

DRAFT York Region 2023 to 2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan



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Please email aoda@york.ca or call 1-877-464-9675 ext. 74562.

Note: This document is a text-only version. Graphics will be added once text is approved

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that York Region is located on the traditional territory of many Indigenous peoples including the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendat and Métis peoples and the treaty territories of the Haudenosaunee, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and Williams Treaties First Nations. Today this area is home to many diverse Indigenous Peoples, and we recognize their history, spirituality, culture and stewardship of this land. We also acknowledge the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation as our closest First Nation community.

Message from the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee

Celebrating the Past, Embracing the Future

The York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee (YRAAC) advises York Regional Council and York Regional Police on how to make it easier for people with disabilities to use our programs, services and facilities.

Our committee is made up of passionate, insightful professionals and volunteers who are committed to creating a more accessible York Region. With leadership from Council and the Senior Management Team, YRAAC has worked tirelessly to ensure York Region and York Regional Police have met, and in some cases exceeded, the requirements of the Provincial accessibility legislation and its standards.

The committee represents all nine local municipalities, people with diverse backgrounds and different abilities that allow us to offer many perspectives to improve accessibility for York Region residents. To us, accessibility means ensuring that all people have the freedom and opportunity to participate freely in their community.

In 2023, our Committee celebrated a big milestone – the 20th Anniversary of the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee. Since its inception in 2003, YRAAC members have participated in more than 90 formal meetings and provided feedback and consultation on over 250 presentations. We believe that our knowledge, expertise, and most importantly, lived experiences, have positively contributed to making Regional programs, services and facilities more accessible. YRAAC has also been involved in organizing and hosting many accessibility forums and professional development events.

This updated York Region Multi-Year Accessibility Plan builds on the accomplishments of York Region's previous accessibility plans and activities to implement the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA). It also outlines the work ahead to help achieve the vision of creating an accessible Ontario by 2025 and beyond.

Our Region is enriched by contributions from people of all abilities. We look forward to the future and a barrier-free community where everyone is included. It is our privilege to continue to advise Regional Council and York Regional Police on identifying and removing barriers, changing attitudes, and raising awareness about all abilities and the importance of access in York Region.

Placeholder for 2023 to 2026 York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee Headshots

A Plan on a Page

York Region Statement of Organizational Commitment

The Regional Municipality of York (York Region) is committed to meeting the accessibility needs of people with disabilities in a timely and proactive manner and will use reasonable efforts to provide equitable access to Regional programs, goods, services and facilities in a way that respects a person’s dignity and independence.

York Regional Police Statement of Organizational Commitment

York Regional Police is committed to meeting the accessibility needs of people with disabilities in a timely and proactive manner so that all people may have equitable access to programs, goods, services and facilities in a way that respects their dignity and independence.

The Plan

This 2023 to 2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan outlines how York Region and York Regional Police meet the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005 and remove barriers in our programs, services and facilities for people with disabilities across five areas that impact our daily lives: information and communications, employment, transportation, design of public spaces, and customer service. The AODA also has general and compliance requirements. We strive to make York Region more inclusive and accessible for everyone.



York Region at a Glance

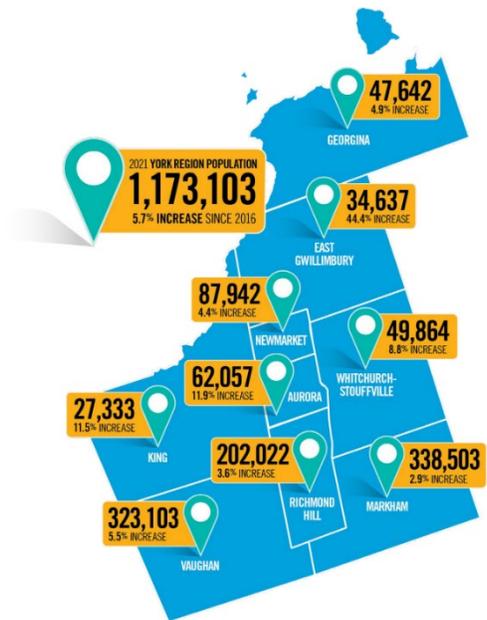
York Region is home to nearly 1.2 million people of all ages and backgrounds. It is one of Canada's fastest growing communities and the third largest municipality in Ontario.

