

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 29, 2013

Item 5, Report No. 1, of the Committee of the Whole, which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on January 29, 2013.

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CITY OF VAUGHAN ACCESSIBILITY POLICY

The Committee of the Whole recommends approval of the recommendation contained in the following report of the Commissioner of Community Services, dated January 15, 2013:

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Community Services, in consultation with the Technical Advisory Committee and the Vaughan Accessibility Advisory Committee, recommends:

- 1) That the City of Vaughan Accessibility Policy as outlined on Attachment 1 be approved and posted on the City of Vaughan website.

Contribution to Sustainability

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council in the Green Directions, Vaughan, Community Sustainability Environmental Master Plan, Objective 4.1.10

- 4.1.10 Develop accessible service standards as part of the compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act, 2005.

Economic Impact

There is no economic impact related to the endorsement of the Accessibility Policy.

Costs associated with the continuous improvements initiatives associated with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and Integrated Accessibility Standards, Ontario Regulation 191/11 will be included in the various departmental operating and capital budget submissions as required.

Communications Plan

The Accessibility Policy has been reviewed by the Vaughan Accessibility Advisory Committee, the Technical Advisory Committee (made up of representatives from all City departments) and available to the public on the City's website and social media and is available in accessible formats upon request. In addition, the Accessibility Policy will be reported to the Ontario Government.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to obtain Council approval for the City of Vaughan Accessibility Policy which is a requirement of the Accessibility for Ontarians Act, 2005 (AODA) and Integrated Accessibility Standards, Ontario Regulation 191/11.

Background -Analysis and Options

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) establishes the goal of an accessible Ontario by 2025. This will be achieved through the implementation of mandatory accessibility standards relating to customer service, transportation, information and communications, employment and the built environment. Both public and private sector organizations are required to implement these standards in phases.

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The AODA may eventually replace the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA). However, until the Province repeals the ODA, all public sector organizations such as the City of Vaughan, must continue to comply with both Acts simultaneously.

The City of Vaughan has made great progress in complying with both acts to make the City more inviting and inclusive of people with disabilities. Since 2003, the City of Vaughan has executed annual accessibility plans, which have included the development and implementation of accessibility-planning initiatives across all departments. The City of Vaughan has integrated accessibility into the Vaughan's core business practices and processes, with an ongoing commitment to making the City's programs, services and facilities accessible.

Accessibility Standards for Customer Service

The *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07* was the first regulation under the AODA to become law. The Accessible Customer Service Policy was approved by Council in 2009 as a requirement of the Regulation. It outlines the policies, practices and procedures required to provide accessible customer service to customers with disabilities. The City of Vaughan achieved compliance with this regulation by January 1st, 2010.

Integrated Accessibility Standards - Regulation

The *Integrated Accessibility Standards, Ontario Regulation 191/11* (IASR) came into force on July 1, 2011, with staggered compliance dates to January 1, 2021. Under the IASR, Information and Communications, Employment and Transportation Standards are integrated into one regulation.

The IASR is divided into five sections:

1. General section - Explains the relationship between the IASR and the Ontario *Human Rights Code* and harmonizes common requirements across the three standards to reduce burden and cost, including the establishment of accessibility policies;
2. Information and Communications Standards - Outlines how organizations will be required to create, provide and receive information and communications in ways that are accessible to people with disabilities;
3. Employment Standards - Builds upon organizations' existing requirements under the Ontario *Human Rights Code* to accommodate people with disabilities;
4. Transportation Standards - Creates accessible conventional and specialized public passenger transportation services under provincial and municipal jurisdiction;
5. Compliance - Establishes monetary penalties to deal with non-compliance and the appeals process.
6. Proposed Standards for the Built Environment - Aims to remove accessibility barriers in public spaces and buildings. An accessibility standard for the built environment (buildings and outdoor spaces) is in draft format and will be included in the IASR once it is final.

Note: Vaughan has completed the individual 2011 and 2012 requirements of the IASR. The Province has indicated that the compliance report for these and the 2013 requirements may need to be filed as of December 31, 2013.

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Integrated Accessibility Standards – Requirements

Under the IASR, the City of Vaughan must develop, implement and maintain policies on how the City will meet its obligations under the Regulation and document them in writing by January 1, 2013. Further the City must establish, implement and document a multi-year accessibility plan which outlines the strategy to prevent and remove barriers. Compliance reports must be filed by December 31st. 2013. Although the IASR now includes specific requirements related to information and communications, employment and transportation, the City has already made progress in these areas as part of its ongoing business practices. The establishment of this accessibility policy will not necessarily mean new and different work but in many cases a refinement to our existing programs, services and practices.

Under the Employment Standards, for example, organizations must provide an emergency response plan for employees with a disability upon request. This has been a long-standing service to Vaughan employees that has now been formalized and communicated. In another example, the Information and Communications Standards require information to be available in accessible formats upon request. Again, the IASR offers the opportunity to refine and communicate City processes already in place to respond to requests for accessible formats and communication supports from the public.

The Government of Ontario was obligated to meet this IASR requirement one year in advance of municipalities. The Province has grouped all accessibility standards under one policy umbrella. *Ontario's Accessibility Plan: Directives and Policies* (ontario.ca) outlines policies and directives that support Customer Service, Information and Communications, and Employment requirements. Transportation standards deal mainly with services at the municipal level and are not included in the Provincial policy.

Using the Provincial format as a guideline, the proposed City of Vaughan Accessibility Policy includes the requirements of all AODA standards under one policy.

City of Vaughan Accessibility Policy

The Accessibility Policy affirms the City of Vaughan's commitment to meet the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner. The proposed Accessibility Policy functions as an overarching policy for the requirements of the accessibility standards developed under the AODA. This policy now includes the corporate Accessible Customer Service Policy, which until now was a stand-alone policy.

Also included in the Accessibility Policy is a required statement of organizational commitment to meet the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner, as follows:

The City of Vaughan is committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in integration and equal access for residents, visitors, and employees with visible or non-visible disabilities. We are committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner, and will do so by preventing and removing barriers to accessibility, and by meeting the accessibility requirements under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA) and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA).

The content of the policy is in compliance with the requirements of the IASR and was developed using inter-jurisdictional best practice examples, the Province's compliance guidelines, the City's strategic directions and priorities, and in consultation with the lead departments for each standard, the ODA/AODA Technical Advisory Committee and the Vaughan Accessibility Advisory Committee.

The main objective of the policy establishes the City's core accessibility principles, while allowing for the ongoing development of specific practices and procedures to achieve compliance with

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requirements of the Regulation over time. Each City department is responsible to ensure that its own policies, practices and procedures comply with those contained in this policy.

The policy's guiding principles include Vaughan's commitment to:

- comply with all IASR regulations and requirements;
- adopt and incorporate existing provincial accessibility standards into the policy; and,
- assign lead departments to develop corporate standards and guidelines for the various regulations where none currently exist.

The annual Accessibility Plan will outline the relevant operational details such as objectives and tasks, lead departments and associated timelines.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020/Strategic Plan

In consideration of the strategic priorities related to Vaughan Vision 2020, this report will provide:

- **STRATEGIC GOAL:**
Service Excellence – Providing service excellence to citizens
- **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:**
Enhance and Ensure Community Safety, Health and Wellness.

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council and the necessary resources have been allocated and approved.

Regional Implications

N/A.

Conclusion

The City of Vaughan continues to demonstrate its commitment to providing accessibility for everyone. With the ongoing implementation of the AODA, the City continues to integrate accessibility planning into business practices and processes across all departments.

The Vaughan Accessibility Advisory Committee continues to play a critical role in making the City of Vaughan accessible by assisting in the preparation and implementation of an Accessibility Plan and providing direct input into the implementation of all accessibility standards under the AODA.

This policy affirms the City of Vaughan's commitment to meet the accessibility needs of people with disabilities so that all people may have equitable access to City programs, goods, services and facilities in a way that respects their dignity and independence.

The Accessibility Policy meets a compliance requirement of the *Integrated Accessibility Standards, Ontario Regulation 191/11*.

Attachments

1. The City of Vaughan's Accessibility Policy.

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(A copy of the attachments referred to in the foregoing have been forwarded to each Member of Council and a copy thereof is also on file in the office of the City Clerk.)