



Office of the CAO

Prepared for: Council-in-Committee

Report: CAO-16-2024

Meeting Date: December 2, 2024

1. Title

Town of Fort Erie 2024-2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

2. Recommendations

That: Council approves the 2024-2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, attached as Appendix “1”, and further

That: Council directs staff to prepare a By-law to adopt the Town of Fort Erie 2024-2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and repeal By-law No. 157-2019.

3. Relation to Council’s Corporate Strategic Plan

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* requires the establishment, implementation, maintenance and documentation of a multi-year accessibility plan, which outlines the organization’s strategy to prevent and remove barriers and meet its requirements under the legislation.

4. List of Stakeholders

- Town of Fort Erie residents and businesses
- Visitors to the municipality
- Town of Fort Erie Members of Council, staff and volunteers, Boards and Committees
- The Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility

5. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to present to Council the Town of Fort Erie’s third Multi Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) for approval and subsequent adoption by By-law. The 2024-2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan is attached as Appendix “1” to the report.

6. Analysis

Legislative Requirement

On December 14, 2001 the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA)* was passed to improve access and opportunities for persons with disabilities, by identifying and removing barriers to full participation. Under the ODA, a municipality had to develop an annual accessibility plan, consult with people with disabilities to develop a plan, make the plan available to the public and establish an Accessibility Advisory Committee.

The Town of Fort Erie had developed seven previous annual Accessibility Plan documents in accordance with the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA)* based on consultation with the Town of Fort Erie Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) and audits of municipal facilities conducted by AAC members.

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)* lays out a comprehensive road map to make Ontario accessible to all people through the development, implementation and enforcement of new, mandatory accessibility standards for some of the most important aspects of people's lives (customer service, employment, information and communication, transportation and the design of public spaces). The aim of the AODA legislation is to make the Province fully accessible by 2025. The standards developed are mandatory for both public and private sectors.

Section 4 of Ontario Regulation 191/11 made under the *AODA, 2005* requires:

- the establishment, implementation, maintenance and documentation of a multi-year accessibility plan, which outlines the organization's strategy to prevent and remove barriers and meet its requirements under the legislation;
- the posting of the plan on the website and making the plan available in accessible format, upon request;
- review and update of the plan at least once every five years;
- the plan must be established, reviewed and updated in consultation with persons with disabilities and the Accessibility Advisory Committee; and
- an annual status report must be prepared on the progress of the measures taken to implement the strategy outlined in the multi-year plan and be posted on the website and made available in accessible format, upon request.

In order to ensure implementation of the requirements developed under the *AODA*, the Province requires that municipalities prepare a comprehensive multi-year plan, similar to other master plans that the municipality is required to complete (Water Master Plan, Roads Master Plan, etc.), so that proper planning, both legislatively and financially, can be put in place to address the compliance requirements.

Legislative Requirement, continued

The first Multi-Year Accessibility Plan was adopted by By-law No. 40-13. The second Multi-Year Accessibility Plan was adopted by By-law No. 157-2019. Annual status Reports were provided to Council each subsequent year, as required under the legislation. The 2024 Annual Report was received by Council at the October 7, 2024 Council-in-Committee meeting.

The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Attached as Appendix “1” to the Report is the final 2024-2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. The Plan is broken down into ten sections, as follows:

Section 1.0 – Introduction

Section 2.0 – Statement of Organizational Commitment

Section 3.0 – Background of the Accessibility Advisory Committee

Section 4.0 – Legislative Authority

Section 6.0 – Compliance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*

Section 6.0 – Public Consultation on Improving Access in the Community

Section 7.0 – Audits of Town Facilities, Parks and Playgrounds

Section 8.0 – Multi-Year Accessibility Plan Recommendations

Section 9.0 – Feedback and Contacts

Section 10.0 – Ongoing Review and Monitoring of the Plan

Public Consultation

As noted in the Plan, the Town has met all of the AODA compliance requirements required to date and so the AAC felt that it was important to reach out to the community to ask what they would like to see undertaken over the next five years, with the goal of making our community more accessible.

A public consultation campaign began with the AAC Chair and staff resource presenting at Council during National AccessAbility Awareness Week and encouraging participation in an on-line survey that was undertaken from June 7, 2024 through to July 20, 2024. Hard copies of the survey were also available at the Town Hall and the computer in the Town Hall atrium was set up for those that wanted to complete the survey on-line but did not have access to a computer.

