



2020 Status Update: City of Stratford Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

**A summary of progress achieved in 2020 on the City's
Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (2018 – 2022)**

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Multi-Year Accessibility Plan Status Update - 2020

Introduction

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) was passed by the Ontario government in 2005. It called for the development of standards and regulations to make Ontario fully accessible to people with disabilities by the year 2025. A series of accessibility standards have been developed since that time and are all incorporated under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR), Ontario Regulation 191/11. There are standards for Customer Service, Information and Communications, Employment, Transportation and Design of Public Spaces.

The IASR requires the development of a multi-year accessibility plan, as well as annual status updates to the accessibility plan. This is the third status update to the 2018-2022 Accessibility Plan. The 2018-2022 Accessibility Plan reflects the proposed intentions of the City of Stratford for meeting the regulations under the AODA, and for identifying, removing and preventing barriers for people with disabilities in City programs, services and facilities.

Using a web browser you will find the accessibility policy and plan documents on the [Accessibility Page](#)¹ of the City of Stratford's website.

Stratford's Accessibility Commitment

The City of Stratford will make reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies and practices are consistent with the following principles:

- People with disabilities must have equal opportunity to obtain, use or benefit from the City's goods and services, which will be provided in a manner that respects their dignity and independence and is integrated with non-disabled people unless an alternative accommodation measure is necessary.
- The City will prevent and remove barriers that impede access by people with disabilities.
- The City will communicate with a person with a disability in a manner that takes into account their needs and abilities.
- People with disabilities may make use of an assistive device, service animal and/or a support person to access information, goods and services.

¹ <https://www.stratford.ca/en/inside-city-hall/accessibility.aspx>

- The City will continue to meet the requirements for consultation with persons with disabilities and the Accessibility Advisory Committee as established under various sections of the IASR.

The Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC)

Council appoints consumers, people with disabilities, and a City Councillor to the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC). All AAC members are trained on all standards under the AODA and the Ontario Human Rights Code, as it pertains to people with disabilities.

The Accessibility Advisory Committee advises Stratford City Council about the accessibility of City services, programs and facilities, including:

- Accessibility plans
- Bus stops and shelters
- Accessible taxicabs
- Recreational trails
- Outdoor play spaces
- Exterior paths of travel
- On-street parking spaces
- Site plan reviews

The Accessibility Steering Committee (ASC)

The Accessibility Steering Committee (ASC) represents all City Departments and manages the City's AODA compliance process.

Monthly reports are provided to the ASC on issues relating to AODA compliance.

Compliance Status

In 2020, the City of Stratford submitted a fully compliant accessibility report for 2019, as per legislative requirements.

Compliance Overview for 2020

The following outlines the City of Stratford's commitments and progress in 2020 in meeting the accessibility standards in five key areas:

- Customer Service
- Information and Communications
- Employment
- Transportation

- Design of Public Spaces (and Built Environment)

There are also a number of general requirements (see below) that apply across all of the accessibility standards.

New goals established by the City under each of the accessibility standards in the coming years will be reflected in the Annual Status Updates to the 2018-2022 Accessibility Plan.

General Requirements

Procurement

People with disabilities will be treated equitably with respect to the procurement, use and benefit of City services, programs, goods and facilities in a manner that respects their dignity, independence and integration. This commitment extends to residents, employees, visitors and other stakeholders with visible and non-visible disabilities. Furthermore, the City will ensure that accessibility is integrated into all City initiatives, business practices, boards, committees, departments and divisions. Where it is not practicable to incorporate accessibility criteria and features into the procurement of goods, services or facilities, an explanation will be provided, upon request.

Reporting

Reports will be produced annually on the progress and implementation of the multi-year Accessibility Plan, and this information will be posted on the City's website and will be available in alternate formats, upon request. The multi-year Accessibility Plan will be reviewed and updated once every five years. Compliance Reports will be filed bi-annually with the Accessibility Directorate. The 2019 report was submitted and the next report must be completed by December 31, 2021.

Training

All employees, volunteers and persons developing policies for the City of Stratford are trained on the requirements of the accessibility standards in the IASR and on the Human Rights Code. Persons who provide goods, services or facilities on behalf of the City must also be trained.

All members of Stratford City Council are trained on accessible customer service and how to interact with people with different disabilities.

The Corporate Accessibility Policy is updated to reflect changes to any of the standards and training is provided in order to ensure an understanding of any changes.

Records will continue to be maintained for training provided on accessibility, including the dates of the training and the number of individuals who attended.

Feedback

The City welcomes input from the public in order to help identify ways to improve accessibility in facilities, goods and services. Members of the public are encouraged to share their comments or suggestions by contacting the City of Stratford or completing the Contact Us section on the City of Stratford's website.

