



<b>Prepared for</b>	Council-in-Committee	<b>Report No.</b>	CAO-24-2021
<b>Agenda Date</b>	November 8, 2021	<b>File No.</b>	120809

<b>Subject</b>
<b>ANNUAL ACCESSIBILITY STATUS REPORT - 2021</b>

<b>Recommendations</b>
<b><u>THAT</u> Council receives the Accessibility Status Report 2021, attached as Appendix “1” to Report No. CAO-24-2021, as the annual Accessibility Status Report required under the <i>Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act</i>.</b>

<b>Relation to Council’s 2018-2022 Corporate Strategic Plan</b>
The <i>Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005</i> , 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.

<b>List of Stakeholders</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Town of Fort Erie residents and businesses</li><li>- Visitors to the municipality</li><li>- Town of Fort Erie Members of Council, staff and volunteers, Boards and Committees</li><li>- The Ontario Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility</li></ul>

Prepared by:	Approved by:
<i>Original Signed</i>	<i>Original Signed</i>
Bev Bradnam, DPA, CMM III Manager, Strategic Initiatives	Tom Kuchyt, CET Chief Administrative Officer

## **Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to present Council with the annual Accessibility Status Report, as required under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*.

## **Analysis**

### **Legislative Requirement**

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)* lays out a comprehensive road map to make Ontario accessible to all people through the development, implementation and enforcement of 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* 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.

Council adopted By-law No. 157-2019, being the 2019-2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. This was the second Multi-Year Plan adopted by Council. Section 4 of the Regulation also requires the preparation of an annual status report outlining the progress made on implementing the multi-year strategy and requires the report be posted on the website and made available in accessible format, upon request.

### **The Annual Status Report**

Attached as Appendix "1" to the Report is the annual Accessibility Status Report that highlights action taken by the Town of Fort Erie to ensure compliance with the AODA legislation.

The Annual Status Report also provides a report on the achievements of the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC), based on the following six specific categories:

- 1) Commitment of Funding by Council;
- 2) Review, Comment and Implementation of the AODA Legislation;
- 3) Review of Site Plans/Secondary Plans/Park Development;
- 4) Removal of Barriers;
- 5) Representation/Interaction with Organizations; and
- 6) Other Accomplishments.

Due to COVID-19, the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) was unable to formally meet monthly, as had been past practice, but was able to have virtual check-ins which included a review of the Crystal Beach Secondary Plan. Three formal meetings were held from October 2020 to October 2021, with one held at the Stevensville Hall, one at the Fort Erie Public Library and one at the Town Hall in order to ensure social distancing. While the Committee was unable to formally meet during most of the year, the AAC Coordinator continued to monitor and respond to accessibility requests and, when required, reached out to the AAC Chair and members of the Committee for input and discussion.

### **Financial/Staffing and Accessibility (AODA) Implications**

The AAC is provided with an annual budget for training, conferences and meeting expenses. It is important to note that the implementation of the AODA requirements to date have been done in-house at no additional cost to the municipality.

All training of staff and volunteers has been conducted in-house by the AAC Coordinator, including training materials and e-modules.

The compliance requirements for Transportation under the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation have been included in the contracts with both transit service providers and funding requirements have been provided in reports to Council under separate cover by Infrastructure staff. Additional funds were required to ensure fare parity and hour parity between conventional and specialized transit, as required under the legislation. Effective October 4, 2021, the conventional transit system was replaced with an On Demand service and many of the AODA Transportation Standard requirements were no longer required, as noted in Appendix "1" under the Compliance Actions section.

In 2021, funding was used to install a Hearing Loop Induction System at Customer Service to assist customers who are deaf or hard of hearing. With the introduction of plexiglass at these stations, it has made it more difficult for individuals to communicate with the Customer Service staff. The introduction of this new system and masks that have a clear mouth piece has improved communications for customers.

The Facilities Manager includes an annual budget allocation for accessibility improvements to Town Facilities based on the AAC's audit of municipal facilities. Due to COVID-19, the audits were not conducted this year and will hopefully resume in 2022.

Every two years, the Town is required to complete a Provincial AODA Compliance Report based on specific questions related to service provision. The 2021 Report was submitted on October 5, 2021, and shows that we are in non-compliance due to our present web-site. An explanation was provided to the Province outlining our plan for a new website that will meet the requirements of the Information and Communications Standard regulation under the AODA. In early 2020, an audit of the 2019 Compliance Report was conducted by the Province and at that time the Town was in compliance as the additional website requirements were not required until 2021. It is likely that the Town will be audited based on the 2021 responses.

