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# The Regional Municipality of Durham Report

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To: Finance and Administration Committee  
From: Elaine Baxter-Trahair, Chief Administrative Officer  
Report: #2023-A-4  
Date: Feb 14, 2023

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**Subject:**

The Regional Municipality of Durham's Accessibility Advisory Committee's 2022 Annual Report and 2023 Workplan

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**Recommendation:**

That the Finance and Administration Committee recommends to Regional Council:

- A) That the CAO's Report #2023-A-4 be received for information as The Regional Municipality of Durham's Accessibility Advisory Committee's 2022 Annual Report; and
  - B) That the Regional Municipality of Durham's Accessibility Advisory Committee's 2023 Workplan be approved.
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**Report:**

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Accessibility Advisory Committee's (AAC) 2022 Annual Report and 2023 Workplan to the Finance and Administration Committee and Regional Council.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 In June 2005, the Ontario Legislature passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA). The AODA builds on the previous Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA) and both acts are still in effect.
- 2.2 Municipalities are required to have AACs which advise Council by:
  - a. Providing advice on the preparation of accessibility reports and plans required under the AODA.

- b. Advising Council on the requirements and implementation of accessibility standards.
  - c. Reviewing site plans and drawings for buildings and facilities.
- 2.3 In addition, as outlined in the Terms of Reference (ToR) the AAC is also active in the following areas:
- a. Committee education
  - b. Communication and outreach
- 2.4 The ToR also requires that the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer prepare an annual report to Committee and Council.

### **3. Durham Region's Accessibility Advisory Committee**

- 3.1 Legislation stipulates that AACs must ensure most of its members are persons with disabilities. Ten community members plus one Regional Councilor comprise the AAC.

### **4. Durham Region AAC 2022 Achievements**

#### **4.1 Events**

- a. Each year Accessibility Awards are presented to champions within the Region. These awards acknowledge a person, business or an organization that have made considerable effort to incorporate accessibility into their operations or everyday life. Nominations are sought from each of the eight area municipalities. In 2022, awards were presented to:

- **Town of Ajax – Barb Dowds**

Barb Dowds was an Ajax Accessibility Advisory Committee member from 2010-2022. Throughout her tenure on the Committee, Barb served as Committee Chair for several years, and led numerous initiatives to identify and break down barriers in her community, including conducting facility site assessments, reviewing site plans, and helping staff set up mobility device obstacle courses at the bi-annual Library Accessibility Fair. In recent years, you could always find Barb taking part in the Accessible Ajax Information Station at Town community events or attending the ribbon cutting ceremony for the latest committee accomplishment, like installation of beach access-mats at the waterfront park, or at the ready for the Committee's #RespectTheSpace campaign.

- **Township of Brock – Brock Township Public Library**

The Brock Township Public Library is a three-branch system with facilities located in Sunderland, Cannington, and Beaverton. Throughout the pandemic, the Brock libraries have shown their dedicated commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility for their patrons and community members through their advancements in provisions of service during the pandemic. They quickly and seamlessly responded to meet the needs

of their community by pivoting to online programming including virtual children's story times, curbside book pick-ups, and wifi-hubs for public use.

- **Municipality of Clarington – Kingsway Hardware**

Naveed Chico Khan is known for providing exceptional customer service at Kingsway Hardware in Clarington, particularly to those who have mobility issues or use mobility devices. Customers can call the store from a parking spot outside the business or go to the customer service desk to request their items and have staff bring the items to their car. Many residents say that although the store itself is not barrier-free, the owner, Naveed Chico Khan, goes out of his way to assist people and make their shopping experience easier. Mr. Khan's consideration of the needs of his community continues to bring people together in creating lasting friendships at their reliable one-stop shop.

- **City of Oshawa – Back Door Mission for the Relief of Poverty**

The Back Door Mission for the Relief of Poverty with the support of Simcoe Street United Church, began Project Mission United when it opened available spaces to be used as a collaborative and centralized service hub for people living unsheltered or marginally housed with limited access to essential supports. Project Mission United is a low-barrier access hub for essential services, social supports, and primary health care. This project provides wraparound client support services to individuals in Durham Region who are experiencing homelessness, housing insecurity, mental health and addiction concerns, and food access challenges.

- **City of Pickering – Peter Bashaw**

Peter Bashaw was appointed by Council to the Pickering Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) on October 28, 2013, and has been a high-performing AAC member continuously since that time. Peter's wisdom, judgement, technical expertise and fabulous networking skills have been invaluable to the Pickering Committee. Among many accessibility topics that Peter feels strongly about, his passion for advancing accessible housing and expanding employment opportunities for people with disabilities are especially noteworthy.

- **Township of Scugog – Two Blokes Cider**

Two Blokes Cider owners Matthew Somerville and Andrew Paul incorporated the Scugog Accessibility Advisory Committee's comments into the plan for Two Blokes Cider. This included an accessible pathway with a minimum width of one-and-a-half metres, having the entire structure at grade level to allow accessible access, and incorporating automatic doors to the facility and washrooms. Two Blokes Cider has created a gathering place for the community with sustainable farming practices at the centre of it all.

- **Township of Uxbridge – Uxbridge Lions Club**

The Uxbridge Lions Club is committed to creating spaces that are accessible for families of all ages and abilities so that everyone can participate together. They embarked on an

ambitious project of creating a universal playground at Elgin Park. They hope that by making the park universal, it will improve accessibility to the park for the entire community. The new park will incorporate sensory music play and opportunities for individuals, of all ages with differing abilities, to enjoy the space together in nature exploration, while enjoying a playground with wheelchair accessible features.

- **Town of Whitby – WindReach Farm**

WindReach Farm’s LEARNING-4-LIFE adult day program redefined creativity during the COVID-19 pandemic when in-person programming was not possible. WindReach Farm adapted it’s program to connect with participants virtually to offer barn and local attraction visits, art projects and movie afternoons. Programming is now back on-site at 85 per cent capacity, welcoming many new faces to the program. In 2022, they expanded the program to add a second cohort Monday through Friday, to reach more adults of all abilities in Durham Region and beyond. Their wheelchair accessible wagon rides on the farm bring guests on an engaging sensory experience to take in the peaceful and expansive landscape, which is uniquely accessible to those who use mobility devices.

- **Durham Region – Mike Roche**

Mike Roche served on the Durham Region AAC from 2004 to 2022, the Durham Region Transit Advisory Committee, as well as the site plan sub-committee where he offered insights on accessibility for several key projects. Mike shared learning opportunities with his co-members and supported the Committee, Regional Council and staff in identifying, removing and preventing barriers to accessibility. Mike played an important role on the team to advocate and raise awareness on issues that impact people with disabilities in our community, improving the quality of life and participation of everyone who calls Durham Region home.

- Two AAC members sat on the Transit Advisory Committee and provided input on behalf of the AAC. In addition, they ensured that the AAC members are apprised of relevant information. The Council representative from the AAC also sits on the Transit Executive Committee (TEC), to make additional connections and share information. A sub working group of three volunteer AAC members was formed to assist the Rapid Transit Office with the Bus Rapid Transit shelter design in July.

4.2 Education – throughout 2022, the AAC received the following presentations for information:

- a. Judy Christianson, Program Coordinator for Accessible Documents, re: the Accessibility Widget Pilot. J. Christianson advised that the accessibility widget is an additional tool on the Durham Region website that allows users to access information specific to their individual needs. She noted that the widget is an optional item for the public to use to enhance the user experience. J. Christianson provided a live tutorial of how the widget works and discussed the options available which included colour contrast, highlight links, bigger text, text spacing, pause animations, dyslexia friendly, cursor options, tooltips, line height, and text align. She also provided a tutorial of additional options

including the move/hide option, the accessibility statement, how to report a problem, and the UserWay.org third party logo. J. Christianson responded to questions regarding whether the widget is available to lower tier municipalities in Durham Region; how to reactivate the accessibility widget; if any feedback was received from the public; and how the accessibility widget appears on cell phones.

