

**ANTI-HATE, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE –
NOVEMBER 13, 2023**

COMMUNICATIONS

Distributed November 6, 2023

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Please note there may be further Communications.

Inclusive Language Guide

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This Guide is a living document and will be updated to reflect evolving language preferences.

Acknowledgements

This Inclusive Language Guide was developed after a review of inclusive language guides from across Canada. Some examples of the resources used to develop this Guide include:

- British Columbia's Public Service Agency's [Words Matter](#)
- City of Oshawa's [Inclusive Language Manual](#)
- Durham District School Board's [Guidelines for Inclusive Language](#)

- Humber College's [Inclusive Language in Media](#)
- Town of Whitby's Inclusive Language Guide
- University of Victoria's [The Edge Brand Guidelines](#)

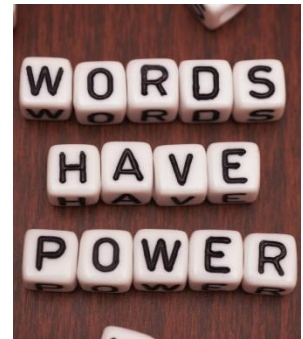
We want to extend our thanks to members of the York Region Municipal Diversity and Inclusion Group (MDIG) for their role in shaping, reviewing and providing feedback throughout the development of this Guide and encouraging its use throughout our workplaces and communities. Similarly, we thank all York Region subject matter experts for reviewing this Guide.

Introduction: Setting the Context

Purpose

What is this Guide for?

Building and maintaining welcoming and inclusive communities and environments where everyone feels like they belong is a responsibility we all have. This Inclusive Language Guide was developed to support the use of inclusive language, in writing and in conversation. Inclusive language refers to communication that is free of prejudicial terms, names or phrases. It does not include stereotypical or discriminatory ideas or views of people/groups and is respectful of different backgrounds, languages, ethnicities, religions, ages, abilities and other defining identities.



What is this Guide not for?

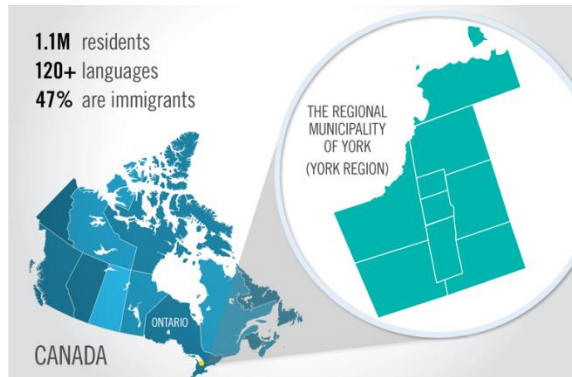
This Guide is **not** a policy or procedure manual. It contains best practice recommendations **only**. Since language is constantly evolving and language preferences are unique to an individual, readers must use their best judgement when applying the practices recommended in this Guide. Readers may also have to adjust their language from situation to situation.

Why did York Region develop this Guide?

The Regional Municipality of York developed this Guide to curate the opinions and recommendations of trusted sources into one reliable document. During development, subject matter experts were consulted. Consideration for the local context of York Region's growing communities also influenced the information included in this Guide. York Region residents can use the trusted best practices collected in this Guide to navigate inclusion challenges and questions at work, school and home.

Beliefs and best practice recommendations about inclusive language have evolved rapidly in recent years. What was considered a best practice two years ago may be now considered outdated. At times, there can be conflicting information on what is considered a best practice, and the reliability of sources can vary. As such, this Guide will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

Regional Diversity



York Region is one of the fastest growing and most diverse communities in Canada. As of 2016, [1.1 million people call York Region home](#), speaking over [120 different languages](#) and coming from over [230 distinct ethnic origins](#), with approximately [49% of residents identifying themselves as a visible minority](#) and [47% of residents born outside of Canada](#). Data from 2017 also indicates that [nearly one in five York Region residents \(age 15 and over\) had at least one disability](#). As the population of York Region grows, so will its diversity.

The growing diversity of York Region as a community makes the use of inclusive language increasingly important.

Fostering a strong sense of belonging has also been shown to have physical and mental health benefits. It has, for example, been found to serve as a protective factor when managing stress (Mayo Clinic, 2019). When we feel we have support and are not alone, we may cope more effectively with difficult times in our lives. Using inclusive language can have a significant impact on a person's sense of belonging.

