

# YORK REGION ACCESSIBILITY STATUS REPORT 2017

## CREATING AN ACCESSIBLE YORK REGION

An update on actions by York Region and York Regional Police to prevent and remove barriers for people with disabilities and implement the *York Region 2015 - 2021 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan*





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## York Region Accessibility Status Report 2017

Creating communities where every person can participate is important for people, businesses and community life. The *York Region Accessibility Status Report 2017* is an annual update provided by The Regional Municipality of York (York Region) and York Regional Police on measures taken to improve accessibility and implement the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA).

This report highlights AODA requirements that became law on July 1, 2016 and January 1, 2017. It includes the strategies and actions approved

by York Regional Council to identify, prevent and remove barriers for people with disabilities in our programs, services and facilities.

It also provides an update on actions taken to implement the *York Region 2015-2021 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan*, which details the Region's strategy for meeting AODA requirements.

To review the *York Region 2015-2021 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan* and previous status reports visit [york.ca/accessibility](http://york.ca/accessibility)

### Creating a More Accessible York Region

York Region and York Regional Police are committed to creating programs, services and facilities that people of all abilities can access. Accessibility not only helps people with disabilities, it benefits everyone. Creating welcoming and inclusive communities where every person who lives, works or visits can participate fully makes good sense for all of us.

## Statement of Organizational Commitment

York Region's Statement of Organizational Commitment provides a foundation for creating an accessible York Region: "The Regional Municipality of York 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."

Source: [York Region Accessibility Policy 2017](#)

# DOING MORE TO CREATE ACCESSIBLE COMMUNITIES IN 2017



## CELEBRATING THE FULL DIVERSITY OF EVERYONE

York Region launched a series of community conversations and events at summer festivals in local cities and towns to find out how we can become more welcoming and inclusive for all people. Over 1,800 people shared what makes them feel included in their community. Their feedback will help shape the creation of a Diversity and Inclusion Charter that is being developed with our partners and community organizations.

## YORK REGION MOBILE APP

York Region launched a mobile application in March 2017. It allows residents to access information and to connect with Regional services. Existing web accessibility guidelines were used to inform best practice techniques, allowing the Region to create a better and more accessible experience for users. Elements incorporated into the mobile application include accessible font and sizing, zoom magnification and use of consistent iconography. The York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee (YRAAC) was consulted during the testing phase of the mobile application and a YRAAC member participated in a hands-on session to test the accessibility features of the application. The mobile app is available to download for free on iOS, Blackberry and Android.



## The York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee

The York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee (YRAAC) advises York Regional Council and York Regional Police on what can be done to make it easier for people with disabilities to use the Region's many

programs and services. Members come from different backgrounds and most are people with disabilities. Meetings are open to the public and are held at the York Region Administrative Centre.



Members of the 2015-2018 York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee. Front row (left to right): Lilian Hulme-Smith, Brian Lynch, Steve Foglia (Vice-Chair), Astley Dennis. Back row (left to right): Mayor Justin Altmann, Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville, Joann Simmons, Judy Phromratsamy, Angelo Tocco, Regional Councillor Vito Spatafora (Chair), Town of Richmond Hill, Frank Maggisano, Laurie Fortnum, Kirsten Hill, Sandy Palombo, Leslie Bolt. Absent: York Region Chairman and CEO Wayne Emmerson, Ex-Officio Member.

### Recruitment Ahead

Are you interested in becoming a member of the YRAAC? York Regional Council will be seeking applications from residents who are interested in joining the 2019-2022 YRAAC. The Committee is made up of citizen volunteers and most members are people with disabilities.



# DOING MORE TO CREATE ACCESSIBLE COMMUNITIES IN 2017



## NATIONAL ACCESS AWARENESS WEEK

To celebrate National Access Awareness Week, the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee hosted a forum entitled *Building Livable Accessible Communities*. This forum brought together accessibility advisory committee members from local municipalities, school boards and hospitals to learn from one another about best practices in inclusive design, and building livable and accessible communities.

