

Community Services and Housing Department

Environmental Scan

Community Services and Housing will focus on the following objectives:

Building Strategic Partnerships to Enhance Accessibility to Programs and Services:

- Consult with community agencies, disability organizations and other Regional departments to explore opportunities to provide greater accessibility to our clients and customers with a range of disabilities.

Education and Outreach to Address Attitudinal Barriers

- Provide tools, information and training to staff to increase awareness, and assist with the identification and development of solutions for York Region citizens with disabilities.

Addressing Information and Communications Barriers

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

Enhancing Accessibility to Facilities to Address Physical Barriers

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

Our Customers

Housing Services Branch

The Housing Services Branch directly manages 1927 social housing units through the operations of Housing York Inc. The Branch also administers 4051 social housing units through independent non-profit and co-operative housing providers. The Branch 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.

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 Works payments, 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 through 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 and responding to future *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* regulations.

Employment and Financial Support Branch

The Employment and Financial Support Branch provides employment and financial assistance to approximately 8800 residents annually (including adults and children). This comprises approximately 4700 family units.

The demographics of our customers vary widely. We serve:

- Persons in financial need, including those who are homeless.
- Persons of all ages, including children, youth and seniors.
- Persons 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.

Assistance for our clients with disabilities includes:

Financial assistance:

- 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 & 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:

- 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.
- Employment workshops, delivered at local Ontario Works offices, are physically accessible for persons with disabilities and mobility issues.
- 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.
- Evaluating and responding to future AODA regulations pertaining to program and employment services.

Family and Children's Services Branch

The Family and Children's Services Branch 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 *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.

Our customers can access our programs by calling a toll free line 1-800-703-KIDS (5437)

All requests for information, intake, and access for the following programs are accessed by calling the toll free 1-800-703-KIDS (5437) line:

- Child Care Fee Assistance
- Early Intervention Programs
- 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 Branch 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 Branch provides direct service delivery for developmental programming:

- Early Intervention Services (EIS) provides:
 - o Developmental programming and 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 Branch 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 Branch manages the domiciliary hostel program through:

- Administering per diem agreements with domiciliary hostel operators for domiciliary hostel beds.
- Responsibility for licensing domiciliary hostels under the *Lodging House By-Law*.
- Monitoring compliance under the by-law and per diem agreements.

Business Operations and Support Services Branch

The Business Operations and Support Services Branch 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 that provides callers with information, referral, and application services.
- Accounting and Business Services Team - ensures the Department's fiscal integrity.
- Administrative Services and Technology Support Team - delivers accommodation services and standard practices and provides expert technology support for program applications.

Our customers are residents of York Region, Community Services and Housing Department clients, staff, service providers, and vendors.

Policy and Program Support Services Branch

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

The Branch 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 supports the implementation of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005(AODA)*;
- manages community investment, planning and program evaluation activities; and
- provides data and research for the Community Social Data which is an online resource.

Our customers are primarily the Community Services and Housing Department, the corporation, community service agencies and the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Accessibility Statement

The Community Services and Housing Department will continue to move toward enhancing the accessibility of our programs and services through building strategic community and regional partnerships and by increasing our awareness of the needs of persons with both visible and invisible disabilities, so that we can better respond to those needs. After three years of accessibility planning under the ODA, the department continues to consider accessibility planning as a key component when reviewing, improving and developing its' programs and services. In 2007, branches will work together to identify, remove and prevent barriers in our programs and services.

Community Services and Housing Department

Progress Report on Accessibility Achievements - 2006

Barrier Identified ¹	Barrier Type ²	Disability Type ³	How the barrier was addressed ⁴
Helping People Live Independently			
Begin process of creating a centralized waiting list for households requiring modified units . (Housing services)	All	All	Initiative on hold (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has indicated an imminent change in legislation that may eliminate the need for this item).
Facility limitation and need to provide greater accessibility for social housing residents. (Housing Services)	Physical	All	The modification of one public washroom at 37 North St. in Sutton, and elevators in two other locations (16105 Yonge St. Aurora; 540 Timothy St. Newmarket) is underway. The researching of products to upgrade electric openers and door holders is also underway.
Need to develop affordable accessible rental housing for persons with physical disabilities and hearing impairments. (Housing Services)	Physical	Physical, Sensory	The development of 50 new affordable accessible rental units for families, singles and seniors in the Town of Newmarket is underway. Three of these units will be fully accessible for persons with disabilities and five to seven units will be accessible for persons who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.
Need to develop emergency family shelter housing with accessibility features for persons with disabilities. (Housing Services)	Physical	All	Development of 15 emergency shelter units for families including persons with disabilities (Leeder Place) is underway.
Need to provide greater accessibility services for households requiring transitional housing. (Housing Services)	Physical	Physical	The Sutton Youth Multi-Service Centre was opened in early 2006 to provide emergency shelter and transitional housing services for youth aged 16-26. The building incorporates barrier-free design features including a fully accessible washroom, door closers, ramp systems and mobility access to all shelter units and common areas.

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Barrier Identified ¹	Barrier Type ²	Disability Type ³	How the barrier was addressed ⁴
Helping People Live Independently			
Service Contact Centre. (Business Operations and Support Services)	Informational	Sensory	Implementation of Voice Information System to make information accessible to people with visual impairments is underway.
Staff knowledge about Mobility Plus transit service. (Family and Children's Services)	Attitudinal, Informational	All	Development of staff training materials regarding Mobility Plus service is underway (CS&H and YRT are collaborating to complete this initiative).
Client knowledge about Mobility Plus transit service. (Family and Children's Services)	Informational	All	Development of a communications strategy to inform clients about Mobility Plus service is underway.
Review the recommendations from client focus group and take appropriate actions to address identified barriers in the Ontario Works appeal process. (Employment and Financial Support)	Policy/Practice	All	Initiative is underway to make changes to business processes for Ontario Works client letters.
Review survey results and feedback to make adjustments to York Region's Ontario Works office Employment Resource Centres as required. (Employment and Financial Support)	Physical, Information, Technological	All	60 OW participants completed the surveys in four offices. Feedback was reviewed with the following results: - Georgina has improved access to information by using wall mounts to better organize job postings - All offices have installed typing tutor software to one computer in each ERC Other recommendations are currently under review.
Need to provide greater access to information through the use of multiple formats. (Corporate)	All	All	Development of a multiple formats guideline in consultation with other Regional Departments and York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee (YRAAC) is underway.

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Making Regional Services More Accessible			
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. (Employment and Financial Support)	Informational	Sensory	Plan is underway to conduct a focus group to review existing practices and research potential alternatives.
Making it Easier to Participate in Regional Government			
Sign language interpretation is not made available at all public meetings. (Policy and Program Support Services)	Informational, Communicational	Sensory	Initiative to develop a contract with an external supplier to provide information to staff is underway.
Meetings are not equally accessible for all. (Policy and Program Support Services)	All	All	Development of an accessible meeting guideline in consultation with other Regional Departments and the YRAAC is underway.
Changing Attitudes and Raising Awareness			
Conduct a current review of Ontario Works staff skills and knowledge on employment resources for participants with disabilities. (Employment and Financial Support)	Attitudinal, Policy/Practice	All	Survey is underway to identify staff needs and knowledge on employment resources for participants with disabilities.
Increase awareness of staff to the needs of persons with disabilities through staff participation in inclusivity training. (All Branches)	Attitudinal	All	58 CS&H staff members have attended the corporate accessibility training and 21 are registered for the fall sessions.

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Changing Attitudes and Raising Awareness			
Need for more staff awareness of customers with disabilities and how to best serve them. (Policy and Program Support Services)	All	All	National Access Awareness Week (NAAW) was recognized internally through information displays at the Administrative Centre and South Services Centre; held “sold out” Know York lunch-time session; promoted NAAW and held quiz/contest through York Beat (internal e-newsletter); produced newsletter with tips from various organizations serving people with disabilities.

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Barrier Identification for 2007

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		
Access to special needs units for people with disabilities. (Housing Services)	Survey support service providers who have referral agreements with housing providers.	4 th quarter 2007.
Housing York Inc. resident feedback on the housing services they receive including accessibility issues. (Housing Services)	Survey of all Housing York Inc. residents.	Spring 2007.
Making it Easier to Move Around the Regional Municipality of York		
Access to York Region Transit's conventional travel training program for Community Services and Housing clients. (All Branches)	Department to investigate partnering with YRT to have selected clients participate in the YRT Travel Training Program.	2007.

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By-laws, policies and practices to be reviewed	Methods to be used to identify the barrier	Timing ⁵ (when will this be completed?)
Making Regional Services More Accessible		
Client feedback on accessibility issues within our programs and services. (All branches)	Identify and develop standardized accessibility questions that could be integrated into the business processes (e.g. surveys) to obtain client feedback on the Community Services and Housing Department's programs and services.	2007
Access for persons who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing to the Community Service and Housing Department's programs and services. (All branches)	Interbranch consultation with Canadian Hearing Society on how to better meet the needs of persons who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing in relation to: -providing better access to social services offered by the Region -need for affordable housing -creating a referral system for potential tenants for the designated units at Tom Taylor Place in Newmarket -provision of training for onsite housing staff to provide appropriate service for hard of hearing tenants -investigate why there is minimal use of TTY in the Contact Centre	2007.
Review corporate Accessibility Planning Policy. (Policy and Program Support)	Work with Regional departments to ensure that the Corporate accessibility planning policy is updated to include new legislative requirements under the <i>Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)</i>	2007.

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Barriers That Will Be Addressed for 2007

Barrier Identified ⁸	Barrier Type ⁹	Disability Type ¹⁰	What will be gained by removing or preventing this barrier? ¹¹	Means to prevent/remove the barrier ¹²	Indicators of Success ¹³	Timing (when will this be completed?) ¹⁴
Helping People Live Independently						
Access to special needs units for people with disabilities with support services. (Housing Services)	Informational	All	Clients and staff will be better able to determine the suitability of social housing units with support services attached.	Engage a consultant to prepare a detailed inventory of the support service providers with housing provider referral agreements. (It will be a centralized source of information regarding special needs units (units with support services) within the social housing portfolio).	Clients and staff will be able to access a detailed inventory of the support services providers. The inventory will include the eligibility criteria, application and waiting list information.	4 th quarter 2007.