Collective Action to Develop the Guide

This Inclusive Language Guide was developed by York Region, in close coordination with MDIG and is one of many actions resulting from the [Inclusion Charter for York Region](#).

The Inclusion Charter for York Region outlines a common commitment to welcoming and inclusive communities and was developed and endorsed by all MDIG member organizations. Co-Chaired by York Region and York Regional Police, MDIG includes representatives from all nine of York Region's cities and towns, police services, hospitals, school boards and conservation authorities. MDIG includes 20 member organizations, consisting of all nine local municipalities, police services, hospitals, school boards, conservation authorities and agencies.



This Guide represents a collective action of MDIG and supports MDIG's common commitment to inclusion. MDIG organizations are also developing a **collective action plan** to foster inclusion by addressing two priority areas: increasing the sense of community belonging amongst York Region residents and decreasing the incidence of hate crimes. Learn more about the Inclusion Charter and MDIG by reading the annual Inclusion Charter Progress Reports available online at york.ca/inclusiveyr

Inclusive Language and the Ontario Human Rights Code

This Guide supports compliance with the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#), which provides protection from discrimination in five areas of our lives. It states every person has a right to freedom from discrimination in the following social areas: accommodation (housing), contracts, employment, goods, services and facilities and membership in unions, trade or professional associations. The [Ontario Human Rights Code](#) recognizes discrimination occurs most often because of a person's membership in a particular

group in society. In the five social areas above, the Code protects people based on the following grounds: age, ancestry, colour, race, citizenship, ethnic origin, place of origin, creed, disability, family status, marital status (including single status), gender identity, gender expression, receipt of public assistance (in housing only), record of offences (in employment only), sex (including pregnancy and breastfeeding) and sexual orientation.

How the Guide is Organized

This Guide covers various inclusive language topics and is organized in two sections:

- **Section 1** provides **guiding principles** to follow when making language inclusive. This includes what to practice, what to ask yourself and what to be aware of
- **Section 2** provides inclusive language guidance around specific topics (identities, social categories) by applying the **guiding principles** and recommending **preferred terms** (names, phrases, terms).

CONTENT WARNING

This Guide contains words and terms that are considered offensive and discriminatory. The examples of problematic terms are not exhaustive and there are other problematic terms that are not listed in this Guide. These words and terms are included to demonstrate what should **not** be communicated. Readers should be aware that these words and terms may cause emotional distress; they are encouraged to take steps to support their emotional well-being, including discontinuing use of the Guide, if necessary.

Section 1: Guiding Principles

The following are general principles to keep in mind when using inclusive language.

Practice this

- **Put people first:** When practicing inclusive language, remember to put the *individual* first. This means referring to them by their name or preferred title rather than by a social group or characteristic. For example, when referring to persons with disabilities, use their name or say “a person with a disability” rather than “disabled person”
- **Avoid generalizations and stereotypes:** Do not make statements or assumptions about any social group. This would include statements or generalizations about gender, culture, ancestry, race, age, ability/disability or any other categories
- **Avoid making distinctions based on physical attributes:** Avoid making any comments about an individual’s physical attributes unless these are necessary in the context of the statement
- **Adopt an open and empathetic mindset:** Be open to changing your language habits and adopting a mindset that is empathetic towards people who have experienced marginalization and discrimination through language
- **Be self-aware and seek education:** Consider the words and expressions you use in conversation and writing and identify if you use any problematic phrases or terms. Learn about

the origins of problematic terms to understand why they are not inclusive. If you recognize any problematic terms, look for more inclusive alternatives

Ask yourself this

- **Does the individual or group have preferred terms?** Some individuals have preferred terms for themselves. If you do not know what someone’s preferred terms are, do not make assumptions; ask them. Keep in mind that individuals who identify with the same social group may have different preferred terms. Always be sensitive to these differences and respect what the individual prefers.
- **Does the language you use reflect the diversity of the intended audience?** Be aware of the language choices you are making and whether there are any terms you are using that exclude certain groups or people in your audience.
- **Is it necessary to refer to a person’s gender, culture, ethnicity, age, etc.?** It is easier to be inclusive if you refrain from referencing gender, culture ethnicity, age and other identities and social categories. Look for substitutions or ways around referencing these identities.
- **Are you staying open and empathetic, and encouraging others to do the same?** Engage in frequent self-reflection to check if you are maintaining an open and empathetic mindset. Try to frequently remind yourself, and others, of the importance of inclusive language and how it can impact more marginalized groups.

