



Administrative Report

To: Warden MacDonald and Members of Essex County Council

From: Crystal Sylvestre, Manager, Records and Accessibility/Deputy Clerk

Date: Wednesday, December 17, 2025

Subject: Accessibility Initiatives Annual Compliance Review

Report #: 2025-1217-LLS-R60-CS

Purpose

The purpose of this Administrative Report is to provide County Council with a summary update of the County's [Multi-Year Accessibility Plan \(2023-2027\)](#) and the work undertaken by the Essex County Accessibility Advisory Committee ("ECAAC") and the Departments of the County of Essex throughout 2025.

Background

In accordance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* County Council adopted a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan for the years 2023-2027 (the "**Accessibility Plan**"). The Accessibility Plan includes a provision that an annual report be provided to Council regarding an update to the status of the accessibility initiatives over the course of the preceding year.

The ECAAC and County Departments work collaboratively and independently throughout each year to promote and advance accessibility and inclusivity throughout the County.

The County is further required to ensure compliance with the [standards and deadlines for municipalities](#) mandated by the Ontario Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility (the "**Ministry**").

Discussion

The Essex County Accessibility Advisory Committee

The ECAAC is comprised of 7 members, the majority of which are people with a disability. Other members of the ECAAC include people working in the

disability community and a representative from County Council. The ECAAC meets monthly with some exceptions, and these meetings primarily take place in-person and are livestreamed whenever possible.

The ECAAC continues to identify priorities, share information, provide education, and aims to improve our community through their efforts to remove attitudinal and physical barriers to accessibility. Support to the ECAAC from various departments of the County has been key to ECAAC project success and continuity.

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan - Review and Monitoring of the Progress

As part of compliance requirements, the County's Accessibility Plan is updated at least once every five years. During the period in-between, on an annual basis, the County reviews the progress of the initiatives undertaken in the Accessibility Plan. Progress reports are provided to both the ECAAC and County Council.

Ongoing feedback from the ECAAC on the progress of the initiatives is reported to County Council through monthly minutes of the ECAAC, and through ECAAC delegations to County Council twice annually.

The following sections outline a summary of the progress made with respect to accessibility in the County.

Infrastructure and Planning Services Collaborations: County of Essex Administration Building

The Infrastructure and Planning Services Department and the Facilities Division continued their pattern of collaboration with the ECAAC to implement accessibility features in the County's Administration Building as needed throughout 2025.

Early in 2025, an accessible lift was installed at the North Entrance of the Administration Building. The new lift offers members of the public and others who work, or visit the Administration Building, a second option to access the first floor of the Administration Building; and providing an important contingency to the traditional elevator.

Building upon the ease-of-access improvements, the Facilities Division installed electronic 'hands free' automatic door openers to the entrances to the Human Resources Department and the General Administration offices and ensured door openers were included in the upper floor remodel of the meeting spaces.

Also in 2025, the Facilities Division provided a report to the ECAAC regarding the Building Condition Assessment that was conducted on the Administration Building in relation to accessible features.

The ECAAC was further consulted on the draft version of the County's first Interior Wayfinding Design Standard. This County standard was designed to align with CSA/ASC B651:23 – Accessible Design for the Built Environment.

The Facilities Division's consistent commitment to the collaborative process with the ECAAC ensures continued progress towards creating a barrier free Administration Building.

Community Services: Career Compass Employment Engagement

The County's Community Services Division continued their relationship with the Community Living Career Compass Program in 2025.

The Career Compass Program provides the opportunity for job seekers to engage in meaningful employment with local businesses.

Together with their on-site job coach, the Career Compass team member offered their skills to the Community Services Division throughout the summer of 2025.

Sun Parlor Home: South Essex Community Council Career Hub Employment Engagement

Sun Parlor Home's Food & Nutrition and Building Services departments engaged with a job seeker enrolled in the Employment Support Services program through the Career Hub at South Essex Community Council.

The Career Hub provides individuals with personalized support such as job search assistance, skills development and employer partnerships. The goal of this program is to help participants build the skills and experience needed to succeed in the workplace.

The Career Hub team member offered their skills to the Sun Parlor Home over an 8-week period throughout the Fall of 2025.