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

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

13 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/preventing this barrier.

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Helping People Live Independently						
Facility limitation and need to provide greater accessibility for social housing residents. (Housing Services)	Physical	Sensory, Physical	Greater independence, integration and accessibility for residents.	Modernize elevators to include several accessibility measures including but not limited to Braille floor buttons and large digital displays and buttons in the following two (2) Housing York Inc. communities: • Maplewood Place (71 Dunlop St.) • Pineview Terrace (190 Church St.)	Use of facilities by persons with physical disabilities.	2007.

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Helping People Live Independently						
Uneven or inadequate lighting levels in older Housing York Inc. properties (Housing Services)	Physical	Sensory	Improved lighting levels across the communities to support seniors with reduced vision.	Upon completion of developing a lighting standard, survey 10 buildings and correct lighting where necessary following energy audits.	Use of facilities and common areas by persons with visual impairments.	2007.
Explore the opportunity of installing railings in the halls of seniors' communities. (Housing Services)	Architectural	Physical	Provide greater movement opportunities for tenants with ambulatory and balance constraints.	Review feasibility based on Ontario Building Code constraints. Identify two Housing York Inc. buildings and install for 2007.	Client feedback and through surveys and enhanced use of common areas by residents requiring assistance with walking.	2007.

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Helping People Live Independently						
People who are deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing are often under-serviced in terms of their access to affordable housing. (Housing Services)	Informational	Sensory	Households with members that are deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing will have priority access to a number of affordable housing units, enhancing their ability to better integrate into their community.	Building seven (7) dedicated units at Tom Taylor Place in Newmarket for households with members who are deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing. Creating a referral system for potential tenants for designated units at Tom Taylor Place in Newmarket	Completion of housing units, occupied by those with hearing loss.	2007.
Review recommendations from client focus group and make changes to communicate more effectively to Ontario Works clients. (Employment and Financial Support)	Informational	Sensory	Ontario Works information will be easier to read and more effective for participants with disabilities	Review current methods of communication and make changes as appropriate.	Changes made to increase accessibility.	3 rd Quarter, 2007

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Making Regional Services More Accessible						
Access to co-located integrated multi-service building for children and youth with disabilities at 13175 Yonge St. Oak Ridges. (Family and Children's Services)	Architectural, Physical	Any physical, motor or related disability	Easier physical access and one point of service for a range of needs for families with children with disabilities.	Including improvements to physical access into leasehold improvements.	Customer Surveys to measure satisfaction.	2007.
Reception area at 62 Bayview Parkway Office. (Business Operations and Support Services)	Architectural	Physical	Improved accessibility at reception area.	Architect is reviewing plans to ensure they include enhancement to accessibility at reception area.	Increase in accessibility.	2007.
Need for Accessibility Planning Resource list of accessibility services to use when planning meetings or events (e.g. Interpreter Services, Notetakers etc.). (Policy and Program Support)	All	All	Allowing persons with disabilities to participate independently	Development of an Accessibility Planning Resource list	Greater participation of persons with disabilities.	

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Changing Attitudes and Raising Awareness						
Increase awareness of staff to the needs of persons with disabilities through staff participation in inclusivity training. (All Branches)	Attitudinal	All	Will provide staff with an introduction to the information to effectively and respectfully serve persons with disabilities.	44 employees across CS&H Branch will participate in 2007 in the inclusivity and accessibility training course being offered corporately. (EFSB -10 staff BOS – 4 staff PPS – 1 staff HRS – 5 staff FCS – 24 staff)	Staff awareness is raised and staff report having a better understanding of the needs of people with disabilities.	2007.

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Changing Attitudes and Raising Awareness						
Need for more staff awareness of customers with disabilities and how best to serve them. (Policy and Program Support)	All	All	Improved customer service for people with disabilities.	Design and implement activities to support and promote National Access Awareness Week in consultation with other departments.	Greater staff sensitivity and awareness in serving customers with disabilities; greater customer satisfaction.	2 nd Quarter, 2007.
Review the recommendations from staff survey and develop appropriate training to enhance staff knowledge of employment resources for Ontario Works participants with Disabilities. (Employment and Financial Support)	Informational, Policy/Practice	All	Will provide staff with increased knowledge of employment resources for persons with disabilities.	Provide training and/or staff resources as appropriate.	Staff knowledge and skills are enhanced to better assist persons with disabilities with their employment goals.	4 th Quarter, 2007.

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Changing Attitudes and Raising Awareness						
Extend mental health and learning disabilities training to staff across all branches within CS&H Department. (Business, Operations and Support Services)	Attitudinal	Cognitive	Will provide staff with increased knowledge and improved customer service for people with disabilities.	Staff will participate in mental health and learning disability training.	Improved staff knowledge, skills and awareness to understand and assist customers with disabilities.	4 th Quarter, 2007.

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

13 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/preventing this barrier.

14 The timing for addressing a barrier does not necessarily have to be set within 2007; 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.