Be aware of this

- **Metaphors and phrases can have offensive origins:** The English language is full of metaphors and phrases that have problematic origins. The use of these metaphors may reinforce stereotypes, generalizations and biases about people and groups, even if there is no conscious intention to cause harm. Likewise, cultural metaphors and comparisons often misrepresent cultural practices and may originate from a time when particular cultures and ethnicities were oppressed. The use of metaphors that originated during a time marked by racism and oppression can be retraumatizing. Metaphors that contain a reference to a particular group, a historic practice that affected a group, or cultural practice/symbol, should be avoided.

Examples of metaphors/phrases to avoid

Metaphor or phrase	Meaning	Avoid because...
“Welshing on a bet”	To swindle a person by not paying a debt.	Reinforces stereotypes about people of Welsh heritage.
“Being gypped”	To be cheated or conned.	Reinforces stereotypes about people of Romani heritage.
“Low man on the totem pole”	If you describe someone with this phrase, you mean that they are the least important person in an organization or a group.	May be offensive to Indigenous peoples due to the inappropriate reference to a significant cultural symbol.
“Turning a deaf ear” or “turning a blind eye”	To ignore something observed or overheard that is ethically questionable.	Reinforces negative connotations around various physical disabilities.

Metaphor or phrase	Meaning	Avoid because...
Having a “pow-wow”	To have a quick meeting to resolve something.	May be offensive to Indigenous peoples due to the inappropriate reference to a significant cultural practice.
“Sold down the river”	Used to signify an act of betrayal or compromised trust.	<p>This term originates from the early 19th century colonial slave trade in the United States. The “river” is a literal reference to the Mississippi or Ohio rivers and “to be sold down the river” refers to when Black slaves from more northern regions would be sold in Louisville, Kentucky, a slave-trading marketplace. Being “sold down the river” became synonymous with being subjected to brutally hard labour.</p> <p>This term is offensive to racialized groups due to its origins.</p>
“Master bedroom”	The largest bedroom in a house.	<p>The origins of the term are thought to come from when there were “masters” of the house. Master is another word for slave owner.</p> <p>This term is offensive to racialized groups due to its origins.</p> <p>The Canadian Real Estate Association switched to using term “primary bedroom”.</p>
“Whitelist” or “Blacklist”	<p>In general terms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A whitelist refers to a list of people or things considered acceptable or trustworthy • A blacklist refers to a list of people or things considered unacceptable or untrustworthy, or that should be excluded or avoided <p>When in reference to computer technology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whitelist refers to a list of programs, email 	<p>The association between “white” and “black” with “acceptable” and “unacceptable”, respectively, is offensive to racialized groups due to its perpetuation of the bias that black is “bad.”</p> <p>The terms “safe/unsafe list” or “allow/deny list” have been used as alternatives.</p>

Metaphor or phrase	Meaning	Avoid because...
	<p>addresses, applications or IP addresses that are considered, by default, safe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blacklist refers to a list of programs, email addresses, applications or IP addresses that are considered, by default, unsafe 	
<p>“Open the Kimono”</p>	<p>To reveal what is being planned or to share important information freely.</p> <p>In the business context, it means to open a company up to closer examination and to reveal its inner workings.</p>	<p>“Open the Kimono” arose in American business jargon during the 1980’s. The phrase is not in wide use in Japan today. In feudal times the Kimono was opened to show that the wearer was unarmed.</p> <p>“Open the Kimono” is a sexist term in that it relies on stereotypes of women revealing their bodies at the direction of men.</p> <p>The terms “open the books” or “raise the curtain” have been used as alternatives.</p>
<p>“Peanut Gallery”</p>	<p>A group of people who criticize something or someone, often by only focusing on insignificant details.</p>	<p>Originates from Vaudeville, which flourished in North America from around 1880 to the 1930’s. The “Peanut Gallery” referred to the cheapest seats in the theatre. These theatres were often segregated, and the “Peanut Gallery” mostly consisted of Black audience members.</p> <p>This term is offensive to racialized groups due to its origins.</p>
<p>“Grandfathered in”</p>	<p>A provision within a new law or regulation that exempts certain people or entities from following that law. Those with “grandfathered in” status may continue to behave as before, while everyone else must follow the new law.</p>	<p>This term originated following the passage of the 15th Amendment to the US Constitution, which prohibited discrimination in elections based on race.</p>

