HALIFAX

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Item No. 08
Halifax Regional Council
September 6, 2016

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:

Original Signed by
_____
John Traves, Q.C. Acting Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: August 4, 2016

SUBJECT: Accessibility Coordination Update

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

Motion of Regional Council, May 31, 2016: That Regional Council request a staff report on the status of the CAO's Business unit Strategic Initiative related to Accessibility Coordination , which was adopted by Council as part of the 2015/16 Budget and Business Plan. The report to provide an outline of work achieved to date, a framework for engagement (including through the Accessibility Advisory Committee), next steps in the development of an Accessibility Policy, and timeline for implementation

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter sections:
11 (2) In the general exercise of its powers, the Council shall take into account the principle of accessibility for its citizens with disabilities.

34 (1) The Chief Administrative Officer is the head of the administrative branch of the government of the Municipality and is responsible to the Council for the proper administration of the affairs of the Municipality in accordance with the by-laws of the Municipality and the policies adopted by the Council.

BACKGROUND

The Strategic Initiative related to accessibility coordination referenced in the above motion was the result of a motion of Regional Council of January 28th, 2014 that directed staff to include a statement "HRM is a leader in building inclusive and accessible community for everyone, including persons with disabilities and seniors" within the Healthy Communities Priority Outcome and develop a Business Plan to support this Outcome for consideration by Council in preparation for the 2015/2016 planning cycle.

The resulting Strategic Initiative presented in the 2015/16 Chief Administrative Office Business Plan stated, "The CAO's Office will provide direction and oversight in defining inclusive and accessible community, establishing a coordination and reporting model for Halifax's Inclusive and Accessible initiatives, and developing an Accessibility Policy for Halifax."

Work is also being done at the provincial level with the establishment of the provincial/municipal taskforce on accessibility. This taskforce will advise the province on the new accessibility legislation and also provide guidance for municipalities on implementing future regulations.

DISCUSSION

Outline of the Work to Date

A number of steps have been taken as a result of the original motion and subsequent 2015/16 Business Plan goal. These include:

- An Office of Diversity and Inclusion was created within the Government Relations and External Affairs section of the Chief Administrative Office;
- A Manager of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion was recruited and hired;
- The Diversity Advisor that works on accessibility was transferred from Human Resources to join the Diversity and Inclusion unit which will to align accessibility initiatives with broader diversity and inclusion issues;
- The Diversity and Inclusion Office has initiated development of a Diversity and Inclusion framework, which will include a comprehensive accessibility framework as a component;
- A review of accessibility best practices in other Canadian municipalities has been completed;
- In preparation for pending provincial legislation on accessibility in Nova Scotia, a scan of accessibility legislation in provinces that currently have such legislation has been conducted. In addition, some initial information gathering has been conducted with the province to help anticipate potential impacts of the new Nova Scotia legislation;
- A survey of all HRM Business Units took place to determine current and planned initiatives in accessibility, and identify gaps in program and service delivery;
- An initial draft of an Inclusive and Accessibility Framework has been created, and will be used to consult internally with a goal of establishing a co-ordination and reporting model within the municipality.
- In March 2016 the Diversity Advisor that works on accessibility was been appointed to the UNSM joint municipal provincial accessibility taskforce. The taskforce will develop and implement an education and awareness program aimed at municipalities and will also provide advice to the province on how the outcomes of the intended legislation can be achieved in the municipal sector.

Framework for Engagement including the Accessibility Advisory Committee

The corporate Diversity and Inclusion Framework will provide overarching guidance to the Municipality on policy, practice and evaluation of diversity and inclusion initiatives. The framework will include subject specific frameworks for work in the areas supported by the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. As noted above, the Inclusion and Accessibility Framework will be included as part of this broader framework.

The Inclusion and Accessibility Framework suggested may require municipal Business Units to develop individual accessibility plans and guidelines for staff, based upon the best practices in their industry.

Business units will be encouraged as part of the framework to consult with the Accessibility Advisory Committee and other stakeholders as part of the development of these plans. Parallel to this activity will be the development of corporate accessibility guidelines or policies in areas that do not fall within the responsibility of an individual business unit. Examples of corporate accessibility guidelines or policies are service dog guidelines, guidelines for alternative formats, or sign language interpretation guidelines. As these corporate accessibility guidelines or policies are developed the Accessibility Advisory Committee and other stakeholders will be consulted. Results from the Business Unit survey, noted above, will help to identify policy gaps and new guidelines required by the organization as the Inclusion and Accessibility Framework evolves.

The Accessibility and Inclusion framework, along with the Diversity and Inclusion framework, is intended to help business units develop individual plans as part of the annual Business Plan and Budget Process. It is anticipated that the Office of Diversity and Inclusion will provide coordination and establish a reporting structure based on plans submitted by the Business Units. Where required, a public engagement process will be a component of developing these plans and/or new corporate policies or guidelines. Part of any community engagement or monitoring activity related to inclusion of disability will include the Accessibility Advisory Committee as a key resource.

Next Steps

The Accessibility framework is being designed to help Business Units produce annual accessibility plans. Approval of the framework will result in a significant change in the manner accessibility initiatives are considered and implemented in the municipality. The following is the projected series of steps.

- Approval of the broad Diversity and Inclusion Framework, including the subset Accessibility Framework;
- Business units, with support from the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, and using best practice research, will be supported in developing accessibility initiatives that may be included in their annual Business Plans. Planning and research will be supported with consultations with the Accessibility Advisory Committee and community partners.
- Development of operational guidelines and/or policies to support accessibility in the regional municipality.
- Regular updates on Inclusion and Accessibility plans and initiatives will be done through reporting on the Diversity and Inclusion Framework

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications as a direct result of the material in this report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Not applicable

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Best Practices Summary Final August 2016
Attachment B - Best Practices list Final August 2016

A copy of this report can be obtained online at http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.php then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210, or Fax 902.490.4208.

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Best Practices Summary
Canadian Municipalities

Background

Research was carried out during 2014to ascertain the extent of ongoing work by various municipalities in terms of accessibility for persons with disabilities. The focus of the research revolved around certain themed areas.

1. Customer service
2. Employment
3. Information & communication
4. Built environment & technology
5. Transportation
6. Training
7. Procurement

Factors that affected the responses included the size of the municipality; whether the Province has a Provincial Disabilities Act; or the decisions of a regulatory body such as a Human Rights Commission. Manitoba and Ontario are the only two Provinces with Disabilities Acts. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act came into law on June 13th, 2005. The Accessibility for Manitobans Act came into law on December 5th, 2013.

Nova Scotia is planning on passing a similar legislation with it being introduced in the Legislature in the fall of 2016. The public consultation on this topic has already been completed. It suggested that standards be created as a result of the Legislation in seven areas.

1. Accessible information & communication
2. Client services
3. Public transportation
4. Employment
5. The built environment
6. Education & training
7. Health services

Municipal Responses

The scan of various Canadian Municipalities did not result in a list of best practices that could be described as core best practices. Municipalities tended to carry out varying best practices. Ontario Municipalities placed more focus on best practices where the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act had developed standards.

Table 1.0 shows the best practices that were identified within the theme areas that were the focus of the research.

Table 1.0

Theme Area	Best Practice Identified
1.0 Customer Service	**1.1** Establish, and document in writing, policies, practices and procedures. **1.2** Let persons with disabilities know that policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of municipal services are available upon request. **1.3** Communicate in a manner that takes into account the person's disability. **1.4** Provide municipal services in a manner that respects the dignity of persons with disabilities. Dignity means the treatment of a person with a disability as a customer who is as valued and as deserving of effective and full service as any other customer. Treatment is not an afterthought or forcing acceptance of lesser service, quality or convenience. **1.5** Provide municipal services in a manner that respects the independence of persons with disabilities. Independence means freedom from control or influence of others or freedom to make one's own choices. It can also mean the freedom to do things in one's own way. **1.6** Provide municipal services to persons with disabilities and others in an integrated manner. Integration means allowing people with disabilities to fully benefit from the same services, in the same place and in the same or similar way as other customers. **1.7** Give persons with disabilities an opportunity equal to that given to others to obtain, use and benefit from municipal services. Equal Opportunity means having the same chances, options, benefits and results as others. **1.8** Accommodate the use of assistive devices by persons with disabilities to obtain, use, or benefit from, municipal services. **1.9** Permit persons with disabilities, who are accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal, to enter municipal premises with the animal and to keep the animal with them. **1.10** Where a person with a disability is accompanied by a support person, ensure that both persons are permitted to enter municipal premises together and that the person with a disability is not prevented from having access to the support person while on municipal premises. **1.11** Give notice and full details to the public of any temporary disruption in facilities or services used by persons with disabilities to access municipal services.

Theme Area	Best Practice Identified
2.0 Employment	**2.1** Notify municipal employees and the public that accommodation, for job applicants with disabilities, is available upon request (recruitment materials and recruitment process). **2.2** Consult with the person making an accommodation request in determining the suitability of an accessible format or communication support. **2.3** Upon request, provide, or arrange for the provision of, information in an accessible format that (a) is needed in order to perform the employee's job; and (b) is generally available to employees in the workplace. **2.4** Notify municipal employees of policies that support employees with disabilities, including, but not limited to, job accommodation that takes into account an employee's accessibility needs. **2.5** Provide individualized workplace emergency response information to employees who have a disability, if the disability is such that individualized information is necessary. **2.8** Develop and document in writing a return to work process for employees who have been absent from work due to a disability and require disability-related accommodations in order to return to work. **2.7** Develop and document in writing individual accommodation plans for persons with disabilities. **2.8** Take into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities, as well as individual accommodation plans, when using its performance management process in respect of employees with disabilities. **2.9** Take into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities as well as any individual accommodation plans, when redeploying employees with disabilities. **2.10** Take into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities as well as any individual accommodation plans, when providing career development and advancement to its employees with disabilities. **2.11** Ensure that all aspects of recruitment and selection of employees are accessible to the needs of persons with disabilities. **2.12** Provide any and all disability related equipment and renovations to facilitate the employment of persons with disabilities on an individual basis. **2.13** Ensure that any cost of accommodation for an employee with disability does not come from the individual budget of the department or business unit that would act as a barrier to employment or career development of an employee.

Theme Area	Best Practice Identified
3.0 Information & Communication	**3.1** Upon request provide, or arrange for the provision of, accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities. **3.2** Consult with the person making an accessibility request in determining the suitability of an accessible format or communication support. **3.3** Ensure that the feedback processes are accessible to persons with disabilities. **3.4** Notify the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports. **3.5** Where information or communications are unconvertible, provide the person requesting the information or communication with (a) an explanation and (b) a summary of the unconvertible information or communications. **3.6** Provide emergency procedures, plans or public safety information, made available to the public, in an accessible format or with appropriate communication supports, as soon as practicable, upon request **3.7** Make the municipality's internet and intranet websites and web content conform to the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0. **3.8** Provide a statement on the web site of the organization outlining the commitment to having the web site accessible and to what standard.

Theme Area	Best Practice Identified
4.0 Built Environment & Technology	**4.1** Apply accessibility standards to newly constructed or redeveloped public spaces that the municipality intends to maintain. **4.2** Exceptions are subject to cultural heritage, historic site, ecological integrity and inherent site-specific-limitation exceptions. **4.3** Undertake consultation with all persons with disabilities regarding the accessibility of trails. **4.4** Ensure that recreational trails and beach access routes meet a defined accessibility standard. **4.5** Ensure that where a recreational trail or beach access route is equipped with boardwalks or ramps, that they meet a defined accessibility standard. **4.6** Ensure that outdoor public use eating areas are accessible to a standard that includes a barrier free path of travel and picnic tables that are accessible. **4.7** Ensure that outdoor play spaces incorporate accessibility features for a range of disabilities. **4.8** Ensure that exterior paths of travel meet a defined accessibility standard. **4.9** Ensure that off-street parking facilities provide accessible parking to a defined standard. **4.10** Ensure that off-street parking facilities meet at least a minimum number spots as defined by the building code. **4.11** Undertake consultation with the public and persons with disabilities regarding the need and location of accessible on-street parking spaces. **4.12** Provide, at a minimum, one service counter that accommodates a mobility aid for each type of service provided. in a mobility aid. **4.13** Ensure that fixed queuing guides are designed with accessible paths of travel.

Theme Area	Best Practice Identified
5.0 Transportation	**5.1** Ensure that public transportation vehicles acquired by the municipality are accessible.
	5.2 Make available to all the current information on accessibility equipment and features of municipal transportation vehicles, routes and services.
	5.3 If accessibility equipment on a vehicle is not functioning and equivalent service cannot be provided utilize accommodation from another source.
	5.4 If the municipality modifies a public transportation vehicle, the modified portion must meet accessibility standards.
	5.5 Undertake ongoing community engagement processes to consult with Persons with Disabilities in the formation of plans for accessible transit services.
	5.6 Waive the fare for a support person who is accompanying a person with a disability where the person with a disability has a need for a support person.
	5.7 Deploy lifting devices, ramps or portable bridge plates upon the request of a person with a disability.
	5.8 Charge a person with a disability the same fare that is charged to a person without a disability.
	5.9 Ensure that transit stops being built meet an accessibility standard; plans are detailed for the retrofit of accessible transit stops; all construction is integrated with other municipal departments to ensure an accessible path of travel.
	5.10 Allow a person with a disability to travel with a mobility aid, assistive device or medical aid.
	5.11 Provide courtesy seating for persons with disabilities on public transportation vehicles located as close as practicable to the entrance door of the vehicle.
	5.12 In situations of service disruption, transport persons with disabilities to their route destination where alternate arrangements for persons without disabilities are inaccessible.
	5.13 Provide pre-boarding audible and visual announcements of the route, direction and destination.
	5.14 Provide on-board audible and visual announcements during the extent of the trip on the transit vehicle.
	5.15 Equip public transportation vehicles with grab bars, handholds, handrails or stanchions.
	5.16 Ensure that public transportation vehicles floors produce a minimal glare and are slip resistant.
	5.17 Provide accessible stop-requests and emergency response controls that are located throughout the transportation vehicle.
	5.18 Ensure that all of its public transportation vehicles are equipped with lights above or beside each passenger access door that are constantly lit when the door is open.
	5.19 Provide accessible signage that displays the route or direction of the transportation vehicle or its destination or next major stop.
	5.20 Equip public transportation vehicles with lifting devices, ramps or portable bridge plates.
	5.21 Have a defined written statement of who can qualify to use specialized transportation services such as door to door and curb to curb services; the roles of the operator and the roles of passengers and support persons.
	5.22 Develop policies and procedures respecting the provision of temporary

specialized transportation services on emergency or compassionate grounds.

5.23 Make specialized transportation services available to visitors and clearly publish the process.

5.24 Ensure that the specialized transportation services have, at a minimum, the same hours and days of service as the conventional transportation services.

5.25 Provide same day booking service to the extent that it is practicable.

5.26 Not limit the availability of specialized transportation services to persons with disabilities by establishing a ceiling on the number of trips for an individual.

5.27 Provide information on the duration of service delays to affected passengers by a method agreed to by the specialized transportation service provider and passenger.

5.28 Allow companions to travel, on specialized transportation service vehicles, with persons with disabilities if space is available.

5.29 Allow dependants to travel, on specialized transportation service vehicles, with a person with a disability who is the parent or guardian of the dependant.

5.30 Undertake regular public consultations with Persons with Disabilities regarding accessible taxi services.

5.31 Ensure that owners and operators of taxicabs, licensed by the municipality charge the same fees for persons with disabilities as the persons without disabilities and there is no charge for the storage or restraint of any mobility aid.

5.32 Ensure that owners and operators of taxicabs licensed by the municipality, have training regarding customer service and persons with disabilities; in the use of any restraint device used to fasten a mobility aid; and operate any other mobility equipment.

Theme Area	Best Practice Identified

6.0 Training	**6.1** Provide customer service training to employees and others that includes a component on providing services for persons with disabilities.
	6.2 Ensure that training is provided on any municipality policies that govern the nature of services to persons with disabilities.
	6.3 Deliver training in a variety of ways and I a manner that is inclusive of persons with disabilities by utilizing accommodation where identified.
	6.4 Ensure that accessibility training is provided during orientation for those employees determined to require such knowledge frequently.
	6.5 Deliver accessibility training to all employees consistent with the provision of diversity and inclusion training.
	6.7 Maintain a record of accessibility and customer service training received by employees.
	6.8 Maintain a document that explains the nature of the training given to employees in the areas of customer service and accessibility.
Theme Area	**Best Practice Identified**
7.0 Procurement	**7.1** Ensure that the procurement process considers the accessibility features required in partnership with the source requesting the procurement.
	7.2 Upon request provide an explanation why it is an undue hardship to incorporate accessibility design, criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities.

Best Practice Application

The best practice initiatives determined by way of the research completed while extensive are continually dynamic in nature. The resulting table serves two purposes.

A. To assist in surveying business units on inclusion of persons with disability.
B. To establish a reference point for the development of a lens tool on the inclusion of persons with disabilities that business units can utilize in relation to projects and activities.

Best Practices Summary
Halifax Regional Municipality

Background

In the fall of 2014 the various business units of Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) were surveyed to collect information on the extent of their work to be inclusive of persons with disabilities. For this purpose a spreadsheet was provided to the business units based upon research in best practices.

Business units reviewed the spreadsheets and replied where they identified work that was done in the area of accessibility. The following list of best practices has been taken from the responses to the spreadsheets and telephone conversations with the business units. It is an overview and not a comprehensive list of all initiatives undertaken by HRM. Others have been added as they have emerged.

Results

- ✓ Only accessible low flow buses are being purchased.
- ✓ New Transit Drivers hired have accessibility training
- ✓ Service hours of Access a Bus the same hours of service as conventional transit.
- ✓ Fare structure for Access a Bus the same as conventional service.
- ✓ Courtesy seating provided for persons with disabilities on conventional transit.
- ✓ Stop request system in place to disembark passengers in safer locations.
- ✓ Service animal policy in place for Transit.
- ✓ Two new accessible transit terminals completed.
- ✓ Ferry service has audible terminal announcements.
- ✓ All ferry terminals accessible.
- ✓ Regional Council has a sub-committee called the Accessibility Advisory Committee comprised of citizen stakeholders.
- ✓ Call centre has TTY services.
- ✓ Sign language is provided upon request at Council meetings.
- ✓ CART (Captioning Access Real Time) is provided at Council meetings.
- ✓ Elevator upgraded in City Hall for larger pieces of mobility equipment.
- ✓ More than a hundred power door operators installed on HRM building as part of program to make HRM properties more accessible.
- ✓ Web site currently being updated to have an accessibility section of information.
- ✓ Accessible picnic tables being introduced in parks and open spaces.
- ✓ Additional pool lifts being installed in both indoor and outside pool facilities.
- ✓ Staff member from recreation regularly attends meetings of the meetings of the Accessibility Advisory Committee.
- ✓ Staff member from Corporate Facility Design & Construction regularly attends the meetings of the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

- ✓ Manager of Accessible Services at Transit regularly attends meetings of the Accessibility Advisory Committee.
- ✓ Municipal buildings being built to CSA standard in terms of accessibility which is greater than the standards imposed by the Nova Scotia Building Code.
- ✓ Pilot project underway testing tactile making on curb cuts to improve accessibility for persons who are blind or visually impaired.
- ✓ Ongoing installation of audible pedestrian signals.
- ✓ More than 150 on-street accessible parking locations in place on HRM streets.
- ✓ More than 30 accessible taxis in service.

As work continues to support Inclusion and Accessibility, additional initiatives are underway. The Diversity and Inclusion office will keep a record of these activities.