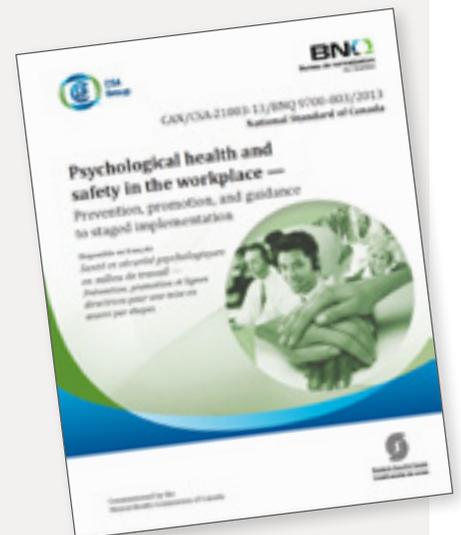


## ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE GUIDELINES

York Region developed the Accessible Customer Service Guidelines for employees which offer tips, processes and templates to best serve our customers with disabilities and to meet the mandatory requirements set out in the Province's accessibility *Customer Service Standards*.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

York Region is implementing the [National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace](#) to ensure the organization is supporting the mental health needs of employees. The Region, along with 42 other organizations across Canada, has recently worked with the [Mental Health Commission of Canada](#) through a three-year case study to examine best practices and to determine how to best implement the standard.



## AODA Compliance Timeline

*The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)* became law in 2005. Under the *Act*, organizations must meet the requirements of the AODA and the *Integrated Accessibility Standards, Ontario Regulation 191/11 (IASR)* in the areas of customer service, information and communications, employment, transportation and the design of public spaces. This at-a-glance summary shows the AODA requirements that are now part of York Region's day to day operations.

### 2010 – 2016 Requirements Completed

- ✓ Accessible customer service
- ✓ Accessible feedback
- ✓ Accessibility policies
- ✓ New websites to World Wide Consortium Guidelines (WCAG) Level A\*
- ✓ Accessible purchases
- ✓ Employment
- ✓ Accessible information
- ✓ Accessible formats and communication supports
- ✓ Emergency response plans for employees
- ✓ Design of public spaces
- ✓ Transportation
- ✓ Training

### New! 2016 Customer Service Amended Requirements Completed

- ✓ Training
- ✓ Support persons
- ✓ Service animals
- ✓ Feedback

### New! 2017 Transportation Requirements Completed

- ✓ Pre-boarding announcements, conventional transportation
- ✓ Categories of eligibility, specialized transportation
- ✓ On-board announcements, conventional transportation

## Future Requirements

2021 - Website to World Wide Consortium Guidelines (WCAG) Level AA\*

\*WCAG is an international standard for making websites and web content accessible to a broader range of users with disabilities.

# DOING MORE TO CREATE ACCESSIBLE COMMUNITIES IN 2017



## COMMUNICATION ACCESS REALTIME TRANSLATION (CART) SERVICE

Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) service is used for corporate events held at the York Region Administrative Centre. The live, word-for-word transcription of speech to text is done by a professional transcriber and allows individuals to read what is being said in larger group settings. Through an audio feed and a secure website, the transcriptions are displayed on a large monitor – not only as an accommodation for people with a hearing or cognitive disability, but for everyone.



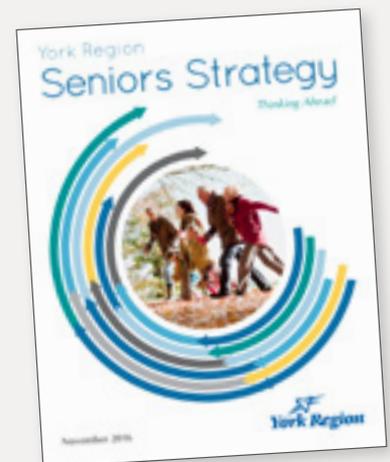
## TO INCLUSION AND BEYOND FORUM

York Region provides support for children with special needs from birth to 13 years of age who attend a licensed child care and approved recreation programs in York Region. In 2017, the Region hosted *To Inclusion and Beyond*, a forum that provided professional development for early learning and child care staff. The forum

focused on the inclusion of children with special needs and addressed the value of practicing inclusive early childhood education in daily life.

## YORK REGION SENIORS STRATEGY

York Region is facing unprecedented growth with seniors becoming the fastest growing segment of the population. [The Seniors Strategy](#) defines how the Region will respond to seniors' needs over the next 10 to 20 years and sets the course for action. The strategy identifies the Region's roles in several areas, including supporting the development of age-friendly, complete communities.



