Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

2012 – 2017

2013 Progress Report

Halton REGION

Available in accessible format on request.

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Statement of Organizational Commitment

The Regional Municipality of Halton is committed to meeting:

- the objectives and requirements of *Ontario Regulation 191/11, Integrated Accessibility Standards* (IASR) under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA); and,

- the accessibility needs of persons with disabilities with respect to Halton Region's programs, services and facilities, in a timely manner.

Introduction

This document provides an update on the work undertaken in 2013 toward meeting the requirements in the IASR. The Halton Region Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, 2012-2017 sets out how Halton Region will address the requirements in the IASR and also identifies other initiatives aimed at removing and preventing barriers to people with disabilities.

This document responds to section 4(3) (a) of the IASR which requires obligated organizations to prepare an annual status report on the progress achieved on their multi-year accessibility plan. It also addresses section 11 of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA) which requires municipalities to develop an annual plan describing how barriers to people with disabilities will be identified, removed and prevented.

Status of Accessibility Legislation in Ontario

Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA)

In 2001, the Government of Ontario enacted the ODA. This Act required organizations within the public sector (the provincial government, municipalities, hospitals, educational institutions and public transportation providers) to undertake activities aimed at reducing and eliminating barriers to people with disabilities. It also required municipalities with populations of over 10,000 to appoint accessibility advisory committees (AACs), develop annual accessibility plans and seek the advice of AACs on certain matters.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)

In 2005, the Provincial government passed the AODA. The purpose of the AODA is to develop and implement accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises on or before January 1, 2025.

Standards developed to date through the AODA are the following:

- Accessibility Standards for Customer Service - Ontario Regulation 429/07 *w*hich sets out what organizations must do to make the delivery of their goods and services more accessible to people with disabilities.

- Integrated Accessibility Standards - Ontario Regulation 191/11 which provides a number of general and specific requirements in the areas of information and communications, employment, transportation and the design of public spaces.

Although the AODA was proclaimed in force in 2005, the ODA was not revoked. The Provincial government has indicated that the ODA will be likely be repealed, however, no definitive timeframe has been provided. As a result, municipalities are still obligated to adhere to the requirements of the ODA.

Accessible Built Environment

In December 2012, the Ontario Government amended the IASR to include Part IV.1 - Design of Public Spaces Standards which largely focuses on outdoor spaces including recreational trails, beach access routes, outdoor public use eating areas, outdoor play spaces, exterior paths of travel and on and off-street parking. However, they also include indoor elements such as service counters and waiting areas. These standards have an implementation date of 2016 for municipalities and include technical and public consultation requirements.

Also being developed are additional accessibility enhancements associated with the interior of buildings. The Provincial government has indicated that they will likely be captured as amendments to the Ontario *Building Code*. It is unknown when these standards will be enacted.

Accessibility Standards Advisory Council

In January 2013, the Ontario Government appointed a new Accessibility Standards Advisory Council. The Council's mandate is to review Ontario's five existing accessibility standards and develop new standards based on public feedback and advice. The Ontario Government has announced that the Council's first order of business will be to review the existing Customer Service Regulation.

Review of Ontario's Accessibility Laws

In September 2013, the Ontario Government appointed Mayo Moran, Dean, Faculty of Law, University of Toronto to lead a review of the AODA. The scope of Dean Moran's review of the AODA and whether it will include public consultation or input is unknown at the moment.

Halton Region Accessibility Advisory Committee

In 2002, Halton Region established the Halton Region Accessibility Advisory Committee (HRAAC) as required by the ODA. The HRAAC is a citizen committee that acts as an advisory body and reports to Regional Council through the Administration and Finance Committee. Its mandate is to advise on the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to people with disabilities with respect to Halton Region facilities, programs and services.

Since 2002, the HRAAC has provided input on a number of Regional initiatives and projects and has supported activities aimed at creating awareness on issues relating to people with disabilities. The members bring to the Committee a wide range of personal experiences and perspectives related to the challenges faced by people with disabilities. They provide invaluable advice and support to Halton Region as it continues to work toward the identification and elimination of barriers.

2013 Actions – IASR Compliance

Throughout 2013, a number of actions and activities were undertaken to respond to the requirements of the IASR. The IASR's requirements and the status of the work undertaken to comply with them are set out in the following table.

