

Celebrating National Access Awareness Week (NAAW) May 24 to May 30, 2009

Message from the Chairman and CEO and the Chief Administrative Officer

The Regional Municipality of York recognizes May 24th to May 30th as National Access Awareness Week. The week is York Region's opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the achievements by and for people with disabilities and to promote ways to make every part of our community more accessible.

National Access Awareness Week was established in 1988 by Rick Hansen to raise awareness of the need for better access for people with disabilities. Communities across Canada continue to celebrate National Access Awareness Week each year, honouring accomplishments that allow full participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of Canadian life, including education, recreation, transportation, housing and employment.

During the week, York Region will launch *Access-ability: York Region's 2009 Accessibility Plan*, our sixth accessibility plan under the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*. The plan highlights what each department across the Region, including York Regional Police, is doing to promote accessibility.

We would like to take this opportunity to commend the efforts and achievements of the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee in making the programs and services of The Regional Municipality of York more accessible. Thank you for your time and your commitment to this important work. To demonstrate a strong commitment to remove barriers and promote greater independence for people with disabilities who live and work here in York Region, the Region has released a brochure outlining the Committee's role and responsibilities. The brochure will be available at our information displays during National Access Awareness Week and also on mYnetWORK.

York Region will continue to enhance and promote equal opportunities that result in greater independence for people with disabilities. During National Access Awareness Week, let's celebrate our progress towards "access-ability" for all people with disabilities.

Bill Fisch
Regional Chairman and CEO

Bruce Macgregor
Chief Administrative Officer



Enhancing Access-ability for Everyone in York Region

York Region is in its sixth year of accessibility planning. The 2009 Accessibility Plan continues to enhance 'access-ability' by finding and removing barriers in all Regional programs and services.

Access-ability: York Region's 2009 Accessibility Plan includes 77 planning activities from across all Regional departments, including York Regional Police. Its goal is to improve access for people with all types of disabilities including physical, sensory, cognitive and mental illness.

The coordination of the Region's Accessibility Plan is led by the Community and Health Services Department, with support from the ODA Staff Committee. Some examples of accessibility activities are listed below.

"The successful development of this plan demonstrates the continued commitment made possible by the ODA Staff Committee and its many dedicated representatives from across York Region departments and service areas."

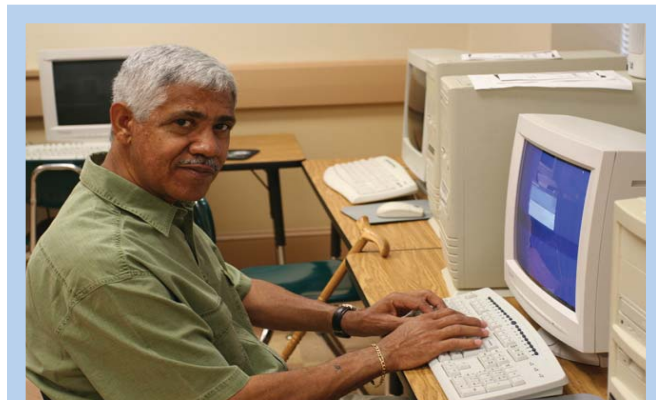
Joann Simmons, Commissioner of Community and Health Services.

Community and Health Services

To improve accessibility for people with disabilities in the seniors' properties that Community and Health Services manages, the following features will be installed:

- new elevators with improved lighting and back lit/large buttons and large digital floor displays
- better lighting in the public areas
- a new emergency power generator to ensure the elevators operate and common areas are lit during a power outage
- automatic door openers, and
- visual alarm features on the fire alarm systems

In addition, Community and Health Services will survey Emergency Medical Services (EMS) staff to determine the need for step aids for patients and relatives with sensory disabilities to access EMS vehicles.



York Region Transit and myRIDE

“We are pleased to announce that since the launch of the Travel Training Pilot Program myRIDE in May 2008, YRT has trained over 80 trainers and currently over 230 participants are enrolled in the myRIDE program,” says Piragal Thiru, Planner of Accessible Services. The myRIDE support program prepares people to travel safely on their own using public transit.



The Region will continue to purchase accessible buses so that by year end, approximately 92% of the fleet will be accessible for people with disabilities. To increase access for people with low vision, Audible Pedestrian Signals will be installed at identified crossings as required by the CNIB.

Corporate Services

To increase accessibility for people with disabilities, the parking lot and main entrance at 22 Prospect Street, one of the Region’s public health buildings, will be redesigned to incorporate a ramp and an accessible parking spot. New internal office signs at the Administrative Centre will make it easier for people with sensory disabilities to find their way through the building.

