



## THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF AMHERSTBURG

### OFFICE OF THE CAO

*MISSION STATEMENT: Committed to delivering cost-effective and efficient services for the residents of the Town of Amherstburg with a view to improve and enhance their quality of life.*

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To: Mayor and Members of Town Council

Subject: 2021 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and Strategy

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#### 1. RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that:

1. The Town of Amherstburg **ADOPT** the 2021 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan in accordance with Ontario Regulation 191/11 section 4(1), as supported by the Amherstburg Accessibility Advisory Committee.

#### 2. BACKGROUND:

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act came into effect in 2005 with the stated purpose of:

1. Recognizing the history of discrimination against persons with disabilities in Ontario, the purpose of this Act is to benefit all Ontarians by,
  - (a) Developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises on or before January 1, 2025; and,
  - (b) Providing for the involvement of persons with disabilities, of the Government of Ontario and of representatives of industries and of various sectors of the economy in the development of accessibility standards.

Further, Ontario Regulation 191/11, the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR), states that:

4. (1) The Government of Ontario, Legislative Assembly, designated public sector organizations and large organizations shall,

- (a) Establish, implement, maintain and document a multi-year accessibility plan, which outlines the organization's strategy to prevent and remove barriers and meet its requirements under this Regulation;
- (b) Post the accessibility plan on their website, if any, and provide the plan in an accessible format upon request; and,
- (c) Review and update the accessibility plan at least once every five years.

The Town adopted a multi-year accessibility plan in 2013 and reviewed and updated that plan in 2017, as required. Beginning in 2019, the Amherstburg Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAAC) began reviewing updates to the existing Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. At its November 25, 2021 meeting, the AAAC moved:

That:

The Amherstburg Accessibility Advisory Committee SUPPORTS in principle the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and Strategy.

### **3. DISCUSSION:**

Municipalities are required to adopt accessibility plans in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Town is required to annually review its progress towards achieving the goals in the plan. The attached draft is a five year plan, built upon a strategy in line with the stated goal of the AODA to make the province of Ontario fully accessible by January 1, 2025. The 2021 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan outlines the practices and initiatives that reaffirm the Town's commitment to an accessible community and to building an equitable and inclusive society that values the contributions of persons with disabilities.

The 2021 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan was drafted in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and Ontario Regulation 191/11. This plan is built upon a strategy of continual improvement and feedback over the course of the next five years, beginning with an initial public consultation. As one piece of the Town's overall accessibility strategy, this process will be the first in a series of annual engagements designed to increasingly narrow the scope and focus on the opportunities for enhancements in the provision of the Town's goods and services in an accessible manner.

The public engagement sought general feedback on the draft plan and also aimed to identify concerns with Town facilities, parkland, infrastructure (such as sidewalks and multi-use trails) and on Town communications. In subsequent years, the focus for targeted investment and improvement will utilize the findings of the continuing public engagement sessions in conjunction with a review of our planning documents such as the Parks Master Plan and the Facility Condition and Needs Assessment Study to make targeted recommendations for Council consideration.

The initial public consultation ran from November 26<sup>th</sup> to December 7<sup>th</sup> and was featured as a project initiative on the Town public engagement platform, Talk the Burg. Additionally, printed copies of the survey were disseminated at Town Hall and the Libro Centre and were collected and added to the results. To ensure that persons with disabilities were engaged in the process, communications were sent specifically to service providers such as Community Living Essex County, Harmony-in-Action, Assisted Living Southwestern Ontario and Amherstburg Community Services to share with their patrons, clients and caregivers. The Town's Communication's Officer built a social media campaign designed to notify the public via the Town's social media platforms and in traditional print media. As the process continues in subsequent years, these models will be replicated and expanded upon.

#### **4. RISK ANALYSIS:**

A diligently planned and well implemented multi-year accessibility plan and strategy can successfully target and remediate barriers to access to goods and services for persons with disabilities, reducing the risk that people will face such concerns in their interactions with the Town. Administration is confident that the strategy set forth is one which offers significant opportunities for consultation, deliberation and planning to meet the challenges the Town is likely to face in reducing and eliminating barriers, and to support actionable and achievable results.

There is a risk that not adopting a multi-year accessibility plan prior to January 1, 2022 could leave the Town non-compliant with the AODA.

There exists further risk that there may be insufficient investment in the development of financial reserves to address the remediation concerns that may arise in coming years. Among the various competing interests for limited financial resources, thought should be spared to whether the annual contributions to reserves are adequate to address the number of issues which may result from existing and future legislative changes.

#### **5. FINANCIAL MATTERS:**

When discussing funding for accessibility it should be noted that the Town contributes direct funding for accessible components in nearly every project it undertakes, as we are required to provide each good and service to meet or exceed the established legislated standard. The Town has also launched or partnered in the creation of a number of specific improvements, upgrades, initiatives and projects that are intended primarily to address accessibility. Such projects as the creation of an accessible entrance to the Carnegie Public Library or the establishment of the first Canadian Miracle League Baseball Diamond at the Libro Centre are prime examples of promoting the need for inclusivity, equity and respect in all activities of the Town.

The Town also contributes \$50,000 annually into the AODA Compliance Reserve fund to remediate compliance issues and improve the provision of goods and services in an accessible manner. If the Town were to increase its contributions into this reserve it would enable additional works to be completed and provide a faster resolution to those issues which may exist.

The adoption of a multi-year accessibility plan does not have direct financial impacts on the municipality. Indirectly, there may be costs borne by the municipality in the implementation of the tenets of the plan. As such costs are borne by meeting legislated accessibility standards, such expenses are actually related to the types of goods and services that Council should undertake. In this way, the plan reinforces the Town's commitment to upholding the legislated accessibility standards and Council is afforded the opportunity, when debating on a particular good or service, to reflect on how this may be affected by its obligation to deliver that good or service accessibly.

## **6. CONSULTATIONS:**

Public Engagement with persons with disabilities, service providers, the public at large, and the Amherstburg Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Chief Administrative Officer (Interim)  
Senior Management Team  
Communications Officer

## **7. CONCLUSION:**

Adoption of the 2021 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and Strategy is the first step in a five-year process designed to increase access to Town goods and services and improve the lives of residents and visitors to the Town of Amherstburg. Administration recommends that Council adopt the 2021 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and Strategy and give consideration to support for future initiatives and projects borne from ongoing public consultation.


  
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Kevin Fox  
**Policy and Committee Coordinator**

## Report Approval Details

Document Title:	2021 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and Strategy.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Dec 6, 2021

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Tiffany Hong

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Haddad', with a stylized, cursive script.

Tony Haddad

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Valerie Critchley', with a cursive script.

Valerie Critchley