Metaphor or phrase	Meaning	Avoid because...
		<p>In reaction to the 15th Amendment, several states implemented voting requirements designed to keep Black citizens from voting (such as literacy requirements, poll taxes and constitutional quizzes). However, these requirements put many white voters at risk of losing their rights because they could not meet such expectations.</p> <p>The solution many States used to continue to suppress the Black vote was to maintain the voting rights of citizens who could vote before the Black community was enfranchised (almost all of whom were white), plus their lineal descendants. Extending the right to vote through lineage established the use of the term “grandfathering in.”</p> <p>This term could be offensive to racialized groups due to its origins.</p>
“Going Postal”	The phrase refers to an employee or ex-employee becoming extremely and uncontrollably angry in a workplace environment, often resorting to violence or aggression towards fellow employees or supervisors.	<p>The expression arose in response to a series of violent events at United States Postal Service facilities from 1970 to date, particularly from 1986 to 1993.</p> <p>Generally, using the phrase is not advised as it makes light of injury and death. It has also been used negatively in connection with potential mental health illnesses</p>

This is not an exhaustive list of metaphors or phrases to avoid. These are examples only.

- **Unconscious bias:** Unconscious bias (or implicit bias) is often defined as prejudice or unsupported judgments in favour of or against one thing, person or group as compared to another in a way that is usually considered unfair. Biases may exist toward any social group.

One's age, gender, gender identity physical abilities, religion, sexual orientation, weight and many other characteristics are subject to bias.

We all hold unconscious biases about various social and identity groups. These biases stem from our natural inclination to organize our world by categorizing it. It is important to self-reflect on your own unconscious biases and try to deconstruct or actively work against them where possible. Although it may be hard to change your thinking around groups, a first step is to check your actions and words to ensure that they do not reinforce stereotypes.

- **Language changes:** Although this Guide attempts to provide up-to-date best practices for inclusive language, because language is constantly evolving it will never be as current as modern language. Be aware that you may not know the current meaning a term or phrase has to particular social groups and exercise caution in using terms or phrases that you are not familiar with.
- **Words matter:** As discussed, terms and phrases can perpetuate or limit the feeling of inclusion experienced by people or groups. They can also convey or embed stereotypes, expectations or limitations and can have real impacts on the resources people have access to in their daily lives. Words have power and words can shape life outcomes. Keep this in mind when practicing inclusive language.

Section 2: Inclusive language topics

The following sections provide inclusive language guidance around specific topics, including identities and social categories.

Age



York Region’s older adult population (65 years and over) is growing rapidly. According to the [2016 Census](#), older adults made up a record high of 15% of York Region’s population, representing a 34% increase between 2011 and 2016. The youth population (15 to 24 years) accounted for 13% of the Regional population in 2016. Both age groups are vital and thriving and make up a significant portion of York Region’s population overall.

Despite the stereotype that older adults cannot contribute and are in physical and mental decline, many older adults are physically and mentally active and engaged in the community. On the other end of the age spectrum, youth can be dismissed as being inexperienced or immature. In actuality, many youth have experienced a range of life circumstances and are often at the forefront of technological evolution. Even though there can be a gap of up to 40 years between these age groups, older adults and youth can experience similar barriers to participation.

The [Ontario Human Rights Code](#) protects individuals from discrimination based on age in the protected social areas. **Ageism** is the stereotyping and discrimination of individuals based on age. Ageism can cause discrimination against, or the exclusion of, youth and seniors from accessing services or participating in the workforce and community.

General principles

The table below provides some general principles for inclusive language on the topic of age, as well as examples of problematic and preferred terms.

General principles	Important because...	Examples
Refrain from using age descriptors when talking about people or groups.	Using an age descriptor (such as “youthful” or “mature”) may offend people who feel sensitive about their age or may suggest positive or negative beliefs about age.	Problematic: Young and vibrant team. Mature workforce. Preferred: Vibrant and effective team. Experienced and skilled workforce.
Do not make comments about people’s age or appearance, regardless of whether it is meant as a compliment.	Comments about perceived age suggest that age has value as a characteristic to judge people by.	Problematic: “You look good for your age”. Preferred: Generally speaking, you should not be commenting on people’s appearance. If you are confident that the compliment will be received well, consider: “You look well”.
Do not ask about a person’s age.	Asking this question could be perceived as passing judgement on a person based on their age. Age may also be a very personal detail	Problematic: “How old are you”? Preferred: “I’m impressed by your skills, knowledge, experience”.