Environmental Services

To enhance accessibility in the Vaughan Community Environmental Centre, two washrooms with accessible fixtures and contrasting colours will be added at the front entrance of the building.



Finance Services

To improve access to services for people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing, the Finance Department is planning to change TTY devices in the Region’s Business Call Centres to TEXTNET. TEXTNET is a PC-based, easy-to-use, digital solution that will directly connect callers to the staff member best able to help them. “By using TEXTNET, people will be able to connect to the staff person best able to help them,” says Darryl Blakeley, Manager, Customer Support, IT Services.



Planning and Development Services

To increase access to maps and products published online, the Planning and Development Services Department is incorporating fully accessible features in online Geomatic maps for people with sensory disabilities.

To ensure full participation by people with disabilities, the Planning and Development Services Department will continue to review its Public Consultation Centres and stakeholder engagement forums to identify barriers.

Office of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)

With the compliance date for the Customer Service Regulation under the AODA fast approaching, the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer, as the departmental lead, has developed and is implementing a corporate training strategy about the provision of York Regional goods and services to people with disabilities. “Training is one of the key requirements of the Customer Service Regulation. Our task is to train Regional staff by January 1, 2010, to ensure that we are providing the best customer service to people with disabilities,” says Michelle Herder, Program Manager, Corporate Customer Service Strategy.

York Regional Police

In partnership with York Support Services Network, York Regional Police are investigating potential funding sources and options for service delivery to expand the role of the Mental Health Support Team to specifically respond to the needs of children. “Our partnership with York Support Services Network has been a great benefit to our service and the children in our community,” says York Regional Police Chief Armand LaBarge.



“People First”

Words are powerful tools, and in some cases can promote negative stereotypes and reinforce attitudinal barriers. Language is the basis of thoughts and attitudes, including those about people with disabilities. Terminology continually evolves. Staying current is important, not to show that you are “politically correct” but to communicate effectively and appropriately. Without being aware of what is current and appropriate language, you may inadvertently offend another person or convey a message that you did not intend to convey.

Using “people first” language emphasizes the individual and not your perception of any possible limitation caused by the presence of a disability.

That means that you refer to a “person” first, then to his or her disability. For example, say a “person with a disability” rather than a “disabled person.” If you refer to a person by his or her disability, (e.g., blind person or deaf person), you imply that the disability is more important than his or her status as a person.

When should I mention that a person has a disability?

Use common sense. Let your choice of words be guided by an awareness of how people prefer to be described. Mention a person’s disability only if it is relevant to the issue. If it is not relevant, don’t mention it. Even more importantly, when you know a person’s name, use it first rather than an indirect reference to a “person with a disability.”

I’ve heard so many different ways to describe people with disabilities.

How do I know what is correct?

Avoid trendy terminology like “challenged,” “handi-capable,” “differently abled,” or “physically challenged.” These terms are mostly invented and used by people without disabilities. Some people with disabilities may choose these terms, but the majority believe these terms are condescending and prefer they not be used. Most people with disabilities prefer to be called a “person with a disability” or a “person who has a disability.”

How do I avoid segregation when talking about people with disabilities?

Be careful not to use language like “we or they,” which suggest segregation. Avoid grouping all individuals with disabilities together. For example, do not refer to a particular group as “the disabled,” “the deaf,” or “the blind.”

What is the proper way to speak to or write about someone who has a disability?

In speaking or writing remember that children or adults with disabilities are like everyone else – except they happen to have a disability. Here are a few tips for improving language related to disabilities:

- Speak of the person first, then the disability
- Emphasize abilities, not limitations
- Don’t give unsolicited praise or attention to a person with a disability; don’t patronize the person

People with disabilities have the same wants and needs as everybody else in society so focus on the person, enjoy their abilities and eliminate labels. The best way to refer to a person with a disability is to use their name.

KIRSTEN HILL is recipient of a 2009 Ontario Volunteer Service Award



The York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee (YRAAC) is pleased to announce that one of their own members, Kirsten Hill, received a 2009 Ontario Volunteer Service Award through the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, for her dedication and service as a YRAAC member over the last five years. The Volunteer Service Award is given to individuals who are recognized for five to 60+ years of continuous service in a given organization.