Accessible formats and communication supports are available, upon request.

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Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)

Customer Service Standard

The City of Stratford continues to meet requirements under the Customer Service Standard, including:

- Gathering feedback on the goods and services it provides and acting on that feedback to improve services to persons with disabilities.
- Ensuring that the feedback process is accessible by providing or arranging for accessible formats and communication supports, on request.
- Posting notices regarding service disruptions.
- Allowing service animals to accompany their owners into City facilities, except into areas not allowed by law.
- Allowing support persons to accompany persons with disabilities into City facilities, and in some cases, requiring a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person for health or safety reasons.
- Ensuring that all employees, volunteers and persons developing policies for the City of Stratford are trained on the requirements of the accessibility standards in the IASR and on the Human Rights Code. Ensuring that persons who provide goods, services or facilities on behalf of the City must also be trained.
- Ensuring that any new policies created with regards to customer service will consider the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity for all persons.

2020 Initiatives for Accessible Customer Service

- Teleconferencing options and accessible spaces utilized for various Accessibility Committee meetings. Any public consultations for the City of Stratford will continue to be held in accessible locations.
- The Social Services Department has been assisting clients in-person or over the phone to complete paperwork.
- Corporate wide accessible documents training was provided to staff. The purpose of the training was to educate staff on making accessible documents, including accessible fillable PDFs.
- Public Consultations for the Community Transportation Project were held in accessible locations.

2021-2022 Goals for Accessible Customer Service

- The Clerk's office at the City of Stratford will complete the 2022 Election Accessibility Report in 2021.
- Infrastructure & Development Services department will complete a review of the FADS manual review and implementation.
- Accessibility Advisory Committee to continue to progress discussions and ideas to improve accessibility throughout the City.
- The CAO and Mayors office will continue to ensure that public consultations and special events hosted by the City are held in accessible locations.

Information and Communications Standard

The City of Stratford continues to meet the requirements under the Information and Communications standard, including:

City Web Site Compliance

- The City of Stratford's website and the Stratford Public Library's website are compliant with Level AA of the WCAG 2.0 Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, which meets the requirements in the AODA.
- Because the City's website is compliant with Level AA of the WCAG 2.0, all documents added to the website must also meet this standard and comply with City style guidelines.

Availability of Accessible Formats

- The City provides documents in accessible formats upon request, and has notifications to this effect on the City's website.
- The City solicits feedback and undertakes to facilitate feedback from people with disabilities in an accessible format, upon request.
- The City has adopted a policy stating that persons who request a document that cannot be converted to an accessible format will receive an explanation as to why the document is unconvertible, and will receive a description of the document's content from the appropriate City department.

2020 Initiatives for Accessible Information and Communications

- The Corporate Services department has ensured that all content is reviewed and updated on the City's website to ensure it is accessible.

- The City is continuing to offer multiple methods for participating in council meetings, public information centers, etc.
- Administrative staff at the Fire Department are completing updates to make all departmental website documents compliant and accessible.
- The 2020 annual public meeting regarding accessibility of transportation system was held electronically to provide information and to seek feedback from persons with disabilities.
- AODA compliant document training through eSolutions Group.
- Adapting complex application forms into compliant and accessible versions for the Social Services Department website.
- Ensured that documents/reports generated in the Mayor and CAO's Office were in an accessible format and ran an accessibility checker to correct errors and warnings (where possible) for posting of documents/reports on the City website and paperless Council agenda system (eScribe).
- Online communications created by the City are offered in an accessible format, including social media (ex. videos created by the City are closed captioned).
- Phone system upgrades/enhancements utilizing accessible technology available on the market.
- Information Technology Services ran an accessibility checker for every tab of the City's website and performed corrections, as required to meet World Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA.

2021-2022 Goals for Accessible Information and Communications

- Continue to apply AODA standards for new documents added to the City's website and modify existing content on behalf of Social Services Department.
- The City is committed to continuing to review and update content on the City's website to ensure that it is accessible.
- The City will continue to offer multiple methods for participating in Council meetings, public information centers, etc.
- 2021/2022 Annual public meeting regarding accessibility of transportation system to be held.
- The Fire Department will complete its documentation update by 2021-2022.