General principles	Important because...	Examples
	that a person may not want to disclose.	
Do not make assumptions about the capabilities of people based on their age.	Making premature assumptions about people's ability to perform a task based on age may lead to their arbitrary exclusion from an activity or opportunity.	Problematic: "You are too old to understand how this new software works". Preferred: "Your experience is valued. Please provide your feedback on how the new software is functioning".
Do not use condescending phrases that reference age-related behaviour.	There are several phrases in the English language that refer to behavioural expectations based on age. These phrases should be avoided as they are disrespectful and ageist.	Problematic: "Act your age". "You'll understand some day". "It's not like that anymore". "That's ancient history". "Get with the times". Preferred: "I respect that we have different approaches and perspectives".

Preferred terms

The following is a list of preferred terms relating to age and the problematic versions of these terms that must be avoided.

Preferred	Problematic
Older adult, senior Please note: some people prefer older adult over senior and some people prefer senior over older adult. Respect the unique language preferences of the individual	When used in a condescending way: old man/woman, old person, oldies, old-timer, elderly person, aged person, grey-hairs, grandpa, grandma. Codger, ancient, baby boomer, boomer
Young adult, young person	When used in a condescending way: junior, kid, kiddo, punk, wet behind the ears, child, whippersnapper, baby, toddler, adolescent, teenager, millennial
New to the job field, has potential	When used in a condescending way: immature, naïve, too young, underdeveloped, fresh, inexperienced
Experienced	Past their prime, older worker, retirement age, set in their ways, worn out

Citizenship or Immigration Status



As of [2016](#), 47% of York Region residents were born outside of Canada. In Ontario, York Region had the third highest percentage of residents born outside of Canada after Peel and Toronto. Recent immigrants, or newcomers, accounted for 10% of all immigrants in York Region.

Immigrants, with or without Canadian citizenship, are valued community members. They are vital to Canada’s economic and social prosperity. Despite this,

discriminatory stereotypes and beliefs around people without Canadian citizenship, immigrants and newcomers still exist. These may include beliefs that newcomers are “stealing jobs,” are in Canada “illegally,” “are taking advantage of Canada’s hospitality” or “just aren’t real Canadians.”

The [Ontario Human Rights Code](#) protects individuals from discrimination based on citizenship status. This means that immigrants who do not have Canadian citizenship cannot be denied service or be discriminated against because of their citizenship status. An exception to this is if Canadian citizenship is a legal requirement or a *bone fide occupational requirement* to obtain a job or certain services. For example, the law requires you to be a Canadian citizen to vote in a municipal or provincial election; this requirement is not discriminatory.

General principles

Here are some general principles for inclusive language on the topic of citizenship/immigration. Please note: Only address someone’s experience as an immigrant if they shared this information with you and they are comfortable discussing it.

General principles	Important because...	Examples
Do not comment on someone’s citizenship or immigration status unless it is directly related to the conversation.	A person’s citizenship/immigration status may be a sensitive subject and should be avoided as a conversation topic. Commenting on or asking about someone’s citizenship/immigration status may come across as a judgment of someone’s eligibility to work or use services in Canada.	Problematic: “What’s your citizenship status?”, “Do you have a work visa?”, “Are you here legally?” Preferred: “I’m so glad to have you on my team. Your previous experience outside of Canada is really helping this project”.
Do not make jokes or comments about the length of time someone has been living in Canada.	Making judgements about the length of time someone has been in Canada may imply there is a connection between time spent in Canada and personal worth. This may come across as dismissive of personal experiences and the knowledge they gained outside of Canada. Generally, this should be avoided as a topic unless it is relevant to the conversation.	Problematic: “How long have you been living in Canada?”, “Are you fresh off the boat?”, “You’re new, so you probably don’t know that’s not how we do things in Canada”. Preferred: “I hope you have enjoyed your time in Canada”. “How have you enjoyed being in Canada?”
Do not make derogatory comments about	A person may have many reasons for choosing to leave their country of origin, either permanently or	Problematic: “No wonder you came to Canada, your home country sounds very uncivilized”.