*Congratulations, Kirsten,
and thank you for your
dedication.*

YORK REGION OFFERS LUNCHTIME SESSIONS FOR STAFF

**May 24 to May 30, 2009
is National Access Awareness Week (NAAW).**

To promote NAAW here at the Region, we are presenting two Know York lunchtime sessions. Guest speakers from the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) will be presenting about "Living with Mental Illness." An update on the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* will also be offered.

We would like to extend an invitation to all Regional staff to join us at either Know York Session.

The sessions are as follows:

Monday, May 25th

South Service Centre

12:15 to 1:00 p.m.

50 High Tech Road
Richmond Hill
Room #316 (3rd Floor)

Friday, May 29th

12:15 to 1:00 p.m.

Administrative Centre

17250 Yonge Street
Newmarket
Committee Room B

**To register for either of these sessions contact:
yorkbeat@york.ca**



The YRAAC includes volunteers from the community with different types of disabilities, as well as Regional Councillors. Their task is to help Regional Council improve opportunities for people with disabilities by advising on how to meet the requirements of the ODA and the goal of an accessible Ontario by 2025 under the AODA. Some of its members have provided their visions of an accessible Ontario.

To me, an accessible Ontario by 2025 looks like...

... an inclusive society where everyone is in fact, not just in spirit, able to participate in living, working and playing to the extent that they desire. Equality comes naturally, not just because a law says so or because we want to be well thought of, or we have a particular special interest.

Janice Cameron

...a place where we have successfully worked with the AODA legislation to identify, remove and prevent accessibility barriers. Within the structure of defined standards we will have achieved communities of inclusion and accommodation, fostering acceptance that allows people with disabilities the dignity and respect to thrive in their community. We will have built the bridge to equity.

Kirsten Hill

...a world-recognized, ground-breaking leader in removing and preventing societal barriers for people who have disabilities. A place where we actively seek to change outdated structures, processes and attitudes that represent a by-gone era of exclusion. Instead, we embrace the concept of full inclusion as a key component in a fair and just society.

Donna Hardaker



... it does today because things such as ramps, signage and visual fire alarms are the norm, not the exception. Inaccessibility in 2025 will be as illegal and socially unacceptable as smoking in a public venue is today.

Cindy Gorlewski

...a place many of us have imagined but not yet seen. In 2025, an accessible Ontario will be a place where no one faces barriers of any kind to what they want to experience or achieve. In 2025, Ontario will be a place where everyone feels empowered and independent. An accessible Ontario in 2025 is one where all people of all abilities enjoy a richer and more rewarding life because they live in a community which respects everyone's right to live free of barriers.

*Town of Newmarket
Regional Councillor John Taylor*

... a place where anyone can participate in every aspect of society; a place where people with disabilities are valued members, integrated in our communities. Wilma Rudolph said "Never underestimate the power of dreams and the influence of the human spirit. We are all the same in this notion: The potential for greatness lives within each of us." Accessibility in Ontario will be the result of the dreams and the influence of the spirit of countless people with disabilities who have been committed to unleashing the potential for greatness in all of us. I am privileged and honoured to be part of that mission.

Trish Robichaud

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) UPDATE

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)* came into effect in June 2005. It applies to both the public and private sectors covering every aspect of life available to the public, except private homes. The goal of the AODA is to ensure that all Ontarians with disabilities have full access to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, building structures, and premises by January 1, 2025. This goal will be achieved through provincially set accessibility standards in the areas of customer service, transportation, information and communications, employment, and the built environment.

Both public and private sector organizations will be required to implement these standards. Enforcement of the AODA happens through a process of reporting, inspection, investigation, compliance orders, and administration penalties.

Under the AODA, the role of the municipal accessibility advisory committees will change from advising municipal councils on their annual accessibility plans to advising councils on their municipalities' compliance with new accessibility standards.

The Customer Service Regulation is the first of five regulations to be released under the AODA and came into effect January 1, 2008. The regulation states what businesses and organizations in Ontario must do to make the provision of their goods and services more accessible to people with disabilities.

The Transportation Standard was submitted to the Minister of Community and Social Services for consideration as law in November 2008. It could be passed into law by June 2009 or earlier. It is expected that the remaining regulations— Information and Communications, Employment and the Built Environment – will be finalized in 2009/2010.

The AODA will eventually replace the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA)*. However, the Province has indicated that the ODA will remain in effect for the foreseeable future while the AODA is phased in.



YRAAC Meetings

The York Region Accessibility Advisory (YRAAC) Committee meets from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. in the Seminar Room at the Administrative Centre and all are welcome to attend.

