



DRAFT 2006 Accessibility Plan

Community Services and Housing Department

Environmental Scan

Community Services and Housing will address the following issues:

Staff Training

- Provide training to staff to assist with awareness, identification, and solutions for York Region citizens with disabilities.

Information

- Work to remove barriers to information regarding services and programs and to increase and manage information for persons with disabilities

Physical Barriers

- Work to make specific services and programs more physically accessible to persons with disabilities

Our Customers

Housing Services Division

The Housing Services Division directly manages 1767 social housing units through the operations of Housing York Inc. The Division also administers 4599 social housing units through independent non-profit and co-operative housing providers. The Division is also responsible for increasing the supply of affordable housing including the creation of new accessible units. The Region supports and funds a range of homelessness and prevention support programs in partnership with community agencies.

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The demographics of our customers vary widely. We serve:

- People of all ages, including children, youth, and seniors who are elderly and fragile
- People with diverse cultural backgrounds, many who are new to the country and have a mother tongue other than English
- Households in financial need
- Households in receipt of Ontario Disability Support Program payments, Old Age Pensions, Disability Pensions, etc.
- People facing a wide range of physical barriers
- Households headed by those who have been victims of domestic violence
- Households who require integrated community support services

The needs of our customers are for housing that is:

- Affordable
- Safe and secure
- Appropriate in size and physical form
- Integrated with community support services

Assistance for our clients with disabilities includes:

- Providing a minimum of 326 accessible housing units throughout York Region
- Incorporating barrier reduced design into new housing development
- Seeking instances where retro fitting of existing properties can accommodate a wider range of clients who face physical barriers in their housing
- Providing information to allow clients to better determine if available housing matches their need for barrier reduced accommodation
- Liaising with community agencies that provide households with community support services
- Evaluating impact of future AODA regulations

Social Assistance Division

The Social Assistance Division provides financial and employment assistance to approximately 8600 residents annually (including adults and children). This comprises approximately 4500 family units.

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The demographics of our customers vary widely. We serve:

- People in financial need, including those who are homeless
- People of all ages, including children, youth and seniors
- People with diverse cultural and religious backgrounds
- Persons in receipt of Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)
- Persons with a broad range of physical, sensory, and cognitive disabilities

The needs of our customers are:

- Financial assistance for food, shelter, and additional expenses
- Employment assistance that supports participants in accessing and maintaining jobs.

Financial assistance available for persons with disabilities:

- All Ontario Works recipients receive an Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB) card with their monthly social assistance cheque. The ODB card covers the costs of all prescription medications listed on the drug formulary
- Ontario Works and ODSP recipients with disabilities may be eligible to receive assistance with the cost of health-related items such as:
 - o Mobility aids (i.e. walkers)
 - o Foot orthotics
 - o Vision and dental care
 - o Prosthetic devices (i.e. hearing aids)
 - o Home repairs or renovations (i.e. addition of ramps, grab bars in the shower)
 - o Wheelchair repairs and batteries
 - o Other eligible items as defined in policy

Employment Assistance available for persons with disabilities:

- Ontario Works currently maintains a link with a range of agencies to assist persons with disabilities to prepare for employment
- Persons with learning disorders have access to literacy and numeracy programs through Ontario Works referrals to community agencies.
- Volunteer placement and employment based workshops, delivered at local Community Services and Housing offices, are physically accessible for persons with disabilities and mobility issues

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- One-on-one employment counselling is offered at all local Ontario Works offices to assist participants in developing strategies to manage disability-related barriers to employment

Family and Children's Services Division

The Family and Children's Services Division provides financial assistance and/or direct developmental programming to approximately 5935 York Region children from birth to 12 years annually and 300 eligible adults residing in domiciliary hostels. This comprises approximately 4344 family units.

The demographics of our customers vary widely. We serve:

- Children from birth to 12 years of age
- Families with diverse cultural and religious backgrounds
- Families with an assessed financial need
- Eligible adults residing in domiciliary hostels
- Children with a broad range of diagnosed and undiagnosed physical, sensory, and cognitive disabilities
- Licensed child care centres with children with special needs enrolled
- Agencies delivering programs for children and families under the *Day Nurseries Act*, the *Child and Family Services Act*, the *Ontario Works Act*, and the *Lodging House By-law*

The needs of our customers are:

- Financial assistance for child care and recreational costs, and enhanced inclusion support for children with exceptional special needs
- Developmental programming to assist in the development of children with special needs and their inclusion into licensed child care centres and community settings
- Information, intake, and access to programs and services in York Region
- Financial assistance for domiciliary hostel costs

