



City of Kingston
Report to Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee
Report Number MAAC-21-004

To: Chair and Members of Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee

From: Brad Joyce, Commissioner, Corporate Services

Resource Staff: JC Kenny, Director, Communications and Customer Experience

Date of Meeting: May 6, 2021

Subject: Communications and Customer Experience Update

Council Strategic Plan Alignment:

Theme: Corporate business

Goal: See above

Executive Summary:

This report provides a progress update of Planned Strategies and Actions for the Identification, Removal and Prevention of Barriers from the City of Kingston Multi-Year Accessibility Plan as it relates to Customer Service and Information and Communications standards. In addition, this report provides an update on Communications, Public Engagement and Customer Experience as it relates to the outcomes of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. The Accessible Customer Service Standard under the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation requires the City to provide accessible public services for people with disabilities and to ensure that policies and procedures are in place to support this requirement. The desired outcome for this standard is an accessible city that includes ensuring people with disabilities receive quality goods and services in a timely manner, supported by effective policies, procedures, tools and resources that promote accessibility in customer service. The Information and Communications Standard under the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation requires the City to communicate and provide information in ways that are accessible to people with disabilities. The outcomes of the implementation of the Information and Communications Standard are enhanced accessibility as it relates to communication supports, formats and websites and web

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content; and City staff has the tools and resources to effectively develop information and communications in accessible formats.

This report outlines the progress on the deliverables Customer Service and Information and Communications standards in 2020, as well as standard techniques that are used to create a consistent messaging approach specifically to the above-mentioned regulations, as well as methods used to raise awareness of public engagement through the City's communication channels to all Kingston residents.

Recommendation:

This report is for information purposes only.

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Authorizing Signatures:

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY COMMISSIONER

**Brad Joyce, Commissioner,
Corporate Services**

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

**Lanie Hurdle, Chief
Administrative Officer**

Consultation with the following Members of the Corporate Management Team:

Paige Agnew, Commissioner, Community Services	Not required
Peter Huigenbos, Commissioner, Business, Environment & Projects	Not required
Jim Keech, President & CEO, Utilities Kingston	Not required
Desirée Kennedy, Chief Financial Officer & City Treasurer	Not required
Sheila Kidd, Commissioner, Transportation & Public Works	Not required

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Options/Discussion:

The Communications and Customer Experience department works in partnership with all City departments to communicate with residents using a variety of methods. As guided by the recommendations of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, the department works to remove barriers so the members of the public can fully participate in public engagement and receive and share information in a variety of methods.

Communications

The Communications and Customer Experience department plays a significant role in the removal of barriers to receiving and understanding communications from the City, as well as ensuring equitable participation in public engagement. The Information and Communications Standard under the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation requires the City to communicate and provide information in ways that are accessible to people with disabilities. The Communications and Public Engagement division supports the outcome of enhanced accessibility in several ways to not only inform residents about public engagement opportunities, but also to share City news and updates using a wide range of tactics.

Some of these communications tactics include:

- Social media posts on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook
- Project specific email lists, residents can sign up to receive updates
- Email updates to a variety of opt-in subscription lists
- Get Involved Kingston project updates via email
- Weekly newspaper ad in Kingston This Week
- Radio ads on multiple local stations
- Roadside signage on project sites or around the City
- Print materials for distribution to homes or City facilities
- Tell Me More – City of Kingston podcast

Clear and accessible communications are a vital part of every communication tactic. All print and digital materials are reviewed to ensure AODA compliance. In 2020, graphic design specialists advanced their learning on accessible design principles. In addition, a number of communications staff received additional training in writing alt-text for accessibility, accessible video captioning best practices and accessible social media communications.

In late 2020, all City of Kingston social media accounts were reviewed to ensure the City was optimizing the available accessibility features on popular social media platforms and a best practices document was developed. The best practices document details:

- A description of the available accessibility features of individual social media platforms the City uses to share information with residents.

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- How to use the accessibility features, for example, how alt and descriptive text is added to images or close captions are added to videos.
- Guidelines on how to write content for social media, specifically on the use of hashtags, emojis and GIFs.

This best practice document is considered a “living document” by the Communications division and will continue to be reviewed and updated each quarter by Communications. Any updates to the best practice document or changes to accessibility features made by social media companies to the social media platforms are shared with all Communications Officers.

Public Engagement

The Public Engagement Implementation Plan for 2020-2022 was reviewed and updated in the fall of 2020 through the COVID-19 lens. The updated plan went to Council on February 16, 2021 and the full report can be accessed [here](#).

In July 2020 a report was brought to Council, [Public Engagement for Projects, Policies and Initiatives during COVID-19](#). Below is a summary which includes additional methods being used during COVID-19.