- CAO/Mayor's Office will continue to ensure that documents/reports for the Council agenda system (Escribe) are in an accessible format, where possible.
- 2021 website upgrades will continue to utilize all current accessibility tools available. Full training will be requested from the provider, as needed.
- Human Resources plans on circulating existing or revised accessibility policies, materials or information (ex. bulletin boards, health and wellness newsletter one to two (1-2) times per year, as required).
- Human Resources plans to review the status of existing Workplace Emergency Response Information forms and work with departments to update, as required.
- Continue to update templates and documents for accessibility.
- Continue to consider accessibility needs when planning meetings and events, including accessible formats, multiple forms of engagement and communication supports.
- CAO/Mayor's office will be updating the City of Stratford Emergency Response Plan so that it is in an accessible format.
- Information Technology Services (ITS) will continue to annually run accessibility checker for every tab of the City of Stratford website and fix any errors to ensure the website meets legislative requirements.
- ITS staff to participate in refresher course and any new training as available pertaining to accessibility offered both in-house and externally, such as eSolutions Group.
- ITS: Future phone system upgrades and/or enhancements to utilize the most current accessible technology available on the market and provide accessible phone sets as required accommodating hearing, vision or mobility impairments. Solutions will be shared with other departments, such as Human Resources, as required.

Employment Standard

Accommodating the needs of people with disabilities throughout the employment cycle.

The City of Stratford is committed to making reasonable efforts to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities throughout the employment cycle, including:

- Notifying job applicants that accommodations are available upon request during the recruitment and selection process.
- Informing employees of supports available.
- Consulting with employees with disabilities to provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports.
- Working with employees who may need individualized workplace emergency response assistance.
- Working with City employees with a disability in developing and documenting an individual accommodation plan that considers their needs.
- Implementing and documenting a return to work process for supporting employees who have been absent due to reasons related to their disabilities.
- Applying processes for performance management, career development and redeployment as required, considering the needs of employees with disabilities.

2020 Initiatives for the Employment Standard

- The Corporate Services Department will continue implementation of AODA training for volunteers on Advisory Committees and boards.
- Human Resources department participated in training related to the creation of accessible documents and forms.
- New Employee Orientation Form 11a) adapted by the Human Resources department to include direct link for Accessible Customer Service Policy/IASR.
- Human Resources staff participated in a variety of corporate efforts to ensure a safe and accessible work process and environment for employees and customers during the COVID emergency.

2021-2022 Goals for the Employment Standard

- The Human Resources Department will commence revision of online documents in accordance with compliance standard requirements.

- The Human Resources Department will continue to circulate existing or revised accessibility policies, materials or information to new and existing staff as available or required.
- Continuing to support corporate efforts to ensure compliance with all accessibility and public health standards.

Transportation Standard

The City of Stratford is meeting all of the applicable requirements for Conventional and Specialized Transit.

The Stratford Police Services Board is responsible for licensing taxis in the City of Stratford.

On April 29, 2019, Stratford Council adopted the City of Stratford Strategic Priorities for the 2018-2022 term. Mobility, Accessibility and Design Excellence is one of the priorities which include:

- Improving ways to get around, to and from Stratford by public transit, active transportation and private vehicle.
- Designing options that are accessible to people of all levels of ability.

2020 Initiatives for the Transportation Standard

- 14 accessible transportation shelters installed throughout the City.
- The PC Connect Community Transportation pilot project launched in November 2020. All vehicles and bus stops are fully accessible.
- The City has eight (8) Nova buses (conventional) with rear facing seats available for persons with disabilities. They have one (1) belt, instead of the four (4) strap harness used in the older buses. This promotes independence for those customers with different needs.
- Stratford Parallel Transit is available at all hours when Stratford Transit is available.
- The new Transit Terminal was completed. Please see [Community Services section of the Design of Public Spaces Standard](#).
- All Stratford Transit and Stratford Parallel Transit operators must complete training required by the Transportation Standard.

- Newly hired staff for Stratford Transit and Parallel Transit must also complete hands-on training on tie-down operation, loading and unloading of customers, the use of the lift and how to position the bus for pick up and drop off.

2021-2022 Goals for the Transportation Standard

- 15 additional accessible bus shelters budgeted for installation in 2021; 14 additional accessible bus shelters budgeted for installation in 2022.
- Roll-out of 6 new conventional buses (40 ft.) and 2 new mobility buses which are sustainable and reliable vehicles.
- Assisting Stratford Police Services with their review of Taxi By-law 3-2004 for the purpose of amending requirements for accessible taxis in the City.
- PC Connect will continue to operate as a fully accessible service moving forward.
- Plan to purchase 6 new forty (40 ft.) foot conventional buses and 2 new mobility buses.

Accessible Taxis

- In 2012 the Police Services Board completed the required consultations with people with disabilities, the general public and members of the taxi sector on the number and availability of accessible taxis in the City, and the other accessible taxi requirements.
- Currently, there are no on-demand accessible taxis in the City of Stratford. A local taxi company had two on-demand accessible taxis in their fleet; however, it was not financially or logistically feasible to continue that service.