Essex-Windsor EMS: Community Engagement

Essex-Windsor EMS was invited to the John McGivney Children's Centre in the summer of 2025 to offer educational information to campers with physical and/or intellectual disabilities. The multi-day community engagement offered the campers an inside peek to the paramedic industry and a hands-on tour of an ambulance. Community engagement opportunities of this nature serve to familiarize individuals of the emergency medical response process and aim to quell anxieties that could arise in an actual emergency.

EMS had an opportunity to marry together their knowledge of equipment and the Provincial communication system to provide education for the hearing impaired. This opportunity arose through a chance meeting at an

elementary school education session. During the session, a deaf student identified that a specific model of an automated external defibrillator (“**AED**”) offered audible and visual prompts; the model allowed them to exercise the AED independently without the assistance of their interpreter. This engagement brought to the forefront the opportunity for EMS to promote how the hearing impaired can engage with 911 via text. The student connected with the AED manufacturer, Zoll, to offer information regarding their experience.

EMS and Zoll honoured the Grade 8 student of Our Lady of Annunciation School in Stoney Point for their advocacy with a special presentation and education session for the entire school.

Communications: County of Essex Website and Social Media

Early in 2025, the County Communications Division attended an ECAAC meeting to formalize a communications plan to support and promote ECAAC initiatives throughout 2025. This collaboration was vital to the success of the committee’s endeavours throughout the year.

Communications offered their expertise to the following:

- a 5-day AccessAbility Week awareness social media campaign;
- a five-month Fest-for-All communications plan, which included a dedicated event page on the County website, newspaper ads, social media blasts and media releases providing a multimedia approach to encourage organizations and members of the community to attend;
- social media support for the United Nation’s International Day of Persons with Disabilities;
- a holiday greeting speaking to ways to support the accessibility community through the winter months for the ECAAC Facebook page;
- along with many other social media posts, shares and likes to help the ECAAC further their reach.

As a result, the ECAAC Facebook page has increased its followers by nearly 40% and the page received over 125,000 views throughout 2025.

The Communications Division also implemented a new public website in 2025. The new website offers built-in accessibility checking to allow the County to monitor the website for compliance to AODA standards on an ongoing basis and specifically identifies where adjustments are required to ensure the County’s compliance with legislation and best practices.

AccessAbility Week Flag Raising and Communications

In 2022, as a joint venture with the local lower-tier municipalities, to commemorate National AccessAbility Week a regional accessibility flag was commissioned.

The flag design is of a stylized figure in a wheelchair facing the right side of the flag, with a series of seven right-pointing chevrons behind it, the word Accessability is below the design. The chevrons on the flag symbolize the 7 lower-tier municipalities moving forward with Accessability together, suggesting momentum, progress and action, moving the most recognizable symbol for accessibility forward.

Each year, in alignment with National AccessAbility Week, members of the ECAAC, Council, and Administration along with members of lower-tier municipal Councils and the public gather to raise the flag in solidarity. This annual event is symbolic and representative of the County's commitment to improving accessibility for all.

In addition to the flag raising, a special social media plan was developed for AccessAbility Week to bolster awareness and share information regarding accessibility and support other initiatives, such as the Easter Seals Red Shirt Day.

Essex Region Conservation Authority Delegation

The Essex Region Conservation Authority ("**ERCA**") provided a delegation to the ECAAC on their efforts to ensure ERCA Conservation Areas are accessible and inclusive to all members of the community. The ECAAC and ERCA have had a long-standing relationship of collaboration and the 2025 update included recommendations of the ECAAC coming to fruition at a number of ERCA facilities.

This valuable partnership supports the County's commitment to a region moving forward together in accessibility.

2025 Outdoor Accessibility Fest-for-All

In September 2025, the ECAAC hosted the second annual **Outdoor Accessibility Fest-for-All**. The event was held at the Libro Credit Union Centre in Amherstburg. The event was planned by the County, and in partnership with the Town of Amherstburg and its Accessibility Advisory Committee. The goal of the event was to raise awareness around inclusive opportunities and activities that promote services and spaces for people with varying levels of ability. The event also allowed the Town of Amherstburg to showcase the great work they have done in their community in support of accessibility and inclusion.