Information, Intake and Access to Family and Children's Services Division

All requests for information, intake, and access for the following programs are accessed by calling the toll free 1-888-703-KIDS (5437) line:

- Child Care Fee Assistance
- Early Intervention Programs

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- Preschool Speech and Language Program
- Tri-Regional Infant Hearing Program
- Child Care Support Line including a Child Care Translation Language telephone line
- Summer Camp Fee Assistance

The Division administers:

- Child care fee assistance for families with an assessed financial need with children enrolled in licensed child care, including those with special needs.
- Wage subsidy to enhance staff salaries within licensed child care programs
- Enhanced funding to provide inclusion supports to children with exceptional special needs in licensed child care programs

The Division provides direct service delivery for developmental programming:

- Early Intervention Services (EIS) provides:
 - o Developmental programming consultative supports for children with special needs in their homes, child care centres, community settings, and EIS offices.
 - o Occupational and Physio-therapy consultative services

The Division manages the funding and program relationships with:

- Speech Language Pathology services through a contract with Markham Stouffville Hospital
- In-home mobility, orientation, and developmental supports through a contract with Ontario Foundation for Visually Impaired Children
- Seating and orthotic clinic equipment support for children with physical disabilities through a contract with Southlake Regional Hospital
- All Our Kids (AOK) Early Child Development and Parenting Programs

The Division administers per diem agreements with domiciliary hostel operators for domiciliary hostel beds. The Division has responsibility to license domiciliary hostels under the Lodging House By-law and to monitor compliance under the By-law and per diem agreements.

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Business Services Division

The Business Services Division delivers direct and support services through its six program teams.

- Family Support Team – assists clients in pursuing support income
- Eligibility Review Team – investigates and collects revenues owed to the Region
- Learning and Development Team – knowledge and skills training for all staff
- Contact Centre Team – 'First Call' services and OW eligibility assessment
- Budget and Finance Team – ensures the department's fiscal integrity
- Administration Team – delivers accommodation services and standard practices and provides expert technology support for program applications

Our customers are Community Services and Housing Department clients, staff, service providers, and vendors.

Policy and Program Support Services Division

The Policy and Program Support Services Division provides support to the Department, the corporation, and Regional Council through the provision of strategic policy analysis and program development services.

The Division also manages departmental emergency preparedness and business continuity planning; provides program communications services; produces YorkLink; co-ordinates the Region's ODA accessibility planning process and manages community investment, planning and program evaluation activities.

Our customers are primarily the Community Services and Housing Department, the corporation, and community service agencies.

Accessibility Statement

The Community Services and Housing Department will continue to move toward accessible programs, training, and information. The first step was the preparation of the 2004 plan. As in the 2005 plan, implementation is the main focus of the 2006 plan.

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Progress Report on Accessibility Achievements - 2005

Barrier Identified ¹	Barrier Type ²	Disability Type ³	How the barrier was addressed ⁴
Helping People Live Independently			
Need to develop affordable accessible rental housing units for frail seniors and adults with disabilities. (Housing Services)	Physical	Physical	Development process for housing additional households of persons with disabilities in progress.
Need to provide greater accessibility services for households requiring transitional housing. (Housing Services)	Physical	Physical	Development of an accessible transitional housing unit in a housing project in Sutton in progress.
Need to create centralized source of information regarding special needs units within the social housing portfolio. (Housing Services)	Informational	Physical, Sensory	Development of detailed inventory of modified units underway.
Need to create a centralized waiting list for households requiring modified units without support services. (Housing Services)	Policy/Practice	Physical, Sensory	Conferring with housing providers, persons with disabilities and support agencies to develop a list of the information required for special needs applicants to assess the suitability of modified or supported units. Engaging a consultant to compile a detailed inventory of modified units in the social housing portfolio.
Remove barriers in the social assistance appeal process. (Social Assistance)	Policy/Practice	All	A workgroup has been established to review feedback from a brainstorming session conducted in May 2005. A client focus group will be conducted in November to determine barriers in the appeal process.

