



The City of Belleville

Corporate Accessibility Policy

Adopted: July 2019

Reviewed:

1. Policy Statement

The Corporation of the City of Belleville is committed to serving our community and being responsive to the needs of our residents. We, the Council and staff of the City of Belleville, believe in creating equal opportunity for all people. We will engage in respectful treatment of all people in a manner that upholds their dignity and promotes independence.

We will work to remove barriers and take a proactive and inclusive approach to the provision of municipal goods, services, programs, and facilities so residents and visitors to our City can enjoy a thriving, accessible community life.

We will embrace principles of diversity and inclusion in our policies, procedures, and our workplace culture. We will support a diverse workforce of employees with varying abilities throughout all stages of recruitment, hiring, training, performance management, and career development. We will promote a positive work environment that is free from discrimination, and will strive to identify and remove barriers to inclusion in our work places.

2. Purpose

This policy serves as a framework to shape the development and review of all City of Belleville policies, procedures, by-laws, and internal standards and operations. In working to create an inclusive community, this policy guides the actions and decision making of all applicable parties acting on behalf of the City of Belleville.

Additionally, through this Accessibility Policy we wish to demonstrate our commitment to the goals of The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (A.O.D.A), and ensure compliance with the standards under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (I.A.S.R).

3. Application

The standards and expectations laid out in this policy apply to all City of Belleville employees, volunteers, and Members of Council, as well as any third party individual or organization that provides the public with goods, services, programs, or facilities on behalf of the City. The responsibilities through this policy apply equally across all City departments and further, require collaborative effort between them to achieve its mandates.

4. Core Principles

4.1 Compliance with the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation

In order to meet the needs of our community, we will maintain the following commitments to the A.O.D.A and I.A.S.R:

- a) **Customer Service** – We will provide barrier free, responsive, and inclusive customer service in a manner that promotes an individual’s dignity and independence by taking into account their abilities. We welcome and respect the use of assistive devices, support persons, and service animals. We will maintain a barrier free feedback process for the public to submit comments on the accessible provision of municipal goods, services, programs, or facilities.
- b) **Information and Communications** – All public information and communications will be made accessible including the municipal website and web content. Public information and communications will meet accessible format and design criteria and, in electronic forms, be compatible with assistive technology. We accept requests for public information or services in alternate formats or with communication supports.
- c) **Employment** – We will ensure equal opportunity and accessibility throughout our recruitment, hiring, and training processes. We will make the public aware of the availability for accommodations during recruitment and hiring. We will support diverse abilities and maximize the contribution of each employee’s potential through the development of workplace modification plans, including personal emergency response plans and return to work plans when needed.
- d) **Transportation** – Belleville Transit will establish accessibility plans for both the conventional and specialized service systems. Transit accessibility plans will support barrier identification and removal as we strive for responsive, barrier-free transportation throughout our community. In order to provide equitable services the conventional system will use accessible transit vehicles and the specialized system will run the same service hours and maintain fare parity.
- e) **Design of Public Spaces** – Accessibility considerations will be included in the planning and development or retrofitting of public spaces. We will incorporate accessibility features and universal design criteria to ensure the creation of inclusive public spaces. Where applicable, we will consult people with disabilities during planning and development stages.

4.2 Duty to Consult

We recognize the importance of the insights shared by people with disabilities to assist City Council and staff members in being responsive to the needs of the community. To this end, we will establish and support an Accessibility Advisory Committee (A.A.C). The A.A.C will be comprised of members of the public, the majority of whom must be individuals with a disability, as well as City staff members, and representatives from City Council.

The A.A.C will be consulted throughout planning, decision-making, and execution stages for relevant projects that have an impact on accessibility and inclusion in our community. Consultation with the public at large, including people with disabilities in our community, will occur for projects as needed and in accordance with our responsibilities under the A.O.D.A.