The event touched on many of the Strategic Priorities for the County, including:

Working as Team Essex County:

Focusing “Team Essex County” for Results -The event was attended by many local lower-tier municipalities and partner/allied organizations. The informal structure allowed for a unique networking opportunity amongst the exhibitors. County departments, divisions, and affiliated entities, including Essex-Windsor EMS, the County’s Emergency Management leads, and the Essex County Library were among the organizations that offered information to the guests. Sun Parlor Home residents attended to enjoy the day.

The event showcased the amenities the Town of Amherstburg has incorporated into the Libro Credit Union Centre to make it an inclusive indoor and outdoor setting including Canada’s first Miracle League Baseball Diamond, an accessible playground and a purpose-built ice hockey rink for Sledge Hockey. The Town was honoured during the event with a certificate from Assisted Living Southwestern Ontario (ALSO) for their exceptional efforts in the area of accessibility.

Growing as Leaders in Public Service Excellence:

Being an Employer with Impact – The event was an approved Volunteer Day for County staff under the “Essex County Gives Back” Employee Engagement program. The opportunity allowed staff to engage with the ECAAC, local lower-tier municipalities, each other, and the community. Volunteers hailed from every department of the County of Essex and their contribution was critical to the event’s success. The event provided the volunteers insight into the objectives of the ECAAC and other like organizations. The feedback on this event from our volunteers was heartwarming, and inspiring.

Growing as Leaders in Public Service Excellence:

A Government Working for the People - Combining the efforts of the Town of Amherstburg and the County on this project furthered the goals of both groups. To ensure that there were no barriers to participation, the event was offered at no cost to attend for exhibitors or for guests who attended. Events that promote accessibility and inclusion inevitably establish a sense of belonging, making all feel more welcome in our community, connected to resources, and like valued members of the public.

Growing as Leaders in Public Service Excellence:

Promoting Transparency and Awareness – The ECAAC was able to offer an opportunity to each of the lower-tier municipalities and their Accessibility Advisory Committees to further their own objectives. Each had an option to host an exhibitor booth to highlight the resources available in their communities. The participation increased awareness by drawing attention to the great work being done for accessibility improvements and barrier removal throughout the County. These engagements across local the lower-tier municipalities were invaluable.

Building a Regional Powerhouse:

Supporting Dynamic and Thriving Communities across the County – The event showcased the efforts being made to develop communities within the County that are inclusive. Offering facilities that provide space for all makes the County more welcoming to current and future residents. The intent of the ECAAC is to continue to offer this event across the County in the future to highlight the accessible amenities in each community.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications resulting from this report. Accessibility initiatives for the County and funding for the ECAAC form part of the annual budget and are considered during budget deliberations.

Consultations

During the preparation of this report, the following individuals were consulted:

- David Sundin, Director, Legislative and Legal Services/County Solicitor
- Katherine Hebert, County Clerk

Strategic Plan Alignment

Working as Team Essex County	Growing as Leaders in Public Service Excellence	Building a Regional Powerhouse
---	--	---

<input type="checkbox"/> Scaling Sustainable Services through Innovation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focusing “Team Essex County” for Results <input type="checkbox"/> Advocating for Essex County’s Fair Share	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Being an Employer with Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A Government Working for the People <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Promoting Transparency and Awareness	<input type="checkbox"/> Providing Reliable Infrastructure for Partners <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporting Dynamic and Thriving Communities Across the County <input type="checkbox"/> Harmonizing Action for Growth <input type="checkbox"/> Advancing Truth and Reconciliation
---	--	---

Recommendation

That Essex County Council receive report number 2025-1217-LLS-R60-CS Accessibility Initiatives Annual Compliance Review as information.

Approvals

Respectfully Submitted,
Crystal Sylvestre

Crystal Sylvestre, Manager, Records and Accessibility/Deputy Clerk

Concurred With,
Katherine Hebert

Katherine Hebert, County Clerk

Concurred With,
Sandra Zwiers

Sandra Zwiers, MAcc, CPA, CA, Chief Administrative Officer

Appendix	Title
A	MYAP 2023-2027 (2025 Year End Reporting Update)