According to the Canadian Survey on Disability (2017), approximately one in five residents aged 15 years and over (or 18%) has at least one type of disability.

York Region has nine local municipalities: Town of Aurora, Town of East Gwillimbury, Town of Georgina, Township of King, City of Markham, Town of Newmarket, City of Richmond Hill, City of Vaughan and Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville. It is a diverse region which combines urban and rural areas and is in the northern part of the Greater Toronto Area.

The Region provides services and programs that are delivered across wide areas and require large-scale coordination. These include children's services, court services, economic development, forestry, housing services, long-term care, paramedic services, planning, public health, regional roads, social assistance, transit, waste management and water.

York Regional Police provide police services to residents. Key priorities include working with partners in addressing community safety issues, delivering sustainable and effective police services to communities, and ensuring roads, schools and communities are safe through prevention and enforcement.



York Region

Vision:

Strong, caring, safe communities

Mission:

Working together to serve our thriving communities – today and tomorrow

Values:

Integrity, Commitment, Accountability, Respect, Excellence

York Regional Police

Motto:

Deeds Speak

Vision:

To make a difference in our community

Mission:

We will ensure our citizens feel safe and secure through excellence in policing

Values:

Professionalism, Compassion, Fairness, Courage, Respect

About the 2023 to 2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

The 2023 to 2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (the Plan) outlines the long-term strategies of both organizations to achieve legislated accessibility requirements and improve accessibility within programs, services and facilities. The Plan builds off the success of Council's direction, York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee's advice and the strong foundation of previous Multi-Years Accessibility Plans.

Each local municipality also has its own multi-year accessibility plan.

The Plan must be reviewed and updated at least once every five years

The AODA became law in 2005. The overarching purpose of the AODA is to make Ontario accessible by 2025. Under the AODA, York Region and York Regional Police must establish, review, update and post a multi-year accessibility plan at least once every five years. The legislation also requires organizations to prepare annual status reports on actions taken to improve accessibility and to implement legislated requirements.

The AODA sets out accessibility standards for private and public organizations. The following provides a description of each standard and the general requirements, all of which are addressed in this Plan:

- Information and Communications – Create, provide and receive information and communications in ways that are accessible to people with disabilities
- Employment – Incorporate accessibility practices across all stages of employment
- Transportation – Make it easier to move around through accessible public transportation services
- Design of Public Spaces – Make public spaces more accessible
- Customer Service – Provide accessible customer service to people with disabilities
- General Requirements – Implement actions, including accessibility policies and plans, to enhance accessibility across the organization
- Compliance Requirements – File accessibility reports every two years and comply with other Compliance requirements

York Region and York Regional Police plan together

York Region and York Regional Police have developed a joint Plan and implemented actions to achieve compliance with the AODA since 2010 when the first requirements of the AODA became law. York Region is the compliance lead for both organizations.

Creating communities where every person can participate is important for people, businesses and community life. An accessible community allows everyone to develop to their full potential, participate freely in society and live with respect, dignity and freedom from discrimination. York Region and York Regional Police continue to plan so services are accessible and welcoming for everyone.

Accessibility planning supports the Region's vision of strong, caring and safe communities. The Plan outlines strategies and actions approved by Regional Council to prevent and remove barriers for people

with disabilities in our programs, services and facilities. It details our approach for meeting the requirements of the AODA. Most actions in the Plan are already in effect and part of regular business practices.

Creating a community that is welcoming, inclusive and accessible for everyone aligns with goals set out in Regional strategies and policies, including the Region’s Accessibility Policy and York Regional Police AODA Procedure AI-345.

To maintain organizational focus on [Vision](#), the Region sets priorities over each four-year term of Council through the [Strategic Plan](#), in alignment with the four areas of focus: Economic Vitality, Healthy Communities, Sustainable Environment and Good Government. The Corporate Strategic Plan is integrated with the Region’s [Multi-Year Budget](#). Vision also serves as the guiding document for the Region’s provincially mandated plans such as the [Regional Official Plan](#) and the [Community Safety and Well-being Plan](#).