**Policies Affecting Proposal**

By-law No. 157-2019 adopted the 2019-2023 Multi Year Accessibility Plan and repealed the initial Plan (By-law No. 40-2013).

By-law No. 124-2019 adopted Council's 2018-2022 Corporate Strategic Plan. In order to achieve Council's vision of a welcoming, prosperous, connected community of choice it is important to work towards an inclusive society where all residents and visitors feel welcome and can participate fully in community life.

**Comments from Relevant Departments/Community and Corporate Partners**

The AAC is comprised of eight members of the public - Councillor Noyes as the Council representative; a representative from the Transit provider; and 6 community members, the majority of which have some form of disability as is legislatively required. The Committee is also served by staff representing Building and Parks/Facilities. The AAC staff resource is the Manager, Strategic Initiatives.

At the October 26, 2021 AAC meeting, the Committee members reviewed the Annual Status Report and made minor amendments. The following recommendation was passed by the Committee:

**Recommendation No. 2:**

**Moved by: Gary Kooistra**  
**Seconded by: Councillor Noyes**

**THAT: The Accessibility Advisory Committee approves the draft Annual Accessibility Report, as amended, that will be presented to Council at the November 8, 2021 Council-in-Committee meeting.**

**(CARRIED)**

**Communicating Results**

The Report is prepared annually and is posted on the Town's Accessibility web page.

**Alternatives**

No alternatives are recommended as Multi-Year Accessibility Plans, including annual status reports, are a provincially legislated requirement.

**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. The AAC will continue to have input into the accessibility plan process; however, the onus for implementing the AODA requirements through long term planning is now the responsibility of municipal staff and has become part of their day-to-day tasks and policies. It is imperative and a legislative requirement that the proper long term plans be put in place to ensure an accessible Ontario by 2025.

**Attachments**

Appendix "1" – Annual Accessibility Status Report 2021

2021



# Accessibility Status Report

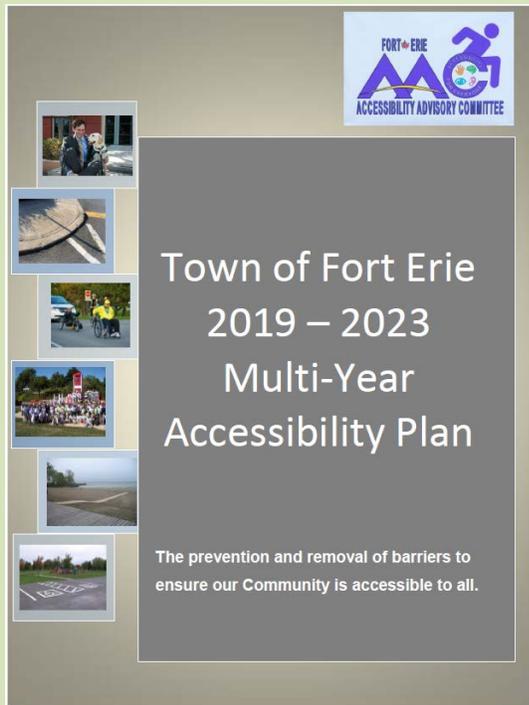
Town of Fort Erie



An update on actions by the Town of Fort Erie to prevent and remove barriers for people with disabilities and implement the Town's 2019-2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

# Town of Fort Erie ACCESSIBILITY STATUS REPORT 2021

Please visit the Town's web-site at [www.forterrie.ca](http://www.forterrie.ca) to view the Town of Fort Erie's 2019-2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan or contact the staff resource to request a copy.



The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)* aims to have an accessible Ontario by 2025. To accomplish this, five mandatory accessibility standards have been developed that affect the most common areas of our daily lives:

- Customer Service
- Information and Communication
- Employment
- Transportation
- Design of Public Spaces

Both public and private sector organizations must implement these standards.

The AODA 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.

By-law No. 40-13 adopted the Town of Fort Erie's first Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2013-2018. By-law No. 157-2019 adopted the Town of Fort Erie's second Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2019-2023.

This Accessibility Status Report is the annual update that the Town is required to provide in order to inform members of Council and the community of the measures taken to improve accessibility and implement the Province's legislated accessibility requirements.

