



The Regional Municipality of Halton

Report To:	Chair and Members of the Administration and Finance Committee
From:	Mark G. Meneray, Commissioner, Legislative and Planning Services and Corporate Counsel
Date:	March 19, 2010
Report No. - Re:	LPS19-10 - Halton Region Accessibility Plan, 2010 Update

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Halton Region Accessibility Plan, 2010 Update, appended as Attachment #1 to Report No. LPS19-10, be approved.

REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the accessibility initiatives and projects undertaken in 2009 and those planned for 2010. These activities are set out in the Halton Region Accessibility Plan, 2010 Update which is appended as Attachment #1 to Report No. LPS19-10. This document builds on accessibility initiatives and projects completed in previous years. Once approved it will be forwarded to the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario, Ministry of Community and Social Services.

BACKGROUND

The *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001, (ODA)* requires the Provincial Government and the broader public sector (i.e., municipal governments, hospitals, educational institutions and public transportation providers) to prepare annual accessibility plans and submit them to the Province. The purpose of an accessibility plan is to identify barriers to people with disabilities when accessing programs and services and to set out processes to remove those barriers. The ODA also requires municipalities with populations of over 10,000 to establish accessibility advisory committees.

Pursuant to the ODA, Halton Region first established the Halton Region Accessibility Advisory Committee (HRAAC) in 2002. The HRAAC is a citizen committee that acts as an advisory body and reports to Regional Council through the Administration and Finance Committee. Its mandate is to advise on the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to people with disabilities to Halton Region facilities, programs and services.

In June 2005, the Ontario government passed the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*. The AODA requires the development of accessibility standards in a number of areas including goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises. The standards will be applicable to both the private and public sectors. The Province established five committees to develop accessibility standards in the following areas: customer service; information and communications; employment; transportation; and the built environment. The committees included people with disabilities and representatives of sectors and industries that will be impacted by the standards.

Although the AODA was proclaimed in force in 2005, it did not revoke the ODA. As a result, municipalities are still obligated to adhere to the requirements of the ODA. The Provincial Government has indicated that the ODA will likely be repealed over the next few years, however nothing more definitive in terms of timeframe has been provided.

Status – Development of Accessibility Standards under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*

On January 1, 2008, the first accessibility regulation under the AODA, Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07 came into force. Designated public sector organizations, including municipalities, were required to be in compliance by January 1, 2010 and submit a compliance report to the Provincial Government by March 31, 2010. Report No. LPS63-09 – *Accessibility Standards under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and Report No. LPS39-10 – *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act: Compliance with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service* set out the steps that Halton Region was undertaking to meet the requirements of the regulation. As noted in Report No. LPS39-10, Halton Region submitted its compliance report to the Provincial Government in advance of the March 31 deadline, indicating compliance.

Accessibility standards in the areas of information and communications; employment; transportation; and, the built environment are under development. It is expected that regulations relating to these areas will be issued at some point this year. Staff will report back to Regional Council on the progress of these additional standards as required.

Independent Review of Accessibility Legislation

In June 2009, the Provincial Government announced that it was launching a review of accessibility legislation, as required by the AODA. Charles Beer, a former Minister of Community and Social Services, was appointed to conduct the review. The review was to look at the following areas: the effectiveness of the AODA; the accessible standard development process; a strategy to repeal the ODA; the role of accessibility advisory committees; and, the function of the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario.

Throughout the fall of 2009, Mr. Beer held a number of public consultation sessions and meetings. Halton Region staff and a member of the HRAAC participated in the public consultation process. The recommendations in Mr. Beer's report will likely have an impact on the role of municipal accessibility advisory committees. It is expected that the report will be publicly available in the spring of 2010. Staff will review the document and report back to Regional Council on its outcomes as required.

UPDATE ON HALTON REGION'S 2009 ACCESSIBILITY PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

Halton Region began reporting its accessibility initiatives to the Provincial Government in 2003. These initiatives are listed and described in Attachment #1 to Report No. LPS19-10. In 2009, Halton Region in conjunction with the HRAAC continued to identify and take measures to reduce barriers to people with disabilities. In addition, a number of activities and initiatives were undertaken that were aimed at addressing the requirements of Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07. Staff also participated in public consultations on additional proposed accessibility standards and provided feedback to the Provincial Government as the standards were being developed.

Projects and activities undertaken in 2009 included the following:

- Policies, procedures and staff tools and resources were developed to address the requirements of Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07.
- Staff training, as required by Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07 was undertaken.
- Halton staff participated in public consultation sessions and provided input to the Provincial Government on draft accessibility standards on information and communications, employment and the built environment.
- The HRAAC provided advice on physical improvements to Regional buildings and facilities.
- The HRAAC provided advice on a number of Regional initiatives including the Sustainable Halton process, the Regional Official Plan Amendment #38, the Joint Municipal Housing Statement, and the development of 2010 Strategic Plan actions.
- Halton staff and HRAAC members provided support and participated in a joint meeting, hosted by the Town of Halton Hills Accessibility Advisory Committee, which involved all five of the accessibility advisory committees in Halton.
- Halton Region's website was re-designed to make it easier to use and more accessible.
- Live video streaming of Regional Committee and Council meetings was launched. The web streaming technology includes captioning.
- Work began on the Milton Employment Resource Centre, which was aimed at assisting people with disabilities to obtain and maintain employment. Enhanced supports will include both physical improvements and adaptive technology.
- Following approval from the Provincial Government, Halton Region initiated a new affordable housing development to be developed and operated by the Halton Community Housing Corporation. The New Horizon Homes Kingsway Project in Burlington will include a 65-unit apartment for seniors and seniors with disabilities.

RECOMMENDED ACCESSIBILITY PROJECTS FOR 2010

Work on improving accessibility will be ongoing throughout 2010. Identified projects and initiatives for Halton Region include the following:

- Continued implementation of the requirements in Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07 including ongoing staff training, as required.
- Monitoring the progress of additional accessibility standards in the areas of information and communications, employment, transportation and the built environment.
- Construction of the New Horizon Homes Project, in Burlington, to be initiated.
- Pending results of the Request for Proposal process, coordinate the design-build phase of the Halton Community Housing Corporation project for 80 units at the Ontario Street site in Milton. Units to be targeted to seniors and persons with disabilities.
- Regional staff will work toward finalizing affordable housing design and accessibility guidelines for use in Regional affordable housing projects.
- Continuing to provide supports to people with disabilities in obtaining and maintaining employment through the Milton Employment Resource Centre.
- Completing physical accessibility improvements to Regional facilities including the Halton Waste Management Site Administration Building and the Halton Region Museum.
- Seeking feedback from the HRAAC on Regional initiatives, including the development of 2011 Strategic Plan actions.
- Providing support to the Town of Oakville in hosting a joint meeting or event involving all five of the accessibility advisory committees in Halton Region.
- Participating in events aimed at creating awareness of accessibility issues.
- Reviewing Charles Beer's report on accessibility legislation to determine potential impacts on Halton Region and the role of the HRAAC, and report to Regional Council as required.
- Continuing to network and information share with Local Municipal accessibility staff and the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals, and participate on the AMCTO Accessibility Project Team.

Conclusion

Throughout 2010, Halton Region will remain actively engaged in eliminating barriers to people with disabilities. Halton staff will also continue to monitor changes to the provincial legislative framework on accessibility to ensure that the Region will be in a position to effectively respond to additional accessibility standards and their requirements as they are issued.

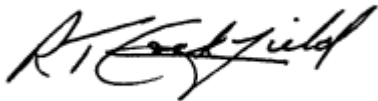
FINANCIAL/PROGRAM IMPLICATIONS

Costs associated with activities identified in this staff report were approved as part of the 2009 and 2010 Budget and Business Plans.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The development of an annual accessibility plan addresses a commitment reflected under Theme 6 – *Ensure Excellence in Government and Fiscal Responsibility* in the 2010 Administration and Finance Committee Plan. Goal 1 – *Preserve and enhance Halton Region’s strong fiscal foundation and administrative excellence* includes Action j) which reads “*Implement recommendations from Halton’s Accessibility Advisory Committee toward identifying and eliminating barriers to people with disabilities when accessing the Region’s facilities, programs and services.*”

Respectfully submitted,



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Approved by



Pat Moyle
Chief Administrative Officer

If you have any questions on the content of this report, please contact:

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