

For Information

REPORT TITLE: **Accessibility Planning Program Update – September 17, 2020**

FROM: Kathryn Lockyer, Interim Commissioner of Corporate Services

OBJECTIVE

To provide an update of the activities undertaken by the Region of Peel Accessibility Planning Program and the Accessibility Advisory Committee since its last meeting on September 19, 2019.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) last met on September 19, 2019.
 - The AAC came together on December 3, 2020 to host “Inclusion by Design” as part of the United Nation’s International Day of Persons with Disabilities celebration.
 - Due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the AAC meetings were placed on hold to enable the Region’s emergency response to the crisis.
 - This report outlines the various activities that the Accessibility Advisory Committee and Accessibility Planning Program have been involved in since the last meeting in the fall of 2019, which are categorized as follows:
 - Consultation and compliance support provided to Regional Programs;
 - Participation in community events.
 - This report also highlights upcoming events and observances.
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DISCUSSION

1. Background

The main objective of the Region of Peel’s Accessibility Planning Program (the Program) is to ensure that Regional programs, services and facilities continue to be inclusive and accessible for persons with disabilities. In order to accomplish this objective, the Program works collaboratively with all Regional departments and the Region of Peel Accessibility Advisory Committee (the Committee).

2. Activity List

a) Consultation and Compliance Support

i) Changes to Barrier-Free Design Section of Ontario Building Code

- Effective January 1, 2020 changes were introduced in Section 3.8, Barrier-Free Design, of the *Ontario Building Code*.

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- These changes provide clarification and enhance accessibility and safety.
- Changes include revisions to design specifications for bathroom fixtures, including water closet stalls, urinals, lavatories, showers and bathtubs.
- A summary of the changes to this section of the Building Code is provided under Communications listed on the September 17, 2020 AAC agenda.

ii) Annual Accessibility Status Report 2019

- In accordance with the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* (IASR), the Region of Peel must prepare an annual status report that outlines the actions taken by the Region of Peel in the previous year (2019) to comply with the requirements of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) to improve accessibility and remove barriers for persons with disabilities.
- The Region's Annual Accessibility Status Report for 2019 was endorsed by Council at its meeting on April 23, 2020.
- A copy of the report which details the Region's accessibility accomplishments for 2019 can be found on the Region of Peel website.

iii) Office 365 Accessibility Training

- In an effort to enhance document accessibility, the Region of Peel will be refreshing its minimum standards for the creation and sharing of documents.
- The intent is to use available built-in accessibility features in Microsoft applications to make documents accessible from the onset and minimize the need for extensive reformatting post document creation.
- Staff met with representatives from Microsoft, attended a training session to review the built-in accessibility features offered by Office 365 and were provided an overview of various Microsoft applications and tools to improve accessibility and promote inclusion.
- Some of the built-in accessibility features offered in Office 365 include:
 - Accessibility Checker
 - Accessible Templates
 - Autogenerated Alt-Text for images
 - Captions for audio
- Some of the applications and tools highlighted include:
 - Immersive Reader – techniques to improve reading and writing for people, regardless of their age or ability.
 - Microsoft Teams - a shared workspace where you can chat, meet, share files, and work with business apps; online meetings, calling, and web conferencing.
 - Microsoft Translator – translates text, voice, conversations, camera photos and screenshots in over 60 languages.
 - Eye Control Option – can be used with eye mobility devices.
 - Seeing AI - designed for the blind and low vision community, uses the power of artificial intelligence to describe nearby people, text and objects.
 - Office Lens – take pictures of whiteboards or printed documents and enhances the photo to look like a scanned image and can be manipulated to improve accessibility.
- Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this work was paused and will resume in the fall of 2020.

iv) Corporate Accessibility Training

- The revised Region of Peel accessibility training for employees and volunteers was launched in April 2020.
- Four training modules have been incorporated into one comprehensive module which addresses the training requirements under the AODA including the Integrated Accessibility Standards and the Human Rights Code as it pertains to persons with disabilities.
- The module provides ease for auditing and reporting to ensure that the Region is compliant with the Provincial training requirements.
- A campaign will be launched in early 2021 for the training of all Region of Peel staff and volunteers.

v) Ensuring Accessible Council/Committee Documents

- The Region is reviewing its Council/Committee documents to ensure they are fully accessible and can be accessed by screen readers.
- Staff from Digital and Information Services consulted with AAC members who have a vision disability and use a screen reader, to assist with trouble shooting.
- A review of the source document was undertaken. Recommendations for improvement were provided and best practices for the creation of accessible documents were shared.
- Staff will meet with the vendor to incorporate suggested revisions and update templates.
- The Region will continue to look for opportunities to ensure document accessibility.

vi) Recruitment - Town of Caledon AAC Representative

- Recruitment to seek Town of Caledon representation on the Region of Peel AAC will be held in the fall of 2020.
- In order to ensure that there is representation from all municipalities at the Regional AAC table, active recruitment will be undertaken to engage Caledon residents in the Region's AAC.
- Advertising will include the Town's newspapers and the Regional website.

b) Participation in Community Events

i) Inclusion by Design – 2019 International Day of Persons with Disabilities

- On December 3, 2019 the AAC and Region of Peel hosted "Inclusion by Design" in commemoration of International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD).
- The event brought together staff and community agency partners with an objective to collaborate to establish a shared vision of an accessible Peel by highlighting the importance of incorporating inclusive design principles in our products, programs and services.
- The full day event included keynote speakers, a panel session and exhibitor booths from local community agencies that provide services for persons with disabilities.

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- The 140 attendees developed an increased understanding of the importance of inclusion by design and a greater appreciation for the contributions people with disabilities make to the community.
- Special thanks to the AAC Event Planning working group for their assistance with planning the event.

ii) National AccessAbility Week (NAAW) – May 31-June 6, 2020

- The Region of Peel acknowledged National AccessAbility Week (NAAW) the week of May 31st, 2020.
- Due to heightened focus on the pandemic, NAAW was observed through a virtual internal campaign that raised awareness on the importance of accessibility during the Covid-19 response.
- A story was shared on the Region of Peel's intranet site which highlighted some examples of enhanced accessibility while responding to the pandemic. Staff was reminded about the importance of applying an accessibility lens to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable in the community are being met.

c) Upcoming Events and Observances

i) World Alzheimer's Day

- On September 21, 2020 the Region of Peel will be observing World Alzheimer's Day.
- This international campaign aims at raising awareness and challenging the common stigma that surrounds Alzheimer-related dementia.
- The Region of Peel will commemorate this day through an on-line campaign to educate and raise awareness about the stigma and discrimination that surrounds this disease.

ii) 2020 International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD)

- As is customary, the Region of Peel will be once again be commemorating International Day of Persons with Disabilities.
- The Region has set aside December 2, 2020 as a tentative date to commemorate this day.
- Due to the pandemic restrictions, a virtual approach will be taken to observe the day.
- We will be working with the AAC Event Planning Working group to assist with planning this observance.

CONCLUSION

This report summarizes the activities and consultations that the Accessibility Planning Program (the Program) has been involved in, together with participation of members of the Accessibility Advisory Committee (the Committee) since September 19, 2020. The Committee and the Program continue to engage in activities that support the Region of Peel's primary accessibility objective of ensuring Regional programs, services and facilities

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are inclusive and accessible for all persons with disabilities and respond to the evolving community needs, including during times of a pandemic.

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

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Reviewed and/or approved in workflow by:

Department Commissioner and Division Director.

Final approval is by the Chief Administrative Officer.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Nancy Polsinelli". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

N. Polsinelli, Interim Chief Administrative Officer