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2 Indicates the type(s) of barrier (physical, architectural, informational, communicational, attitudinal, technological, policy/practice)

3 Indicates the type(s) of disability affected by the barrier (physical, sensory, cognitive or other)

4 Describes the action taken to identify, remove or prevent the barrier

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Barrier Identified ¹	Barrier Type ²	Disability Type ³	How the barrier was addressed ⁴
Making it Easier to Move Around the Region			
Lack of access to Contact Centre for persons with disabilities. (Business Services)	Communicational, Technological	Physical	Survey underway.
Making Regional Services More Accessible			
Need to review and revise the current employment information presentation given to all Ontario Works applicants as part of the second stage application process. (Social Assistance)	Informational	Sensory, Cognitive	The Employment Information presentation has been revised to meet the needs of persons with sensory and cognitive needs. The revised presentation is in the process of being made available on CD ROM with voice over. In addition, participants will be provided with a paper copy.
Based on a review completed on the Ontario Works application process, access needs for persons with disabilities, particularly for those with non-visible disabilities, is not easily identified by staff. (Social Assistance)	Policy/Practice	All	Supportive, non-invasive question has been developed to help identify how to better support persons with disabilities in ongoing work. This question will be incorporated into the initial application process.
An accessible information brochure for the Ontario Works program is currently not available in York Region. (Social Assistance)	Informational	Sensory, Cognitive	Development of a new, easy to read information pamphlet about Ontario Works is in progress. The pamphlet will be printed and distributed by first quarter, 2006.
Review accessibility of Ontario Works resource centres. (Social Assistance)	Physical, Architectural	Physical, Sensory	A survey for users was conducted in each of four OW offices to identify any barriers in the employment resource centres. Survey responses are currently being compiled.

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Barrier Identified ¹	Barrier Type ²	Disability Type ³	How the barrier was addressed ⁴
Review usability and accessibility standards for on-line information found in the YorkLink directory/web site. (Policy and Program Support Services)	Informational	Sensory	Completed review.
An accessible computer workstation is currently only available in one Social Assistance office. (Social Assistance)	Policy/Practice Technological	Physical	Accessible computer workstations have arrived. Implementation is scheduled to be completed by the end of November in each of the OW resource centres.
Continue to review web pages to identify potential barriers for persons with disabilities. (Policy and Program Support Services)	Informational Technological	Sensory	Using accessibility standards established by the W3C and screen reader software, Community Services and Housing will review and revise its web pages on an ongoing basis to identify barriers for people with visual and cognitive disabilities.
Provide print communications in on-line format (PDF). (Policy and Program Support Services)	Informational Technological	Sensory	All print communication is now provided in on line format (PDF).
Awareness of TTY service at Contact centre. (Business Services)	Communicational	Sensory	Promotion of TTY by providing the number in the Bell Blue Pages, on brochures and publications is in progress.

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Barrier Identified ¹	Barrier Type ²	Disability Type ³	How the barrier was addressed ⁴
Changing Attitudes and Raising Awareness			
Need to continue to provide effective staff training to effectively promote services and information to persons with disabilities. (Corporate/Policy and Program Support Services)	Attitudinal Policy/Practice Informational Communicational	All	Completed sensitivity training.
Review writing standards in program communications to improve usability and accessibility. (Policy and Program Support Services)	Informational	All	Writing standards for Departmental on-line information have been reviewed and web pages are being revised to be more accessible to persons with different types of disabilities. Writing standards for hard copy material will be reviewed on an ongoing basis as materials are updated and reprinted.

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Barrier Identification for 2006

By-laws, policies and practices to be reviewed	Methods to be used to identify the barrier	Timing ⁵ (When will this be completed)
Helping People Live Independently		
Begin process of creating a centralized waiting list for households requiring modified units. (Housing Services)	Develop Service Agreement and negotiate with non-profit housing providers.	2 nd Quarter 2007
Making Regional Services More Accessible		
Access to CS&H services. (Business Services)	Develop a department pamphlet/questionnaire asking customers to identify barriers.	2006-2007
Complete a review of the effectiveness of Ontario Works cheque inserts, one of the primary methods of communicating information to clients, for persons with disabilities. (Social Assistance)	Conduct a focus group to review existing practices and research potential alternatives.	4 th Quarter
Changing Attitudes and Raising Awareness		
Conduct a current review of Ontario Works staff skills and knowledge on employment resources for participants with disabilities. (Social Assistance)	Conduct surveys to identify staff needs and research available resource/agency and community supports to address skill and information gaps.	3 rd Quarter

⁵ The timing for addressing a barrier does not necessarily have to be set within 2006.

The nature of the action may be phased in over a number of months or years depending on the resources and priorities of the Department.

