

York Region 2020 to 2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Update to the York Region 2015 to 2021
Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

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York Region



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Wayne Emmerson



Regional Councillor
Joe DiPaola
City of Richmond Hill

A Message from York Region Chairman and CEO and Members of Regional Council

York Regional Council is committed to ensuring residents of all ages and abilities can enjoy the same opportunities as they live, work, play and invest in York Region.

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) sets out accessibility standards for organizations to implement with the goal of making Ontario accessible by 2025. York Region is committed to meeting — and, in certain circumstances, exceeding — these standards by removing and preventing barriers through sound and effective accessibility planning.

The 2020 to 2023 York Region Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (the Plan) highlights and guides the important work that The Regional Municipality of York (York Region) and York Regional Police are doing to create accessible programs, services, supports and facilities for everyone. Together, more than 850 initiatives have been implemented that promote accessibility since planning efforts to respond to provincial legislation began in 2003.

Through our focus on customer service excellence and with the support of the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee, York Regional Council will continue to create welcoming and inclusive communities that value the diversity of our residents and allow every person to thrive, free of barriers and without discrimination.



Regional Councillor
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Regional Councillor
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City of Richmond Hill



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York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee

Front row (left to right): Scott Wollin, David Hingsburger, Astley Dennis.

Middle row (left to right): Vito Spatafora, Laurie Fortnum, Town of Newmarket Deputy Mayor and Regional Councillor Tom Vegh (Chair), Lindsey Gold, Barry Martin, Joann Simmons (Vice-Chair), City of Markham Deputy Mayor and Regional Councillor Don Hamilton.

Back row (left to right): Angelo Tocco, Cheryl Davies, Kirsten Hill.

Not pictured: York Region Chairman and CEO Wayne Emmerson (Ex-officio), Sandy Palombo.

Message from the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee

Everyone is likely to be affected by disability at some point in their life – whether personally or indirectly through the experiences of family, friends or coworkers. For each person, their experience of disability is unique. A disability can be visible or invisible and can require different adaptations, such as mobility or sensory adaptation. One can be born with a disability, or acquire it through an accident or simply through the act of aging. Better access helps not just people with disability, but everyone. Making services, programs and facilities more accessible, and, ultimately, more inclusive, improves the quality of life of our entire community.

The York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee advises York Regional Council and York Regional Police about accessibility initiatives to create a barrier-free York Region.

Committee members are from all nine local municipalities and are made up of diverse backgrounds and abilities. This allows us to offer many perspectives to improve accessibility for York Region residents. Accessibility means ensuring that all people, including people with disabilities, have the freedom and opportunity to participate in their community.

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 (AODA). It also outlines the work ahead to help achieve the vision of creating an accessible Ontario by 2025.

Our Region is enriched by the contributions of people of all abilities. Our community is strengthened when 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 creating more awareness around both disability and the importance of accessibility in York Region.



DISABILITY IN YORK REGION

Nearly **one in five** York Region residents has at least one disability. This represents

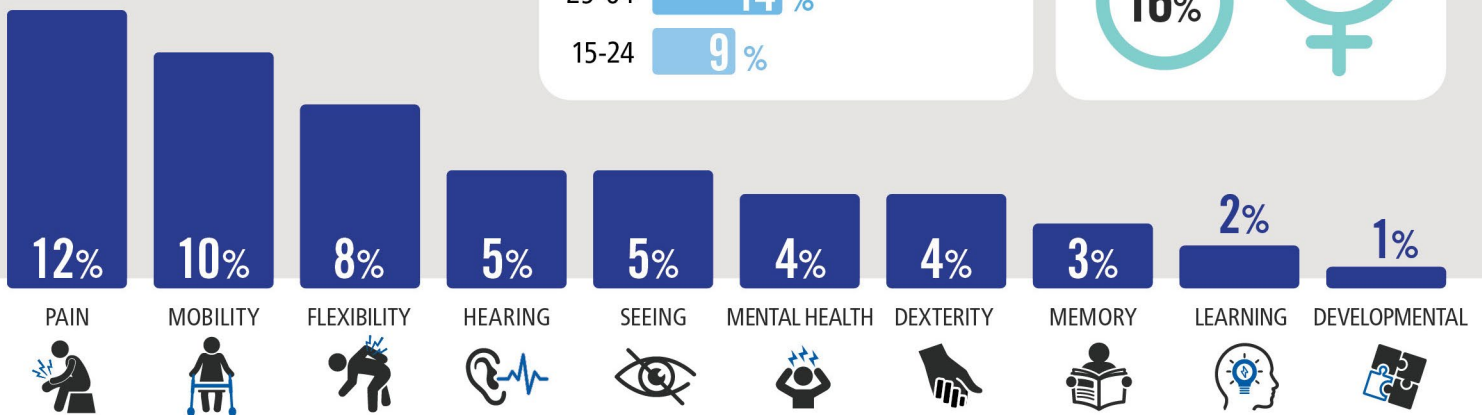
162,600 people.*



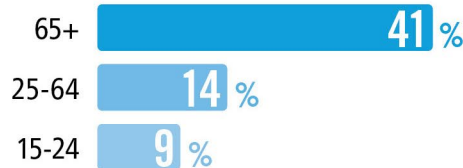
*This data is sourced from the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD), which covers Canadians living in private dwellings, aged 15 years and over, whose everyday activities are limited because of a long-term or health-related condition. Visit the [Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017: Concepts and Methods Guide](#) for important information when interpreting this data.

Percentage of residents with at least one disability:

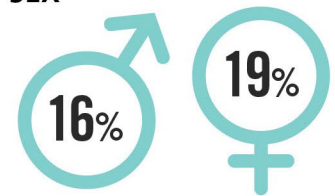
DISABILITY TYPE



AGE



SEX



Due to cost, **33,000** York Region residents with disabilities were unable to afford aids or assistive devices,

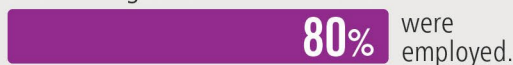


and **21,500** were unable to afford prescription medication.

Of adults aged 25-64 **with** disabilities:



Of adults aged 25-64 **without** disabilities:



Among seniors with disabilities,



Among youth with disabilities, **62%** had a mental health related disability.



About the 2020 to 2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

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 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability, 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, seniors services, 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.

The Plan outlines the long-term strategies of both organizations to achieve legislated accessibility requirements and improve accessibility within programs, services and facilities. The 2020 Plan builds off the success of Council's direction with the previous 2015 Plan.

Each local municipality also has its own multi-year accessibility plan and accessibility advisory committee, as required by the AODA.



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 and update 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 to enhance accessibility across the organization

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 *Vision 2051, Regional Official Plan, 2019 to 2023 Strategic Plan – From Vision to Results, Accessibility Policy* and York Regional Police Business Plan. To learn more, visit york.ca and yrp.ca.

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 2015 to 2021 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan approved by Regional Council in 2015 and is designed to align with the term of Council and 2019 to 2023 Strategic Plan. It is integrated with the Region’s business planning and budget process with an update planned for 2023 when that new budget cycle begins. Annual status reports will continue to be posted at york.ca/accessibility.

The following table illustrates how the Plan updates and builds on actions from the previous one since multi-year accessibility planning was first established in 2013.

Table 1: Actions build from one Plan to the next

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
2013 to 2021 Plan											
Multi-year accessibility planning established	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Accessibility policies	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Transportation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Training		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Accessible Purchases		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Employment		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Websites WCAG* Level A		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
2015 to 2021 Plan											
Plan updated			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Accessible information			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Design of public spaces				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Customer service amendments				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2020 to 2023 Plan											
Plan updated								✓	✓	✓	✓
Websites WCAG Level AA									✓	✓	✓

*Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

How the Plan was developed for York Region and York Regional Police

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 the use of public meetings, social media and an online survey conducted during the Plan's development phase.

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.

The Plan in action

With this Plan, York Region and York Regional Police will continue to maintain compliance with the Province's accessibility standards. Both organizations will continue to assess services for barriers outside the legislation. To ensure access, the Plan goes beyond the requirements of the AODA to include actions not addressed by the AODA.

