
Subject: 2024-2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP)

Report to: Planning and Economic Development Committee

Report date: Wednesday, December 4, 2024

Recommendations

That report PDS 32-2024 **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to present for information the Niagara Region's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) for 2024-2029 to the Planning and Economic Development Committee.
- This plan is a legislative requirement of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA). The AODA requires the MYAP to be updated every five years.
- This MYAP builds on the progress of the Region's 2018-2023 MYAP and will continue to advance accessibility across the Region. A total of 31 actions have been identified in the six focus areas of General Requirements, Customer Service, Information and Communication, Employment, Design of Public Spaces, and Transportation.
- This MYAP was approved by the Corporate Leadership Team on September 30, 2024, and endorsed by Niagara Region's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) on October 22, 2024.

Financial Considerations

There are no direct financial considerations associated with this report. It is anticipated that any investments required to implement the actions of the MYAP will be accommodated within the approved annual operating budgets for each related department as workplans are developed.

Staff will monitor provincial, federal and other grant opportunities to assist with advancing accessibility and removing barriers for people with disabilities across Regional services.

Analysis

The *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (O. Reg. 191/11)* of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)* requires designated public sector institutions and large organizations to establish, implement, maintain and document a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP). The plan is intended to identify the ways in which the Region will identify, remove and prevent barriers to Regional services, programs and facilities, for people with disabilities. Annual progress reports must be shared with the public and the plan must be updated every five years.

In September 2023, an internal staff working group was established to support the development and implementation of the Region's 2024-2029 MYAP.

From January to June 2024, Regional staff sought input from people in Niagara, including people with disabilities, about accessibility and disability barriers to Regional services, programs and facilities. LURA Consulting was retained to help design and execute this community engagement project. Five hundred and eighty seven (587) people provided input into the Region's 2024-2029 MYAP through the following activities:

- Three in person sessions (Heartland Forest in Niagara Falls, Meridian Community Centre in Fonthill, Dunlop Drive Older Adult Fair in St. Catharines)
- Online survey (also available by telephone and in paper format)
- One virtual community meeting (webinar)
- Niagara Region's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) meeting with representatives from area municipality AAC's
- Niagara Region's Women's Advisory Committee
- Niagara Region's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee

A [summary report](https://www.niagararegion.ca/projects/accessibility-planning/pdf/community-engagement-summary-june2024.pdf) (<https://www.niagararegion.ca/projects/accessibility-planning/pdf/community-engagement-summary-june2024.pdf>) of the community engagement activities was provided by LURA Consulting to the Region in July of 2024.

The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

There are six areas of focus in the MYAP which are based on the Accessibility Standards in the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) of the AODA. In total there are 31 actions across the focus areas which are summarized below:

- **General Requirements:** Actions include updating the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP), corporate accessibility policies and related training processes.
- **Customer Service:** Reviewing and updating, where necessary, corporate procedures, Regional meeting accessibility features and staff and volunteer training on the AODA, disability and accessibility.
- **Information and Communication:** Reviewing and updating, where necessary, corporate public feedback procedures, emergency management communication processes, and web accessibility tools and auditing procedures.
- **Employment:** Developing and implementing corporate DEI resources to support inclusive recruitment and hiring, strengthening communication with job applicants and employees related to workplace accommodations and emergency response plans.
- **Design of Public Spaces:** Identifying and remediating accessibility barriers in Regional facilities, adopting Universal Design Standards for Regional construction and Niagara Regional Housing projects, and updating corporate procedures to support the development of scent and fragrance-free Regional spaces.
- **Transportation:** Continuing to implement accessible features such as curb ramps, tactile walking surface indicators and pedestrian signals as Regional projects occur.

The actions in each focus area have been identified and developed based on accessibility legislation, internal accessibility audits, accessibility best practices and community feedback received as part of the consultation process. This MYAP was approved by Niagara Region's Corporate Leadership Team on September 30, 2024. It was endorsed by the Region's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) on October 22, 2024.

Alternatives Reviewed

No alternatives were reviewed. This 2024-2029 MYAP provides the corporation with the necessary roadmap for achieving compliance with provincial accessibility legislation over the next five years. It will also assist in advancing Regional Council's important Strategic Priority of an Equitable Region.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

The 2024-2029 MYAP supports the Council Strategic Priority of an Equitable Region through identifying and removing accessibility barriers to Regional services, programs and facilities.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 2024-2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP)