

Clause No. 3 in Report No. 4 of the Community and Health Services Committee was adopted, without amendment, by the Council of The Regional Municipality of York at its meeting on May 20, 2010.

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ACCESSING YORK: YORK REGION'S 2010 ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

The Community and Health Services Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report dated April 27, 2010, from the Commissioner of Community and Health Services.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Council approve *Accessing York: York Region's 2010 Accessibility Plan* as included in *Council Attachment 1*.
2. Council approve the summary chart of the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee's questions, comments and suggestions and York Region staff recommendations and responses regarding the draft 2010 departmental accessibility plans (*Council Attachment 2*).
3. Council approve the release strategy in Section 4 of this report to make the 2010 Accessibility Plan available to the public.
4. The Regional Clerk forward this report to the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee, the Municipal Staff Reference Group, local municipalities and their Accessibility Advisory Committees, The Regional Municipality of York Police Services Board, and the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario for their information.

2. PURPOSE

This reports presents to Regional Council *Accessing York: York Region's 2010 Accessibility Plan* (see *Council Attachment 1*) and the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee Summary of Feedback on the draft 2010 Departmental Accessibility Plans (see *Council Attachment 2*). This report also seeks approval for this plan and its release strategy which includes forwarding the final printed version to area municipalities, their Accessibility Advisory Committees and other community stakeholders across York Region.

3. BACKGROUND

York Region must comply with the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*

The *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA) requires municipalities, including York Region, to prepare annual accessibility plans that address the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to accessibility for people with disabilities in their municipal bylaws, policies, practices, programs, services and facilities. The ODA also requires that the accessibility plan is developed in consultation with people with disabilities and is made available to the public. The ODA applies only to the Ontario Public Service and the broader public sector, including municipalities.

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) came into effect on June 13, 2005 with the goal to make Ontario fully accessible by 2025. This goal will be achieved through the development, implementation, and enforcement of provincially set accessibility standards relating to customer service, transportation, information and communications, employment and the built environment. Both public and private sector organizations will be required to implement these standards in phases.

As required for designated public sector organizations under the AODA, York Region achieved compliance with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Regulation by January 1, 2010. Actions taken by York Region to comply with the regulation are summarized in another report entitled “Update on Compliance with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Regulation (429/07) under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*” for review at the May 12, 2010 meeting of the Community and Health Services Committee.

The AODA will eventually replace the ODA, however, the Province has indicated that the ODA will remain in effect for the foreseeable future. Until the Province repeals the ODA, all public sector organizations, including York Region, must continue to implement both acts simultaneously. To ensure that the Region’s accessibility efforts remain linked, AODA compliance initiatives have been included in the ODA accessibility planning process.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

York Region’s ongoing commitment to accessibility

Since 2004, York Region has planned and executed six, and with the release of this plan, seven accessibility plans which have involved the development and implementation of close to 600 accessibility planning initiatives.

Accessibility achievements made in the 2009 accessibility plan

ACCESS-ability: York Region's 2009 Accessibility Plan originally contained a total of 77 initiatives. Since its approval in May 2009 (Clause No. 6 of Report No. 4 at the May 21, 2009 Regional Council Meeting), some departments worked on additional initiatives thereby increasing the total to 85 initiatives. The 85 initiatives included 29 related to barrier identification and 56 aimed at removing and preventing barriers from across all Regional departments including York Regional Police. Of these, 61 per cent are complete, 32 per cent are underway and 7 per cent are planned, with completion expected in 2010.

A progress report on *ACCESS-ability: York Region's 2009 Accessibility Plan* was presented to and approved by Council on December 16, 2009 through the adoption of Clause No. 4 of Report No. 4 of the Community and Health Services Committee.

Developing Accessing York: York Region's 2010 Accessibility Plan

Accessing York: York Region's 2010 Accessibility Plan continues to follow the direction set out in our Accessibility Plan Policy Framework and is integrated with our annual business planning and budget process. The Region's accessibility plans are developed by the ODA/AODA Staff Committee, an inter-departmental committee with representatives from each department including York Regional Police and in consultation with the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee. Each Staff Committee member works with their respective department to ensure that ODA commitments are planned and implemented successfully.