Regulatory Requirement	Compliance Deadline	Actions Completed / Actions to be Taken
Part I – General Requirements		
Develop accessibility policies • Develop, implement and maintain accessibility policies, including a statement of organizational commitment • Make policies publically available	**January 1, 2013**	**Completed** - Halton Region Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy developed and approved by Regional Council in November 2012. Policy was placed on Halton Region's website.
Develop a multi-year accessibility plan • Establish, implement, maintain and document a multi-year accessibility plan	**January 1, 2013**	**Completed** - Halton Region Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, 2012-2017 approved in November 2012 and placed on Halton's website.
Report annually on the multi-year accessibility plan • Prepare an annual status report on progress of measures in the multi-year plan, post on website and provide in an accessible format, upon request	**Annually**	**Completed** - 2013 Progress Report developed and will be placed on Halton Region's website.
Incorporate accessibility in procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities • Incorporate accessibility design, criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities, except where it is not practicable to do so	**January 1, 2013**	**Completed** –Accessibility Obligations in Procurement procedure developed. Requirement addressed in Halton's IASR training.
Training • Ensure that training on the IASR and the Human Rights Code is provided to employees, volunteers, persons who participate in developing policies and others who provide goods, services or facilities on behalf of organization	**January 1, 2014**	**In Progress -** Development of training module completed. Roll-out to staff is underway. Materials summarizing training module being developed for volunteers and Regional Councillors.

Regulatory Requirement	Compliance Deadline	Actions Completed / Actions to be Taken
Part II - Information and Communications Standards		
Feedback processes • Ensure that processes for receiving and responding to feedback are accessible to persons with disabilities by providing/arranging for accessible formats and communication supports, upon request	**January 1, 2014**	**Completed** - Halton's advertisements include wording that asks residents to advise if they require accommodation at any Regional event or meeting. "Accessible Feedback" procedure developed. Requirement addressed in Halton's IASR training.
Accessible formats and communication supports • Upon request, provide for provision of accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities • Notify the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports	**January 1, 2015**	**In Progress** - Existing procedure reviewed and updated. Halton's website to include wording notifying the public that accessible formats and communication supports are available. Requirement addressed in Halton's IASR training.
Emergency procedures, plans or public safety information • Provide emergency procedures, plans or public safety information, that are available publicly, in an accessible format or with appropriate communication supports, upon request	**January 1, 2012**	**Completed** – documents provided in alternate formats, upon request. Information on emergencies and people with disabilities is available on Halton Region's website. Brochures and information available in a variety of formats. Providing Emergency Information in Alternate Formats Procedure developed. Requirement addressed in Halton's IASR training.

Regulatory Requirement	Compliance Deadline	Actions Completed / Actions to be Taken
Accessible websites and web content • New websites and web content on new websites • Websites and web content to conform to WCAG 2.0 Level AA	**January 1, 2014** **January 1, 2021**	**Ongoing -** An accessibility tool checker is run weekly on Halton's website to identify accessibility issues. Efforts will be ongoing to educate staff on creating accessible documents for Halton's website. Requirement addressed in Halton's IASR training.

Regulatory Requirement	Compliance Deadline	Actions Completed / Actions to be Taken
Part III – Employment Standards		
Recruitment • Notify employees and the public about the availability of accommodation for applicants with disabilities in recruitment process • Notify job applicants when selected to participate in an assessment or selection process that accommodations are available • When making an offer of employment, notify successful applicants of policies for accommodating employees with disabilities	**January 1, 2014**	**Completed -** Wording on Halton Employment Opportunities page has been updated to reflect that disability-related accommodations are available. **Ongoing** - Hiring managers to advise individuals who are selected to participate in interviews of the availability of disability-related accommodations. Successful applicants to be made aware of policies on disability-related accommodation. Requirement addressed in Halton's IASR training.
Informing employees of supports • Inform employees of policies to support employees with disabilities	**January 1, 2014**	**Ongoing** - New employees to be advised of policies in place to support employees with disabilities. Existing employees will be advised of changes to policies through a variety of methods, including the Region's intranet site and email. Requirement addressed in Halton's IASR training.
Accessible formats and communication supports for employees • When requested by an employee with a disability, employers shall provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for	**January 1, 2014**	**Completed -** Requirement addressed in Halton's IASR training.