The AAC Chair and staff resource attended the June 19, 2024 Seniors Stepping Out Event, hosted by the Ridgeway Legion, to raise awareness of accessibility in the community and encourage participation in the survey.

AAC members participated in the annual Ridgefest event to garner additional feedback on the MYAP’s development and shared space with Planning Staff that were obtaining feedback on the Official Plan and Parks and Open Space Master Plan

Public Consultation, continued

The Fort Erie Observer also highlighted the AAC's participation.

Similar to previous years, participants were asked three questions:

- 1) What barriers to **municipal services** do you feel are still occurring?
- 2) What other barriers in the **community** would you like to see addressed?
- 3) What does an accessible community look like to you?

The responses received and staff commentary related to response/action are included as Appendix "1" to the MYAP. Survey results helped form a number of the recommendations contained in the MYAP

Audits of Town Facilities, Parks and Playgrounds

Audits of Town facilities, parks and playgrounds took place during the month of June and July and detailed reports are attached as Appendix "2" to the MYAP.

AAC members inspected the following locations:

Facilities:

- ✓ Bay Beach
- ✓ Crystal Beach Waterfront Park Washrooms
- ✓ Crystal Ridge Arena
- ✓ Ridge Road Museum
- ✓ Town Hall – Municipal Centre
- ✓ Leisureplex
- ✓ Waverly Beach Washrooms
- ✓ Gibson Centre
- ✓ Fort Erie Tennis Club
- ✓ Stevensville Memorial Hall
- ✓ Ferndale Park Washrooms
- ✓ Oakes Park Washroom
- ✓ Sugar Bowl Washrooms

Playgrounds/Parks/Trails:

- ✓ Bay Beach
- ✓ Crystal Beach Waterfront Park
- ✓ Crystal Ridge Park
- ✓ Lions Field Park
- ✓ Shagbark Park – Nature Trail
- ✓ Battlefield Museum Park
- ✓ Ferndale Park
- ✓ Waverly Beach
- ✓ Albert Street Playground
- ✓ Oakes Park

Audits of Town Facilities, Parks and Playgrounds, continued

Playgrounds/Parks/Trails, continued:

- ✓ Sugar Bowl Spray Pad
- ✓ Bowen Road Park
- ✓ Stevensville Memorial Playground
- ✓ United Empire Loyalist Park – West Main
- ✓ Ott Road Park
- ✓ AC Douglas Park #1 – playground
- ✓ AC Douglas Park #2 – storm water management pond parkland

Some of the barriers identified during the audits had work orders created where staff could make the corrections immediately.

Based on the feedback received and the inspections that took place, the following recommendations are contained in the Plan:

- THAT: the Town of Fort Erie continues to meet its obligations under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act;
- THAT: the Town of Fort Erie include long-term planning and budgeting for accessibility improvements in Town facilities identified during the AAC audits related to automatic doors and improvements to accessible washrooms;
- THAT: the Town of Fort Erie include long-term planning and budgeting for accessibility improvements at community parks, specifically for universal/accessible washrooms, benches, pathways, shade areas and rubberized surfaces;
- THAT: the Town of Fort Erie investigate improving access into the water;
- THAT: the Town of Fort Erie pro-actively inspect, maintain and clear sidewalks and curb cuts to ensure a smooth path of travel for all residents;
- THAT: the Town of Fort Erie, in consultation with the AAC, review on-street parking and municipal parking lots and create new accessible parking spaces closer to public buildings, where determined, as well as investigate the need for accessible bicycle paths;
- THAT: the Accessibility Advisory Committee continue to be consulted on all applicable Master Plans, Neighbourhood Plans and major projects to ensure no new barriers are created;
- THAT: the Accessibility Advisory Committee continue to work with businesses and organizations to improve access and create a more inclusive experience; and
- THAT: the Accessibility Advisory Committee lead an awareness campaign on the barriers that are created when sidewalks and accessible parking spaces are blocked; and
- THAT: the Town Council acknowledges the work being done to create a more inclusive community on an annual basis during National AccessAbility Week.

The AAC will continue to review the feedback comments received from the community and begin work at addressing the concerns that the AAC can influence or help implement.

7. Financial, Staffing and Accessibility (AODA) Implications

Council continues to support the Accessibility Advisory Committee with annual funding that allows for training, attendance at conferences and interpretive services.

Council also provides funding through the Facility Budget to address barriers identified and accessible features are included in all new playground designs.