Design of Public Spaces Standard / Built Environment

The City of Stratford is meeting the requirements for the Design of Public Spaces Standard. This standard consists of the following Public Spaces, Services and Planning requirements:

- Recreational trails
- Outdoor public use eating areas
- Outdoor play spaces
- Exterior paths of travel
- Accessible parking
- Obtaining services
- Maintenance planning for above public spaces

2020 Initiatives for Design of Public Spaces Standard and Built Environment

a) Corporate Services Department

- Implementing a mobile parking payment system to offer an additional method of payment for parking in 2021.
- Began first phase of wayfinding sign installation, which focused on parking wayfinding signs.

b) Infrastructure & Development Services

- The Traffic Division installed [Key2Access2](#) improvements. Key2Access is revolutionizing pedestrian mobility with wireless technology that allows users to request a crossing without having to find and reach the button on the pole. Using mobile devices or special key fobs, these hand-held solutions are customized for the visually and mobility impaired but also support the needs of the elderly, parents with strollers and those with an active lifestyle such as runners or cyclists.
- As recommended by the City's AAC and by City staff, curb ramps are retrofitted. Also known as curb cuts, these modifications enable people with mobility impairments and/or a wheeled mobility device to move more easily between the street and the sidewalk.
- The design and tender have been prepared for an accessible reception counter replacement, including enhanced security in the Clerk's Office.
- Plans to generate over 1.4 km of new sidewalk on Erie Street, Mornington Street and West Gore Street.
- The AAC and City staff will continue to identify new projects.

c) Community Services

- Accessible viewing pathway created around new scattering garden in Avondale Cemetery.
- Accessible platform created around new niche columbarium in Avondale Cemetery.

² <https://key2access.com>

d) Social Services

- Chair lift installed in a family housing unit in Stratford along with grab bars at entrance of unit.
- Grab bars installed in four housing units.
- Sidewalks at a Listowel and a Stratford family housing unit regraded to allow for step-free transition from driveway to front entrance.
- Accessible kitchen installation at a St. Marys housing unit.
- Installation of a wheelchair accessible bathroom in a Listowel unit along with grab bars throughout.

2021-2022 Goals for Design of Public Spaces Standard and Built Environment

a) Infrastructure and Development Services

- The City will continue to complete annual and ongoing reviews through public feedback and the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC). Identified barriers and required actions will be forwarded and responded to by the appropriate departments.
- Plan to install new tactile warning plates.
- The City will ensure that new curb cuts are located only where they are safe; for example, where there are traffic lights or an established crossing.
- Review of the City of Stratford Accessibility Guidelines began in 2017, with a plan for a new Facility Accessibility Design Manual to be completed in 2021, which will be in line with a new Zoning By-law.

b) Community Services

- New accessible play structures to be added to new subdivision parks annually (number per year is budget dependent).
- Continue to purchase and replace picnic tables for accessible use (ratio of 5:1), as budget permits.
- Work with Upper Thames to widen/stone dust path along with bank retention work along the river from James St. entrance to Waterloo St.
- Continue to rehabilitate and repair existing paths, as required.

- Accessible aids in viewing areas as well as on floors and stairs in each facility.
- Update the outdoor washroom facilities (Upper Queens park, Tourism Booth/Boathouse, SERC, Allman Arena exterior) to make those washrooms fully accessible.
- Continue to rehabilitate and repair existing paths. The process will include consulting with the public, persons with disabilities and the Stratford Accessibility Advisory Committee, as legislated.
- Continue to hold annual transit public information sessions.
- Ongoing accessibility improvements of existing bus stops and installation of new accessible bus stops in Capital Plan, dependent upon budget approval.

c) Stratford Public Library

- Renovation of lower floor washrooms planned in 2021 to create barrier-free access.
- The existing Children's floor public service desk is to be replaced with an accessible model in 2021.
- Addition of a power door operator to the rear parking lot door in 2021.

d) Social Services

- Britannia Street Phase II Development will incorporate accessible features.
- Pending capital budget approval and Government grants, planning to upgrade Perth-Stratford Housing Corporation (PSHC) properties in Listowel and Stratford to provide more accessibility options, including wheelchair accessible units, elevating devices in properties that lack elevators, as well as scooter access and related storage.

e) Corporate Services

- Will continue to add more accessible parking spaces in the downtown core, where possible.
- Implementation of a comprehensive wayfinding strategy which includes installation of wayfinding signs.
- Will continue to consult with the Accessibility Advisory Committee on further ways to remove barriers to accessibility.

f) Fire Department

- Future retrofits of fire stations will include accessibility during the planning.