



**THE CORPORATION OF THE
TOWN OF COBALT**

BY-LAW NO. 2023-23

Being a By-Law to adopt an Accessibility Plan for the Town of Cobalt

WHEREAS Section 8 (1) of the Municipal Act, 2001, S.O. 2001, Chapter 25, the powers of a municipality under this or any other Act shall be interpreted broadly so as to confer broad authority on the municipality to enable the municipality to govern its affairs as it considers appropriate and to enhance the municipality's ability to respond to municipal issues. 2006, c. 32, Sched. A, s. 8;

AND WHEREAS Section(3) of the Municipal Act, 2001, S.O. 2001, Chapter 25, a municipal power, including a municipality's capacity, rights, powers and privileges under section 9, shall be exercised by By-Law unless the municipality is specifically authorized to do otherwise. 2001, c. 25, s. 5 (3); 2006, c. 32, Sched. A, s. 5.;

AND WHEREAS Section (2) of the Municipal Act, 2001, S.O. 2001, Chapter 25, a single-tier municipality may pass By-Laws respecting the following matters: 5. Economic, social and environmental well-being of the municipality, including respecting climate change. 6. Health, safety and well-being of persons. 8. Protection of persons and property, including consumer protection;

AND WHEREAS Regulation 191/11: Integrated Accessibility Standards under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 requires organizations to create written accessibility policies and make them publicly available. Accessibility policies are the formal rules an organization puts in place to achieve its accessibility goals;

AND WHEREAS Regulation 191/11: Integrated Accessibility Standards under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 requires organizations to create multi-year accessibility plans, update them at least once every five years and post them on their websites if they have one. An accessibility plan outlines what steps an organization will take to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility and when it will do so.

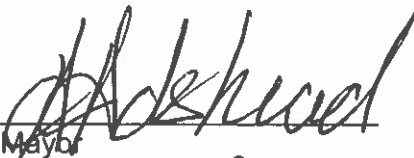
NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Council for the Corporation of the Town of Cobalt enacts as follows:

1. That Council for the Town of Cobalt adopts an Accessibility Policy identified as Schedule "A", attached hereto and forming part of this By-Law.
2. That By-Law 2014-38 *Accessibility Plan*, as amended, is hereby repealed.


3. That this By-Law shall come into force and take effect on the date of its final passing.
4. That the Clerk of the Town of Cobalt is hereby authorized to make minor modifications or corrections of a grammatical or typographical nature to the By-Law and schedule after the passage of this By-Law, where such modifications or corrections do not alter the intent of the By-Law.

TAKEN AS READ a first, second and third time and passed this 15th day of August 2023;

AND FURTHER THAT the said By-Law be signed and sealed by the Mayor and Clerk.



Mayor



Clerk



**THE CORPORATION OF THE
TOWN OF COBALT**

Schedule "A" to By-Law 2023-23

Accessibility Plan for the Town of Cobalt

Introduction

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 of Cobalt is committed to fulfilling our requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005. Our plan shows how we will play our role in making Ontario an accessible province for all Ontarians.

The 2023-2028 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan outlines the strategic choices that the Town of Cobalt will prioritize through initiatives and goals that targets the assurance that its citizens will have access to an inclusive and equitable community free of barriers.

Through the Town's passage and adoption of strategies and policies that promote values of integrity and accountability, independence and foresight, collaboration and engagement, the Town endeavours to facilitate inclusive access to all its municipal programs, services, and facilities while maintaining the dignity and respect of all its residents equally.

Our Commitment

Though the Town prides itself on many of its achievements, it recognizes that accessibility and the needs of our citizens are ever-changing and to affirm inclusivity within our community we must focus our priorities on the work ahead. Achieving success for the future lies with the use of strategic planning initiatives that create programs and services that meet the needs of our growing diverse population. The Town of Cobalt is committed to promoting independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity for persons with disabilities.

The Town of Cobalt's 2023-2028 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan demonstrates the Town's commitment to build upon its previous Accessibility Plan, Accessible Customer Service Policy, Accessible Transportation Policy and Employee Accommodation Plan Process Policy to ensure we are identifying, preventing and removing barriers in order to achieve our long-term goals that align with the provincial legislation of an accessible Ontario by 2025 and beyond.

Governing Legislation

The legislative foundation that governs accessibility requirements are found under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act 2005 (AODA) which received Royal Assent on June 13, 2005. The purpose of the AODA is to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities and to provide for their involvement in the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to ensure their full participation. The Province of Ontario is responsible for determining the legislative framework and standards that apply to organizations across the province. Under

this framework, municipalities, including the Town of Cobalt, are responsible for accessibility as it relates to municipal programs, services and facilities.