Specifically in 2024, funding was provided to continue the StopGap Ramp Project.

8. Policies Affecting Proposal

By-law No. 157-2019 adopted the second Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2019-2023. This By-law will be repealed once the 2024-2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan is adopted by Council.

9. Comments from Departments, Community and Corporate Partners

The AAC is comprised of nine members of the public, Councillor Noyes as the Council representative, and staff representing Building and Facilities. The AAC staff coordinator is the Manager of Corporate and Community Initiatives. All Accessibility Advisory Committee members have provided input into the Plan and were instrumental in conducting the public consultation and audits/inspections of municipal assets. At the October 29, 2024, AAC meeting, the following recommendation was passed:

Recommendation No. 3

Moved by: Lindsay Davis

Seconded by: Gary Kooistra

THAT: the Town of Fort Erie Accessibility Advisory Committee approves the draft 2024-2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, as amended, that will be presented at the Council-in-Committee meeting of December 2, 2024.

(CARRIED)

Comments from the community are included as Appendix "1" to the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

10. Alternatives

No alternatives are recommended as Multi-Year Accessibility Plans are a provincially legislated requirement.

11. Communicating Results

The AODA requires that Multi-Year Accessibility Plans and Annual Status Reports are made publicly available. Plans, Reports, Minutes of meetings and other pertinent information are available on the Town's Boards and Committees web page. The AAC also has their own web-page that provides resources and materials.

12. Conclusion

The Town of Fort Erie’s Accessibility Advisory Committee members are a hardworking group of volunteers that take pride in their achievements to make our community more accessible.

It has been almost 20 years since the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* was first introduced and it seemed like we had ample time to work towards the goal of creating an Accessible Ontario by 2025. Municipalities have led the journey, identifying and removing barriers and meeting compliance requirements under the *AODA*, but the work is not yet done. Focusing on the future, it is important for the Town of Fort Erie to expand its reach out into the community to ensure that barriers are removed, no new barriers are created, that an inclusive community is created and sustained, and that we truly reach Council’s Vision of becoming “*A Community for Everyone*”.

13. Report Approval

Prepared by:
Bev Bradnam, DPA, CMMIII
Manager of Corporate and Community Initiatives

Approved by:
Chris McQueen, MBA
Chief Administrative Officer

14. Attachments

Appendix 1 – Town of Fort Erie 2024-2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan



Town of Fort Erie 2024 - 2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

The prevention and removal of barriers to ensure our Community is accessible to all.

Town of Fort Erie

2024 - 2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Table of Contents

Section 1.0	Introduction	Page 1
Section 2.0	Statement of Organizational Commitment	Page 2
Section 3.0	Background of the Accessibility Advisory Committee	Page 3
Section 4.0	Legislative Authority	Page 4
Section 5.0	Compliance with the <i>Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.</i>	Page 5
Section 6.0	Public Consultation on Improving Access in the Community	Page 10
Section 7.0	Audits of Town Facilities, Parks and Playgrounds.....	Page 12
Section 8.0	Multi-Year Accessibility Plan Recommendations	Page 14
Section 9.0	Feedback and Contacts	Page 15
Section 10.0	Ongoing Review and Monitoring of the Plan	Page 15
Appendix "1" - Survey Results		
Appendix "2" - Audits of Town Facilities, Parks and Playgrounds		

Town of Fort Erie

2024 - 2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The 2024 – 2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan outlines the Town of Fort Erie’s strategy to prevent and remove barriers and meet its requirements under the *Accessibilities for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*.

The AODA requires the development of a multi-year plan, similar to other municipal master plans that the Town has in place, to ensure the long term planning for identification, prevention, and removal of barriers to accessibility. The Plan requires that consultation takes place with the Town’s Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) and persons with disabilities within the community.

The Town of Fort Erie’s 2013-2018 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, approved by By-law No. 40-2013, was the first long term planning document required under the AODA. Each year since the Plan’s adoption, staff has provided an Annual Accessibility Report to Council and the community. By-law No. 157-2019 adopted the Town of Fort Erie’s second Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. Prior to the requirement for a Multi-Year Plan, seven previous annual Accessibility Plan documents were approved by Council in accordance with the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA)*, based on consultation with the AAC and audits conducted by AAC members of municipal facilities and parks.

As the municipality’s compliance requirements under the AODA have all been met, the consultation for the third Multi-Year Plan has dealt more with the community as a whole and how the Town can be a leader and work with our community partners to improve access for everyone.