4.3 Accessibility Planning

We will establish and maintain a Multiyear Accessibility Plan (MAP) that will detail a long-term outlook on our accessibility goals and priorities, as well as the steps we will take to achieve them. The MAP will outline the strategies we will use to identify and remove barriers to accessibility, create an inclusive community, and how we will exceed our responsibilities set under the A.O.D.A. Additionally, we will prepare an annual status report on the progress we have made for implementation of the MAP. The MAP will be fully updated every five years.

4.4 Policies, Procedures, & By-Laws

We will make every attempt to be cognizant that we do not create systematic barriers when developing, reviewing, or enforcing corporate policies and procedures, and municipal by-laws. We will establish policies, procedures, and by-laws that promote accessibility and inclusion in our community, and that govern how, as a municipality, we will achieve this. If a barrier is identified, City Council and staff will respond in a timely manner to review and amend the policy, procedure, or by-law in question.

4.5 Procurement

We will incorporate accessibility criteria and universal design features when procuring or acquiring goods, services, or facilities. Accessibility criteria and universal design features will be set based on the standards contained in the A.O.D.A, the Ontario Building Code, and in consultation with persons with disabilities through the A.A.C. In evaluating accessibility criteria and universal design features, we will consider current best practices, future needs, innovative solutions, and sustainability.

After thorough evaluation, if it is determined that incorporating accessibility criteria and universal design features is not practicable, we will, upon request, provide an explanation detailing why we cannot meet this requirement.

4.6 Accessibility Training

To ensure consistency across City departments, Human Resources will initiate accessibility training as part of the on-boarding process for all new employees and volunteers. This training will consist of:

- an A.O.D.A and Human Rights Code overview
- a review of internal policies and procedures related to accessibility
- how to provide service to people with different disabilities.

The management team of each individual department will complete further job specific accessibility training as needed.

Training requirements apply to all City employees, volunteers, and members of council. Completion of accessibility training must be documented and dated. Training will be updated if any policies, procedures, or legislation related to accessibility changes.

Any third parties acting on behalf of the City must have A.O.D.A and accessible customer service training. Documentation of this training will be required as part of the procurement and contract process.

4.7 Feedback

We welcome public input on accessibility and inclusion in our community. We will maintain an open and barrier-free feedback process, and encourage members of the public to submit comments regarding the accessible provision of municipal goods, services, programs, or facilities. We will give notice of the availability for alternate formats or communication supports upon request. If a response is requested, we will follow-up within two business days and do so in a manner that takes into account the individual's abilities and preferences.

4.8 Transportation

4.8.1 Public Transit

We will endeavor to provide reliable public transit that connects our community and is responsive to the needs of our residents. Belleville Transit will ensure equitable services are provided between the conventional and specialized service systems, and maintain fare parity between them. We will establish a transit specific accessibility plan to address barrier identification and removal for the unique operational features of each service option.

4.8.2 Taxicabs

We will consult our A.A.C on accessibility considerations for the taxicab industry in Belleville, and on the need for accessible taxicab vehicles in the community.

Furthermore, we will be accountable for developing and enforcing by-laws to ensure that taxicabs are prohibited from:

- charging a higher fare or any additional fees to persons with disabilities than to persons without disabilities for the same trip
- charging an additional fee for the use or storage of mobility aids or assistive devices
- charging an additional fee or refusing service to someone using a service animal

The City is responsible for licensing taxicabs and we will ensure that, upon request, licensing is available in alternate formats. We require all licensed taxicabs to display vehicle registration and identification information on the rear bumper of the vehicle.

4.9 Design of Public Spaces

We will take an innovative and proactive approach to creating inclusive public spaces. Beyond our legislative requirements, such as the A.O.D.A and the Ontario Building Code, we will include additional accessibility criteria and universal design features when constructing and redeveloping public spaces. As detailed in the Design of Public Spaces Standard within the I.A.S.R, this includes, but is not limited to, the following community elements:

- Maintained recreational trails and beach access routes
- Outdoor public use eating areas
- Outdoor play spaces
- Exterior paths of travel
- Accessible parking

Beyond meeting any technical requirements, when newly constructing or redeveloping any of the above elements we will consult with our A.A.C