- b. Mitch McFarlane, Museum Team Leader, Ontario Regiment Museum, re: Accessible Tank Ride Project. M. McFarlane advised that he is the project leader for Project Uplift which was developed to create devices to help load people safely into military vehicles that are on display at the Ontario Regiment Museum. M. McFarlane stated that the Ontario Regiment Museum in Oshawa is the largest operational military museum in the world. He advised there are approximately 120 military vehicles from before World War II up until 2006. M. McFarlane displayed pictures showcasing what the Ontario Regiment Museum offers such as the Aquino Tank Weekend; re-enactments; the Team involved with the Project Uplift project; vehicles selected to be part of Project Uplift; volunteers of the museum; Tank Weekend; and, the various military vehicles in the museum.
- c. Mohammad Saifan, Keegan Dsouza, Henik Patel and Ugesh Chitram, Ontario Tech University Students, re: Project Uplift – Ontario Regiment Museum Accessibility Initiative. M. McFarlane reported that the museum has been in contact with the Abilities Centre to request assistance and guidance on how to make the museum space more accessible within, and that the goal of the museum is to release the patent for the CAD Model to the world so that everyone can have access to it. K. Dsouza advised that the museum requested that students from Ontario Tech University create a mechanism that could assist people into the vehicles on display at the Ontario Regiment Museum that is suitable for both M113 and LAV III military vehicles. The most important requirement was the safety of the user and the device had to take into consideration criteria such as the material, strength, and structures. He stated that the ramp that was developed was designed to rise gradually rather than with a steep ascent to allow ease of use for individuals using wheelchairs, crutches, or walkers.
- d. Danielle Culp, Planning Analyst, Greg Pereira, Manager of Transportation Planning, Steven Kemp, Manager of Traffic Engineering & Operations, and Ashley Bridgeman, Solicitor, re: Regional Mobility By-law and provided a presentation with regards to the Regional Electric Kick Scooter By-law. D. Culp advised that many stakeholders have expressed the need for establishing clear regulations on where and how to enable safe operations of e-mobility devices. Staff have determined two separate approaches with one being an e-scooter by-law and the other being an amendment to the Regional Traffic and Parking By-law. D. Culp advised that a by-law would include devices such as electric kick scooters and power-assisted bicycles and would not include assistive mobility devices or an e-scooter fleet provided by vendors. D. Culp reviewed the Regional electric kick-scooter by-law timeline

including the process for assessment, engagement, finalization, and launch of the by-law. D. Culp reviewed the main concerns which were safe operating speeds; locations of where devices can be used; etiquette and enforcement; and, parking. She explained how the concerns are being addressed in the by-law.

- e. Yin Brown, Pinder DaSilva, and Mike Walker, Abilities Centre, re: Creating Accessible and Inclusive Communities: An Abilities Centre Model. Highlights of the presentation included LEAD objectives, themes, examples, process and impact. M. Walker advised that the LEAD process is still required even with legislation because barriers to accessibility and inclusion as a society are still being encountered. He also advised that the Abilities Centre wants to embed accessibility and inclusion within organizational frameworks and systems to create cultural change. M. Walker reviewed the objectives of the LEAD process. Y. Brown provided an overview of the steps of the LEAD process and stated that it is not just one time training, it is a process. She noted that following the evaluation of the organization, an improvement plan will be brought back to the organization for adjustments and a follow up plan.
- f. Jamie Austin, Deputy General Manager, Business Services, re: Whitby Autonomous Vehicle Electric (WAVE) Pilot Status and the Transit Assistance Program (TAP) Update. J. Austin discussed the preparations involved with the autonomous vehicle which included route design and scheduling; traffic measures and signage; standard operating procedures; integration with transit control; safety attendant training; safety committee and shuttle testing; first responder engagement; and COVID-19 precautions. J. Austin provided an overview of the accessibility initiatives involved with the autonomous vehicle which included a session hosted prior to launch with AAC members; policies and procedures created to ensure appropriate audible and visual route and stop announcements; ramp deployment angles and assessment at each stop; high visibility reflective tape added to the shuttle ramp; cabin lighting tested to ensure visibility during night operations; accessible bus pads installed along routes; and attendant safety training for the proper securement of mobility devices.

