
MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: March 1, 2023
To: Infrastructure, Transportation and Safety Sub-committee
From: Jonathan DeWeerd, Chief Building Official
Report #: ITS23-008
Attachments: None

Title: Proposed Amendment to StopGap Portable Accessibility Ramp Program

Objective: To approve amendments to the StopGap portable accessibility ramp program including allowing temporary ramps to be permitted to be left out on the City right-of-way during business operating hours.

Background: The City of Stratford approved the extension of the StopGap Ramp Program on November 23, 2015, which is facilitated through the Accessibility Advisory Committee. The program attempts to provide businesses with an option to increase accessibility by the installation of a temporary portable accessible 'StopGap' ramp.

The StopGap foundation is a registered charity that promotes the use of temporary ramps to allow access to commercial buildings where a step currently presents a barrier. This is done through Community Ramp Projects, which are volunteer-led initiatives bringing StopGap's awareness to the community. Shortly after the approval from Council the Accessibility Advisory Committee arranged for the construction and implementation of StopGap ramps to be installed at various businesses within the Downtown District at no cost to participating businesses.

The City of Stratford StopGap Ramp Program was approved with the following parameters:

- The Accessibility Advisory Committee members continue to coordinate the request for the StopGap ramps and liaise with the store owners to confirm measurements and colour;
- The StopGap ramps are to be colourful (red, yellow, green, and blue) to ensure ramps are visible to pedestrians walking along the sidewalks and into the stores;
- Store owners who will be participating in the program will be required to provide the City with a Certificate of Insurance in the amount of 2 million dollars to indemnify the City, if the deployed ramp will sit on City property;

- There will be no charge to the store owners for placing the StopGap ramps on the City sidewalks outside their store's entrance on an 'as needed' basis;
- The StopGap ramp design as approved by the Chief Building Official will be used for the construction and that any design improvements are subject to prior approval by the Chief Building Official;
- Concerns regarding the StopGap ramps are to be referred to the Building Division;
- That a list of current store owners with StopGap ramps is to be provided to the Building Division on an annual basis; and
- That the Accessibility Advisory Committee be tasked with promotion of the StopGap ramp program in the City of Stratford.

Analysis: The Accessibility Advisory Committee has requested that Staff bring to Council a request that the StopGap Ramp program be modified to allow the StopGap Ramps to be placed on the City right-of-way during the hours of operation of the business instead of on an 'as-needed basis' to promote their use.

Throughout the past five years many businesses have been leaving the ramps out during the business' operating hours with no complaints being received by the City. From our research it seems that most municipalities permitting the StopGap Ramp program do not actively enforce the ramps being available only on an 'as-needed' basis, but rather permit the ramps to be available during the businesses operating hours.

At this time Staff do not have concerns with the ramps being left out during business hours, but staff are recommending that Council increase the insurance requirements for the StopGap ramps to 5 million dollars to be consistent with the other encroachments and license requirements.

The suggested wording for the revised StopGap Ramp program would be as follows:

- Staff in the Building Division will coordinate the request for the StopGap ramps and liaise with the store owners to confirm measurements and colour;
- The StopGap ramps are to be brightly colourful (red, yellow, green, and blue) to ensure ramps are visible to pedestrians walking along the sidewalks and into the stores;
- Store owners who will be participating in the program will be required to provide the City with a Certificate of Insurance in the amount of 5 million dollars to indemnify the City, if the deployed ramp will sit on City property, Certificate to be submitted to the Building Division by March 31 of each year the business chooses to participate in the program;
- There will be no charge to the store owners for placing the StopGap ramps on the City sidewalks outside their store entrance during daylight business hours provided there is no more than a 1.2 metre encroachment into the public right-of-way;

- The StopGap ramp design be approved by the Chief Building Official, with a maximum 1:6 slope with a slip resistant finish, will be used as the design for the construction and that any design improvements are subject to prior approval by the Chief Building Official;
- Concerns regarding the StopGap ramps are to be referred to the Building Division;
- That the Accessibility Advisory Committee be tasked with promotion of the StopGap ramp program in the City of Stratford.

Financial Implications:

Financial impact to current year operating budget:

Approval of the recommendation as outlined in this report will have no impact on the current approved budget.

Insurance considerations:

Due to elevated costs of claims and since the City can be named in a claim under joint and several liability, the City has moved to towards being named as additional insured for five million dollar coverage. This is currently applied to other third-party relationships, such as licensing, rentals, tenders and purchases. This is particularly important in this case with the increased exposure to liability from having the ramps potentially extending onto City property for the entire day.

Alignment with Strategic Priorities:

Developing our Resources

Optimizing Stratford's physical assets and digital resources. Planning a sustainable future for Stratford's resources and environment.

Alignment with One Planet Principles:

Equity and Local Economy

Creating safe, equitable places to live and work which support local prosperity and international fair trade.

Staff Recommendation: THAT Council approve amendments to the StopGap program as follows:

- **Staff in the Building Division to coordinate the request for the StopGap ramps and liaise with the store owners to confirm measurements and colour;**
- **The StopGap ramps are to be brightly colourful (red, yellow, green, and blue) to ensure ramps are visible to pedestrians walking along the sidewalks and into the stores;**
- **Store owners who will be participating in the program will be required to provide the City with a Certificate of Insurance in the amount of \$5**

million dollars to indemnify the City, if the deployed ramp will sit on City property, Certificate to be submitted to the Building Division by March 31 of each year the business chooses to participate in the program;

- **There will be no charge to the store owners for placing the StopGap ramps on the City sidewalks outside their store entrance during daylight business hours provided there is no more than a 1.2 metre encroachment into the public right-of-way;**
- **The StopGap ramp design be approved by the Chief Building Official, with a maximum 1:6 slope with a slip resistant finish, will be used as the design for the construction and that any design improvements are subject to prior approval by the Chief Building Official;**
- **Concerns regarding the StopGap ramps are to be referred to the Building Division;**
- **That the Accessibility Advisory Committee be tasked with promotion of the StopGap ramp program in the City of Stratford.**

Prepared by:

Jonathan DeWeerd, Chief Building Official

Recommended by:

Taylor Crinklaw, Director of Infrastructure and Development Services

Joan Thomson, Chief Administrative Officer