Various pieces of legislation and regulations govern and mandate the provincial laws that directly impact accessibility within a municipality. Such laws are:

- [The Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001](#)
- [The Ontario Human Rights Code, 1990](#)
- [Regulation 191/11– The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations](#)

Of particular importance is Part I, subsection 4(1) of the General Requirements in the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations, which requires municipalities to:

- (a) establish, implement, maintain and document a multi-year accessibility plan, which outlines the organization's strategy to prevent and remove barriers to meet its requirements under this Regulation.
 - a. Prepare an annual status report on the progress of measures taken to implement the strategy referenced in clause (a) above, including steps taken to comply with this Regulation; and
 - b. Post the status report on their website, if any, and provide the report in an accessible format upon request. (O. Reg. 191/11, s.4(3); O. Reg.413/12, s.3(1).
- (b) post the accessibility plan on their website, if any, and provide the plan in an accessible format upon request; and
- (c) review and update the accessibility plan at least once every five years.

An accessibility plan outlines what steps the municipality will take to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility and when it will do so. This Multi-Year Accessibility Plan was prepared in order to meet the requirements of both the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, and to assist the Town of Cobalt in identifying, preventing and removing barriers to accessibility in each of the Municipality's By-Laws, policies, practices and services.

Summary

Currently, the Municipality is committing itself through continual improvements of access to municipal facilities and within budget limitations. Accessibility planning does not end once a plan is formulated and documented. Monitoring is essential to ensuring that the Municipality is meeting its obligations and commitments. An annual report will be prepared on the progress being made towards implementation and presented to Council. A comprehensive review of this

plan will be completed every five years, unless significant changes necessitate an earlier revision of the plan.

The Town of Cobalt has identified a number of barriers and will continue to improve and/or eliminate these barriers. The most significant findings were that while our facilities can accommodate wheelchair accessibility, certain renovations or alterations will be required to become fully accessible.

With this plan, the Town is pleased to present its findings and report on the development of strategies to remove and prevent future barriers for people with disabilities. The AODA requires that Ontario be an accessible province by 2025. To assist in this endeavor, the AODA contains accessibility standards in the areas of:

- **Accessible Customer Service**

The Standard for Accessible Customer Service came into force in 2008. To date, the Town has successfully met the requirements of this standard through the development of an Accessible Customer Service policy and through ongoing training.

- **General Requirements**

The general component of the Integrated Accessibility Standard focuses on the establishment of accessibility policies, accessibility plans, the procurement of goods and services, self-service kiosks and training requirements.

- **Information and Communication**

The Information and Communications Standard was designed to assist Ontario businesses and organizations in making their information accessible for people with disabilities. This standard focuses on websites and accessible formats and communication supports.

- **Employment**

The Employment Standard was designed to assist Ontario businesses and organizations make accessibility a regular part of recruiting, hiring and supporting employees with disabilities. This standard focuses on policy and procedure requirements.

- **Transportation**

The Transportation Standard was designed to make it easier for everyone to travel in Ontario. This standard applies to:

- conventional transportation services, for example, the Toronto Transit Commission;
- specialized transportation services;
- municipalities with specific requirements for those that license taxicabs or provide conventional transportation services;
- certain ferries;
- other transportation services; for example
 - public school boards that provide transportation services;
 - hospitals, colleges and universities who provide transportation services.

- **Design of Public Spaces**

The Design of Public Spaces Standard came into force on January 1, 2013. The requirements mandated under this standard address a broad range of physical and architectural features specific with a view to eliminate barriers in public spaces and buildings, i.e. recreational trails/beach access, outdoor eating areas, outdoor play spaces, exterior paths of travel, service counter, waiting areas, etc. The Design of Public Spaces

Standard applies to public spaces that are newly constructed or redeveloped. Designated public sector organizations, such as the Town of Cobalt, were required to meet the requirements of this Standard as of January 1, 2016.

Town of Cobalt Achievements

Over the last few years, the Town of Cobalt has achieved much success at reducing barriers and improving accessibility within our services, programs and facilities by focusing on the 5 key priorities. Many of the larger commercial structures in the Town of Cobalt date back to the early part of the last century. Unlike larger municipalities, the Town of Cobalt is quite small, enabling it to be quite accessible and responsive.