General principles	Important because...	Examples
someone's country of origin.	temporarily. Assuming they left their country of origin for negative reasons can be very offensive.	"People are crazy drivers in your country!" Preferred: "What do you miss about [country of origin]?"
Do not use language that suggests that immigrants or people without Canadian citizenship are not qualified to work.	Immigrants and people without Canadian citizenship are guaranteed economic and social rights, including the right to work in many circumstances. Do not assume that an immigrant or person without a Canadian citizenship cannot work and do not use language that reinforces this stereotype.	Problematic: "Are you allowed to have a job?" Preferred: "How are you enjoying your job?"

Preferred terms

The following is a list of preferred terms relating to citizenship/immigration status and the problematic versions of these terms that must be avoided.

Please note: This terminology should be used in a respectful way and not in an accusatory tone. The citizenship/immigration status of an individual should not be questioned/commented on unless it is necessary to securing/providing services or it is raised as a topic by the individual.

Preferred	Problematic
Newcomer	New Canadian, fresh off the boat, imposter, non-Canadian, illegal, green carder, alien, foreigner, outsider, stranger, new arrival, squatter, interloper, non-citizen, intruder, invader, refugee, undocumented
Person who is an immigrant, person without Canadian citizenship	Imposter, non-Canadian, illegal, green carder, alien, foreigner, outsider, stranger, new arrival, squatter, interloper, non-citizen, intruder, invader, refugee, undocumented
Person with Canadian citizenship, Canadian citizen	Taxpayer, legalized, a "real" citizen, a "real" Canadian

Creed or Religion



York Region residents practice and follow a range of creeds, religious beliefs and faith systems or do not practice a faith. The most recent data on religious affiliation ([York Region 2011 National Household Survey](#)) showed that about 77% of York Region residents reported having a religious affiliation. Affiliation with the Christian faith was reported the most, followed by affiliation with the Jewish, Muslim and Hindu faiths.

The [Ontario Human Rights Code](#) protects individuals from discrimination based on creed in the protected social areas. The *Code* does not define creed, but according to the [Ontario Human Rights Commission](#), “courts and tribunals have often referred to religious beliefs and practices”, and “creed may also include non-religious belief systems that substantially influence a person’s identity, worldview and way of life”. Despite the many legal advances in protections for people against discrimination based on creed, severe forms of creed-based prejudice, such as antisemitism and Islamophobia, have emerged in recent times. These are often shaped by international events.

General principles

Here are some general principles for inclusive language on the topic of creed or religion. Please note: Only ask about a person’s religious practices if you are confident in their religious affiliation and their comfort with questions (i.e., they have told you what their religious affiliation is).

General principles	Important because...	Examples
Do not use language with a group that assumes a common religious practice, belief or observance.	There is variety among practices within religious systems, and two people who affiliate with the same religion may not practice their religion the same way. Using language that assumes a particular practice or belief may lead to feelings of exclusion.	<p>Problematic: “What did you give up for Lent?”</p> <p>Preferred: “What did you do this weekend?”</p>
Do not pass judgement on religious practices or beliefs, including the absence of religious practices or beliefs.	Religious practice and belief can be a very personal subject. Making judgements about religious practices, beliefs or observances could be considered offensive.	<p>Problematic: “I thought you weren’t supposed to eat pork because of your religion?”</p> <p>Preferred: “What did your family do for Hanukkah this year?”</p>
Do not force an individual to accept or comply with a religious practice or belief.	Forcing someone to participate in one’s own religious practices or beliefs is inappropriate.	<p>Problematic: “Come join us in Christmas carolling! It’s an important part of the holidays!”</p> <p>Preferred: “What would you like to do for the holiday party?”</p>
Consider rephrasing common terms that reference religious practices or figures.	Referring to a religious practice or figure in a casual or disrespectful way may be offensive to some.	<p>Problematic: “I pray to Jesus we have good weather”. “What is your Christian name?”</p> <p>Preferred: “I hope we have good weather”. “What is your name?”</p>

Preferred terms

The following is a list of preferred terms relating to creed or religion and the problematic versions of these terms that must be avoided.

Preferred	Problematic
Work/school/winter break, vacation, holidays	Christmas break, vacation, holidays
That's surprising. That's interesting to hear	Oh my god! Sweet Jesus! Dear Christ!
Followers of the _____ faith (applies to any religious affiliation or belief system)	Holy followers, church go-ers
Followers of the Christian faith; Christians	Bible beater, Bible thumper, Fundie (short for Fundamentalist), Prod (short for Protestant), holy roller
Followers of the Catholic faith; Catholics	The/those Catholics
Followers of the Jewish faith; Jewish	The/those Jews
Followers of the Muslim faith; Muslims	The/those Muslims
Followers of the Sikh faith; Sikhs	The/those Sikhs
Followers of the Hindu faith; Hindus	The/those Hindus
Persons without a religious affiliation	Heathen, infidel, pagan, non-believer, without faith

Disability



The United Nations [defines](#) people with disabilities as “those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others” (United Nations. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). [“Article 1 – Purpose”](#)). Not all disabilities are visible or permanent; a person can be born with a disability (congenital), or they may acquire a disability through age, illness or accident. A disability can be visible (e.g., use of a wheelchair due to spinal cord injury) or non- visible (e.g., mental illness) or occur only periodically (e.g., seasonal).

In [2017](#), nearly one in five or 17% of York Region residents 15 years of age and over lived with at least one disability. This percentage is expected to increase as the population grows and diversifies, and at some point in our lives, it is likely we will experience some form of disability. Although there has been a societal shift to better understand and respect people with disabilities, discrimination still exists.

The [Ontario Human Rights Code](#) protects individuals from discrimination based on disability in the protected social areas.

General principles

Here are some general principles for inclusive language on the topic of disability.

General principles	Important because...	Examples
Use language inclusive of the range of disabilities that exist.	Do not assume you know your audience and their disabilities. Many disabilities are invisible, and some people may not disclose their disability. Your language must be inclusive of the range of disabilities that exist.	<p>Problematic: “An elevator is available for wheelchair users”.</p> <p>Preferred: “There are various accommodations available for persons with disabilities. If you require an accommodation, please let me know”.</p>
Never assume a person’s disability, ability or health status based on their appearance.	Someone’s physical appearance is not a clear indicator of their physical or mental capabilities. Having a disability is not the same as being sick. Many people with disabilities are physically and mentally healthy.	<p>Problematic: “Don’t worry about lifting that box, I know you have balance difficulties”.</p> <p>Preferred: “Please let me know if you would like assistance moving your items”.</p>
Person-first language is preferred in many circumstances, but not all. On an individual basis, please use the terminology preferred by the person you are interacting with. Some persons with disabilities prefer the term “disabled person” to person-first language.	This type of language prioritizes the person first and references the disability second.	<p>Problematic: Blind person, deaf person, handicapped, afflicted with a disability, struggling with a disability, a victim of a disability</p> <p>Preferred: Person with a disability, person with a physical disability, person with a vision disability, person with epilepsy</p>
Generally, frame a disability and most medical conditions as something a person has rather than what they are.	This puts the emphasis on the person rather than the disability as the person’s identity.	<p>Problematic: She is disabled, he is arthritic, they are epileptic, she is deaf</p> <p>Preferred: She has a disability, he has arthritis, they have epilepsy, she has a hearing disability</p>
Be cautious about using words that suggest weakness, such as impairment or “suffer from”.	Language that suggests weakness due to disability will be offensive to persons with disabilities. Keep in mind that assistive and mobility devices usually increase people’s independence and are not symbols of dependence.	<p>Problematic: Wheelchair bound, confined to a scooter, physically limited, mentally compromised</p> <p>Preferred: Person who uses a wheelchair, person who uses a mobility device, person with a cognitive disability</p>
Be cautious about portraying a person as “courageous” or “special” just because they have a disability.	Describing a person with a disability as “courageous” or “special” because they have “overcome” a disability implies it is unusual for people with disabilities to have talents and the ability to contribute to society.	<p>Problematic: “You are very courageous for coming in here, given your mobility challenges”.</p> <p>Preferred: Treat and talk to persons with disabilities the same way you talk to anyone else.</p>

Preferred terms

The following is a list of preferred terms relating to disability and the problematic versions to avoid.