The Status Report also provides an update on the actions taken to implement the 2019-2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

The following chart highlights actions taken by the Town of Fort Erie to comply with the individual standards within the Regulation from January 1, 2010 to October 31, 2021. They are organized under the accessibility standards of the AODA.

The Report also provides details of achievements made by the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) from October 2020 to October 31, 2021. Due to the impacts of COVID-19, the AAC was only able to meet three times in a formal setting but did have virtual check-ins throughout the pandemic.

# Town of Fort Erie

## ACCESSIBILITY STATUS REPORT 2021

### Compliance Actions: AODA Standards January 1, 2010 to October 31, 2021

Requirement	Action	Status: Completed
<b>CUSTOMER SERVICE</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible Customer Service</li> </ul>	<p>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.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>GENERAL</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessibility Policies</li> </ul>	<p>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.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-Year Accessibility Plan</li> </ul>	<p>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.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible purchases</li> </ul>	<p>Accessibility requirements are included in all Request for Proposals, tenders and contracts, where applicable.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate accessibility features into self-service kiosks</li> </ul>	<p>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 and tickets are not issued to those with an accessible parking permit.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

# Town of Fort Erie

## ACCESSIBILITY STATUS REPORT 2021

### Compliance Actions: AODA Standards January 1, 2010 to October 31, 2021

Requirement	Action	Status: Completed
<b>GENERAL, continued</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training on Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation and the Ontario Human Rights Code</li> </ul>	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.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible Information</li> </ul>	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.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making feedback processes accessible</li> </ul>	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.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make all new internet websites and new web content on those sites conform to WCAG 2.0, Level A</li> </ul>	A new web site is being planned and has been stalled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some compliance issues have been identified with the present web-site and Digital Services staff continues to work to rectify these. As noted above, staff have received training on ensuring documents are accessible, including documents that are made available on the Town's website. All Council meetings are now live streamed and as they are a record, past meetings have been closed captioned in order to meet compliance requirements.	<b>Pending new website</b>

# Town of Fort Erie

## ACCESSIBILITY STATUS REPORT 2021

### Compliance Actions: AODA Standards January 1, 2010 to October 31, 2021

Requirement	Action	Status: Completed
<b>EMPLOYMENT</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individualized Work- place Emergency Response Information for Employees</li> </ul>	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.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make employment practices accessible including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recruitment</li> <li>- Employee accommodation</li> <li>- Returning to work</li> <li>- Performance management, career development and redeployment</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	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.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accessibility equipment on Transit vehicles</li> </ul>	The Transportation Standard of the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation (IASR) has specific requirements that need to be met, such as brightly coloured on-vehicle grab rails, on-board announcements, handrails and stanchions, courtesy seating, lighting features, signage, visual differentiation of platform edges and lowered stop request buttons. As of October 4, 2021, the Town has moved to an "On Demand" Service that will provide transit ridership with an enhanced service and includes two accessible vans. The Transportation Standard defines "bus" as a motor vehicle designed for carrying 10 or more passengers and used for the transportation of persons. The new service will no longer have compliance requirements under the IASR as it relates to this requirement.	<b>No longer applicable with the "On Demand" Service</b>

# Town of Fort Erie

## ACCESSIBILITY STATUS REPORT 2021

### Compliance Actions: AODA Standards January 1, 2010 to October 31, 2021

Requirement	Action	Status:
<b>TRANSPORTATION, continued</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bus stops and shelters</li> </ul>	<p>The IASR requires that a municipality that provides conventional transportation services consults with the Accessibility Advisory Committee, the public and persons with disabilities in the development of accessible design criteria to be considered in the construction, renovation or replacement of bus stops and shelters and provides provisions if a municipality contracts out these services. The Town's conventional transit service was converted in 2017 from a "flag stop" service to over 170 bus stops with distinct routes. Bus stop signs have been erected and the Town has built the Municipal Hub shelter at the Leisureplex and shelters in the Bridgeburg BIA area (funded by the Niagara Region) and the Ridgeway BIA area. Other shelters have been phased in. The consultation requirements under the Transportation Standard have been met. Some of the bus shelters and Municipal Hub will still be utilized by the On Demand Service.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-boarding and on-board announcements (electric)</li> </ul>	<p>The former conventional transit buses also have both the pre-boarding and onboard announcement and visual systems (electronic notification) installed and were effective on the new routes put in place on October 2, 2017. This requirement is no longer applicable with the On Demand Service as it will not be a "fixed route", so announcements do not apply.</p>	<b>No longer applicable with the "On Demand" Service</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Categories of Eligibility</li> </ul>	<p>Since 2015, the Town's FAST application form and process has included the eligibility requirement per the Standard. This work is considered compliant with the Regulation.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency Preparedness and Response Policies</li> </ul>	<p>The AAC staff resource worked with both the conventional and specialized transit providers to develop the required emergency preparedness and response policies. This requirement is not applicable for the new On Demand Service.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fare and hour parity</li> </ul>	<p>Conventional and specialized transit offer the same operating schedules (days and hours) and the fares are the same for both services. With the new On Demand Service, registrants of specialized transit will have equal access and opportunity to the On Demand accessible vans.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