- **Phone:** Call Contact Us to complete project-specific surveys.
- **Mail:** Request a paper copy of the survey that you can complete and mail in, if time allows. Pre-paid postage will be supplied.
- **Mailing list:** Your name can be added to a mailing list to receive a paper copy of a survey when it goes live.
- **Contact Project Managers:** Residents can email or phone the City staff person managing the project. This contact information is listed on the Get Involved Kingston project page under Who’s Listening.
- **Virtual Public Engagement Sessions:** Sessions are live streamed, live close captioned, recorded and posted to YouTube. ASL interpretation is provided upon request. For those without access to the internet, telephone numbers are provided so residents can participate by phone. All public engagement sessions are recorded with a link posted on the Get Involved Kingston and City website project pages.
- **Get Involved Kingston:** The City’s portal for public engagement. The site has over 10,000 activated participants on the site.

This information is included in various public engagement project communication materials.

Customer Experience

The Customer Experience division continues to work on accessibility compliance and is looking at items identified within the 2018-2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan relating to accessible customer service feedback.

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Although COVID-19 presented some challenges, by the end of Q4 2020, Customer Experience division made significant progress in support of the [Channel Management Strategy](#) which was received and adopted by City Council in May 2019. This strategy outlines the City's commitment to building a responsive multi-channel service delivery model aimed to provide quality customer service resulting in consistent and integrated service built around user needs across three main channels of interaction:

1. Online service;
2. Phone service; and
3. Counter service.

This commitment continues to make services online, over the phone and in-person more accessible for all customers.

Online Service

In keeping with the City's commitment to measure customer satisfaction, the Customer Experience division, in partnership with Information System and Technology, continued to expand the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system so City staff have a more holistic approach to customer service by providing:

- Increased access to online services via self-serve options;
- Open access to current and accurate information for customers and staff;
- A mechanism for soliciting and collecting feedback through surveys; and
- A centralized place for customer information and interactions with the City.

With CRM, City staff capture, maintain and share information across departments with the goal of providing seamless quality customer service. Customer feedback surveys were updated in Q2 2020 to collect data on over customers satisfaction based on four key performance indicators:

1. Customer Satisfaction (CSAT);
2. Customer Effort Score (CES);
3. Net Promoter Score (NPS); and
4. Close the Loop (CTL).

In addition, improvements to the accessibility identification feature in the CRM system began in Q4 2020 (implemented in Q1 2021). With these improvements, not only can staff easily flag service requests related to accessibility feedback, but they can also identify the classification of barrier to align with criteria for quarterly reporting to MAAC and the province. This feature is used to capture feedback and concerns relating to accessibility issues across all channels of interaction – online, phone and counter services.

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Staff leverage the resulting data to make recommendations to improve the City's ability to deliver services and information to all customers.

Phone Service

Staff continue to work with the City's phone service provider to identify ways of improving the corporate phone system. One of the main areas of focus continues to be the design of the phone system. Key elements of the design include more effective voice recognition, clean and concise service menu options, daytime and after-hours messaging and the categorization of incoming calls.

Customer Experience and Information Systems and Technology divisions worked together to complete phone system upgrades from Q1 2020 through Q2 2020. These upgrades support more effective and efficient phone service to keep pace with the changing needs of Kingston's diverse community.

Counter Service

Although the full scope of the implementation of counter service was not completed in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, frontline Customer Experience staff continued to work at Recreation facilities (Artillery Park Aquatic Centre, INVISTA Centre and Rideau Heights Community Centre) to offer administrative and customer service support for Recreation and Leisure Services department as well as limited City services via online and phone. The roll out of expanded City services at Recreation facilities will resume in the future when it is deemed safe to proceed, as planned.

In summary, the work mentioned above aligns with the corporation's vision to create a customer-centric organization that looks at service delivery from the customer's perspective. This means that all processes are designed with the customer in mind. Establishing an integrated service delivery model enables the City to be more responsive, accountable and efficient in the way it provides access to City services. All departments continue to work collaboratively toward building a multi-channel service delivery model where online services continue to grow, customer access by phone is simplified and services provided at counter locations expand.

Existing Policy/By-Law:

Accessibility Consultation Process Policy

Accessibility Standards Policy

Notice Provisions:

None

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Accessibility Considerations:

The above activities are guided by the AODA and municipal accessibility policies and procedures.

Financial Considerations:

None

Contacts:

Debbi Miller, Manager, Communications and Public Engagement 613-546-4291 extension 1323

Julie Fossitt, Manager, Marketing and Public Engagement 613-546-4291 extension 1143

Natalie Lecomte Elwood, Manager, Customer Experience 613-546-4291 extension 1214

Other City of Kingston Staff Consulted:

Tracy Steele-Leaver, Supervisor, Customer Experience

Jen Pinarski, Communications Officer

Jessica Mueller-Hyde, Communications Officer (CRM)

Exhibits Attached:

None