

National Access Awareness Week (NAAW) **June 1 to June 7, 2008 - Opening Doors**

Celebrating National Access Awareness Week

Message from the Chairman and CEO and the Chief Administrative Officer

National Access Awareness Week from June 1 to June 7, 2008 is a chance for The Regional Municipality of York to celebrate the achievements that make our community more accessible for people with different types of disabilities.

National Access Awareness Week was established in 1988 by Rick Hansen to raise awareness of the need for better access for people with disabilities.

This year, York Region will release *Opening Doors: York Region's 2008 Accessibility Plan*, which marks our fifth year of accessibility planning. The 2008 Plan outlines what each Regional department, including York Regional Police, is doing to enhance accessibility. It features 91 initiatives to remove barriers for people with disabilities.

We will also introduce the Region's Accessible Meeting Resource List to help our employees locate the services and resources needed to ensure our meetings and events are accessible. It will be available at our information displays during National Access Awareness Week and also on mYnetwORK.

York Region is a leader in creating equal opportunities that result in greater independence for people with disabilities. During National Access Awareness Week, let's celebrate how we are capable of "opening doors."

Bill Fisch

Chairman and CEO

Bruce Macgregor

Chief Administrative Officer

2008



Opening doors of opportunity to everyone in York Region

York Region is now in its fifth year of accessibility planning. The 2008 Plan continues to build on previous plans, enhancing accessibility by finding and removing barriers in all Regional programs and services.

Opening Doors: York Region's 2008 Accessibility Plan includes a total of 91 accessibility planning activities from across all Regional departments, including York Regional Police. The 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 Plans is led by the Community and Health Services Department, with the support of the ODA Staff Committee. "The members of this committee are the champions within their departments who ensure accessibility commitments are made and fulfilled," says Joann Simmons, Commissioner of Community and Health Services. Some examples of accessibility activities are listed below.

Community and Health Services

To increase the safety and independence of persons who are deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing, the Community and Health Services Department will add visual alarm features to the fire alarm systems in the public areas of the Maple and Newmarket Health Centres.

To better support their tenants, Housing Services will research the self-declared disabilities of tenants reported in last year's Housing York Incorporated tenant survey.

Printed material in Family and Childrens' Services, Policy and Program Support Services, and Public Health will be reviewed to identify barriers and find solutions or possible alternate formats.

In addition, Employment and Financial Services will create a staff resource library in each Ontario Works office with material focused on mental illness, learning disabilities and chronic diseases to raise staff awareness and promote inclusivity.

York Region Transit and Mobility Plus

"We are pleased to announce that Mobility Plus – York Region Transit's door-to-door shared ride accessible public transit service for people with disabilities – will continue improving accessibility," says Sharon Doyle, Manager of Mobility Plus. To improve customer service levels, Mobility Plus will provide trip booking services 24 hours per day, seven days a week using an interactive voice response software and interface.

To meet the increasing demand for accessible public transit, the Region will continue purchasing accessible buses so that by year-end, approximately 89% of the fleet will be accessible for people with disabilities. In



cooperation with the Oak Ridges Trail Association, plans are in place to make some Regional forest trails accessible for people with disabilities.

Environmental Services

With plans underway for the proposed Community Environmental Centre in Vaughan, Environmental Services and the Accessibility Advisory Committee has reviewed and incorporate accessibility measures into the detailed architectural plans for the centre. "Additional accessibility measures will be included in our plans using the valuable feedback provided by members of the YRAAC," says Neil MacDonald, Project Manager, Environmental Services Department.

Environmental Services will also review the promotional and educational materials to ensure use of plain language, legible fonts, and colour contrasts. Accessibility audits will also be conducted.

The York Regional Police in partnership with the Canadian Hearing Society

The York Regional Police continue to improve on their ability to serve citizens who are disabled. "Our partnership with the Canadian Hearing Society has been of great benefit to our service and to the community we serve," says York Regional Police Chief Armand LaBarge, "It has promoted better relations between police and citizens who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing".



Continuing with last year's initiatives in partnership with the Canadian Hearing Society, York Regional Police will:

- Develop aids to raise awareness and help officers communicate with citizens who are deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing
- Invite representatives from the Canadian Hearing Society to become members of the YRP Recruitment Community Insights Program
- Appoint a police member who is deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing to the York Regional Equity Advisory Committee
- Develop a Sign Language Interpreter Services Protocol

Corporate Communications

To make Regional Services more accessible for persons who are blind or have low vision, Corporate Communications continues work towards making York Region's website content compatible with technological advancements. "Technology is always changing, therefore it is important to ensure that our website continues to be accessible," says Marc Gallant, Senior Multimedia Specialist.

Finance

To continue improving access to services for people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing, the Finance Department will study the use of technology solutions used in other municipalities across Ontario. Existing business call centres with TTY devices will be migrated to TextNet. "This will allow staff to serve customers who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing more effectively," says Darryl Blakely, Project Manager, Finance.



Human Services Planning

To increase accessibility for all citizens, Planning and Development Services will incorporate accessibility and mobility concepts when developing design criteria for new communities. According to John Waller, Director of Long Range and Strategic Planning, “An inclusive community prioritizes mobility and access so that everyone has reasonable access to all places, goods and services”.

Corporate Services

Property Services will study and redesign the ramp at the Administrative Centre’s ceremonial entrance and install a power door operator on the door to the Corporate Learning Centre at the South Services Centre. “By opening doors, York Region’s services are more accessible to all”, says Tracy Grover, Project Coordinator, Property Services.

To raise awareness among Human Resource staff about mental illness disabilities in the workplace, Human Resources will launch the Mental Health Works program offered by the Canadian Mental Health Association. “We’re excited about piloting this program at York Region to raise awareness about mental health issues in the workplace” says Bev Cassidy-Moffatt, Manager, HR Consulting.

It’s not my struggle, it’s yours

A customer service tip

By: Lisa Rose

I have spent my life learning to find alternative ways to do things in inaccessible environments. I must admit I’ve become very creative.

When I enter an office, store or place of business I appreciate when I am simply asked, “May I help you?”. If I require assistance, I will say yes and explain what type of help I need. Sometimes when I answer, “No thank you, I can manage” the person asking will insist on helping – even when I don’t need the help.

When people assume that I am not able to do things on my own and persist in trying to help me — that’s when I have been known to say, “It’s not my struggle – it’s yours!”.

//////
Lisa Rose is a York Region summer student working in the Policy and Program Support Services Branch of Community and Health Services. She is a third-year Social Work student at York University.
//////



“May I help you” — providing quality service to customers with disabilities

Customer service, including serving customers with disabilities, is the key to success in any business. Because some disabilities are not always visible or easy to distinguish, the following information may be helpful.

When serving a person with any type of disability, always ask the person, “May I help you?” and respect their response.

Physical disabilities include a range of functional limitations from minor difficulties in moving or coordinating one part of the body, through muscle weakness, tremors, and paralysis. A physical disability may affect an individual’s ability to:

- Perform manual tasks such as gripping a door knob
- Move around independently
- Control the speed or coordination of movements
- Have strength or endurance



When providing customer service to a person with a physical disability:

- Do not touch, move or lean on wheelchairs and other mobility devices as they are part of a person’s personal space
- Keep ramps and corridors free of clutter
- Step around a counter to provide service if it is too high or wide
- Provide seating for those that cannot stand in line

Hearing loss can cause difficulty in distinguishing certain frequencies, sounds or words. A person who is **deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing** may be unable to:

- Use a telephone
- Understand speech in noisy environments
- Pronounce words clearly enough to be understood by strangers

When providing customer service to a person who is deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing:

- If the person uses a sign language interpreter to communicate, always direct your attention to them, not the interpreter
- If necessary, write notes back and forth to share information
- Face the person and keep your hands and other objects away from your face and mouth
- Do not shout – speak clearly

Deafblindness is a combination of hearing and vision loss. Deafblindness interferes with communication, learning, orientation and mobility.

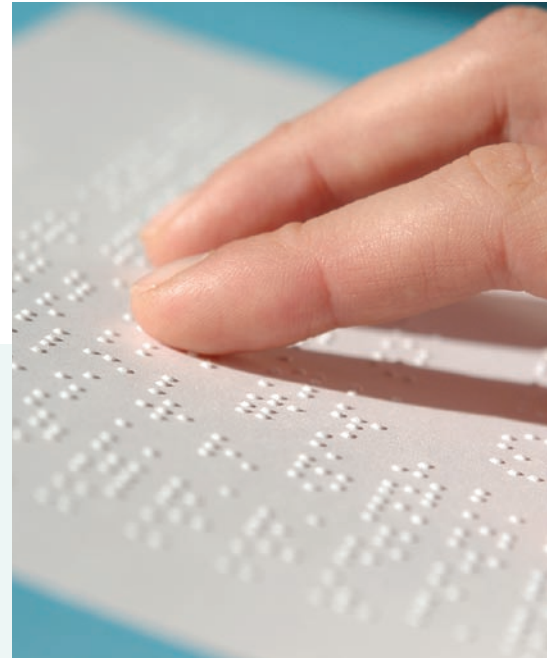
Many people who are deafblind use the services of an intervener who act as the eyes and ears for people who are deafblind.