J. Austin continued with a PowerPoint presentation on the Transit Assistance Program (TAP) Update. J. Austin advised that the Durham Region Transit ACCESS Pass to end October 2022 and move to contactless options including the phase out of paper passes. He also advised that DRT is offering a special run of ACCESS Passes over the next 6 months which includes an attachment to educate riders that the ACCESS Pass is ending and transitioning to TAP. J. Austin advised that TAP is a PRESTO-based, reduced cost fare program for low-income persons receiving social assistance. He stated that TAP was introduced as a pilot program in November 2019 and has been extended through to 2023. J. Austin reviewed the summary of differences between the ACCESS Pass and TAP. He advised that customers are only required to confirm eligibility once every six months for TAP, whereas the ACCESS Pass customers were required to confirm eligibility every month. He

- also advised that the card for the TAP looks the same as PRESTO cards so that the pass does not identify the cardholder as a social assistance recipient.
- g. Nathan Gardner, Executive Director, Back Door Mission, re: Accessible Transportation – Usable Formats for the Vulnerable Sector. N. Gardner reviewed the vulnerable individuals who are served through Mission United which include individuals with mental health issues, addictions, illness or medical conditions, learning/cognitive limitations, physical limitations, and brain injuries. N. Gardner discussed the transportation barriers of using a PRESTO card for vulnerable individuals. He stated that implementing a change where individuals are required to use electronic formats for travel will result in an almost zero percent chance the individual will have a successful transition. N. Gardner discussed the various challenges for the vulnerable population; the need for the continuation of paper bus tickets; and the need for non-electronic formats of bus schedules and route maps. He stated that moving away from paper bus tickets can result in risk to the safety and access to services for vulnerable individuals.
  - h. Stephanie Bolton, Regional Services Coordinator, Spinal Cord Injury Ontario, re: Organization Overview. S. Bolton provided a PowerPoint presentation with regards to a Brief Introduction to Spinal Cord Injury Ontario's Programs and Services. Highlights of the presentation included: Spinal Cord Injury Ontario (SCIO) offices, services, the role of regional services coordinators, common questions from clients, peer program, peer mentorship for people with SCI, peer mentorship for family members, peer connections, SCIO employment services, four urgent public policy issues, Your Move, Ontario and the SCIO knowledge exchange.
  - i. David Dunn, Manager, Rapid Transit Office, and Jack Phelan, Program/Project Manager, Transit Operations, re: Median BRT Shelter Design. D. Dunn provided a brief overview of the project leading up to today from the Scarborough Town Centre to Downtown Oshawa. He advised that buses will use the median lanes and shelter infrastructure will be placed in the center of the road. D. Dunn discussed the intersection design and advised how pedestrians will cross the road and the safety precautions in place. J. Phelan provided descriptions for the median shelter platform design for the 3.6 meter shelter for constrained locations and the 4.2 meter shelter for standard locations.
  - j. Judy Christianson, Program Coordinator, and Lori Talling, Program Specialist – Tourism, re: 2023 Parasport Committee Access Now App. The presentation provided pictures of various parasports and examples within the Access Now app. J. Christianson advised that Durham Region is hosting the 2023 Ontario Parasport Games from February 3-5, 2023. She also advised that when Durham Region hosted the Parasport Games in 2019 they were recognized with many local, provincial, and national awards, including the Lieutenant Governor's Award for Economic Development Excellence. J. Christianson provided an example of a location pin and reviewed this within the Access Now app. She advised that prior to the 2023 Parasport Games beginning,

they will be working together with Boards of Trade and Chambers of Commerce across Durham Region to get as many business members reviewed and mapped as possible in the app.