The Annual Accessibility Report, received under separate cover, continues to highlight the achievements of the Town’s AAC throughout the previous year and demonstrates how the Town continues to identify and remove barriers. The AAC also has extended its reach out into the community and has worked with several businesses and organizations to improve access.

Town of Fort Erie

2024 - 2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

2.0 STATEMENT OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

The Town of Fort Erie is a progressive, caring community and is committed to being responsive to the needs of its citizens. We pride ourselves on our sense of community, our many charitable organizations, and high standard of public service. We are cognizant of the diverse needs of our residents and strive to provide services and facilities that are accessible to all.

Our vision of the Town of Fort Erie is that of a well-designed community that is safe, convenient and comfortable for all persons.

The Town of Fort Erie, as an employer and provider of services, is committed to barrier free access and will:

- 1) continue to take a leadership role in achieving and setting an example as a barrier free community to the business, institutional and volunteer sectors of our community;
- 2) continue to identify barriers and gaps in existing services and facilities and continuously improve the level of accessibility of existing municipal services and facilities; and
- 3) actively encourage input from all segments of the community in the design, development and operation of new and renovated municipal services and facilities.

The Town of Fort Erie is committed to meeting the accessibility needs of people with disabilities in a timely and proactive manner and will use reasonable efforts to provide equitable access to programs, goods, services and facilities in a way that takes into account the following key principles:

Dignity: Service is provided in a respectful manner consistent with the needs of the individual.

Independence: Services for persons with disabilities shall support their independence while respecting their right to safety and personal privacy.

Equity/Equality of Outcome: Service outcome is the same for persons with disabilities as for persons without disabilities.

Integrated: Services allow people with disabilities to fully benefit from the same services, in the same place and in the same or similar way as other customers.

Sensitive: Service is provided in a manner that is respectful to an individual's needs.

Responsive: Service is delivered in a timely manner, considering the nature of the service and the accommodation required.

Inclusive: We are committed to an inclusive environment as one where people experience both the feeling and reality of belonging and where, as a result, they are able to fulfill their potential.

Town of Fort Erie

2024 - 2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

3.0 BACKGROUND OF THE ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

On December 14, 2001 the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA)* was passed to improve access and opportunities for persons with disabilities, making Ontario a more accessible province.

Municipalities with a population of 10,000 or more were also required under the ODA to set up Accessibility Advisory Committees (AAC) by September 30, 2002. By-law No. 171-2002 established the Town of Fort Erie Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC). In 2006, a review of boards and committees decreased the composition of the committee from the original 15 members to 8 members. In 2023, the committee was increased to 9 members. The majority of AAC members must be persons with disabilities. In addition, there is one Council member representative on the Committee.

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)* repealed the section related to Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committees and replaced it with Part VII.

Based on the requirements of the AODA, the Committee:

- advises Council about the requirements and implementation of accessibility standards and the preparation of accessibility reports and such other matters for which the Council may seek its advice;
- review in a timely manner the site plans and drawings described in section 41 of the *Planning Act* that the committee selects;
- evaluates the Town's progress annually and the plan is updated to identify further barriers to people with disabilities and ways to remove and prevent them; and
- gives advice to the Council on the accessibility of buildings, structures or premises that the Council purchases, builds or renovates, or generally, makes available as a municipal building.

While the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)* sets out new requirements for multi-year planning for accessibility, the AAC still plays a major role in commenting and helping shape the content of the Plan and will continue to evaluate the measures that the Town puts in place to remove barriers and comply with the AODA Standards.

The AAC meets on a monthly basis (with the exception of July, August and December) and the minutes of each meeting are provided to Council for their review and approval. The AAC Minutes are posted on the Town's web-site under Boards and Committees.

Members of the Committee are enthusiastic and committed to making Fort Erie a more fully accessible community. Their advice and suggestions will be appreciated by all of the citizens, visitors, and businesses of Fort Erie for many years to come.

Town of Fort Erie

2024 - 2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

4.0 LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

On December 14, 2001 the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA) was passed to improve access and opportunities for persons with disabilities, by identifying and removing barriers to full participation. Under the ODA a municipality had to develop an annual accessibility plan, consult with people with disabilities to develop a plan, make the plan available to the public and establish an Accessibility Advisory Committee.