York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee provides valuable input and advice throughout the accessibility planning process

As legislated under the ODA, the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee continues to provide valuable input and advice throughout the accessibility planning process. For example, in 2009 members of the Committee:

- Provided advice in the development and implementation of *ACCESS-ability: York Region's 2009 Accessibility Plan* and in the development of *Accessing York: York Region's 2010 Accessibility Plan*.
- Recommended that Regional Council recognize National Access Awareness Week (May 24 to May 30, 2009), which was endorsed by Council in April 2009.
- Participated in the Rapid Co. accessibility workshop in May 2009.
- Participated in the Province's Accessibility Advisory Committee forum held in June 2009.
- Participated on the York Region Forest Trail Accessibility Sub-Committee.
- Presented at the full day training modules of Accessible Customer Service Training in the Spring of 2009.
- Participated in the filming of the Accessible Customer Service Training DVD.
- Presented an update of York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee activities to the Town of Markham Accessibility Advisory Committee in October 2009.

- Attended six York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee meetings and provided feedback to all regional departments on draft departmental accessibility plans for 2010.

York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee members have reviewed and endorsed the initiatives included in *Accessing York: York Region's 2010 Plan*. Regional staff presented the draft departmental accessibility plans to the committee over two meetings held in November 2009. The Committee members provided their comments and advice on the proposed initiatives and these were incorporated into the final version of the plan. *Council Attachment 2* includes the Committee's questions, comments and suggestions and the corresponding staff recommendations and responses for Council's review and approval.

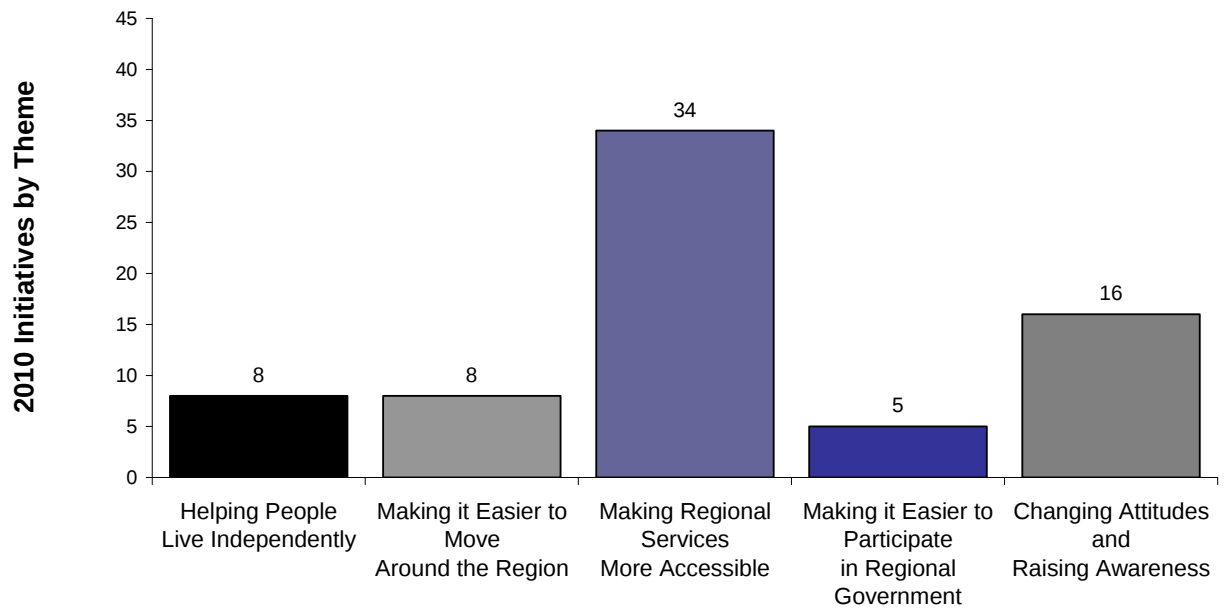
The 2010 accessibility plan has 71 new initiatives

In 2010, departments will continue to identify and address barriers that prevent people with disabilities from 'Accessing York' Region's facilities, programs and services. This year, departments have brought forward 71 accessibility planning initiatives (18 Barrier Identification and 53 Barriers to be Addressed initiatives) that have been organized into the five accessibility themes reflecting feedback from the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee and the public. The themes are:

- Helping people live independently;
- Making it easier to move around the Region;
- Making Regional services more accessible;
- Making it easier to participate in Regional government; and
- Changing attitudes and raising awareness.