The upcoming meeting dates are:

- Wednesday, June 24, 2009
- Wednesday, September 23, 2009
- Wednesday, November 18, 2009
- Wednesday, November 25, 2009

You can contact the YRAAC for:

- feedback and advice concerning accessibility issues
- participation on focus or advisory groups
- advice on the scope or content of related policies or guidelines that are being developed or researched

To contact the YRAAC, call Lois Davies at 905 830-4444 ext. 2060 or by email to lois.davies@york.ca

New brochure highlights YRAAC

Have you had an opportunity to pick up a copy of the new York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee (YRAAC) brochure?

This brochure describes the role and responsibilities of the YRAAC as legislated by the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA)* and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*.

The York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee is committed to improving opportunities for people with all disability types.

During National Accessibility Awareness Week, copies of the brochure will be available at the display tables at the Administrative Centre and South Service Centre and also on mYnetWORK.



York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee Members

Janice Cameron

Margaret Gaukel

Cindy Gorlewski

Beverley Hall

Donna Hardaker

Kirsten Hill

Diana Hordo

Diane Humeniuk

Wilf Morley (Vice-Chair)

Trish Robichaud

Bill Fisch,
Regional Chairman and CEO
(ex officio)

Vito Spatafora,
Regional Councillor,
Town of Richmond Hill (Chair)

John Taylor,
Regional Councillor,
Town of Newmarket

Danny Wheeler,
Regional Councillor,
Town of Georgina

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)

Customer Service Training

One of the requirements of the Customer Service Regulation, which was the first standard to be passed into law under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*, is that all staff must be trained on the provision of goods and services to people with disabilities while incorporating the core AODA principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.

AODA customer service training for York Region staff, volunteers and agents working on our behalf must be complete by January 1, 2010. In this training, participants will develop skills to respond to the particular needs of persons with disabilities, in relation to their position and level of contact with the public.

Further information and additional resources will be posted to assist staff on mYnetwORK.

For more information about the AODA customer service training contact Michelle Herder, Program Manager, Corporate Customer Service Strategy at ext. 1275.

York Region departmental staff that are planning a new program or evaluating existing services are welcome to come and speak to the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee to get their feedback and thoughts on barriers to accessibility and ways to address them.

To contact the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee contact:

Lois Davies, Program Manager AODA/ODA

by phone at 905 830-4444 ext. 2060

or by email at lois.davies@york.ca.



Mental Health and Mental Illness Information

One in five Canadians are likely to experience a diagnosable mental illness... that would make over 185,000 York Region residents needing mental health services. One of the most common reasons people do not seek help for their illness is stigma which is often perpetuated by misconceptions about these illnesses.

Taking the time to learn about mental illness could make all the difference to you or to someone you care about. It's important to watch for warning signs of mental illness—and to seek medical advice as soon as possible if any become apparent.

To find out more about mental illness contact the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) – York Region Branch at 905-853-8477 or 1-888-208-5509 or

www.cmha-yr.on.ca



CANADIAN MENTAL
HEALTH ASSOCIATION
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE
POUR LA SANTÉ MENTALE
YORK REGION BRANCH
Serving York Region and South Simcoe

Annual General Meeting

Save the date!

CMHA is proud to host an evening with Elizabeth Manley...

An acclaimed figure skater and a recipient of the Order of Canada, Elizabeth speaks openly about her journey – what it was like to be a teenager training to be an Olympian and battling depression. She lost her hair, put away her skates, and retreated from the world. All before her stunning finish at the 1988 Olympics. Her story is one of resilience and hope.



Monday, June 22, 2009 at 6:30 p.m.
Vaughan City Playhouse Theatre
Ticket information to follow

905-853-8477 ext 2204 1-866-208-5509 www.cmha-yr.on.ca

Looking for community services close to home?



COMMUNITY AND HEALTH SERVICES

YorkLink

A Community Services Directory

Celebrating 10 Years

Aurora • East Gwillimbury • Georgina • King • Markham
Newmarket • Richmond Hill • Vaughan • Whitchurch-Stouffville

www.yorklink.org

Thank you to the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee for their involvement in the development of *Access-ability: York Region's 2009 Accessibility Plan* and to staff across the Region who contributed to developing this newsletter.

To view York Region's Accessibility Plans visit:

www.york.ca
under Services > Accessibility Planning

Or contact :

Lois Davies
Program Manager AODA/ODA
Community and Health Services Department
lois.davies@york.ca
905 830-4444 ext. 2060

For information on:

Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001
and
Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005
visit the Ministry of Community and Social Services Accessibility Directorate at:

www.mcass.gov.on.ca/mcass/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario

