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Date March 20, 2025 **Report No.** 2025-153

To Chair and Members
Brantford Accessibility Advisory Committee

From Maria Visocchi
Director, Communications, Community Engagement and Customer Service

1.0 Type of Report

Consent Item []
Item For Consideration []

2.0 Topic 2025 City of Brantford Accessibility Award Nominees [Financial Impact - None]

3.0 Recommendation

- A. That the report regarding the 2025 City Brantford Accessibility Awards be received.
- B. THAT the 2025 Accessibility Awards Program Nominees as outlined below
BE APPROVED:

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- C. THAT the 2025 Accessibility Awards Program City of Brantford staff nominees as outlined below BE APPROVED for acknowledgement:

- D. THAT the approved 2025 Accessibility Awards Program awardees and those being acknowledged be officially recognized at the City of Brantford City Council Meeting on May 27, 2025.

4.0 Background

The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with a summary of the 2025 Accessibility Award Nominees and to facilitate a process whereby this year's nominees are recommended to be considered by Brantford City Council for final approval.

In October 2016 City Council approved the Brantford Accessibility Advisory Committee's (BAAC) recommendation to launch the City of Brantford Accessibility Awards Program, directing staff to implement and promote the 2025 campaign with the objective of acknowledging individuals and organizations that have made a meaningful contribution to making our community more accessible. The City's Accessibility Coordinator, together with both the Director and Manager of Communications and Community Engagement worked closely with BAAC to create a program that would support the Committee's objective to make Brantford barrier free. The purpose of the Awards Program is to promote accessibility to organizations and individuals across the community, honour those who are making a meaningful difference, and inspire others to do the same.

The 2025 Accessibility Awards program campaign launched on January 27th 2025 and was supported by a comprehensive social media and print advertising campaign that directed people to www.brantford.ca/accessibility to complete the online nominee form. This year's nomination process closed on March 7, 2025.

5.0 Analysis

5.1 Nominees for Consideration

Following are summaries of the nominations received to officially honour individuals and organizations with a City of Brantford 2025 Accessibility Award.

Greg Wilson

Greg Wilson, owner of William Street Eyecare, was nominated because of his commitment to making significant improvements to his optometry practice. Located in a historic 1911 residence, William Street Eyecare has undergone multiple upgrades over the past 55 years to enhance accessibility for all patients. In 2024, the clinic introduced an accessible examination lane, ensuring that patients who use wheelchairs and cannot transfer are still able to receive a full and comprehensive eye examination. Additionally, the practice upgraded its elevator to provide better lighting and smoother operation, further improving access for individuals with mobility challenges.

Greg Wilson's accessibility improvements in 2024 are consistent with the **Built Environment** category of the City of Brantford's Accessibility Improvement Awards. His modifications meet and exceed the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* standards by eliminating barriers and enhancing accessibility in a professional healthcare setting. The integration of accessible door openers, ramps, and an upgraded elevator ensures that individuals with disabilities have an equal opportunity to obtain essential optometry services. By addressing both the physical environment and medical equipment, William Street Eyecare has created an inclusive space where patients with disabilities can receive the same level of care as all others.

Andrew Nielsen

Andrew Nielsen's nomination highlights his dedication to accessibility and inclusion, driven by his lived experience with spastic quadriplegia cerebral palsy. His passion has led him to devote his life to improving the lives of individuals with disabilities. He began advocating for himself as a teenager and expanded into championing accessibility improvements for others. Over the years, he has raised more than \$165,000 for Easter Seals Ontario, funding essential mobility and accessibility equipment for children with disabilities. His relentless advocacy extends beyond fundraising; he has directly influenced accessibility improvements in housing by securing funding for Stedman House, a supportive living space for individuals with disabilities. Andrew has also worked with professional sports teams, including the Toronto Maple Leafs, Hamilton Tiger-Cats, and Toronto Blue Jays, to address accessibility barriers in their venues.

Through his speeches, social media presence, and participation in high-profile fundraising events like the Drop Zone rappel challenge, he continues to educate the public and challenge societal perceptions of disability.

Andrew Nielsen's contributions align directly with the **Information & Communication** category of the City of Brantford Accessibility Improvement Awards. His efforts have gone beyond personal advocacy to create widespread awareness and systemic change. By using social media, public speaking engagements, and media outreach, he has effectively communicated the importance of accessibility and inclusion, ensuring that persons with disabilities have an equal opportunity to participate in all aspects of society. His ability to inspire, educate, and mobilize support for accessibility improvements exemplifies the principles of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*.

Harmony United Church

Harmony United Church was nominated for making a significant commitment to improving accessibility within its facility, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of mobility challenges, can fully participate in church services and community events. Recognizing the barriers that previously existed for individuals using wheelchairs or walkers, the church recently undertook a thoughtful renovation to enhance accessibility. The key improvements include the construction of a ramp connecting the Sanctuary to the Social Hall and the addition of an accessible washroom. These enhancements have had a meaningful impact on the community, allowing individuals with disabilities to participate in church functions, social events, and cultural gatherings such as the Ukrainian Village Committee's annual festival.

Harmony United Church's accessibility upgrades align closely with the City of Brantford's Accessibility Improvement Awards criteria under the **Built Environment** category. Their efforts ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal access to essential spaces within the building, meeting the requirement of providing services in a manner that respects dignity and independence.

5.2 City of Brantford staff acknowledgements

This year, we also received several nominations recognizing the outstanding efforts of City of Brantford staff in advancing accessibility, and recommend the nominees outlined below be acknowledged for setting an exemplary standard for both their colleagues and the broader community.

Following are summaries of the recommended staff acknowledgements.

Spencer Moore

City of Brantford employee Spencer Moore received four nominations detailing his dedication to accessibility, inclusion, and community engagement. Multiple nominations highlighted Spencer's commitment to breaking down barriers and ensuring that all individuals, regardless of ability, can fully participate in fitness, recreation, and community activities. Through his work as a Fitness Instructor at the Wayne Gretzky Sports Centre, his mentorship of individuals with disabilities, and his leadership in various fundraising initiatives and awareness campaigns, Spencer has inspired countless people to challenge limitations and embrace inclusivity. His innovative approach to accessibility, from supporting athletes with vision loss to organizing adaptive fitness programs and advocating for community-wide improvements, exemplifies his passion for making a tangible difference. Whether through mentoring a student with vision loss through his personal training diploma, advocating for accessibility improvements at local recreation facilities, or participating in fundraising efforts for health-related causes, Spencer has consistently gone above and beyond.

Christian Bean

Christian Bean, Manager of Construction, has been nominated in the Customer Service category for his exceptional dedication to improving accessibility. He has played a key role in ensuring City documents are AODA compliant, leading a thorough review among his team to identify areas for improvement. His expertise and attention to detail have enhanced the readability and usability of documents, benefiting individuals who use assistive devices to access City documents. Beyond documentation, Christian's commitment to AODA standards extends to ensuring infrastructure projects meet accessibility requirements, allowing everyone to access and navigate City assets and resources with greater ease.

City of Brantford Traffic Department

The City of Brantford's Traffic Services Department was also nominated for their commitment to accessibility and pedestrian safety. Over the past several years, the department has implemented numerous initiatives that

significantly improve pedestrian access and mobility for individuals with disabilities. Their efforts include the installation of 75 Pedestrian Crossovers (PXOs), 100 Accessible Pedestrian Signal (APS) buttons, and 119 pedestrian countdown timers. Additionally, adjustments to pedestrian walk times, the introduction of No Right Turn on Red (NRTOR) policies at 11 intersections, and Lead Pedestrian Intervals (LPIs) at 7 intersections demonstrate their commitment to reducing collisions and improving pedestrian safety for all.

By proactively integrating AODA compliant infrastructure and pedestrian safety measures, the City's Traffic team have helped to ensure that all residents, including those with disabilities or mobility challenges, can navigate the city with greater ease and confidence.

6.0 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

7.0 Climate and Environmental Implications

There are no climate and environmental implications associated with this report.

8.0 Conclusion

The nominations received for the 2025 City of Brantford Accessibility Awards highlight the exceptional efforts of individuals, organizations, and City staff in advancing accessibility within the community. Each nominee has demonstrated a strong commitment to removing barriers and fostering inclusivity, making a meaningful impact on the lives of individuals with disabilities. Their efforts align with the principles of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* and the City's goal of creating a barrier-free community.

Staff recommend that all three nominations be approved for recognition as part of the 2025 Accessibility Awards Program and that the award recipients be formally honoured at the May 27, 2025, City Council meeting. Additionally, staff who have been nominated for their contributions to accessibility should be recognized during the presentation of awards for their leadership and for setting a positive example for both their colleagues and the broader community. Their dedication reinforces the City of Brantford's commitment to accessibility and serves as an inspiration for ongoing efforts to make the city more inclusive for all.

Director, Communications, Community Engagement and Customer Service

In adopting this report, is a by-law or agreement required? If so, it should be referenced in the recommendation section.

By-law required ☐ yes ☒ no

Agreement(s) or other documents to be signed by Mayor and/or City Clerk ☐ yes ☒ no

Is the necessary by-law or agreement being sent concurrently to Council? ☐ yes ☒ no