The following is an outline of the Town's achievements in accessibility to-date:

1) Customer Service

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service enacted on January 1, 2008, establishes standards that requires every provider of goods and services to establish policies, practices and procedures governing the provisions of its goods or services to persons with disabilities.

The Town has successfully met the requirements of this standard on August 19th, 2014 through the development of By-Law 2014-029 *To adopt an Accessible Customer Service Policy* and the ongoing training of new employees, volunteers and individuals who serve the public on behalf of the Town.

The Accessible Customer Service Policy is available to the public through the Town's website or in an accessible format upon request.

The Town exercises a process for general or accessibility related feedback. The Municipality is committed to excellent customer service and feedback from the public is encouraged to identify areas that may require change and service improvement. Customers can provide feedback as follows:

- By mail or in person
- By telephone or fax
- Online form available on Town's website – www.cobalt.ca

The 2022 Municipal and School Board Elections were planned with accessibility in mind. During the selection of voting location, accessibility evaluations and audits were conducted by the Town of Cobalt on all potential locations. Additionally, a large emphasis was placed on the creation of accessible communications strategy for both voters and candidates. Election materials were created using simple language and high contrasting colours. Information regarding the election was made available in a number of communication formats.

General Requirements

a) Establishment of Accessibility Policies

The established accessibility policies guide the Town in its efforts to achieve compliance. The Town's Accessibility Plan outlines our commitment to achieving the requirements under the various AODA Standards.

b) Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

The objective of the Town Multi-Year Accessibility Plan are to:

- Identify the goals and strategies of the Town to remove barriers and meet the requirements of the AODA;
- Outline actions already undertaken by the Town to achieve its goals.

Approved by Council, the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan is posted on the Town's website and is available in accessible formats upon request.

c) Procurement or Acquiring Goods, Services or Facilities

When procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities, the Town shall incorporate accessibility guidelines or standards into relevant policies. The Town of Cobalt's 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. Every effort is made to ensure compliance with the standards set out by the Act.

d) Training – IASR Standards and Human Rights Code

Ongoing compliance with Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations and Human Rights Code training includes the training of new hires, volunteers and individuals who serve the public on behalf of the Town and upon changes to policies, procedures and practices.

2) Information and Communication

a) Accessible Formats and Communication Supports

Accessible formats for information or communication support are provided upon request, including for emergency or public safety information made available to the public. The Town is pleased to consult with residents on how best to meet their accessibility needs upon request.

b) Accessible Website and Web Content

Website is periodically updated as required to meet accessibility standards to ensure AODA compliance to WCAG Level AA.

3) Employment

The Town has incorporated accessibility criteria into its employment practices by:

- Notifying and providing accessible formats and communication supports to employees as requested;
- Advising employees of the workplace emergency response information and developing a procedure to implement an accommodation;
- Developing an employee accommodation plan and return to work plan (By-Law 2016-015 to adopt an *Employee Accommodation Plan Process for the Town of Cobalt*);

- Incorporating accessibility considerations into performance management, career development and advancement as well as redeployment.

4) Transportation

As a partner in the Temiskaming Transit System, the Town of Cobalt and the City of Temiskaming Shores are committed to providing accessible transportation for all our citizens. Four new buses were purchased in 2013 that 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. The Town of Cobalt will continue to work with the Temiskaming Transit System to ensure the transit fleet and transit shelters remain in compliance with accessibility standards.

5) Design of Public Spaces

Prioritizing the improvement of accessibility for municipal facilities and infrastructure is a fundamental aspect to maintaining sustainability for future generations.

The Town of Cobalt shall meet accessibility requirements when constructing and maintaining new or redeveloped elements of public spaces including:

- Recreational trails and beach access routes
- Outdoor eating areas for public use
- Outdoor play spaces (such as playgrounds)
- Exterior paths of travel (such as walkways across parks or between buildings)
- Accessible on and off street parking
- Service counters and waiting areas

2008 – Chairlift was installed in the Community Hall

2020 – Installation of automatic doors at the Municipal Office, Medical Office and the Public Library

2022 - Town of Cobalt received funding under Canada Healthy Communities Initiative to restore the Teck Park walking path. Formerly gravel, the path was paved to increase accessibility for all residents.

When undertaking new construction or redevelopment in any of the above categories, the Town will refer to and comply with the legislative requirements.

Looking Forward

1) Accessible Customer Service

The Accessible Customer Service Standard under the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation requires the Town to provide accessible public services for people with disabilities and to ensure that policies and procedures are in place to support this requirement. Accessible customer service means dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity for all people.