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Barriers That Will Be Addressed for 2006

Barrier Identified ⁶	Barrier Type ⁷	What will be gained by removing or preventing this barrier? ⁸	Means to prevent/remove the barrier ⁹	Indicators of success ¹⁰	Timing ¹¹ (When will this be completed)
Helping People Live Independently					
Facility limitation and need to provide greater accessibility for social housing residents. (Housing Services)	Physical	Increased resident accessibility and greater independence.	Modify 3 public washrooms: -37 North St. Sutton -75 Dunlop St. Richmond Hill -474 Eagle St. Newmarket Modernize elevators: -16105 Yonge St. Aurora - 540 Timothy St. Newmarket	Use of facility by physically challenged	4 th Quarter 2006
Need to develop affordable accessible rental housing for persons with physical disabilities and hearing impairments. (Housing Services)	Physical	Addition to the inventory of social housing units available to those with disabilities.	Development of 50 new affordable units for non-seniors in the Town of Newmarket (Stickwood Farm site). Three of the units will be fully accessible and 5 to 7 units will be designated for clients of the Canadian Hearing Society.	Housing additional households of persons with disabilities.	2007

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⁸ Indicate how accessibility will be enhanced by removing or preventing this barrier.

⁹ Describe what action will be taken to remove and/or prevent the barrier.

¹⁰ Indicate how customer service will be improved by removing or preventing this barrier. Also indicate any other measure(s) that will be used to determine whether or not the department was successful in removing and/or preventing this barrier.

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Need to develop emergency family shelter housing with accessibility features for persons with disabilities. (Housing Services)	Physical	First accessible emergency housing units for persons with disabilities.	Development of 15 emergency shelter units for families including persons with disabilities (Leeder Place).	Providing emergency housing units for persons with disabilities.	2006
Need to provide greater accessibility services for households requiring transitional housing. (Housing Services)	Physical	The ability to serve those facing physical barriers in need of transitional housing.	Development of an accessible transitional unit (Sutton Multi-Purpose Centre for Youth).	Serving households requiring transitional housing with accessible features.	2006
Service - Contact Centre. (Business Services)	Physical (visual)	Information accessible to visually impaired.	Implement Voice Information System	Number of users of the system.	2006-2007

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Staff knowledge about Mobility Plus transit service. (Family and Children's Services)	Attitudinal and Informational	Staff can increase client awareness of service that may improve accessibility to Regional programs and services.	Staff training materials regarding Mobility Plus service developed collaboratively between CS&H and York Region Transit.	Training materials developed	4 th Quarter, 2006
Client knowledge about Mobility Plus transit service. (Family and Children's Services)	Informational	Clients made aware of service that may improve accessibility to Regional programs and services.	Development of communications strategy to inform clients about Mobility Plus service.	Communications strategy developed	4 th Quarter, 2006
Review the recommendations from client focus group and take appropriate actions to address identified barriers in the Ontario Works appeal process. (Social Assistance)	Policy/Practice	The appeal process will be better understood and more effective in terms of accessibility for persons with disabilities.	To be determined based on feedback from the focus group.	Recommendations from focus group implemented as appropriate.	4 th Quarter, 2006

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Review survey results and feedback to make adjustments to York Region's Ontario Works office Employment Resource Centres as required. (Social Assistance)	Physical/information Technological	York Region's Ontario Works Employment Resource Centres will be more accessible and user-friendly to persons with disabilities.	To be determined on feedback from client surveys	Changes made to increase accessibility	3 rd Quarter, 2006
Need to provide greater access to information through the use of multiple formats. (Corporate)	All	Better access to information.	Development of a multiple formats policy in consultation with other Regional Departments	Increased access to Regional services resulting in good customer service for persons with disabilities	4 th Quarter 2006
Making it Easier to Participate in Regional Government					
Sign language interpretation is not made available at all public meetings. (Policy and Program Support Services)	Physical Communicational	Enable individuals who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing to attend public meetings.	Contract with external supplier to provide information to staff	An increased number of people who are deaf attending meetings	3 rd quarter

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Meetings are not equally accessible for all. (Policy and Program Support Services)	All	Allowing persons with disabilities to participate independently.	Development of an accessible meeting policy in consultation with other Regional Departments	Greater participation of persons with disabilities in Regional meetings	4 th Quarter 2006
Changing Attitudes and Raising Awareness					
Increase awareness of staff to the needs of persons with disabilities through staff participation in inclusivity training. (All Divisions)	Attitudinal	Will provide staff with an introduction to the information and tools to effectively and respectfully serve persons with disabilities.	72 CS&H employees will participate in the inclusivity and accessibility training course being offered corporately	Staff awareness raised and staff report better understanding of the needs of people with disabilities	2006
Need for more staff awareness of customers with disabilities and how best to serve them. (Policy and Program Support Services)	All	Improved customer service for people with disabilities.	Design and implement activities to support and promote NAAW in consultation with other Regional Departments	Greater staff sensitivity and confidence in servicing customers with disabilities; greater customer satisfaction	May/June 2006 (NAAW)

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