

For Information

REPORT TITLE: **Annual Accessibility Status Report 2020**

FROM: Gary Kent, Chief Financial Officer and Commissioner of Corporate Services

OBJECTIVE

To provide an update on the progress made and actions taken by the Region of Peel to improve accessibility, remove barriers and implement the requirements set out in the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, as well as the strategies set out in the Region's 2018-2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, for the 2020 calendar year.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) aims to make Ontario accessible for people with disabilities by 2025.
 - As part of the AODA, the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* (IASR) sets out rules that organizations must follow.
 - A requirement under the IASR is the preparation of an annual status report on the progress and measures taken to implement the requirements under the AODA and the strategies set out in the Region's 2018-2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.
 - The "2020 Peel Region Accessibility Status Report – Ensuring Accessibility during a Pandemic" outlines the actions taken to comply with the requirements for the period of January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020.
 - 2020 was an unprecedented year with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the accessibility initiatives for that year shifted to focus on the pandemic response.
 - The status report outlines some of those accessibility-related initiatives and includes some that are not pandemic related.
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DISCUSSION

1. Background

In 2005, the Ontario government passed the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA), with the objective of improving accessibility for Ontarians by identifying, removing and preventing barriers faced by persons with disabilities by 2025.

Under the AODA, the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* (IASR) sets out requirements that organizations must follow in 5 categories also known as standards:

- Information and Communications
- Employment
- Transportation

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- Design of Public Spaces
- Customer Service

A requirement under the IASR is the annual reporting of the measures taken in the Region of Peel to remove barriers and improve accessibility for persons with disabilities, as required under the AODA as well as provide an update on the actions taken to implement the 2018-2025 Region of Peel Multi-Year Accessibility Plan .

On December 14, 2017, the Region of Peel's second Multi-Year Accessibility Plan was passed in accordance with the requirements of the AODA and the IASR. The multi-year accessibility plan was created with objectives that go beyond legislated requirement and align with the Region's 20 Year Strategic Plan.

The "2020 Peel Region Accessibility Status Report – Ensuring Accessibility during a Pandemic" attached as Appendix I, outlines the actions the Region of Peel took in 2020 to continue to meet the requirements of Ontario's accessibility legislation. However, due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the report for 2020 looks slightly different than that from previous years. Accessibility as it pertains to the Region of Peel's programs and services took a different approach in response to the changing landscape brought on by the pandemic. The pandemic presented various challenges for individuals and the community and presented increased vulnerabilities for people with disabilities. Region of Peel programs and services needed to adapt to the new reality, while continuing to ensure that programs, services and facilities continued to be accessible, barrier-free and safe. The 2020 Accessibility Status Report focuses on some of those initiatives with a continued commitment to accessibility. It also includes activities that were not COVID-focused.

The report will be posted on the Region of Peel website and made available in alternate formats, upon request.

2. Preparing the Annual Accessibility Status Report

In preparation for the report, each department and program area was consulted on their achievements and accomplishments undertaken in 2020 to improve accessibility and remove barriers for persons with disabilities as it relates to Regional programs, services or facilities. Departments were requested to include initiatives that were related to the pandemic response as well as any others.

3. Report Findings

The report outlines the Region of Peel's accomplishments in 2020 with a specific focus on the immediate COVID-19 response as well as other accessibility initiatives. For a detailed list of the Region's accessibility accomplishments for 2020, please refer to Appendix I "2020 Peel Region Accessibility Status Report – Ensuring Accessibility during a Pandemic". Some examples where accessibility was built in include:

- Pandemic Focused
 - The implementation of new and accessible technologies to ensure the continuity of programs and services.
 - The conversion of in person programs and services to virtual or social distancing formats.

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- Programs and supports offered to Region of Peel staff to assist in transitioning to work remotely.
- The introduction of process and protocols to ensure everyone's health and safety during COVID-19.
- Other Initiatives
 - Website compliance.
 - Updates to the Accessibility Corporate training.
 - Enhancements related to the built environment.
 - Workforce Census.

These accomplishments are in line with the strategies and initiatives outlined in the Region's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan to break down barriers and provide persons of all abilities access to our programs, services and public spaces, while ensuring continued compliance with the requirements of the IASR, even during trying times brought on by a global pandemic.

The Region of Peel continues to take a proactive approach and explore opportunities for improvement, to incorporate accessibility and remove barriers whether they be in person or in a virtual format. This includes working with community partners to address the needs of the community and mitigate the impacts that COVID-19 has brought on for persons with disabilities.

CONCLUSION

As required under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA), the "2020 Peel Region Accessibility Status Report – Ensuring Accessibility during a Pandemic" outlines the actions taken in 2020 to implement the requirements set out in the AODA legislation, with a shift in focus on the COVID-19 pandemic.

As we move into 2021, we will continue to respond to the needs brought on by the pandemic so that the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities are taken into consideration and that we are accessible and inclusive while continuing to build on our strategic vision of Community for Life.

APPENDICES

Appendix I - 2020 Peel Region Accessibility Status Report – Ensuring Accessibility during a Pandemic

For further information regarding this report, please contact Juliet Jackson, Director, Office of Culture and Inclusion, Ext. 6741, juliet.jackson@peelregion.ca.

Authored By: Veronica Montesdeoca, Accessibility Planning Specialist

Reviewed and/or approved in workflow by:

Department Commissioner and Division Director.