

Region calls for public input to boost accessibility locally

If you've experienced a barrier, the Region of York wants to hear from you.

The Region is currently seeking public input on their Draft 2023 to 2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. It's a document that guides how the Region and the York Regional Police meet the requirements of the Province's Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act and remove barriers to programs, services and facilities.

Public comments will be accepted in the form of a survey until Monday, July 31.

"York Region is committed to creating welcoming and inclusive communities that value the diversity of residents and allow every person to thrive, free of barriers and without discrimination," says Stephen Maio, Senior Executive Officer, People, Equity and Culture, for the Region of York. "Part of this commitment is working to make the Region more accessible for everyone.

"The plan identifies actions across five areas that impact [residents'] daily lives, information and communications, employment, transportation, accessible public spaces and customer services. Developed in consultation with people with disabilities, the community and the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee (YRAAC), the plan builds on progress made as a result of the York Region 2020 to 2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan."

This year marks YRAAC's 20th anniversary of "sharing knowledge, expertise and most importantly, lived experiences, to help make Regional programs, services and facilities more accessible," says Maio, noting members have participated in more than 90 formal meetings and provided feedback on more than 250 presentations since its inception.

"This updated York Region Multi-Year Accessibility Plan builds on the accomplishments of York Region's previous accessibility plans and activates to implement the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005," says YRAAC. "It also outlines the work ahead to help achieve the vision of creating an accessible Ontario by 2025 and beyond.

"Our Region is enriched by contributions from people of all abilities. We look forward to the future and a barrier-free community where 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 raising awareness about all abilities and the importance of access in York Region."

Adds Maio, "Everyone has different needs, and there is no one-size-fits-all solution to accessibility. To meet the needs of all residents we must all participate in identifying, removing and preventing barriers."

To participate in the survey, visit york.ca/AccessibilityPlanning.

By Brock Weir
Editor
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter