

MEMORANDUM

TO: Community and Health Services Committee Members

FROM: Adelina Urbanski,
Commissioner of Community and Health Services

DATE: March 10, 2010

RE: **Charles Beer's Independent Review of the AODA**

In June 2009, Charles Beer was appointed by the Ontario Government to conduct a legislated independent review of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (AODA) and regulations. The AODA requires that an independent review of the Act be undertaken within four years of it coming into force and every three years thereafter. The purpose of this review is to ensure the legislation is effective for people with disabilities and businesses and organizations. The review involved consultations across the province with people from the disabilities, business and public sector communities, and written submissions from the public.

Mr. Beer invited York Region to host one of these sessions on December 21, 2009. Accessibility Advisory Committee members from the nine local municipalities, the Municipal Staff Reference Group members, and members of York Region's ODA/AODA Staff Committee were invited to attend. Accommodations such as sign language interpreters and note takers were provided to ensure that the session was accessible to people with disabilities.

The review session focused on the following areas:

- The standards development committee process.
- The role of Municipal Advisory Committees.
- The functions of the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario, including public education.
- Recommendations for a repeal strategy for the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA).
- Recommendations for amendments to the AODA and for the development of additional Accessibility Standards.

The session did not focus on the specifics of the standards, as there is a separate process for that, but rather focused on the development of the standards and how the Act will continue to be implemented between now and 2025.

At the York Region session the participants provided feedback to Mr. Beer relating to the following:

- The lack of accompanying funding to implement the requirements of the legislation.
- A request for consideration of municipal processes (e.g. Council/Committee timelines and procedures) within the timelines prescribed by the regulations.
- The requirement for business resources to meet the needs driven by the legislation (e.g. shortage of sign language interpreters, note takers).
- Concern that enforcement responsibilities will be downloaded to the municipalities without adequate funding to support.
- The need for a central information resource for Accessibility Advisory Committees to access best practices and resources.
- The need for clarity within the regulations to ensure consistent application across the province.
- The need for a standard to address accommodations for volunteers with disabilities allowing them to participate in the volunteer sector.
- The need for more specific direction around the compliance dates for various sectors outside of municipalities (e.g. police services are not listed as a public sector organization).
- A request for clarification around the changing role of the Human Rights Commission and the AODA legislation. It is not clear where people go with concerns about accessibility issues.

The AODA review period has now concluded. Mr. Beer will now compile all the feedback received during the consultation and is scheduled to submit a report of his findings to the Minister of Community and Social Services in early 2010. Once this report is released to the public, the Community and Health Services Department will provide a subsequent information report to Regional Council at that time.

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


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