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) laid out a comprehensive road map to make Ontario accessible to all people through the development, implementation and enforcement of new mandatory accessibility standards for some of the most important aspects of people's lives. The aim of the AODA legislation is to make the Province fully accessible by 2025. The following standards are mandatory for both the public and private sector:

1. **Customer Service** (introduced as Ontario Regulation 429/07 and integrated into the IASR 191/11 as Section IV.2) – governs how we provide accessible customer service.
2. **Information and Communication** (Integrated Accessibility Standards, O. Reg. 191/11) – aims to identify and consider the nature of barriers experienced by people with a wide range of disabilities in the area of information and communication.
3. **Employment** (Integrated Accessibility Standards, O. Reg. 191/11) – governs how we recruit, hire and accommodate individuals in the workplace.
4. **Transportation** (Integrated Accessibility Standards, O. Reg. 191/11) – aims to remove barriers to public transportation, so people with disabilities can travel more easily in Ontario.
5. **Design of Public Spaces** - (introduced as O. Reg. 413/12 and integrated into the IASR 191/11 as Section IV.1) – aims to make outdoor public spaces in Ontario accessible for all new construction and extensive renovations.

Section 4 of Ontario Regulation 191/11 made under the *AODA, 2005* requires:

- the establishment, implementation, maintenance and documentation of a multi-year accessibility plan, which outlines the organization's strategy to prevent and remove barriers and meet its requirements under the legislation;
- the posting of the plan on the website and making the plan available in accessible format, upon request;
- review and update of the plan at least once every five years;
- the plan must be established, reviewed and updated in consultation with persons with disabilities and the Accessibility Advisory Committee; and
- an annual status report must be prepared on the progress of the measures taken to implement the strategy outlined in the multi-year plan and be posted on the website and made available in accessible format, upon request.

Town of Fort Erie

2024 - 2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

5.0 COMPLIANCE WITH THE AODA (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act)

Compliance Actions: AODA Standards January 1, 2010 to October 31, 2024

Regulation: Customer Service Standard (429/07 and integrated into O. Reg. 191/11 – Part IV.2)

Requirement: Customer Service √ **Completed**

Action:

The Town of Fort Erie is committed to offering excellent accessible customer service. Ongoing compliance with the customer service standard includes the training of new hires as part of their orientation and volunteers who interact with the public on the Town's behalf.

Regulation: Integrated Accessibility Standard (191/11)

PART I - GENERAL

Requirement: Accessibility Policies √ **Completed**

Action:

By-law No. 128-2012 adopted the Town of Fort Erie's Accessibility Policy. The Accessibility Policy guides efforts to achieve compliance with AODA requirements and establishes the Town's core accessibility principles. The Policy's statement of commitment affirms the Town's commitment to meet the accessibility needs of all people. The Policy was updated in 2016 (By-law No. 73-2016) to include revisions related to service animals and support persons that were effective July 1, 2016.

Requirement: Multi-Year Accessibility Plan √ **Completed**

Action:

By-law No. 40-2013 adopted the Town of Fort Erie's first Multi Year Accessibility Plan. By-law No. 157-2019 adopted the second Multi Year Accessibility Plan 2019-2023. The Plan outlines the Town's accessibility planning strategy to remove barriers and meet the compliance requirements of the AODA. Annual status reports are provided to Council.

Town of Fort Erie

2024 - 2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Compliance Actions: AODA Standards January 1, 2010 to October 31, 2024, continued

Regulation: Integrated Accessibility Standard (191/11), continued

PART I – GENERAL, continued

Requirement: Accessible Purchases √ **Completed**

Action:

Accessibility requirements are included in all Request for Proposals, tenders and contracts, where applicable.

Requirement: Incorporate accessibility features into self-service kiosks √ **Completed**

Action:

The Accessibility Policy includes this requirement. The new admissions kiosk at Bay Beach is accessible; however, the Parking Pay and Display machines are still inaccessible. Persons with an accessible parking permit do not pay for parking.

Requirement: Training on Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation (IASR) and the Ontario Human Rights Code √ **Completed**

Action:

All employees, including new hires, members of Council, volunteer fire fighters, boards and committee members have been trained on the IASR Standard and on the Ontario Human Rights Code, as it relates to persons with disabilities. An e-module and pamphlet were also created and is available on the Accessibility web page.

Town of Fort Erie

2024 - 2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Compliance Actions: AODA Standards January 1, 2010 to October 31, 2024, continued

Regulation: Integrated Accessibility Standard (191/11), continued

PART II – INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

Requirement: Accessible Information ✓ **Completed**

Action:

Accessible formats and communication supports are provided upon request, including emergency and public safety information made available to the public. Town administrative staff have participated in accessible document creation training and developed accessible templates for the most frequently used documents. Compliance requirements are also included in the Accessibility Policy. Additional training for new hires and a refresher for staff will be taking place in early 2025.

Requirement: Making Feedback Processes Accessible ✓ **Completed**

Action:

The Accessibility Policy outlines the feedback process. Staff are also trained to respond to feedback in a way that takes into account the individual's needs.

Requirement: Make all new internet websites and new web content on those sites conform to WCAG 2.0, Level A

✓ **Completed**

Action:

AODA compliance requirements were to be met by December, 2021, which includes conformance with Website WCAG Level AA. The Town entered into a compliance agreement with the Province as they did not meet the compliance requirements by the December 2021 date. The new website was unveiled in July 2023 and meets WCAG Level AA compliance requirements. The Accessibility staff resource was part of the review team for the new website.

Town of Fort Erie

2024 - 2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Compliance Actions: AODA Standards January 1, 2010 to October 31, 2024, continued

Regulation: Integrated Accessibility Standard (191/11), continued

PART III – EMPLOYMENT

Requirement: Individualized Work-place Emergency Response Information for Employees ✓ **Completed**

Action:

Safe Work Standard for Workplace Emergency Response Information Plan was developed and distributed to all staff and included in all Fire Safety Plans. The Standard is reviewed with new staff during accessibility training.

Requirement: Make employment practices accessible, including recruitment, employee accommodation, return to work, performance management, career deployment and redeployment

✓ **Completed**

Action:

Administrative Police Directive ERC-006 “Accommodation in Employment” describes the accommodation procedures available to employees and applicants with disabilities to enable their full participation in employment activities. The Directive is reviewed with new staff during accessibility training.

PART IV – TRANSPORTATION

No longer applicable as the Town is no longer the service provider for conventional or specialized transit service.

Regulation: Design of Public Spaces (O. Reg. 413/12 and integrated into O. Reg. 191/11 – Part IV.1)

PART IV.1 – DESIGN OF PUBLIC SPACES

Requirement: The Design of Public Spaces (DOPS) Standard became effective as of January 1, 2016. The Standard covers any new construction or redevelopment of public spaces.

Town of Fort Erie

2024 - 2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Compliance Actions: AODA Standards January 1, 2010 to October 31, 2024, continued

PART IV.1 – DESIGN OF PUBLIC SPACES, continued

Requirement: The Standard provides compliance requirements related to:

- Recreational Trails and Beach Access Routes
- Outdoor Public Use Eating Areas and Play Spaces
- Exterior Paths of Travel
- Accessible Parking
- Obtaining Service including service counters, fixed queuing guides, and waiting areas

√ **Completed**

Action:

The Town's Accessibility Policy (By-law No. 73-2016) confirms that the Town is committed to designing new construction or redevelopment of public spaces in accordance with the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* (Ontario Regulation 413/12) under the AODA.

The Bay Beach redevelopment includes accessible beach access routes, accessible eating areas and play spaces, accessible washrooms and changerooms. An adult-size change table is also available.

Planning staff continue to consult with the AAC on playground features to ensure compliance with the legislation. The AAC has also been consulted on the Parks and Open Space Master Plan

Accessible Parking, which was updated in 2012, addresses accessibility requirements. The DOPS requirements are reviewed with any new construction or remediation.

AODA Implementation continues

AODA compliance requirements continue and AAC members review and provide comment on the five-year reviews conducted by the Province's Standards Advisory Committees.

Town of Fort Erie 2024 - 2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

As the Town has met compliance requirements under the AODA, the development of the 2024-2029 Multi-Year Plan once again looked outside of municipally provided services and facilities and asked the Community what they would like to see undertaken over the next five years, with the goal to making our community more accessible.



A public consultation campaign began with the AAC Chair and staff resource presenting at Council and encouraging participation in an on-line survey that was undertaken from June 7, 2024 through to July 20, 2024 to help in the development of the third Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. Hard copies of the survey were also available at Town Hall and the computer in the Town Hall atrium was set up for those that wanted to complete the survey on-line.

Participants were asked three questions:

- 1) What barriers to **municipal services** do you feel are still occurring?
- 2) What other barriers in the **community** would you like to see addressed?
- 3) What does an accessible community look like to you?

The AAC Chair and staff resource also attended the Seniors Stepping Out Event held on June 19, 2024 to raise awareness of accessibility in the community and encourage participation in the survey.



AAC members participated in the annual Ridgefest event to garner additional feedback on the MYAP's development. Banners were created and thank-you gifts were given out to those that completed the survey. The AAC shared space with the Town's Planning staff that were obtaining feedback on the Official Plan and Parks and Open Space Master Plan. The Fort Erie Observer highlighted the AAC's participation.



The responses received during the Seniors Stepping Out Event, Ridgefest, from the on-line survey and from Town Hall are attached as Appendix "1". A response/action is also included in response to the comments received.

Town of Fort Erie

2024 - 2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

6.0 PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON IMPROVING ACCESS IN THE COMMUNITY, continued

Based on the comments received from survey participants, the following barriers were identified and will form part of the recommendations of the 2024-2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

- 1) What barriers to **municipal services** do you feel are still occurring:
 - Need for accessible playgrounds, including more benches and shade areas
 - Need for accessible bike paths, especially in Crystal Beach
 - Need for accessible washrooms at community parks and for those with accessible washrooms, ensure that toilets are higher
 - Need for additional accessible parking spaces throughout Town
 - Doors to Council Chambers must be accessible
 - Sidewalk snow removal needs to be improved to provide access to all
 - Road improvements as potholes are dangerous to people with bad backs
 - Lengthen the time the beach mats are out
 - When reconstructing any Town facilities, ensure that the turning radius of accessible washrooms meet the new standards
 - More access for persons with disabilities to get into the water

- 2) What **barriers in the community** would you like to see addressed:
 - Need to make more businesses accessible and educate them on what they need to do
 - Need more StopGaps for wheelchair users and strollers
 - Ensure accessible parking is available at any festivals or events
 - Would like to see some type of accessibility app that can show green if accessible, yellow if there are some barriers, and red if totally not accessible
 - Ensure that Douglas Memorial Hospital remains open post 2028
 - Transit concerns for persons with disabilities accessing services and those utilizing OnDemand accessing social services, such as foodbanks
 - Need to help make fishing available to persons with disabilities

- 3) What does an accessible community look like?

The majority of comments received speak to a community that is welcoming, inclusive, where everyone has access to live, work, play and travel. Similar to Council's Corporate Strategic Plan Vision ... *A Community for Everyone*.

Town of Fort Erie

2024 - 2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

7.0 AUDITS OF TOWN FACILITIES, PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS

Audits of Town Facilities, Parks and Playgrounds took place during the months of June and July and detailed reports are attached as Appendix “2” to the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

AAC members inspected the following locations:

Facilities:

- ✓ Bay Beach
- ✓ Crystal Beach Waterfront Park Washrooms
- ✓ Crystal Ridge Arena
- ✓ Ridge Road Museum
- ✓ Town Hall – Municipal Centre
- ✓ Leisureplex
- ✓ Waverly Beach Washrooms
- ✓ Gibson Centre
- ✓ Fort Erie Tennis Club
- ✓ Stevensville Memorial Hall
- ✓ Ferndale Park Washrooms
- ✓ Oakes Park Washroom
- ✓ Sugar Bowl Washrooms

Playgrounds/Parks/Trails:

- ✓ Bay Beach
- ✓ Crystal Beach Waterfront Park
- ✓ Crystal Ridge Park
- ✓ Lions Field Park
- ✓ Shagbark Park – Nature Trail
- ✓ Battlefield Museum Park
- ✓ Ferndale Park
- ✓ Waverly Beach
- ✓ Albert Street Playground
- ✓ Oakes Park
- ✓ Sugar Bowl Spray Pad
- ✓ Bowen Road Park
- ✓ Stevensville Memorial Playground
- ✓ United Empire Loyalist Park – West Main
- ✓ Ott Road Park
- ✓ AC Douglas Park #1 – playground
- ✓ AC Douglas Park #2 – storm water management pond parkland

Some of the barriers identified during the audits had work orders created where staff could make the corrections immediately.

Town of Fort Erie

2024 - 2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

7.0 AUDITS OF TOWN FACILITIES, PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS, continued

The following barriers were identified and will form part of the recommendations of the 2024-2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan:

- Where there are depressed curbs, ensure tactile warning surface indicators are included.
- Wayfinding signage at all parks should meet accessibility requirements. Current font is too small and cannot be viewed easily from a distance.
- Accessible/universal washrooms should be included in any new community park design and long-term planning for playground/park upgrades at community parks should include a universal washroom.
- Where accessible washrooms are in Town facilities there should be a long-term plan put in place to meet the current requirements for higher toilets and larger turning radius. Some of the washrooms located in parks do not have automatic doors (i.e. Waverly Park). Some of the washrooms had a lip at the entrance, even though they have accessible signage (Ott Road Park, Oakes Park).
- Automatic doors at Gibson Centre need to be turned on and the table in the entrance replaced with a smaller table.
- Ensure that the entrance path of travel to playgrounds have no barriers.
- Playgrounds should have rubberized surfaces as the engineered wood fibre is not accessible and very difficult to maneuver. Long term planning and budgeting should include rubberized surfaces.
- Extend the length of time the beach mats are placed at Bay Beach (late spring to late fall).
- Ensure playgrounds have accessible features.
- Some parks require accessible parking or improvements to spaces already in place.
- Accessible viewing areas at both arenas should be improved.

Town of Fort Erie

2024 - 2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

8.0 MULTI-YEAR PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

As noted, the Town of Fort Erie has met all AODA compliance requirements. Focusing on the future, and the target date of 2025 to create an Accessible Ontario, it is important for the Town of Fort Erie to expand its reach out into the community to ensure that barriers are removed, no new barriers are created, and that an inclusive community is created and sustained.

The following recommendations, if enacted, will lead us closer to that end goal of an Accessible Fort Erie.

Recommendations:

- THAT: the Town of Fort Erie continues to meet its obligations under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act;
- THAT: the Town of Fort Erie include long-term planning and budgeting for accessibility improvements in Town facilities identified during the AAC audits related to automatic doors and improvements to accessible washrooms;
- THAT: the Town of Fort Erie include long-term planning and budgeting for accessibility improvements at community parks, specifically for universal/accessible washrooms, benches, pathways, shade areas and rubberized surfaces;
- THAT: the Town of Fort Erie investigate improving access into the water;
- THAT: the Town of Fort Erie pro-actively inspect, maintain and clear sidewalks and curb cuts to ensure a smooth path of travel for all residents;
- THAT: the Town of Fort Erie, in consultation with the AAC, review on-street parking and municipal parking lots and create new accessible parking spaces closer to public buildings, where determined, as well as investigate the need for accessible bicycle paths;
- THAT: the Accessibility Advisory Committee continue to be consulted on all applicable Master Plans, Neighbourhood Plans and major projects to ensure no new barriers are created;
- THAT: the Accessibility Advisory Committee continue to work with businesses and organizations to improve access and create a more inclusive experience;
- THAT: the Accessibility Advisory Committee lead an awareness campaign on the barriers that are created when sidewalks and accessible parking spaces are blocked;
- THAT: the Town Council acknowledges the work being done to create a more inclusive community on an annual basis during National AccessAbility Week.

Town of Fort Erie

2024 - 2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

9.0 FEEDBACK AND CONTACTS

The Town of Fort Erie welcomes feedback on the 2024-2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, and on the accessibility of our programs, services and facilities.

Feedback may be provided directly to the service provider or to:

Town of Fort Erie – Accessibility Coordinator
1 Municipal Centre Drive
Fort Erie, ON L2A 2S6
Telephone: (905) 871-1600 ext. 2201
FAX: (905) 871-4022
E-mail: bbradnam@forterie.ca

All feedback will be kept in strict confidence and used to improve the way we do business. In addition, the author of the feedback will be provided a response in the format in which the feedback was received outlining actions deemed appropriate, if any.

10.0 COMPLIANCE, ONGOING REVIEW AND MONITORING OF THE PLAN

Failure to comply with the AODA regulations can result in administrative penalties as defined in Part V: Compliance of the *Integrated Accessibility Standards, Ontario Regulation 191/11*.

Annual status reports on the implementation of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2024-2029 will be provided to Council each year, as required, and made available on the Town's web-site and in alternative format, upon request.

The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will be reviewed and updated at least once every five years.

Creating an Accessible Fort Erie

Our vision of the Town of Fort Erie is that of a well-designed community that is safe, convenient and comfortable for all persons, with or without disabilities. By implementing the requirements of the AODA, we are all working towards creating an accessible Town and Province.

“It’s time we take our focus off disabilities, and place it on capabilities, so we can see the person first”.

~ Robert M. Hensel