When providing customer service to people who are deafblind:

- *Understand that communication can take some time – be patient*
- *Direct your attention to your customer, not the intervener*

Vision disabilities range from slightly reduced vision to total blindness. Vision loss can result in:

- Difficulty reading or seeing faces
- Difficulty manoeuvring in unfamiliar places
- Inability to differentiate colours or distances
- A narrow field of vision
- The need for bright light, or contrast
- Night blindness



When providing customer service to a person who is blind or has low vision:

- *Verbally identify yourself before making physical contact*
- *If the person uses a service animal do not touch or approach the animal – it is working*
- *Verbally describe the setting, form, location as necessary*
- *Offer your arm to guide the person – do not grab or pull*

Intellectual disabilities affect a person's ability to think and reason. It may be caused by genetic factors such as Down's Syndrome, exposure to environmental toxins such as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, brain trauma or psychiatric disabilities. A person with an intellectual disability may have difficulty with:

- Understanding spoken, written and conceptual information
- Perception of sensory information
- Memory

When providing customer service to a person with an intellectual disability:

- *Be prepared to explain and provide examples regarding information*
- *Use clear, simple language*
- *Remember that the person is an adult and unless you are informed otherwise, can make their own decisions*
- *Be patient and verify your understanding*

Speech disabilities involve the partial or total loss of the ability to speak. Speech disabilities can include problems with:

- Pronunciation
- Pitch and loudness
- Hoarseness or breathiness
- Stuttering or slurring

When providing customer service to a person with a speech disability:

- *If possible, communicate in a quiet environment*
- *Give the person your full attention – be patient and do not interrupt to finish their sentences*
- *Ask them to repeat as necessary, or to write their message*
- *Verify your understanding*

Learning disabilities can affect:

- Verbal and non verbal acquisition
- Retention
- Understanding/processing

Learning disabilities affect the way a person processes information and expresses knowledge. People with a learning disability have average or above average intelligence, but may experience difficulties in reading, problem solving, time management, way finding and/or processing information.

When providing customer service to a person with a learning disability:

- *Respond to any requests for verbal information, assistance in filling in forms and other requests with courtesy*
- *Allow extra time to complete tasks if necessary*

Mental illnesses can take many forms, just as physical illnesses do. Three main categories of mental illness are:

- Anxiety
- Mood
- Behavioural

When providing customer service to a person who has a mental illness:

- *Ask what would make him/her the most comfortable and respect his/her needs*
- *Try to reduce stress and anxiety in situations*
- *Stay calm and courteous, even if the customer exhibits unusual behaviour, focus on the service they need and how you can help*

Source: Reprinted with permission from Durham Region



New member joins the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee

The York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee (YRAAC) is a legislatively mandated committee of Council that includes both members of Regional Council and citizen volunteers. The YRAAC advises Council on the preparation, implementation, and effectiveness of its annual accessibility plans. As required by legislation, the majority of its members have a disability.

In April 2008, the YRAAC welcomed Diana Hordo as its newest member. Through the pursuit of her education goals, Ms. Hordo has combined her talents and love of music with disability studies.

Ms. Hordo is pursuing multi-disciplinary studies focusing on the positive remedial effects of dance and music therapies on brain placidity. Building on an Honours Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Music, she is currently a Master's degree candidate in Critical Disability Studies at York University.

In her spare time, Ms. Hordo has achieved numerous swimming and scuba diving qualifications.

Other members of the YRAAC include Councillor Danny Wheeler (Chair), Wilf Morley (Vice Chair), Janice Cameron, Margaret Gaukel, Cindy Gorlewski, Beverley Hall, Kirsten Hill, Diane Humeniuk, Trish Robichaud, Councillor John Taylor, Councillor Vito Spatafora and Regional Chairman and CEO Bill Fisch (ex-Officio).

YRAAC Meetings

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

The upcoming meeting dates are:

- Wednesday, June 18, 2008
- Wednesday, September 24, 2008
- Wednesday, November 26, 2008

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.





did you know? //

The City of Vaughan is hosting a series of free information workshops entitled "How do I..." on June 14, 2008 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The event will be held at the Vellore Village Community Centre in Woodbridge. The workshops will address how to access recreational activities, funding and services in York Region for children, youth, adults and seniors. For more information, visit www.vaughan.ca under "Events", or contact Mihaela Neagoe at 905-879-8732 ext. 7405.

The Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) is hosting a ground-breaking exhibition entitled "Out From Under: Disability, History and Things to Remember", April 17 to July 13, 2008. This event chronicles the struggles, alliances, and setbacks faced by people with disabilities in Canadian history. For more information, visit www.rom.on.ca.

Win York Region merchandise!

Do you have an idea to make York Region programs, services and facilities more accessible? Share your idea and you can win exciting York Region merchandise.

Are you familiar with the 2008 accessibility plan? You can also win by completing the 2008 accessibility plan quiz.

Visit York Beat on mYnetwORK to share your idea and complete the accessibility quiz.

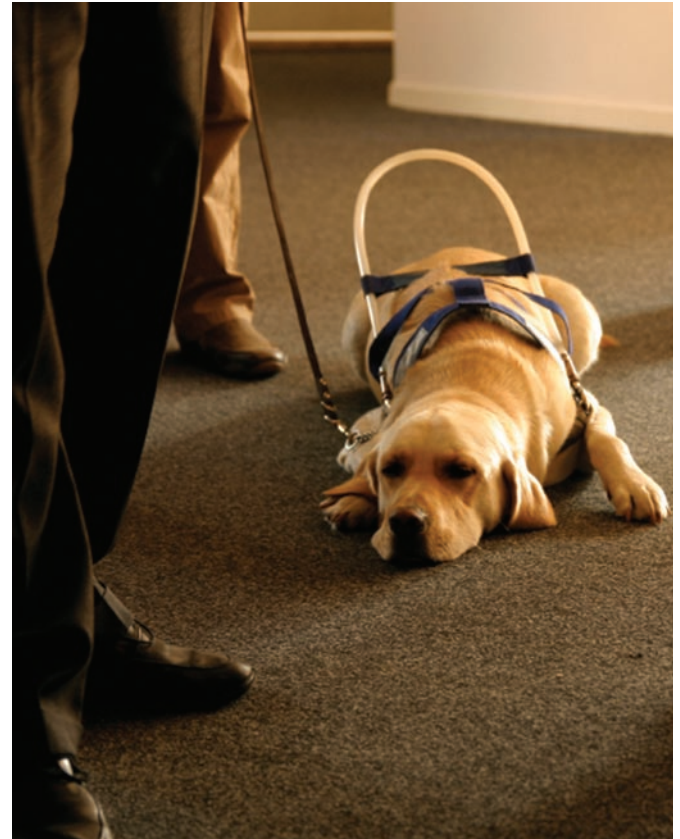


Just Ask! Inclusivity Training *Offered November 18 and 19*

Gain insight into the lives of people with various disabilities and how to provide effective and respectful customer service through this interactive one-day workshop.

Register now for the upcoming sessions of Just Ask! The next workshop dates are November 18 and 19.

You can register online through the Corporate Learning Registration System via mYnetwORK.



Looking for community services close to home?

YorkLink

A Community Services Directory

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

Go to www.york.ca
and click the YorkLink
icon at the top of the page

Visit the new and improved YorkLink
website for information on hundreds
of agencies serving York Region residents



www.york.ca

 York Region

Community and Health
Services Department

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, service, facilities, accommodation, employment, building structures, and premises by January 1, 2025. This goal will be achieved through provincially set accessibility standards primarily in the areas of customer service, the built environment, information and communications, employment, and transportation.

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 administrative 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 standard is the first of five regulations to be released under the AODA and came into effect January 1, 2008. It focuses on the establishment of customer service policies, staff training, the provision of accessible customer services, supporting the use of accessibility devices, service animals, support people and the establishment of customer feedback processes.

The Transportation Standard is expected to be finalized into regulation in 2008. It is anticipated that regulations surrounding the other standards – Built Environment, Employment, and Information and Communications – will be finalized in 2009. The AODA will eventually replace the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA). However, the Province has indicated that the ODA will remain in effect for the foreseeable future while the AODA is phased-in.

Attention meeting planners!



Have you had an opportunity to use York Region's Accessible Meeting Guidelines and checklist? These guidelines, can help you make York Region's meetings, public consultations, and events accessible for all.

This year, the Region has introduced the Accessible Meeting Resource List to help you locate the services and resources needed to plan an accessible event.

To view the Accessible Meeting Resource List, please visit [mYnetwORK](#) under Business Resources --> Corporate Policies and Procedures.

Thank you to the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee for their involvement in the development of Opening Doors 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
Acting Senior Program Manager, ODA
Community and Health Services Department
at lois.davies@york.ca or
(905) 830-4444, Ext. 2060

For information on:

*The Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 and
the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities
Act, 2005, visit the Accessibility Directorate's
website at:*

[www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/mcss/english
/pillars/accessibilityOntario.](http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/mcss/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario)