Regulatory Requirement	Compliance Deadline	Actions Completed / Actions to be Taken
information needed to perform employee's job and/or generally available to employees in workplace		
Workplace emergency response information • Provide individualized workplace emergency response information to employees who have a disability, as required	**January 1, 2012**	**Completed** – A process has been put in place for employees to self-identify so that a workplace emergency response plan can be developed. Requirement addressed in Halton's IASR training.
Documented individual accommodation plans • Develop and have in place a written process for the development of documented individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities	**January 1, 2014**	**Completed** - Halton Region has an existing Work Accommodation Policy. Requirement addressed in Halton's IASR training
Return to work process • Develop and have in place a return to work process for employees who have been absent from work due to a disability and require disability-related accommodations to return to work	**January 1, 2014**	**Completed** – Halton Region has a return-to-work process in place. Requirement addressed in Halton's IASR training.
Performance management, career development and redeployment • Take into account accessibility needs of employees with disabilities and individual accommodation plans as part of performance management processes, when providing career development opportunities and considering redeployment	**January 1, 2014**	**Completed** – Halton Region's Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy reflects requirements for performance management, career development and redeployment. Requirement addressed in Halton's IASR training.

In addition to the activities identified above, Halton Region staff, in conjunction with accessibility staff in the Local Municipalities, hosted a meeting with representatives of the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario (ADO). ADO representatives provided guidance to staff on meeting the requirements of the IASR and direction on questions relating to interpretation and implementation.

Part IV.1- Design of Public Spaces Standards

As Part IV.1-Design of Public Spaces Standards of the IASR was enacted following the development of the Halton Region 2012-2017 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, the plan did not include a discussion of actions that would be undertaken in 2013 to address the new standards. However, as Halton Region's training module was developed after the Design of Public Spaces Standards were enacted, the requirements were addressed in the training module and staff were advised of additional resources that would assist with their interpretation and implementation.

The Design of Public Spaces Standards include a number of technical and public consultation requirements which have an implementation date of January 1, 2016 for municipalities. Throughout 2014, Regional staff will continue to work toward meeting the requirements before their compliance deadline.

Additional Accessibility Initiatives

During 2012 and 2013, a number of initiatives, not directly related to the IASR, but which were aimed at improving access to Regional programs and facilities were undertaken. They included the following:

- The input of the HRAAC was sought on construction, renovation and physical improvement projects including the following:
    - 271 Kerr Street, John R. Rhodes Seniors Residence
    - Health Department Clinic – Milton
    - Health Department Clinic - Georgetown
    - 440 Elizabeth Street, City of Burlington
    - Palermo Paramedic Services Station
    - Halton Regional Centre, Auditorium Entrance
    - Halton Regional Police Service Headquarters, Front Entrance
- Accessibility features and improvements were incorporated into a number of Regional construction and renovation projects.
- The HRAAC was consulted on corporate initiatives under development such as the Comprehensive Housing Strategy Update and the Active Transportation Master Plan.
- Halton Region and the HRAAC hosted the annual meeting of the Local Municipal and Regional Accessibility Advisory Committees in Halton aimed at networking and information sharing on issues of common interest.

- The HRAAC and Regional staff participated in regional forums hosted by the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario and the 2013 Halton Resource Fair.

Next Steps

Halton staff will continue to work toward meeting the requirements of the IASR and undertake other activities aimed at eliminating barriers to people with disabilities. These activities include:

- Preparing for the submission of a report to the Provincial Government demonstrating compliance with components of the IASR and the Accessible Customer Service Regulation in advance of the December 31, 2013 deadline.

- Continuing to provide training on both the IASR and the Accessible Customer Service Regulation.

- Seeking input from the HRAAC in identifying and removing barriers to people with disabilities with respect to Halton's programs, services and facilities.

- Monitoring the development of accessibility enhancements to the Ontario Building Code and changes to accessibility legislation, and reporting to Regional Council, as required.

- Participating and providing input, as appropriate, on the review being undertaken on Ontario's accessibility laws.

- Continuing to share information and network with Local Municipal accessibility staff in Halton, the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals and the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario.