



**THE CORPORATION OF THE  
TOWN OF COBALT**

**SCHEDULE "A" TO BY-LAW 2014-38**

**ACCESSIBILITY PLAN**

**PREFACE**

*The Town of Cobalt is committed to ensuring equal access and equal participation opportunities for people with disabilities. We are committed to treating people with disabilities in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in full participation and we are committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner. We will do so by removing and preventing barriers to accessibility and meeting our accessibility requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and Ontario's accessibility laws.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Town of Cobalt was established in 1906 within a mining camp that started three years beforehand. It came into being almost overnight, totally unplanned and without advance notice. At the turn of the century there were few geological maps and little suspicion of the existence of the widespread mineral deposits that have since made the Canadian Shield of Precambrian rock one of the world's greatest treasure troves.

Cobalt is a dynamic community nestled in the heart of the Pre-Cambrian Shield. Named Ontario's Most Historic Town and a Parks Canada National Historic Site, Cobalt enjoys all of the services of much larger communities in a relaxed lifestyle. The town's modern infrastructure and enhanced telecommunications services afford many opportunities for individuals wanting to relocate.

The Town of Cobalt is committed to providing excellent service to all of its residents and visitors and will comply with the Integrated Accessibility Standards for information and communication, transportation, employment and the built environment. It is in addition to Ontario Regulation 429/07 with respect to accessible customer service.

The Town of Cobalt is classed as "a small designated public sector organization" as defined in Ontario Regulation 191/11 and as such is required to meet requirements of the regulation on or before the dates prescribed.

### **SECTION 1:     *Past Achievements to Remove and Prevent Barriers***

The municipality has 1268 residents, many of whom are elderly. As general improvements have been made over the years, the needs of all citizens have long been a consideration. When the sidewalks were redone, the curbs were modified to accommodate walkers and wheelchairs.

Many of the larger commercial structures in Town date back to the early part of the last century. The Community Hall, which houses the Municipal Office and the Doctor's Office was a YMCA in the first half of the last century. Since becoming the Municipal Office, it has undergone significant modification to make it accessible even though retrofitting has been a challenge. The building houses a wheelchair lift to the upper hall which has had new accessible washrooms added in 2013.

The Town of Cobalt owns the buildings which house the Mining Museum, the Bunker Military Museum, the Cobalt Classic Theatre and the Cobalt Public Library. All of the buildings are accessible and equipped with accessible washrooms.

The Cobalt Public Library has a number of features which provide accessibility, including large keyboard/font computing, large print materials and recorded books for our aging population which make good use of the service.

The Bilsky Block, an over 100 year old building in the heart of Town, was completely renovated in 2012 with accessibility in mind. Even though funds were not available through an accessibility grant, an elevator was installed and the Cobalt apartments have walk-in showers with a bench, and the raised toilets. The entrance and sidewalk are accessible and there is handicap parking.

The Town of Cobalt is also the only municipality which provides a completely accessible club building for its seniors. The Golden Age Club hosts a number of events, even some for young children. The building is at ground level, with accessible washrooms. It is also available for a nominal fee for groups who want a smaller venue than the community hall.

A number of seminars are hosted here to provide general information to citizens regarding, Community Access programs, Managing your meds, Safe Driving, and workshops on a number of services in the area for an aging population. The regular monthly meeting is attended by the Mayor and the Chair of our Housing and Services Advisory Group who reports back to council about issues and concerns.

Our Historic Railroad Station was partially renovated to house an historical interpretive centre for visitors to Cobalt. This facility is also accessible and is used for special events. We hosted the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, David Olney at a special luncheon in August of 2013. He is a railroad aficionado and we were pleased to provide a venue to his liking that met his particular needs.

The Town of Cobalt also partners with the Municipality of Temiskaming Shores to provide an accessible transit service for our residents. If one looks at the census data from the last few collections, it would be noted that the average income is considerably less than the provincial average and the age of our citizens is considerably greater. No other municipality in the District of Temiskaming has a transit service, nor is there a transit service available for communities of our size in the province. This is an extremely expensive accessibility initiative but has made a considerable difference in the lives of many of our citizens.

In small town Northern Ontario, it is not always easy to find service providers for accessibility issues. They tend to work in the larger centers where there is an ongoing need and obvious need for their services.

The Municipality of the Town of Cobalt is committed to providing activities, services and venues which meet the needs of all our citizens and employees. We are working hard to remove or prevent barriers to accessibility and to improving the opportunities for people with disabilities.

Unlike larger municipalities, the Town of Cobalt is quite small enabling it to be quite accessible and responsive. This document includes a summary of the accessibility initiatives the Town of Cobalt has undertaken or completed.

## **Customer Service**

The Town of Cobalt is compliant with the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service for organizations with fewer than 20 employees. Bylaw 2014-29 has confirmed the Town of Cobalt's ongoing commitment to equitable access. The establishment of a sub-committee of council, the Housing and Services Advisory Committee includes individuals who are in a position to provide feedback and advice to the municipality on accessibility issues.

## **Information and Communications**

The quarterly newsletter, local paper, regular workshops and partnership with the Golden Age Club present many opportunities for two-way communication. Issues are brought forward to the Municipality for action and if a capital or other expenditure is required, it is reviewed and acted upon by Council.

The Town provides information in accessible formats as soon as practicable, upon request. The Town's Emergency Plan is available on the website and the work in underway for the site to meet accessibility standards.

Most of the recent initiatives were implemented through the suggestions of staff or council. A recent suggestion from a local business person to add an additional handicapped parking spot was acted upon and is in this year's main street renewal.

## **Employment**

At the present time, there are no employees requiring accommodation. If and when the need arises, the Town, always mindful of the importance of its staff, will make every effort to maintain their contribution to the workplace.

## **Procurement**

When we purchase equipment or furniture, renovate, remodel or build facilities, every effort is made to ensure compliance with the standards set out by the Act.

## **Transportation**

As a partner in the Temiskaming Transit System, the Town of Cobalt and City of Temiskaming Shores are committed to providing accessible transportation for all our citizens. When four new buses were purchased in early 2013, these were equipped

with a ramp for wheelchairs, a kneel down feature for easy access, a designated wheelchair spot and a mike for the driver to call out the stop

## **Section 2:        *Strategies and Actions***

### **Customer Service (O. Reg. 429/07)**

The Town of Cobalt is classed as a "small designated public sector organization". As such, it is committed to providing accessible customer service to people with disabilities as defined in Ontario Regulation 191/11 by the dates prescribed and according to our *Accessible Customer Service By-law 2014-29*. This means that we will provide goods and services to people with disabilities with the same high quality and timeliness as others by continuing to identify, remove and prevent barriers so as to ensure the full participation of all citizens.

The Town of Cobalt is committed to ensuring equal access and participation for people with disabilities. We are committed to treating people with disabilities in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in full participation and we are committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner.

Timeframe: Ongoing 2014-2019

### **Training**

We are committed to training staff and volunteers in Ontario's accessibility laws and aspects of the Ontario Human Rights Code that relate to persons with disabilities.

The Town of Cobalt shall prepare or acquire training resources on the requirements of accessibility standards referred to in Regulation 191/11 and on the Human Rights Code as it pertains to persons with disabilities. Training that is appropriate to their respective duties shall be provided to Members of Council, Boards, and Committees and volunteers who provide services to citizens of the Town of Cobalt.

Persons, such as contractors, who provide goods, services or facilities on behalf of the Town of Cobalt shall also be apprised of the requirements under the Act.

Timeframe: Ongoing 2014-2019

Training shall be provided as part of the orientation process for Members of Council following an election; as part of the orientation for new employees.

Timeframe: Initial Training to be done on or before January 16, 2015.

## **Procurement**

The Town of Cobalt Purchasing Policy was updated on September 9, 2014 to reflect our commitment to incorporate accessibility criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities. If it is not possible and practical to do so, we will provide an explanation upon request. The Municipality shall incorporate accessibility design, criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities, except where it is not practicable to do so.

Timeframe: Ongoing throughout 2014-2019

As we go forward to purchase new buses for the Temiskaming Transit, these will comply with standards set out by the Ontario Regulations which apply to persons with disabilities.

Timeframe: Ongoing throughout 2014-2019

## **Information and Communications**

We will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that takes into account their disability. When asked, we will provide information about our organization and its services, including public safety information, in accessible formats or with communication supports. Printed materials will be made available in an appropriate font for citizens with visual impairment upon request.

Timeframe: Ongoing throughout 2014-2019

We will meet internationally-recognized Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA website requirements in accordance with Ontario's accessibility laws.

Timeframe: To be done on or before March 2015

The Town of Cobalt shall investigate the various means available to us to provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities, in a timely manner. When accessible formats and communication supports are requested the Town of Cobalt will ensure its suitability. The Town shall notify the public that this option is available to persons with disabilities.

Timeframe: January 1, 2017

## **Employment**

We will notify employees, potential hires and the public that accommodation can be made during recruitment and hiring. We will notify staff that supports are available for those with disabilities. We will put in place a process to develop individual accommodation plans for employees as the need arises.

Timeframe: Ongoing throughout 2014-2019

We will notify staff that supports are available for those with disabilities. We will put in place a process to develop individual accommodation plans for employees. Where needed, we will also provide customized emergency information to help an employee with a disability during an emergency.

Timeframe: Fall 2015

We will modify or remove an existing policy that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.

Timeframe: Ongoing throughout 2014-2019

## **CONTACT US**

For more information on this accessibility plan, please contact Candice Bedard, CAO, Town of Cobalt at 705.679.8877 or email at [cobalt@ntl.sympatico.ca](mailto:cobalt@ntl.sympatico.ca).

Standard and accessible formats of this document are free on request from Candice Bedard, Town of Cobalt, 705.679.8877.