York Regional Police understands that inclusion matters. Its commitment to promoting equity and inclusion within its organization and the community is demonstrated through the [Inclusion Strategy](#) and the [Business Plan](#), which serves as the organization’s roadmap in building a workplace and a region where everyone feels that they belong.

How the 2023 to 2027 Plan is developed

Key steps for the development of the 2023 to 2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan include: Consultations (Phase 1), Development of the Plan, Consultations (Phase 2), Council approval of the Plan, Posting and Distribution, Implementation, and Annual Status Reports.



Summary of consultations

The AODA requires the Plan to be developed, reviewed and updated in consultation with persons with disabilities and an accessibility advisory committee. York Region and York Regional Police collect feedback about the Plan from people with disabilities, the community and the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee. This requirement was met through consultations with staff, including meetings and one on one conversations with subject matter experts, consultations with York Region's Community of Belonging for Staff with Disabilities, Diversity and Inclusion Staff Committee, and York Regional Police Internal Support Network. External consultations included two public YRAAC meetings and an online survey conducted during the Plan's development phase. This survey included targeted outreach to community agencies serving York Region residents with disabilities and the AACs within York Region's nine local municipalities.

York Region Transit (YRT) consults annually with people with disabilities on the transportation-specific section of the Plan, as required by the AODA. Feedback collected from YRT consultations has also been used to inform the development of this Plan.

Key findings and themes from consultations include:

- Theme 1 (placeholder – to be added following consultations)
- Theme 2 (placeholder – to be added following consultations)
- Theme 3 (placeholder – to be added following consultations)

The Plan in Action

This Plan highlights actions to strengthen the accessibility of York Region and York Regional Police programs, services and facilities. It updates and builds on the 2020 to 2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan approved by Regional Council in 2020 and is designed to align with the term of Council and the 2023 to 2027 Strategic Plan. It is integrated with the Region's business planning and budget process and will be updated in 2027 when the new budget cycle begins.

Accessibility Accomplishments

Multi-year accessibility planning was first established in 2013. Since then, York Region and York Regional Police have been implementing and meeting all AODA requirements for broader public sector organizations. Building on the solid foundation of accessibility accomplishments and actions, York Region and York Regional Police will continue to meet and, in some cases, exceed the AODA requirements.

General Accomplishments

Continue to implement the general requirements of the AODA through the following actions designed to enhance accessibility across the organization:

- Continue to use York Region Accessibility Policy and York Regional Police AODA Procedure AI-345 which govern how York Region and York Regional Police achieve and maintain compliance with the requirements of the AODA

- Implement a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan that outlines long-term strategies to achieve AODA requirements and improve accessibility across programs, services and facilities. Report annually on the status of the Plan
- Include accessibility criteria in purchases and acquisitions including self-service kiosks
- Train all employees, volunteers and agents on the AODA, the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation and Ontario's Human Rights Code as it pertains to people with disabilities

Information and Communications Accomplishments

Continue to provide accessible information and communication to residents, visitors and employees through the following actions:

- Ensure processes for receiving and responding to feedback are accessible to people with disabilities
- Provide and arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports upon request, in consultation with the requestor and considering the person's accessibility needs (this includes emergency plans and public safety information)
- Ensure all existing York Region and York Regional Police websites and web content conform to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA in accordance with the timelines set out by the AODA Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation

What are we proud of?

All existing York Region and York Regional Police websites and web content conform to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA as required by the AODA. Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) are international standards developed through the World Wide Web Consortium for making websites and web content accessible to a broader range of users with disabilities. York Region is responsible for compliance for york.ca and several affiliate websites, including: yorklink.ca, vivanext.com, yrt.ca, yrp.ca and yrpsb.ca (websites for economic development, transit and police services, respectively). York.ca and York Region's affiliate sites are updated constantly, and we continue to monitor and address accessibility issues on ongoing basis to ensure websites and web content remain accessible.

[Add image]

Employment Accomplishments

Continue to ensure employment policies and practices are inclusive of people with disabilities with these established actions:

- Ensure all employees and successful applicants with disabilities are informed of available supports and accommodations
- Ensure applicants with disabilities are informed of available accommodations during the recruitment, assessment and the selection processes
- Consult with employees to provide and arrange for accessible formats and communication supports
- Provide employees, upon request, individualized workplace emergency response information
- Maintain a return-to-work process and provide individual documented accommodation plans for employees with disabilities when required

- Ensure the needs of the employees with disabilities are considered for the purposes of performance management, career development, advancement and redeployment

What are we proud of?

York Regional Police Working with Restrictions Internal Support Network

In line with its priority to cultivate an environment of professionalism, respect and well being, in 2022, York Regional Police established an Internal Support Network (ISN) for employees who represent and support individuals who require workplace accommodations.

Self-identifying as the Working with Restrictions ISN, the group strives to be inclusive and multi-representational of both visible and invisible disabilities. ISNs are voluntary support networks designed to help specific, self-identified groups share information and experiences. ISN members also provide mentoring and guidance to help members develop both personally and professionally. The ISNs raise awareness and promote the importance of an inclusive environment for all members.

Advocating for increased awareness and inclusivity within the workplace so that everyone can participate with purpose and belonging, the group has hosted a Multiple Scleroses fundraiser; participated in workplace discussions with stakeholders from around the province to increase awareness; and hosted motivational guest speakers to share their lived experiences on the importance of workplace accommodations.

The Working with Restrictions ISN and the support it receives from the Chief of Police and the Executive Leadership Team, demonstrates YRP's continued commitment to promoting inclusivity, celebrating diversity and reflecting the communities we serve.

Transportation Accomplishments (applicable only to York Region as a public transportation services provider)

Continue to ensure York Region's conventional and specialized transportation services are accessible to people of all abilities with these established actions:

- Offer information on the accessibility equipment and features of vehicles, routes and services is available upon request
- Establish documented emergency preparedness and response policies that provide for the safety of people with disabilities
- Ensure people with disabilities are able to board or deboard at the closest available safe location if the official transit stop is not accessible
- Offer safe storage and handling of mobility aids
- Provide alternate accessible arrangements to transport persons with disabilities to their destination if there is a service disruption
- Offer specialized transportation to visitors who are eligible in the jurisdiction where they live
- Coordinate specialized transportation services between adjacent municipalities with connections made from one transportation service to another
- Provide same hours of operation for conventional and specialized transportation services
- Ensure service delay information is provided to a passenger using specialized transportation in a mutually agreed manner
- Provide clearly marked priority seating for people with disabilities

- Allow companions and dependents to travel on specialized services with a person with a disability, with notice and paid fare. A support person who accompanies a person with a disability is not charged a fare
- Ensure transit operating contractors provide accessibility training for staff on how best to provide service to people with disabilities, the safe use of accessible equipment and features, emergency response procedures and addressing temporary barriers, in addition to the other AODA training requirements
- Provide an eligibility application process for those wanting to use specialized transit. Riders can be deemed eligible for full specialized transportation services, the Family of Services or conventional transportation under three categories: Unconditional (no limit), Temporary (with a time limit) and Conditional (with some conditions for use)
- Offer temporary specialized services for emergency needs or on compassionate grounds
- Accept same day bookings for specialized services and provide same day service based on availability. Registrants can also book any number of trips within regular hours of service
- Offer automated electronic pre-boarding and on-board announcements
- Implement transportation specific accessibility performance measures

Transportation Maintenance Procedures and Performance Measures

York Region will continue to implement transportation specific accessibility performance measures.

Elements of the Region's planned activities are as follows:

- **Process for managing, evaluating and taking action on customer feedback** includes but is not limited to the following steps:
 - Customer feedback/complaints are received by York Region Transit (YRT) and Mobility On Request staff representatives, tracked in the complaint tracking system and forwarded to the appropriate functional area for investigation and resolution, and customer follow-up, where requested
 - Monthly reports summarize the number of complaints received and categorize them according to functional area. Customer feedback is used to identify opportunities for service improvement
- **Demographic and ridership projections for specialized transportation services:**
 - YRT undertakes a demand analysis for Mobility On Request as part of the five year service plan. The five year service plan for Mobility On Request includes ridership projection as well as measures to reduce waiting times.
- **Steps to reduce waiting times:**
 - As part of the five year service plan for Mobility on Request, YRT identifies steps to reduce waiting times, including maintaining contractual obligations for on time service delivery and providing same day service.
- **Accessibility equipment failures:**
 - Measures to identify, prevent and address accessible equipment failure is documented in the operating contract between YRT and the operating contractors. These include pre-trip, in-trip and post-trip inspections and regularly scheduled maintenance of vehicles.
- **Development of accessible design criteria to be considered in the construction, renovation or replacement of bus stops and shelters:**

- YRT ensures that there is a staff representative at every York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting. YRT continues to provide updates and solicit feedback on transit-related matters, including the design of bus stops and facilities, when required. YRT continues to upgrade stops and terminals using accessible design criteria to increase accessibility.

What are we proud of?

York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee (YRACC) members receive transit orientation including a York Region Transit (YRT) Family of Service vehicles tour. Adapting to a virtual environment of YRAAC meetings, a comprehensive descriptive video tour was created featuring accessibility components on vehicles ranging from 60-foot articulated buses to small accessible vans. YRT is compliant in all AODA transportation regulations and continues to strive to go above and beyond in making transit accessible for all travellers. The virtual tour can be used as a teaching tool for others wishing to learn about YRT's accessible fleet.

Design of Public Spaces Accomplishments

Continue to ensure new or redeveloped public spaces comply with specific accessibility design requirements for the following areas:

- Trails, beach access routes and forest trails
- Outdoor public eating areas
- Public play spaces and accessible parking
- Exterior paths of travel including sidewalks and accessible pedestrian signals
- Service counters, fixed queuing lines and waiting areas
- Emergency and preventative maintenance in public spaces

What are we proud of?

With York Regional Council's leadership and advice of the previous York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee, York Region's new building located at **17150 Yonge Street** in Newmarket has been awarded **the Gold Certification by the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification (RHFAC)**. The RHFAC is a national rating system that measures and certifies the level of accessibility of buildings and sites. To receive Gold certification, sites must achieve a rating score of 80% and higher and meet mandatory Gold certification requirements. Some of the accessible and inclusive designs that earned the 17150 Yonge Street building its Gold certification include:

- Accessible paths of travel leading to the building's entrances, which are provided throughout the building
- The site and building incorporate safety warning features, such as tactile attention indicators at the top of stairs and where drive aisles are level with pedestrian paths; cane-detectable features; and features detecting if there are overhead or protruding hazards along the path of travel
- The fire alarm system is equipped with visual and audible signal devices mounted in both public and private areas (for example washrooms and changerooms)

This certification is a testament to York Region's commitment to building welcoming and inclusive communities that are accessible to all.



Photo: members of the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee and York Region's Staff (left to right) Lara Marchetti, Tracy Kidd, Vito Spatafora, Kathleen Britten, Angelo Tocco

Design of Public Spaces Maintenance Procedures

York Region and York Regional Police will continue to implement the maintenance procedures and performance measures requirements of the AODA through the following actions:

- Review and update procedures for the preventative and emergency maintenance of the accessible elements required in the Design of Public Spaces Standards, such as curbs and ramps, handrails and tactile indicators on stairs
- Review and update procedures for dealing with temporary disruptions when these accessible elements are not working

Customer Service Accomplishments

Continue to offer an excellent accessible customer experience to everyone through the following actions:

- Provide Accessible Customer Service training to all staff and volunteers, and to agents who provide service to the public on our behalf
- Accommodate the use of assistive devices, support persons and service animals
- Receive and respond to feedback regarding the manner in which goods or services are provided to people with disabilities
- Provide notice of temporary service disruptions to programs, services or facilities

What are we proud of?

Designed to be accessible by default, York Region launched and operated several **COVID-19 Mass Vaccination Clinics** during Covid-19 pandemic. This was one of the largest direct service delivery initiatives in its history. Throughout the planning/design phases of the clinics, site selection and audits for accessibility were conducted and the Region consulted with YRAAC to ensure accessibility standards were being met. Clinic staff who were already AODA trained also received additional accessibility content in their clinic training program to provide quality customer service. The accessibility features of the clinics ensured all persons with disabilities could access these vital services. These features included:

- An option in the vaccination online booking system that allowed customers to indicate if they were being accompanied by a support person and if they require any accommodations
- Designated quiet areas for vaccination of people with sensory-related disabilities
- Chairs placed along waiting lines so that people could rest
- Wheelchair accessible access, including accessible post-vaccination areas
- Pocket talkers, clear masks and American sign language (ASL) interpretation (via video)

OUR VACCINATION CLINICS ARE ACCESSIBLE AND WELCOMING

Let a staff member know if you require support to receive your immunization

Supports may include:



Use of a support person and/or service animal



Sign language



Clear masks and voice amplifiers



Language interpretation services



Privacy requests



Other types of support



Other vaccination clinic options were offered to York Region residents as well, including drive-through vaccination clinics, in-car vaccination options at non-drive-through sites and specialized clinics that meet the unique needs of people, such as children with developmental disabilities. Recommendations for accessibility at Mass Immunization Clinics were documented in the Risk Assessment Planning Tool, which will help inform the development of future clinics.

Mobility On-Request (MOR) completed 2,326 trips to safely connect paratransit customers and seniors to their nearest vaccination clinic within York Region. Drivers provided added support by remaining at clinics to avoid having customers wait outside for their return trips. The MOR team supported stakeholder communications and worked with Public Health on drive-through clinic entrance and exit logistics.

Next steps

York Region and York Regional Police will continue to implement continuous quality improvement actions aimed at ensuring programs, services and facilities continue to be accessible to everyone. This includes reviewing processes created to meet the requirements of the AODA to identify opportunities for improvement, including:

- General Requirements – review and update Region’s accessible procurement practices and procedures

- Information and Communication Standards – review and update Region’s Information and Communications Guidelines
- Employment Standards:
 - undertake an equity audit to review Human Resources policies from an inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility perspective
 - review York Region’s internal disability management program to align with the new Canadian Standards Association (CSA Group) on Workplace Disability Management [CSA Z1011:20](#) – the first National Standard on occupational disability management.
 - York Regional Police will develop a specialized course for its staff, that provides a comprehensive understanding of disability in the workplace, reflects on ableism, able-bodied privilege, and accommodations, with the aim improving inclusion for everyone
- Transportation Standards – York Region Transit will conduct an accessibility and best practices review
- Design of Public Spaces Standards – review and update the Region’s Accessibility Design Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities
- Customer Service Standards – conduct a needs assessment to determine accessible customer service gaps and areas for improvement

Actions to monitor, evaluate and report on AODA requirements

York Region and York Regional Police will continue to monitor the Province of Ontario’s legislative reviews of accessibility laws and requirements. Both organizations will continue to comply with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and its regulations, including any amendments to existing and release of new applicable standards.

As legislated, York Region and York Regional Police will review and update this plan at least every five years. An annual status report outlining the progress of the actions in the plan will also be prepared. These documents will be posted on the Region’s and York Regional Police websites at york.ca, yrp.ca, and yrpsb.ca and can be made available in an accessible format or with communication supports upon request.

In addition to the development of the 2023 to 2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, York Region and York Regional Police will continue to meet accessibility reporting requirements as required to the Government of Ontario:

- **2023:** File accessibility (compliance) report with the Government of Ontario
- **2024:** Prepare an annual status report
- **2025:** File accessibility (compliance) report with the Government of Ontario and prepare an annual status report
- **2026:** Prepare an annual status report
- **2027:** File accessibility (compliance) report with the Government of Ontario and prepare the 2027 to 2031 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan



Let us know what you think

We welcome your feedback. Please let us know what you think about the York Region 2020 to 2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and accessibility matters in general.

To view this plan online visit york.ca/accessibility

To request a copy of the plan in another format or to send us your comments or questions, please contact us at:

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