

New initiatives will boost accessibility in region

BY DAVID FLEISCHER
dfleischer@yrmg.com

York Region got a little more accessible last week, with the passing of the 2010 accessibility plan.

York advisory committee member Kirsten Hill praised council for eliminating 600 barriers since issuing its first plan seven years ago.

This year's plan contains 71 more initiatives that will introduce changes to the region's website, housing facilities, regional buildings and emergency management planning.

They include:

- Constructing and modifying building entrances, bathrooms and new units in regional housing facilities;
- Installing more accessible and audible pedestrian traffic signals and using street signs with larger fonts;
- Hiring a consultant to review best practices for York Regional Police facilities;
- A redesign of the corporate website, including audio files and options to increase font sizes and zoom in on text and;
- Training staff so children with special needs can attend recreational programs and camps.

"(The committee) wants you to know we value and respect your commitment to building a strong, safe, caring and accessible community," Ms Hill told councillors.

"We are known across Ontario as the post-

er child for accessibility committees and for results on accessibility," regional chairperson Bill Fisch said, adding the province often asks the region about its efforts.

The region also approved spending \$85,000 to create a one-kilometre, fully accessible trail loop in the York Regional Forest Hollidge tract.

*'We are known across Ontario
as the poster child for
accessibility committees and
for results on accessibility.'*

New features will include grading of the trail to avoid steep slopes, new signage and accessible parking.

It was a reminder that we need to look beyond the obvious when considering accessibility issues, Newmarket Regional Councillor John Taylor said.

"Accessibility isn't just about making sure someone can get up a curb," he said.

It is estimated the number of residents with disabilities increased from 90,000 in 2001 to 140,000 by 2006.

National Access Awareness Week is June 6 to 12.

For more information on the region's plan visit york.ca and follow the Services link to Accessibility Planning.
