



National AccessAbility Week: May 26 – June 1, 2024

Background for Proclamation:

The Northumberland Accessibility Advisory Committee (NAAC) is once again seeking County Council's endorsement and support to proclaim the week of May 26 – June 1, 2024, as National AccessAbility Week in Northumberland County.

A national accessibility awareness week was first established following Paralympian Rick Hanson's Man in Motion World Tour in 1987. "Access" means more than just removing physical barriers; it means changing attitudes and supporting all people.

Under the Accessible Canada Act, 2019, National AccessAbility Week is now legislated for federal entities. This means that it must take place every year, starting on the last Sunday in May for federal organizations. Municipalities can also recognize this week, as they have been doing for many years, prior to the introduction of the Accessible Canada Act.

National AccessAbility Week is an opportunity to promote accessibility and inclusion across communities and workplaces, and a time to celebrate the contributions of Canadians with disabilities. It's an opportunity to raise awareness and change culture by promoting inclusion and accessibility, celebrating progress and being inspired to further break down barriers.

Northumberland County's Statement of Commitment to Accessibility

The County of Northumberland is committed to ensuring that people of all ages and abilities enjoy the same opportunities as they live, work, visit and invest in our community.

Planned Activities/Actions:

For the week of May 26 – June 1, 2024, the Northumberland Accessibility Advisory Committee (NAAC) has approved the theme of "Advocating for an inclusive Northumberland". The call to action for this week will focus on the recruitment of 1-3 new NAAC members as the NAAC membership has declined over the past year.

In consultation with Communications, The NAAC has approved the following awareness activities.

1. The NAAC honoured the recipient(s) of this year's **Helping Hands Award**. The NAAC established a "Helping Hands" certificate in 2017 to recognize County staff members who have embraced accessibility and have gone above and beyond mere compliance with accessibility legislation. The NAAC presented the Helping Hands Award certificates by video conference prior to National AccessAbility Week on April 11, 2024.

The following 7 County staff were nominated for, and received, a 2024 Helping Hands Award:

Cara Timmermans, Digital & Document Accessibility Specialist, Communications and Information Technology

- For excellence in Information and Communications demonstrated by greatly improving the accessibility of the County's web content, training and supporting staff on accessible digital document creation, improving Council document accessibility, and conducting regular reviews of webpages and documents.

AJ Wood, Administrative Clerk, Golden Plough Lodge (GPL)

- For excellence in Customer Service demonstrated by going above and beyond to assist GPL residents, their families and staff with resolving issues. He spends time with residents and offers a helping hand to zip up coats, assist residents to exit and enter the building, and help residents to call their family members.
- For excellence in Information and Communications demonstrated by going out of his way to help residents and families find information and working to update GPL documents to an accessible format.
- For excellence in Design of Public Spaces demonstrated by ensuring all areas in the front lobby and office areas provide clear pathways for residents who use walkers and wheelchairs.

Jen Glover, Manager Ontario Works, Community and Social Services

- For excellence in Information and Communications demonstrated by supporting staff in the development of accessible documents for our public facing websites and staff reports.
- For excellence in Design of Public Spaces by playing a pivotal role in providing recommendations on design options for Community and Social Services public and staff workspaces and advocating for solutions that foster inclusivity and accessibility.
- For excellence in Customer Service demonstrated by her commitment to accessibility standards and inclusive practices.

Ashley Postma, Jackie Diminie, Jaclyn McDougall, and Kathryn Larcher, Customer Service Representatives, Community and Social Services

- For excellence in Information and Communications demonstrated by their dedication in ensuring all CSS documents and web content are accessible

to people of all abilities, actively participating in document remediation and collaborating to establish a streamlined process to manage a substantial volume of documents.

2. A County website banner will link to the NAAC application form page.
3. The County will place a **newspaper ad** in 1 local newspaper. The ad will proclaim National AccessAbility Week, reaffirm the County's commitment to accessibility and reinforce the call to action which inviting interested residents of the County to apply to participate as a member of the NAAC.
4. The **electronic sign outside the Courthouse building** at 860 William Street (Cobourg) will notify the community of National AccessAbility Week and the theme for the week.
5. Jostle, the County's **internal website**, will raise awareness regarding the purpose, legislative requirements, and work of the Northumberland Accessibility Advisory Committee. Jostle postings will also feature the 2024 Helping Hands Award recipient(s) and their accomplishment and quotes from NAAC members that highlight the value of people with disabilities participating on the committee, the importance of the NAAC for our community and what members gain by being part of the committee.
6. The County's **social media** will feature information about National AccessAbility Week and focus on the call to action and feature the quotes from NAAC members as above.

To conclude, County Council's proclamation of National AccessAbility Week in Northumberland County would provide needed exposure and support and would reaffirm the County's commitment to creating an accessible Northumberland County.