

As the municipal committee mandated to report to council on accessibility issues in our community we were given a presentation by the Forward Movement. This group is asking the City of Kingston to symbolize barrier free access in Kingston differently. The intention in this brief is to stimulate a richer conversation regarding the International Symbol of Access and a newer suggested version of the Dynamic Symbol of Access. It's important to consider what we are trying to accomplish through these symbols and how we want accessibility imagined in our community? Wheelchair access seems to be the most recognizable symbol, yet it is not the only universal symbol in a series of exceptionalities. As definitions of accessibility shift in the larger society, does the dynamic symbol assist to evolve a cultural shift as other symbols have been adapted over the years to suit cultural shifts? How would we incorporate this symbol into our current initiatives for a more accessible Kingston?

BACKGROUND

By the late 1960s, the need for a symbol to designate accessible facilities was being discussed in a number of countries. In fact, different access symbols were already in use in France, Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States and an idea of interest in Asia. The development of different symbols brought a certain sense of urgency. At a World Congress in Dublin in 1969, the stipulations were that the symbol must be readily identifiable from a reasonable distance; must be self-descriptive; must be simple yet esthetically designed with no secondary meaning; and must be practical.

Through competition by RI Global's International Commission on Technology and Accessibility, (RI Global - Rehabilitation International, is a global organization and network that empowers persons with disabilities) Ms. Susanne Koefoed, a Danish graphic design student, submitted the winning design, a simple motif of a stick figure using a wheelchair to indicate barrier-free access. Taking the original copy of the submitted design, Karl Montan, Swedish Director & Chair of the Commission, 'humanized' it further by adding a circle to the top of the seated figure, thus giving it a 'head.' With the addition of the 'head', the World Congress formally adopted the Koefoed's Symbol in 1969. It was copyrighted by the Committee and was decided to make the use of this symbol open to all.



In 2013, David Onley the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario (2007-2014), launched an international competition to find a contemporary symbol or set of symbols that will achieve the same global recognition as the International Symbol of Access. The competition was administered by OCAD University in Toronto and received well over 100 entries, not just from Canada and the U.S., but also from Britain, France, Italy, Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico.

The competition resulted with no winners as the entries fell short of conveying the complex needs of people with disabilities. However, two designs received honourable mentions.

The Accessible Icon Project started in Boston in 2010 intending from beginning to be “a forum for asking questions about disability and access encouraging individuals with all abilities to re-imagine accessibility at their workplaces and schools and in their community. The previous International Symbol of Access has been transformed to look like a symbol of access - active, engaged, and ready-for-action!”... “The “project began precisely by noticing the differences among icons already in existence.” Now, as always intended, the symbol is in the public domain. New York State adopted the new symbol in 2014, Connecticut in 2017. “The icon is genuinely global now: in hundreds of cities and towns, at private and public organizations, used by governments and by individual citizens.” See website for more examples at <http://accessibleicon.org/>

ACTION REQUESTED

The Forward Movement started in Toronto in 2016 following on momentum of the Accessible Icon Project to build support across Ontario for the Dynamic Symbol of Access. Their website states “The change in symbol has also served as a medium to have conversations about accessibility and disability rights in the province; the catalyst for a much needed culture shift on these issues. “

Co-Founder, Dylan Itzikowitz, sees the Icon as “a means of educating his society on the importance of bringing down barriers to be inclusive for everyone.” The Forward Movement approached MAAC asking for an endorse of *The Forward Movement*. “**Endorsement**” is more an endorsement of their provincial efforts to bring the dynamic symbol of barrier free access to Ontario than of the organization itself. It would mean agreeing to complete points 1 & 2 “and any other options felt appropriate to your municipality:”

1. You recommend to your municipal council to pass a resolution adopting the Dynamic Symbol and endorsing our campaign to bring the symbol to Ontario;
2. You recommended that the wording for your municipality’s accessibility guidelines be changed from “(International) Symbol of Access” to “Dynamic Symbol of Access” and that the icon be changed on municipal property over time.
3. Repaint municipally owned parking lots (the icon on the pavement in parking lots is not regulated by provincial laws).
4. Contact local disability and accessibility organizations and ask that they endorse *The Forward Movement*
5. Allow us to mention your organization’s endorsement on the “Endorsements” page of our website and social media.
6. Write a post expressing your endorsement on your social media and communications platforms

RECOMMENDATION

1. For the City of Kingston's MAAC to accept the request for endorsement from The Forward Movement to include points 1 & 2 above;
2. In order to facilitate a more robust conversation and discussion in the community, the Awareness and Education Working Group should assist to develop a public engagement and communication strategy regarding the "Dynamic Symbol of Access"; and
3. Consider a process to accept points 3-6 above and tie engagement and communication to Celebrating Accessibility Awards and International Day of Disabilities.

What do the elements of the Accessible Icon mean?



1. Head Position

Head is forward to indicate the forward motion of the person through space. Here the person is the "driver" or decision-maker about their mobility.

2. Arm Angle

Arm is pointing backward to suggest the dynamic mobility of chair users, regardless of whether or not they use their arms. Depicting the body in motion represents its symbolically-active status of navigating the world.

3. Wheel Cutouts

By including white angled knockouts, the symbol presents the wheel as being in motion. These knockouts also work for creating stencils used in spray paint application of the icon. Having just one version of the logo keeps things more consistent and allows viewers to more clearly understand intended message.

4. Limb Rendition

The human depiction in this icon is consistent with other internationally established body representations. Using a different portrayal of the human body would clash with those widely recognized icons and could lead to confusion.

5. Leg Position

The leg has been moved forward to allow for more space between it and the wheel, which allows for better readability and cleaner application of the icon as a stencil.

Where in Kingston

- Some private parking areas. Currently scope unclear
- City of Kingston “Celebrating Accessibility Awards” webpage



- Queen’s University Accessibility Hub – Blue Folder Initiative (2013) dedicates space to the Accessible Icon “to open conversation about changing people’s perceptions about disability.”