# Town of Fort Erie

## ACCESSIBILITY STATUS REPORT 2021

### Compliance Actions: AODA Standards January 1, 2010 to October 31, 2020

Requirement	Action	Status:
<b>DESIGN OF PUBLIC SPACES</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreational Trails and Beach Access Routes</li> <li>• Outdoor Public Use Eating Areas and Play Spaces</li> <li>• Exterior Paths of Travel</li> <li>• Accessible Parking</li> <li>• Obtaining Services</li> </ul>	<p>The Design of Public Spaces Standard became effective as of January 1, 2016. The Standard covers any new construction or redevelopment of public spaces.</p> <p>The Standard provides compliance requirements related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recreational Trails and Beach Access Routes               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Slope, Surface, Ramps</li> <li>○ Rest Areas, Passing Areas</li> <li>○ Viewing Areas</li> <li>○ Signage</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Outdoor Public Use Eating Areas and Play Spaces               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Picnic Tables, Slope, Surface</li> <li>○ Play Equipment, Play Features</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Exterior Paths of Travel               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Sidewalks or walkways, Ramps</li> <li>○ Stairs that connect to an exterior path of travel</li> <li>○ Pedestrian curb ramps (or curb cut-outs)</li> <li>○ Accessible pedestrian signals</li> <li>○ Rest areas</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Accessible Parking               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Surface, Curb ramps, depressed curbs, curb cuts</li> <li>○ Maintenance of Physical dimensions of spaces, Signage</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Obtaining Service including service counters, fixed queuing guides and waiting areas</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>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 <i>Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation</i> (Ontario Regulation 413/12) under the AODA.</p> <p>The Bay Beach redevelopment includes accessible beach access routes, accessible eating areas and play spaces, accessible washroom and changerooms.</p> <p>Complaints have been received regarding access at the new Bernard Beach boardwalk and staff have committed to making improvements including beach mats at this location in early 2022.</p> <p>The Manager, Community Planning, has also consulted with the AAC on playground features to ensure compliance with the legislation.</p> <p>Accessible Parking, which was updated in 2012, addresses accessibility requirements. The DOPS requirements are reviewed with any new construction or remediation.</p>

# Town of Fort Erie

## ACCESSIBILITY STATUS REPORT 2021

### AODA Implementation continues

AODA compliance requirements continue up until December, 2021 and implementation includes conformance with Website WCAG Level AA (2021). The Town has just completed an RFP process for a new website and includes AODA compliance requirements. The Accessibility staff resource is a member of the review committee for the new website.



#### Information and Communications

- All internet websites and web content on those sites must conform with WCAG 2.0 Level AA, excluding live captioning and audio description

Annual status reports on the implementation of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2019-2023 are provided to Council each year, as required, and made available on the Town's web-site and in alternative format, upon request.

In 2019, the second Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2019-2023 was developed and included extensive public consultation. As the Town had met all compliance requirements under the AODA up until that time, the 2019-2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan included what was heard from the consultations and focus groups. The AAC will continue to audit both our municipal buildings and parks/playgrounds to ensure any barriers are identified and a plan put in place for removal. Any new public facility or park will also include consultation with the AAC members.

Due to COVID-19, audits were not conducted during this past year but will hopefully resume in 2022.