## 2016 Status Report for Customer Service Amended Requirements

### Summary of Changes

York Region is committed to providing exceptional customer service to people of all abilities. York Region's "How May I Best Help You?" approach demonstrates our focus on providing accessible customer service and meeting the individual needs of our clients.

The Province's *Customer Service Standards* set requirements for accessible customer service that apply to York Region and York Regional Police as providers of goods, services and facilities.

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service came into force for public sector organizations on January 1, 2010. Following a review of the Standards, several changes were made. These changes became law on July 1, 2016 and include the following:

- All accessibility standards, including the accessible customer service standard, are now part of one Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation.
- All members of the organization must now be trained on accessible customer service. Previously only staff who dealt directly with the public or created policies and procedures on how to interact with people with different abilities had to be trained.
- More types of regulated health professionals can provide documentation of a need for a service animal. Doctors and nurses were originally the only ones allowed to provide such authorization, but the list has been expanded to include psychologists, psychotherapists, audiologists, chiropractors and optometrists.
- Consultation with the person with a disability is now required if an organization wants a support person to accompany the person with a disability for the purposes of health or safety. In such cases, if a support person is required, the fee or fare (if applicable) for the support person must be waived.
- Since 2010, organizations have been required to provide a way for customers who have disabilities to comment on how accessible customer service is provided. Organizations must now provide or arrange for accessible formats and communication supports on request so that persons with disabilities may comment on how accessible customer service is provided.



# DOING MORE TO CREATE ACCESSIBLE COMMUNITIES IN 2017



## PEDESTRIAN + CYCLING PLANNING & DESIGN GUIDELINES

York Region developed planning and design guidelines for pedestrian and cycling facilities. These guidelines include tools to design accessible and safe pedestrian and cycling paths for users of all ages and abilities, meeting and in some cases exceeding AODA requirements.



## YORK REGION TRANSIT TRAVEL TRAINING CENTRE

York Region completed the construction of the temporary Travel Training Centre, the first of its kind in Canada. The indoor, life-size training centre is located in the Town of Richmond Hill, and provides a safe learning environment for all, including people with disabilities. It includes a pedestrian crossing, a real bus platform and a shelter, where clients can practice boarding a bus with a working ramp and learn how to pay their fare. This facility allows trainees to familiarize themselves with the accessible features of York Region Transit (YRT) vehicles and facilities, increasing their knowledge and confidence with using transit services. The Training Centre will be open to the community through YRT's Travel Training Program starting in fall 2018.



## YORK REGIONAL POLICE VULNERABLE PERSON REGISTRY

York Regional Police launched an online component of the Vulnerable Person Registry. The Vulnerable Person Registry allows an improved police response to vulnerable people who may require emergency assistance due to their condition. It expedites the process of locating and assisting vulnerable residents or frequent visitors to York Region by making essential personal information readily available to responding officers.

## 2016 Status Report for Customer Service Amended Requirements

### Compliance Actions Completed

The following information highlights actions by York Region and York Regional Police to comply with the Customer Service amended requirements that became law on July 1, 2016.

#### **Requirement:** **Training**

As a reflection of its commitment to offering excellent accessible customer service, York Region has been training staff on accessible customer service since 2010.

#### **Requirement:** **Service Animals**

Persons with disabilities can have service animals with them when accessing goods, services or facilities, except where animals are not allowed by law. If an employee cannot easily identify that an animal is a service animal, an employee can ask the person with a disability to provide documentation from a regulated health professional confirming that an animal is required for reasons relating to a person's disability. York Region's Accessibility Policy has been updated to reflect this change.

#### **Requirement:** **Support Persons**

Support persons are allowed to accompany a person with a disability in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods, services or facilities. If an employee requires a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person for health or safety reasons, the employee must consult with the person with a disability to understand their needs and determine the best solution. In such a situation, the employee must waive the admission fee or fare for the support person, if one exists. York Region's Accessibility Policy has been updated to reflect this change.

#### **Requirement:** **Feedback**

York Region provides a way for customers who have disabilities to comment on the provision of accessible customer service, and provides accessible formats and communication supports, on request. York Region's Accessibility Policy has been updated to reflect this change.



