

For Information

REPORT TITLE: **Annual Accessibility Status Report 2021**

FROM: Gary Kent, CPA, CGA, ICD.D, 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 2021 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, including the preparation of an annual status report.
 - The "2021 Peel Region Accessibility Status Report – Moving Forward to Ensure a Safe and Accessible Peel" outlines the actions taken to comply with the requirements for the period of January 1 to December 31, 2021.
 - 2021 continued to be a challenging year with an ongoing focus on the COVID-19 pandemic response including continuing with mass vaccination efforts and recovery planning.
 - The status report outlines accessibility-related initiatives, both pandemic and non-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
- Design of Public Spaces
- Customer Service

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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 requirements and align with the Region's 20 Year Strategic Plan.

The "2021 Peel Region Accessibility Status Report – Moving Forward to Ensure a Safe and Accessible Peel" attached as Appendix I, outlines the actions the Region of Peel took in 2021 to continue to meet the requirements of Ontario's accessibility legislation. The year 2021 continued to be focused on the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. As lockdowns and restrictions continued and we learned to navigate the various waves of the pandemic, ensuring a safe and healthy community remained the key focus. 2021 continued to present challenges for individuals and the community and increased vulnerabilities for people with disabilities. With almost a year of navigating the pandemic behind us, Region of Peel programs and services continued to adapt and evolve to the ongoing needs of the community. Ensuring accessible and barrier-free programs and services became a focus throughout the pandemic. The 2021 Accessibility Status Report highlights some of these initiatives. It also includes activities that were not COVID-specific.

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 2021 to improve accessibility and remove barriers for persons with disabilities as it relates to Regional programs, services or facilities. Departments shared initiatives that were related to the pandemic response as well as any others.

3. Summary of Accomplishments

The report outlines the Region of Peel's accomplishments in 2021, some directly related to the ongoing COVID-19 response as well as other accessibility initiatives. For a detailed list of the Region's accessibility accomplishments for 2021, please refer to Appendix I "2021 Peel Region Accessibility Status Report – Moving Forward to Ensure a Safe and Accessible Peel". Some examples of accessibility accomplishments include:

- **Pandemic Related**
 - Initiatives focused on mass vaccination efforts and ensuring that the community's vaccination needs were addressed, including for community members with disabilities.
 - Efforts included accessibility considerations for vaccination clinics and resident-facing solutions in support of the Region's Mass Vaccination Program, including services for home-bound residents.
 - Reassessment of client needs in the provision of programs and services, including access to technologies, addressing barriers to communications and overall ability for residents to participate virtually such as in social recreation programs and healthcare, to name a few.

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- Other Initiatives
 - Ongoing efforts to meet website compliance, including long term plans to advance digital accessibility in the organization.
 - 40th year anniversary for TransHelp in 2021
 - 400 per cent increase in trips over two decades
 - 216 per cent increase in kilometers driven over two decades
 - Additional units, including barrier-free units added to Peel's affordable housing stock.
 - An Age-Friendly Communities Built Environment Assessment was launched to support the vision of making Peel more age friendly.
 - Updates and improvements to ensure Peel facilities were barrier-free and accessible.
 - Education and awareness initiatives to promote diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility.

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 as we continued into the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Region of Peel continues to take a proactive approach and explore opportunities for improvement, to incorporate accessibility and remove barriers in our programs, services and facilities. As we prepare to transition out of pandemic mode, it is important we continue to work with our community partners to address the needs of the community and mitigate the ongoing impacts that the pandemic has exacerbated, especially for persons with disabilities.

CONCLUSION

As required under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA), the "2021 Peel Region Accessibility Status Report – Moving Forward to Ensure a Safe and Accessible Peel" outlines the actions taken in 2021 to implement the requirements set out in the AODA legislation, with a continued focus on the COVID-19 pandemic.

As we move forward and transition out of the pandemic, it is important that we continue to respond to the needs of those most vulnerable in the community. In doing so, we can ensure the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities are taken into consideration and our programs and services are accessible and inclusive regardless of challenges we may face. We continue to build on our strategic vision of Community for Life where everyone can thrive.

APPENDICES

Appendix I - 2021 Peel Region Accessibility Status Report - Moving Forward to Ensure a Safe and Accessible Peel

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