### 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.

# Town of Fort Erie

## ACCESSIBILITY STATUS REPORT 2021

### Report on Achievements (October 2020 to October 2021)

The Town of Fort Erie Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) conducts a great deal of work behind the scenes to ensure the removal of barriers. The main purpose of the AAC is to advise Municipal Council about the requirements and implementation of accessibility standards; the identification, removal and prevention of barriers in the municipality's by-laws, policies, programs, projects and services; advise Council on the accessibility of buildings, structures or premises that the Council purchases, builds or renovates as well as reviewing and commenting on site plans and drawings for new buildings or developments. In recent years, the AAC has also encouraged local businesses to correct identified barriers and have had great success working with business owners to create a more inclusive environment. Even though COVID-19 impacted in-person Committee meetings, the AAC still met informally via zoom to review Plans and communicated via email. The AAC was only able to meet formally three times during the above time period. The following report on achievements is broken down into specific categories:

- 1) Commitment of Funding by Council;
- 2) Review, comment and implementation of AODA Legislation;
- 3) Review of Site Plans/Secondary Plans/Park Development;
- 4) Removal of Barriers;
- 5) Representation/Interaction with other Organizations; and
- 6) Other Accomplishments.

#### 1) **Commitment of Funding by Council**

Council continues to commit funding for training and conference attendance to various accessibility events throughout the year. Due to COVID-19, all in-person conferences that normally take place in the spring and fall were cancelled and held virtually. The Accessibility Coordinator is a member of the Ontario Network of Accessible Professionals (ONAP) and continues to correspond on best practices through e-mail and sharing details through a dedicated Google drive.

# Town of Fort Erie

## ACCESSIBILITY STATUS REPORT 2021

### Report on Achievements (October 2020 to October 2021), continued

#### 1) Commitment of Funding by Council, continued

As part of the Multi-Year Plan consultation, Engineering staff have moved forward with the design of two additional accessible parking spaces in downtown Ridgeway and one on Erie Road in Crystal Beach, which were delayed in 2020. Construction for the new accessible spaces was to take place in 2021 but again was delayed due to budget constraints and the redirection of traffic that was proposed for Erie Road. The construction will be budgeted for in 2022 for Ridgeway and Engineering staff have advised that they will await direction on the space for Erie Road.

As funding for contracted/interpreter services was not used in 2021, a Hearing Loop Induction system was installed at the Customer Service desk to help persons with hearing loss. With the installation of plexiglass at the counters, this new system has helped tremendously

#### 2) Review, comment and implementation of AODA Legislation

As described previously in the “Compliance Action” chart, the AAC also has an outstanding agenda item entitled “Multi-Year Accessibility Plan” and the Committee is updated on various processes taking place to ensure implementation of the legislative requirements. They also provide comment on the Annual Accessibility Status Report. Based on the feedback garnered during the public consultation for the second Multi-Year Plan, the AAC reviews comments during its meetings to determine if any action can/should be taken on each comment received from the public.

The AAC reviewed and commented on the new draft AODA Health Care Standard and also reached out to the Community Health Care Services Committee for comment on the draft legislation. The draft AODA Grades K-12 Education and Post-Secondary Education standards were also reviewed by the Committee.

The AAC reviewed and commented on the Government of Canada’ Disability Inclusion Plan.

Council proclaimed the week of May 31-June 4, 2021 as “National AccessAbility Week”.

# Town of Fort Erie

## ACCESSIBILITY STATUS REPORT 2021

### Report on Achievements (October 2020 to October 2021), continued

#### 3) Review of Site Plans/Secondary Plans/Park Development

One of the duties of the AAC is to review, in a timely manner, the site plans and drawings described in the *Planning Act* and recommend accessibility improvements on the plans.

While developers are required to meet standards legislated under the *Ontario Building Code*, including barrier free requirements, the AAC suggests improvements that relate to making the development more accessible and universal in design.

The following site plans were reviewed by the AAC between October 2020 and October 31, 2021. The Committee's recommendations and comments are contained in the AAC minutes, available on the Town's website:

- Sherwin Williams expansion
- 7 Central Avenue
- Bertie Tire
- Gilmore Lodge
- Revision to the site plan for Fort Erie Fire Station 4
- Cannabis building on a Stevensville farm
- 405 Ridgeway Road
- 424-426 Ridge Road
- The Oaks Block 82
- 43 Jarvis Street
- 255 Emerick Avenue

The Neighbourhood Planner/Urban Designer met virtually with the AAC to provide an overview of the Crystal Beach Secondary Plan and seek Committee feedback.

The Manager, Community Planning, also provided the AAC with updates related to:

- the construction of Pedestrian Crossovers along the Friendship Trail at Ridge Road and Gorham Road; and
- the Development of Spears Park, Crystal Ridge Park Phase 2 and the Albert Street Park redevelopment.