I. Continuing actions

The following actions required by the AODA are already in place as a result of earlier plans. The actions in this Plan are aimed at ensuring that York Region and York Regional Police remain compliant with the AODA requirements already in effect.



A. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

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

- Continue to use the Accessibility Policy which governs how York Region and York Regional Police achieve and maintain compliance with the requirements of the AODA. Both organizations have a policy
- Implement a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan that outlines long-term strategies to achieve AODA requirements and improve accessibility within 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 Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation and the Human Rights Code as it pertains to people with disabilities



B. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS STANDARDS

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 taking into account 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 Regulation



C. EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

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 taken into account for the purposes of performance management, career development, advancement and redeployment



D. TRANSPORTATION STANDARDS

(Not applicable to York Regional Police, who do not provide public transportation service)

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

- Ensure information on the accessibility equipment and features of vehicles, routes and services is available upon request



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- 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 passengers 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 (see Table 2)

Table 2: Transportation Performance Measures

AODA REQUIREMENT	REGIONAL ACTION
Process for managing, evaluating and taking action on customer feedback	<p>The process includes but is not limited to the following steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<p>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.</p> <p>YRT continues to upgrade stops and terminals using accessible design criteria to increase accessibility.</p>



E. DESIGN OF PUBLIC SPACES STANDARDS

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
- Implement emergency and preventative maintenance in public spaces as follows:
 - 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



F. CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS

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



II. New actions

The Plan includes actions to achieve compliance with requirements of the AODA that have yet to come into effect. As of 2020, one requirement of the AODA is pending: all websites and web content (existing and new) will need to meet specific accessibility standards by January 1, 2021.

At the start of 2021, all websites and web content need to be Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Level AA compliant. WCAG is an international standard for making websites and web content accessible to a broader range of users with disabilities. WCAG 2.0 A and AA refer to a series of technical checkpoints to make websites more accessible, with Level AA building on the checkpoints of Level A.

For example, Level A includes:

- Text descriptions of images so users with vision disabilities can understand what the image represents
- Web content that can be changed into large print so a user can read the content with ease

Examples of Level AA include:

- Headings and labels that help users navigate and find content with minimal barriers
- Colour-contrast of 3:1 on navigational graphics to help users with vision disabilities

To achieve the standard by January 1, 2021, York Region and York Regional Police will:

- Implement a strategy to ensure all websites and web content conform to WCAG 2.0 Level AA
- Provide accessible formats of content published before 2012, upon request, as historic content does not need to be modified to meet current standards

III. Additional actions

There are additional actions in the Plan. Although not a requirement of the AODA, York Region and York Regional Police implement continuous quality improvement actions aimed at ensuring programs, services and facilities continue to be accessible to everyone. This includes reviewing compliance processes for requirements of the AODA to identify improvements in practices and procedures which have been implemented in the past to ensure our approaches remain current.

The Plan includes the following additional actions:

- Develop detailed work plans to review activities that address AODA requirements which have been implemented in the past
- Conduct accessibility reviews of York Region and York Regional Police facilities with high public access
- Coordinate forum for local accessibility advisory committees and other York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee-led events

Actions to meet monitoring, evaluation and reporting requirements

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 are posted on the York Region and York Regional Police websites and can be made available in an accessible format or with communication supports upon request. Accessibility (compliance) reports will be submitted as required to the Government of Ontario, which regulates compliance for all Ontario organizations.

Helping achieve strong, safe and caring communities through accessibility planning

Including accessibility in the Region's everyday work has become the way of doing business. With the 2020 to 2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, York Region and York Regional Police will continue to strive for excellence to meet Ontario's requirements and enhance accessibility in our communities.

In addition to meeting legislated requirements, accessibility planning supports York Region's vision of strong, safe and caring communities. Creating communities where every person can participate fully is important for people, businesses and community life. Accessibility not only helps people with disabilities, it benefits everyone. Accessibility means giving people of all abilities opportunities to participate fully in everyday life.



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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