Achieving success by:

- Continuing to ensure compliance by developing and implementing a training cycle to ensure staff remain up-to-date on accessibility legislation, corporate policies and best practices.
- Continuing to record the training provided, dates of training and names of individuals trained.

-
- Ensuring the procurement processes take into consideration accessibility requirements.
- Regularly reviewing existing policies and procedures to update any changes.
- Reviewing the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan to identify the goals met as well as new project goals, short-term and long-term

2) Information and Communication

Communication is a fundamental aspect to any society. As societal needs and practices change over time, the importance of ensuring that the Town's communication practices and strategies equate to the same level of change is paramount. Clear and concise accessible communication not only assists those with disabilities but assists our community overall to connect with one another efficiently and equally.

Achieving success by:

- Improving and standardizing wayfinding strategies and the technology which supports these throughout town services, programs, and facilities.
- Continuing to utilize plain language text and accessible font with all communication pieces and by incorporating caption technology where possible.
- Improving and standardizing signage throughout the town in an accessible format.
- Continuing to improve accessibility on the Town of Cobalt's website.
- Increasing the number of accessible documents, forms, and presentations available to the public.
- Continuing to improve and standardize accessibility with the use of social media.
- Continuing to accept feedback and complaints and improving services.

3) Employment

Learning is the key to success for any municipality. Improving our understanding of accessibility and providing an atmosphere where learning from one another's experience encourages innovation and advancement for all services and programs within the Town.

Achieving success by:

- Placing accessibility at the forefront of any initiatives, decisions, and projects.
- Increasing hands-on experience of the range of accessible needs for staff and community partners.
- Continuing to improve the knowledge of the impacts of mental health on accessibility.
- Continuing to provide and improve on accessible training modules for all staff.
- Continuing to provide and improve on the identification of barriers and their impact on the citizens of the Town of Cobalt.

4) Transportation

To reach the goal of making the Town of Cobalt fully accessible, community mobility is a key priority to achieving success. Residents and visitors should be able to navigate the town without encountering barriers that inhibit access to the services the Town provides.

Achieving success by:

- Continuing to improve transit fair box upgrades and retrofitting transit vehicles.
- Improve wayfinding, maps and technology that assist residents with navigation.
- Continuing to ensure that Temiskaming Transit meets and exceeds compliance in accessible requirements.

- Continue to review Temiskaming Transit policies and practices for specialized transportation.
- Continue to consult the public and persons with disabilities on best practices for community mobility
- Continue to improve on the transit main line and services expansion.

5) Design of Public Spaces

Prioritizing the improvement of accessibility for municipal facilities and infrastructure are a fundamental aspect to maintaining sustainability for future generations.

Achieving success by:

- Continuing to audit municipal facilities for accessibility.
- Continuing to improve on standardizing accessibility requirements in new projects and renovations of facilities.
- Increasing access to accessibility features such as ramps, automatic door push buttons, accessible parking, accessible service counters, universal washrooms throughout all facilities.
- Ensuring spaces are more accessible to people who are sensitive to chemicals or fragrances by using a harm reduction approach; eliminate unnecessary fragranced products and select fragrance free alternatives when appropriate. This will also involve making spaces accessible for both the physical space and the people who come into that space, as well as effectively communicating through outreach materials that this is an accessibility issue.
- Continuing to increase the number of accessible event spaces available throughout the Municipality.
- Continue to make roads, sidewalks, and bus shelters fully accessible.

Conclusion

This plan, which identifies strategic priorities and opportunities for improving accessibility, will provide focus and assist in guiding the Town of Cobalt as we work to ensure that all citizens can participate. Ensuring compliance with the AODA standards is fundamental to working towards the goal of achieving a fully accessible Ontario by 2025.

The Town of Cobalt is committed to ensuring accessibility is a reality throughout all facilities and business operations. The next five years will be an exciting time for improvements to the accessibility of the Town of Cobalt, where more and more improvements will be introduced and barriers to accessibility removed. As we make these improvements and seek the solutions to some problems that persons with disabilities living in or visiting the Town of Cobalt continue to face, we want the community to help us. Members of the public are encouraged to make comments on how we can further enhance the accessibility of Town of Cobalt programs, services and facilities beyond 2028.

Please contact the Town to express your accessibility related comments and/or request a copy of the plan in accessible formats or communication support:

Steven Dalley, Town Manager
18 Silver Street
P.O. Box 70
Cobalt ON P0J 1C0

Email: cobalt@cobalt.ca
Telephone: 705-679-8877