# Town of Fort Erie

## ACCESSIBILITY STATUS REPORT 2021

### Report on Achievements (October 2020 to October 2021), continued

#### 4) Removal of Barriers

The 2019-2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan included additional recommendations based on the public consultation that took place during development of 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 pro-actively inspect, maintain and clear sidewalks and curb cuts to ensure a smooth path of travel for all residents;

In progress

THAT: based on feedback received during the public consultation, the Town of Fort Erie's Traffic Coordinating Committee, 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;

In progress

THAT: all future Administrative Reports to Council include under "Financial/Staffing Implications" the wording "and AODA Considerations" that will require staff to consider any accessibility impacts and ensure that new barriers are not created;



THAT: the Accessibility Advisory Committee are consulted on all applicable Master Plans, Neighbourhood Plans and major projects to ensure no new barriers are created.



THAT: the AAC continues to work with businesses and organizations to improve access and create a more inclusive experience.



THAT: the Town Council acknowledges the work being done to create a more inclusive community on an annual basis.

The last recommendation noted above requires that Council acknowledge the work being done to create a more inclusive community on an annual basis. Usually this takes place during the National AccessAbility Week at the end of May/early June; however, due to COVID-19, we were unable to provide those details at a Council meeting in 2021.

# Town of Fort Erie

## ACCESSIBILITY STATUS REPORT 2021

### Report on Achievements (October 2020 to October 2021), continued

#### 4) Removal of Barriers, continued

As noted above, the Hearing Loop Induction System was installed at the Customer Service Desk to assist individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Customer Service Unit staff also have masks that provide clear plastic over the mouth area for those that need to read lips.

The hand rail that was moved at Town Hall has since been moved back into the middle of the ramp to allow for both left-handed and right-handed individuals to access the hand rail for support.

#### 5) Representation/Interaction with other Organizations

A number of the AAC members represent the Committee by participating on committees or organizations throughout the Town, Region and Province. The Committee was represented in 2020/2021 on the following committees and at the following events:

- The AAC Chair is also the Chair of the Town's Fort Erie Active Transportation (FEAT).
- The AAC Chair was selected in 2018 to participate on the Association for Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) Accessibility Task Force. The Chair is the only citizen representative on the Committee.
- The AAC Chair was selected in 2018 to participate on the Niagara Health System Accessibility Advisory Committee.
- An AAC member is also a member of the Region of Niagara's Accessibility Advisory Committee and acts as a liaison between Committees.
- An AAC member is also a member of the Fort Erie Not For Profit Housing Authority and brings accessibility issues and concerns to the Board.
- The AAC Coordinator is an acting member of the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals (ONAP) that meets quarterly and is in constant contact electronically to support each other on issues that affect municipalities and share best practices.
- The AAC Chair participated in the Transit Governance Review presented by the Region of Niagara.
- The AAC will continue to sponsor the Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Award for Accessibility, which normally takes place every other year. The sponsorship also includes reviewing and commenting on the applications that are received from local businesses.

# Town of Fort Erie

## ACCESSIBILITY STATUS REPORT 2021

### Report on Achievements (October 2020 to October 2021), continued

#### 6) Other Accomplishments

The AAC continues to work in the community to approve access to buildings and services. The following are a few of the accomplishments that the AAC has partnered on or is working with other organizations/companies to improve access.

- Working with the Greater Fort Erie Secondary School, hand rails were placed in the upper seating area of the community theatre.
- Working with the owner of the Garrison Plaza (660 Garrison Road), a new ramp was installed to make it easier for those with mobility devices or mobility concerns to access the Life Lab building.
- The Committee has attempted to have an accessible washroom installed at the medical centre located at 238 Bertie Street for several years. Thanks to Council's funding of improvements at the building, an accessible washroom was a requirement to receive the funding. The Committee can confirm that the accessible universal washroom is now operational thanks to Council.
- The Committee has also worked with the Region of Niagara on fixing signal crossings on Garrison Road and have confirmed that there will be audible signals in the next reconstruction of the intersection located at Thompson Road and Garrison Road that will assist persons with low vision or who are blind cross safely and independently.
- The Committee is also working with the Boys and Girls Club on a proposed pool lift for the E.J. Freeland Centre that will allow persons with disabilities to access the water independently. AAC members met with staff of the Boys and Girls Club on site to review options and discuss a potential fundraising partnership with the Lions Club and the Town.

“The one argument for accessibility that doesn't get made nearly enough is how extraordinarily better it makes some people's lives. How many opportunities do we have to dramatically improve people's lives just by doing our job a little better?” – Steve Krug