- k. Rachel Bromberg, International Crisis Response Association, re: Durham Alternative Crisis Response. R. Bromberg advised that the purpose of the service is to create a civilian led team to respond to mental health, substance use, and social disturbance calls that do not involve violence or danger and do not require police. R. Bromberg advised that the service could be available through existing community safety infrastructure such as 911 and 211 and be led by crisis workers such as peer workers, social workers, nurses and EMTs, with specialized training in crisis response. R. Bromberg advised that the International Crisis Response Association has been engaged as a consultant to support Durham Region in exploring this service. R. Bromberg advised that the first stage of the plan was to conduct an environmental scan of existing community agencies, resources and assets and was completed in August 2022; the second stage of the plan was to develop and implement an extensive community engagement plan and was completed in September 2022; the third stage of the plan is to create a final plan with recommendations for developing the service; and the final stage of the plan is to support Durham Region with implementation and evaluation throughout 2023. R. Bromberg advised that there will be focus groups held between October and December 2022 to assist with community needs for the service with some sessions being held for specific populations including those with lived experience with mental health, substance use and homelessness; service providers; family members with lived experience; and, Black, Indigenous, and people with disabilities.
- l. Heather Hall, Business Owner, TeachAbility re: TeachAbility. H. Hall advised that she began her company, TeachAbility, after working at Participation House with adults with disabilities. She explained that TeachAbility is comprised of various components designed to help clients build skillsets to gain more independence and quality of life. H. Hall works with people of all abilities who live with various intellectual and physical disabilities. The program provides three-hour one-on-one sessions with her clients where she travels to various locations in the community wherever assistance and support is required. H. Hall provided an overview and shared a brief video presentation highlighting the services provided through TeachAbility and advised that the video is provided to customers requesting to learn more about the services offered.

#### 4.3 Community outreach/advocacy

##### National AccessAbility Week (NAAW) 2022:

- Lunch N' Learn with Michael Jacques, author and person with autism and an intellectual disability. During this session Michael shared his brave story, witty personality, and positive outlook on life. His book "Can't Read, Can't Write, Here's My Book" is written by using an iPad's speech-to-text function. It is a down-to-earth collection of

compelling life stories and discoveries that teach us how to embrace and celebrate our differences. Michael, who never surrenders to the idea of “can’t,” spoke about topics such as learning, inclusion, advocating, independence, and the power of perseverance.

- First annual Durham Accessibility Conference “Build Back Better” presented in collaboration with the Abilities Centre. This was a free conference focused on breaking down barriers in Durham Region and providing fair access to services. The virtual conference included keynote speaker Maayan Ziv, Founder of AccessNow, and a panel discussion comprised of accessibility champions and community members.

## **5. 2023 Workplan for the Durham Region AAC**

- 5.1 An AAC Workplan is developed annually to outline the scope and activities of the AAC. It includes necessary activities for meeting requirements of both the ODA and AODA. The workplan includes:
- a. Providing advice and reviewing annually, the Accessibility Report created by the staff liaison in the CAO’s office.
  - b. Reviewing site plans for new builds and extensive renovations to existing buildings that the Region owns and/or operates to ensure accessibility has been incorporated in the design.
  - c. Forming of subcommittees in the areas of site plan review, traffic/road improvements, accessibility awards, education and communication and ad hoc committees as required throughout the year.
  - d. Education development continues throughout the year, as required, for AAC members, Councillors, and staff. Education sessions take place when changes to the AODA standards occur, by agencies who serve the disability community and by staff who present initiatives from departments where feedback from this committee is required.
  - e. Communicating the work that the AAC does annually to Regional Council and staff through AAC minutes of meetings, the staff e-newsletter, newspaper articles, social media messaging when appropriate, and meetings with other AACs within the region.
  - f. Presentation of Durham AAC Accessibility Awards annually to recognize individuals, services and/or businesses that have championed, achieved and/or embraced accessibility in each of our local area municipalities.

## **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1 The AAC will continue to meet legislative obligations of both the ODA and AODA. Activities and consultation with staff will be important elements of their work. Their expertise, experience, and dedication are of great value to the accessibility work undertaken at the Region of Durham. Advice given to Regional Council and staff will

continue to be an integral piece to the Region's identification, removal, and prevention of barriers to accessibility.

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Respectfully submitted,

Original Signed By

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