

Awareness & Education Working Group Quarterly Report – June 2022

Working Group Members

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2022-23 Multi-Year Work Plan

At the February meeting, staff presented the working group with a draft of the 2022-23 Multi-Year Work Plan, a copy of which is attached to this Report. The plan was based on discussion from previous working group meetings. Committee members provided feedback on the following topics contained within the plan:

Mapping of accessibility features

- Information gathered regarding accessibility features at City facilities should be shared with tourism groups (i.e. Tourism Kingston). Visitors to Kingston require information regarding accessibility in the same manner as Kingston residents.
- It is important that accessibility infrastructure is properly labelled at facilities so that residents are aware of its availability.

Service animals

- It will be important to develop clear and simple messaging on any communications as this can be a confusing topic.
- Clarity is required between a service animal (i.e. a guide dog) and an emotional support animal.
- Regulations should be based on the behaviour of the animal. For example, if animal is well behaved it is likely a trained service animal and will not cause

problems. If the animal is jumping or not obeying instruction from its owner, it is not likely a service animal.

- A suggested slogan was ‘Don’t pet, don’t distract’.

Business education

- There is a need for local businesses to receive training regarding the customer service aspects of accessibility. The use of simple, visual messages can be powerful.
- There is a loss in terms of invisible disabilities and a need to figure out a way to educate on this topic.
- Discussion was had in the past about voluntary training or certification for accessible customer service for businesses in the downtown area. It was suggested that an incentive to receive such training would be promotion of businesses that receive the training.
- Kingston Frontenac Public Library branches should be considered as a source for sharing information regarding accessibility and the activities of the working group.

Employment

- There is a need for on-the-job coaching supports for persons with disabilities. This support is provided in some instances, but there is not nearly enough. The only way to improve this situation is through greater monetary investment.
- A significant barrier to accessible employment is the expectation of a 9 to 5 workday in office settings. This is difficult for people with immune or fatigue-related health concerns. The pandemic and shift to work from home may have reduced barriers in this area.
- Offering volunteer opportunities for work experience may be a way to increase skill levels for those with disabilities.

Accessibility Mapping

At the March meeting, staff presented the working group with an overview of a tool that highlights accessibility features at City facilities and parks through a GIS mapping

program. The tool was put into production a few years ago but finalization had been postponed.

The working group provided the following comments on the mapping tool and the project in general:

- There is a need to determine what level of accessibility would be required in a feature in order for it to be included on the map. The example of the elevator at City Hall was brought up. The elevator may technically be an accessibility feature, but it is not large enough for all wheelchair or scooter types.
- It is important to describe what is considered accessible and what the basis is for considering a feature accessible. Using a technical standards document like the Facility Accessibility Design Standards (FADS) was suggested.
- Flexibility is needed in the criteria to cover items that may not be standard in the majority of facilities. The example of the community kitchen at the Rideau Heights Community Centre was brought up.
- Consideration should be given to the audiences for the map. A first potential audience would be persons who want to know what facilities are available in the community and would be accessible while they are out and about. A second audience would be persons interested in attending a specific event or program at a facility that would want to see the accessibility features before registering or attending.
- For parks and outdoor spaces it was suggested that pictures of the playground equipment be included.

2022-2023 Awareness and Education Working Group Work Plan - Draft

1. Create an inventory of accessible services and features at City facilities

Working with staff from the City's Facilities Management and Construction Services Department and Recreation & Leisure Services Department, the working group will create an inventory of accessible services and features available to the public at all City facilities. Once completed, the list will be centralized on the City of Kingston website.

Staff recommendation:

That the Working Group create a list of accessibility features to be inventoried and staff to take that list and create an inventory for inclusion on the City website. Staff to examine potential for information hosting on City's [My Neighbourhood app](#). Information to be gathered by end of Q2 2022 with goal of information to be made available to public by end of Q4 2022.

2. Working Group participation in the 2023-2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

The City of Kingston is required by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) to produce a multi-year accessibility plan; the Plan outlines the steps that the municipality will take to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility at City facilities and in City services. Kingston's current Plan spans the years 2018 to 2022.

Throughout 2022 staff will conduct an engagement process involving City staff, MAAC members, invited stakeholders and the general public to create the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2023 – 2025. Engagement will be held through the first three quarters of 2022 with the Plan being sent to MAAC for approval in November 2022 and to Council for approval in December 2022.

A project team will be selected from MAAC to assist staff in the creation of the Plan. At least two members of the project team will be members of the Awareness & Education Working Group.

Staff recommendation:

That staff provide the Working Group with regular updates on the progress of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and invite members to participate in the creation of the plan.

3. Communication campaigns through the use of various channels to raise awareness of the removal of barriers within the City of Kingston – AccessAbility Awareness Week

In previous years the City of Kingston has created videos highlighting accessibility features at City facilities and educating the public on accessible parking. An archive of the videos can be found on the [City of Kingston YouTube account](#). Topics recommended for future educational campaigns to be held during AccessAbility Awareness Week (held annually in the last week of May/first week of June) include:

- 2022: make public aware of draft Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and opportunity to feedback on draft plan (see Work Plan Item 2)
- 2023: rules and regulations for service animals (see Work Plan Item 4)

Staff recommendation:

That the 2022 education campaign focus on Work Plan Item 2 and the 2023 education campaign focus on Work Plan Item 4.

4. Public education regarding rules and regulations for service animals

Members of MAAC have identified a need for public education regarding the rules and regulations for services animals, particularly with respect to businesses. Working Group members would work with City staff to develop information for inclusion in a public education campaign aimed at both the general public and business owners regarding the rules and regulations for service animals. As part of Work Plan Item 5, staff would approach local business groups to help share messaging.

Staff recommendation:

Staff and working group members to compile information during Q4 2022 and Q1 2023 to inform public education campaign as part of AccessAbility Awareness Week 2023 (May 29 to June 4, 2023).

5. Actively promote the need for accessibility awareness training to business, professional and service communities – i.e. make presentations to Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Kingston, etc.

In 2021 the City partnered with the Kingston Economic Development Corporation (KEDCO) to host a webinar regarding business accessibility as part of the Celebrating Accessibility Awards. Additionally, this partnership has included the hiring of Two Canes Consulting, a local accessibility consulting company, as part of KEDCO's [Ask the Expert](#) program. Under the program, small businesses can receive free training/coaching in the area of business accessibility.

For 2022-23, work will continue in this area with local business organizations (KEDCO, Greater Kingston Chamber of Commerce, Downtown BIA) with focus on the rules and regulations for business regarding service animals.

Staff recommendation:

That City support be continued for the Ask the Expert program and that following the development of a communications plan in Q4 2022 staff approach local business organizations to partner on educational campaigns aimed at the rules and regulations for businesses regarding service animals.

6. Accessible employment

MAAC members have identified accessible employment as an area of opportunity for the Working Group.

In 2019, the [Workplace Inclusion Charter](#) was launched by the City of Kingston and Kingston Employment & Youth Services (KEYS). The purpose of the Charter is to promote employment practices and provide strategies that will improve inclusion, diversity, and equity in the workplace. In 2021 MAAC received a delegation from the [Discover Ability Network](#), which provides tools and supports to help employers become more inclusive and to hire and retain persons with disabilities from the labour pool. City staff have worked with the Discover Ability Network through the implementation of the Workplace Inclusion Charter.

Annually, in October, National Disability Employment Awareness Month is celebrated in Canada. Over the past several years the City of Kingston has participated in Disabilities Mentoring Day in late October.

Staff from the City of Kingston Human Resources & Organizational Development department will be providing a presentation to MAAC in September 2022.

Staff recommendation:

That City staff responsible for overseeing the Workplace Inclusion Charter provide an update to the Working Group on the progress of the Charter at a meeting in Q4 2022. A goal of the presentation will be to identify areas that the Working Group can assist in promoting accessible employment as part of 2023 working group activities.