

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Tuesday, February 13, 2024

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: UPDATED ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY

FROM:

Michael Coroneos, Deputy City Manager, Corporate Services, City Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

To seek approval for the updates to the Accessible Customer Service policy.

Report Highlights

- The City of Vaughan is dedicated to fostering an environment where every citizen has access to the city's services and facilities. Our vision is to build a community that values diversity and opportunity. We're committed to ensuring that our services are accessible to all, particularly individuals with disabilities.
- The updated policy emphasizes the City of Vaughan's aim to meet and exceed AODA requirements, focusing on respect, equal opportunity, and service integration. This aligns with the previous policy's commitment to accessibility and expands upon it with specific language about exceeding standards.
- The update to the policy includes regrouping of the information, reformatting to meet the current format and style for City of Vaughan policies and updates to reflect changes to the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (2005).

Recommendations

1. That the updated Accessible Customer Service policy, as contained in Attachment 1 to this report, be approved;

2. That updates to the Accessible Customer Service policy are communicated to all staff; and
3. That the updated Accessible Customer Service policy be posted to the City's external website and made available in accessible formats upon request.

Background

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) is the law that sets out a process for developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards that government, businesses, non-profits and public sector organizations must follow to become more accessible. These laws and standards are intended to make Ontario open to everyone by helping to reduce and remove barriers.

The City of Vaughan is a designated public sector organization and is required to comply with the following:

- File an accessibility compliance report every two years to confirm that the City has met its current accessibility requirements under the AODA.
- Develop accessibility policies and, in doing so, must
 - tell staff and customers about the policies
 - notify the public about the availability of the policies (for example, a notice on the website, at reception, etc.)
 - provide policies in an accessible format upon request
- Develop a multi-year plan to help set and reach accessibility goals and, in doing so, must
 - consult with people with disabilities and with the accessibility advisory committee while establishing, reviewing and updating the plan
 - post the plan on the City's website
 - provide it in an accessible format upon request
 - review and update the plan at least once every five years
- Prepare an annual status report on progress in implementing the multi-year plan and the steps taken to comply with Ontario Regulation 191/11 and post the annual status report on the City's website

Previous Reports/Authority

- [City Of Vaughan Accessibility Plan \(Revised 2009\) and the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy, Committee of the Whole - April 20, 2009](#)
- City of Vaughan Accessibility Policy, Committee of the Whole, January 15, 2013 [CWA0115_5.pdf \(vaughan.ca\)](#)
- [Accessibility Plan 2013-2018, Committee of the Whole, December 1, 2015](#)
- [Accessibility Initiatives Update, Committee of the Whole, December 6, 2016](#)

- [Inclusive Design Standards, Committee of the Whole \(2\), February 9, 2021](#)
- [2019 - 2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan Update, Committee of the Whole \(2\) February 9, 2021](#)
- [Updated Accessibility Policy, Committee of the Whole \(2\), June 21, 2022](#)
- [Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2023-2026, Committee of the Whole \(1\) October 31, 2023](#)

Analysis and Options

The policy has been migrated to fit the current style and format of the City's policies. Where possible, language has been updated to be concise and complimentary to the City's Accessibility Policy, condensed to reflect the shortened title for the AODA, easy to read and match the City of Vaughan's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan. The following are key changes made to update the Accessible Customer Service policy:

Support Person, Admission Fees & Service Disruptions

- Elimination of admission fees for support persons, reinforcing the City's commitment to accessibility.
- Ensures service animals are welcome, providing greater clarity and inclusivity for individuals relying on these animals.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Updated to provide explicit instructions on the City's expectations of all employees as it concerns accessible customer service. The section now includes the role of
 - Council
 - City Manager, Deputy City Managers, and Directors
 - Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer
 - Diversity and Inclusion Officer
 - Managers and Supervisors
 - City Employees
 - Accessibility Advisory Committee

Training Enhancements

- Introduces comprehensive, job-specific training for staff and volunteers to serve the needs of the community better.
- Emphasizes the importance of maintaining training records, thereby improving accountability and consistency in service provision.

Feedback Process

- Enhances the existing feedback mechanism to be more receptive and adaptive to the needs and concerns of individuals with disabilities.

Documentation & Notification

- Commits to providing documentation in formats that are accessible to all, taking into account various disabilities.

Accessibility Advisory Committee

- Acknowledges the significant role of the Vaughan Accessibility Advisory Committee in guiding the City's accessibility initiatives.

Review and Amendments

- Shifts policy review responsibilities to the Diversity & Inclusion Officer, ensuring regular updates and alignment with current standards and community needs.

Financial Impact

There is no financial impact associated with the approval and implementation of the policies outside the existing approved operating budget.

Operational Impact

There are no operational impacts assessed at this time.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

There are no regional impacts associated with the Policy.

Conclusion

Updates to the attached Accessible Customer Service policy were developed by Staff to ensure ongoing compliance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

It is recommended that Council approve the updated Policy and direct the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer and appropriate staff to take the necessary steps to implement the policy effective immediately.

For more information, please contact:

Mark Bond, Chief Human Resources Officer, Ext. # 8327

Zincia Francis, Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Ext. 8159

Jeremy McLeish, Legal Counsel, Labour, Employment & Human Rights, Ext. 8387

Attachments

1. 01.C.02 Accessible Customer Service Policy

Prepared by

Zincia Francis, Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Ext. 8159

Approved by



Michael Coroneos, DCM, Corporate Services, City Treasurer and CFO

Reviewed by



Nick Spensieri, City Manager