The graph below illustrates the initiatives by theme area.

2010 Initiatives by Theme



Some initiatives included in the 2010 Plan are:

The **Community and Health Services Department** will focus on improving the accessibility of the affordable housing buildings it manages so that more people with disabilities have access to housing that is suitable to their needs.

The **Office of the Chief Administrative Officer** will develop a public education program to build the individual capacity of people with disabilities to be personally prepared during emergencies.

The **Corporate Services Department** will make the Administrative Centre more accessible through the installation of activated floor announcements in elevators, an enhanced accessible washroom and accessible floor directory in the Great Hall.

The **Environmental Services Department** will review its pages on the corporate website and investigate the addition of an audio file option to ensure business critical information is accessible to people with disabilities.

The **Finance Department** will modify its website pages to indicate that contracts and tenders are available in alternate, accessible formats.

The **Planning and Development Services Department** will include policies in the approved Regional Official Plan to ensure that communities are designed to have interconnected and accessible transportation.

The **Transportation Services Department** will continue to ensure that everyone in our region has access to safe, quality-driven transit, roadways and pedestrian networks, including accessibility upgrades to transit stops and additional audible pedestrian signals.

York Regional Police will create the Persons with Disabilities Safety Unit to provide people with disabilities greater access to police resources and the information they need to increase their personal safety and home security.

All Departments will incorporate the Accessible Customer Service Policy into specific departmental policies and practices to ensure compliance with the requirements of the AODA Accessibility Standards for the Customer Service Regulation.

Release strategy for making the 2010 accessibility plan publicly available

The ODA requires that municipal annual accessibility plans be made available to the public. Pending Council approval, *Accessing York: York Region's 2010 Accessibility Plan* will be made available to the public as follows:

- Post the plan on York Region's website.
- Share the plan with individuals, agencies and organizations that represent or provide services to people with disabilities in York Region.
- Share the plan with the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee, the Municipal Staff Reference Group, nine local municipalities and their Accessibility Advisory Committees, The Regional Municipality of York Police Services Board and the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario for their information.
- Make the plan accessible by producing it in large print and CD and offer other alternate formats upon request.
- Offer a survey for public feedback and comments on the accessibility plan that can be mailed or completed online.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Accessibility planning is integrated in the way York Region does its business

Accessibility planning continues to be integrated with the Region's services and business planning practices. The majority of initiatives included in the accessibility plans are therefore, part of the existing base budgets of various departments or in some cases the major capital expenditures were planned and incorporated in previous years budgets and are now being expended as part of existing base budgets. For example, the Transportation Services Department is purchasing buses that include accessibility features as part of the basic design and base price of the bus.

The total estimated cost for new initiatives included in the 2010 plan is approximately \$1.9 million. Of this, approximately \$1.6 million is offset by the Federal Provincial Economic Stimulus funding being used to address accessibility in various Housing York Inc. buildings and non-profit social housing buildings. The remaining (approximately) \$300,000 will be used to improve accessibility to websites, forest trails and transportation services and is included in the 2010 Departmental Budgets.

Since the development of the Region's first accessibility plan in 2003/04, approximately \$141 million has been approved for a range of projects included in York Region's previous six accessibility plans (2003/04 – 2009). This amount was offset by approximately \$47 million in provincial and federal funding. These costs were mainly related to transportation, housing and regional facility capital improvements which included some accessibility features.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

All York Region residents, including those with disabilities, benefit from barrier free regional practices, procedures and services. The Municipal Staff Reference Group, led by the Region, is comprised of those responsible for implementing the requirements of the ODA and the AODA in the nine local municipalities and broader public sectors such as hospitals and school boards. The group continues to meet to exchange information and share ideas regarding implementation activities. York Region will continue to meet with and share reports and information with the Municipal Staff Reference Group and their Accessibility Advisory Committees.

7. CONCLUSION

Accessing York: York Region's 2010 Accessibility Plan reaffirms York Region's commitment to make our region welcoming, inclusive and accessible. It moves us closer to the goal of creating an accessible environment that encourages the independence, inclusion and participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of our community.

For more information on this report, please contact Cordelia Abankwa-Harris, Managing Director, Strategic Service Integration and Policy Branch at Ext. 2150.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.