# DOING MORE TO CREATE ACCESSIBLE COMMUNITIES IN 2017

## mental health matters



Value, support and advocate for positive mental health

### MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS INITIATIVE

Responding to the needs of the community, York Region in partnership with York Regional Police, established the Mental Health Matters (MHM) initiative to enhance supports available to residents who are experiencing mental health issues. This initiative recognizes the need to take a holistic approach when it comes to mental health.



### YORK REGION PARAMEDIC SERVICES PEER SUPPORT TEAM

The Peer Support Team is a group of 36 York Region paramedics, selected by their peers, who are available to support colleagues following a stressful response. Team members have special training in psychological first aid, applied suicide intervention skills and mental health first aid. Peer Support Team members are on-shift 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The team continues to be a leader in the field and is being used as a model by other emergency services organizations across the country.

### PLEDGE TO BE PLAIN

As part of the Connected Communicators Conference led by York Region, a Plain Language workshop was provided to approximately 30 staff who hold various communication roles throughout the organization. The workshop walked participants through how to create content that residents can read and understand the first time, and highlighted the principles of plain language: accessible, useful, accurate and clear.



## 2017 Status Report for Transportation Requirements

### Compliance Actions Completed

The following information highlights actions taken by York Region to comply with the Transportation requirements that became law on January 1, 2017. For more information on the York Region Transit/Viva and Mobility Plus Service, visit [yrt.ca](http://yrt.ca)

#### **Requirement:** **Pre-Boarding Announcements,** **Conventional Transportation**

All YRT/Viva vehicles are equipped with an electronic pre-boarding announcement feature. The automated announcement is activated when the bus services a designated bus stop.

The announcement is consistent with the information displayed on the destination sign, located on the exterior of the bus.

York Region has been compliant with this requirement since April 2016, in advance of the 2017 compliance date.

#### **Requirement:** **On-Board Announcements,** **Conventional Transportation**

All YRT/Viva vehicles are equipped with on-board audio equipment. The system will automatically announce next stop information 200 metres ahead of every stop. Coupled with the on-board Variable Message System display, customers are informed about upcoming stops during their ride.

York Region has been compliant with this requirement since 2007, well in advance of the 2017 compliance date.

#### **Requirement:** **Categories of Eligibility,** **Specialized Transportation**

As required, YRT/Viva has three categories of eligibility to qualify for specialized transit services:

- *Unconditional:* A person with a disability that prevents them from using conventional transportation service shall be categorized as having unconditional eligibility
- *Temporary:* A person with a temporary disability that prevents them from using conventional transportation services shall be categorized as having temporary eligibility
- *Conditional:* A person with a disability where an environmental or physical barrier limits their ability to consistently use conventional transportation services shall be categorized as having conditional eligibility

## AODA Actions Continue

York Region and York Regional Police continue to implement the requirements of the AODA and the actions outlined in the *York Region 2015-2021 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan*. Compliance does not stop with completing the requirements of the AODA by the required date. These compliance activities are now part of ongoing, day to day operations.

## Let Us Know What You Think

We welcome your feedback. Please let us know if you have any questions about the programs highlighted in this *York Region Accessibility Status Report 2017*, the *York Region 2015-2021 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan* and accessibility matters in general. Previous Status Reports and Accessibility Plans are available online at [york.ca/accessibility](http://york.ca/accessibility)

To request a copy of the Status Report or the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan in another accessible format or to send us your comments or questions, please contact York Region at:

**Email:** [AODA@york.ca](mailto:AODA@york.ca)

**Mail:** Attention: Accessibility Unit  
The Regional Municipality of York  
17250 Yonge Street  
Newmarket, Ontario L3Y 6Z1

**Telephone:** 1-877-464-9675 ext. 72149  
TTY: 1-866-512-6228

**Fax:** 905-895-6616

If you have any questions or feedback about York Regional Police accessibility practices, please contact:

**Email:** [accessibility@yrp.ca](mailto:accessibility@yrp.ca)

**Mail:** Attention: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Bureau  
York Regional Police  
47 Don Hillock Drive  
Aurora, Ontario L4G 0S7

**Telephone:** 1-866-876-5423 ext. 7643  
TTY: 1-800-668-0398



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