation with the Accessibility Advisory Committee and take into consideration the current AODA requirements for barrier-free off-street parking.

### 3. Accessible Mobile Stage

In 2015, the Municipality unveiled its new Accessible Mobile Stage, which was purchased with grant money from the Ontario Trillium Foundation as part of a community collaborative project with the Visual Arts Centre, the Rotary Club of Bowmanville, the Orono Agricultural Society and the Municipality of Clarington. The stage has many features including a lift that provides access from the ground to stage level for people with disabilities. This accessible mobile stage will ensure that Clarington events and festivals are accessible to all residents and visitors.

## 2015 Accessibility Compliance Report

The Government of Ontario requires municipalities to file an Accessibility Compliance Report every two years. In 2015, the Municipality filed its 3<sup>rd</sup> accessibility report with the Government of Ontario. This report indicated that Clarington is in full compliance with the AODA and its Standards.

The accessibility report is just one indication of how well we are doing. We encourage staff and members of the community to let us know how we are doing. Feedback can be provided in person, through our website, over the phone, by letter or email. Feedback is always welcomed as we work towards becoming a barrier-free community.

## Next Steps

Throughout 2016, 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.
- Respond to requests for information in an alternative format.
- Formally adopt the Clarington Universal Design Standards for Municipal Facilities.
- Continue conducting accessibility audits on municipal facilities.
- Monitor the proposed changes to the Customer Service Standard and implement any changes prior to its planned implementation date of July 1, 2016.
- 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.

- Update the Terms of Reference for the Clarington Accessibility Advisory Committee to ensure it is consistent with current obligations under the ODA and AODA.
- Continue reviewing 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.
- Continue advocating for greater accessibility within the community.