Preferred	Problematic
Person with a physical disability	Wheelchair or scooter bound, handicapped., physically challenged, physically limited, incapable, differently abled
Person with a cognitive disability/developmental disability/intellectual disability	Dumb, slow, SPED (for special education), retarded, developmentally delayed, stupid, cognitively challenged
Person with a visual disability, person with vision loss <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blind, for someone who has complete loss of sight • Legally blind, for someone who has almost complete loss of sight • Limited vision, low vision or partially sighted, for someone who is neither legally or completely blind 	Visually challenged, blind-as-a-bat, partially blind, the blind
Person with a hearing disability, person with hearing loss	Hearing challenged, the deaf (unless referring to the deaf community), deaf and dumb, deaf-mute, hearing impaired
Person who is deaf-blind (person who has any combination of visual and auditory disabilities)	The deaf-blind, the blind, deaf and dumb
Person with a speech disability, person with a speech impediment	Stutterer
Person with Down Syndrome (only use this terminology when it is directly relevant to the context)	Mongoloid, mongolism
Person with a form of dwarfism	Midget, dwarf
Person with autism	Autistic, low-functioning, high-functioning, on the spectrum
Seizures	Fits, spells, attacks
Person who is not disabled, person who is non-disabled, person without visible disabilities	Normal, regular, unchallenged

Gender, Gender Identity and Gender Expression



The [*Ontario Human Rights Code*](#) protects individuals from discrimination based on gender identity and gender expression in the protected social areas.

Although gender identity has historically been understood as a male and female, gender is now understood as a spectrum. A person's gender identity can fall anywhere along the spectrum, and gender identity is not the same as one's sex assignment at birth.

It is important to acknowledge our society has historically demonstrated bias through language in favour of men and against women. Language has discriminated against women by not properly reflecting their role and status in society.

Language can take on unnecessarily gendered forms. This includes words, phrases and expressions that differentiate between women and men, or exclude or diminish either gender or the spectrum of gender identities. For example, "the best man for the job" can be replaced by "the best person" or "candidate for the job." Similarly, "manpower" can be replaced by terms such as "workforce," "personnel," "staff" and "human resources." Using gender-inclusive language means speaking and writing in a way that does not discriminate against or stereotype gender identity or expression.

Definitions of gender-inclusive terms

To practice gender-inclusive language, familiarize yourself with these terms and meanings:

- **Gender identity:** An individual's understanding of their gender
- **Gender expression:** An individual's personal choice to express their gender identity, including how they dress and behave
- **Sex assignment at birth:** The sex someone is assigned at birth according to their biological traits
- **Intersex:** A person born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that does not fit the typical definitions of female or male. For example, a person might be born appearing to be female on the outside, but having mostly male-typical anatomy on the inside
- **Cisgender:** A person whose gender identity aligns with their sex assignment at birth
- **Transgender:** A person whose gender identity that differs from their sex assignment at birth
- **Genderfluid:** A person whose gender identity fluctuates
- **Gender variant, genderqueer and gender non-conforming:** A gender identity and/or expression that does not conform to the gender-based expectations of society
- **Non-binary:** A gender identity that does not align with the traditional male/female binary
- **Agender:** Someone who does not have a gender identity
- **Bigender:** Someone who experiences two different gender identities, simultaneously or varying between the two. The gender identities could be male, female or the full range of the gender spectrum
- **Pangender:** Someone whose gender identity is not limited to one gender. These identities may shift over time or they may be static
- **Two-Spirit :** A gender role believed to be common among most, if not all, First Peoples of Turtle Island (North America), one that had a proper and accepted place within native societies

Learn more by accessing [519's Glossary of Terms](#).

Pronoun guidance

Using the correct pronouns that respect someone's gender identity is a very important part of making them feel included and respected and fostering a sense of belonging.

A **gendered pronoun** is a pronoun that references a person's gender, such as "hers/his," "he/she," "him/her," or "herself/himself." Pronouns in English originally developed around binary gender norms (male/female) may not match a person's gender identity or expression. It is more inclusive to use the gender-neutral pronoun "they" in written communication. Many non-binary and gender fluid people prefer the gender-neutral pronoun "they" in reference to themselves. You may want to consider privately asking about the preferred term(s) used by an individual. When referring to someone whose identified pronouns are unknown, it is usually preferable to use non-gender-based language as in "they/them/their."

Learn more about gender pronouns by accessing the Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity's [guide to pronouns](#).

General principles

Here are some general principles for inclusive language on gender identity, expression and sex assignment.

General principles	Important because...	Examples
Avoid assumptions about gender and use gender-neutral language.	You cannot make assumptions about people's gender identity based on their dress, physical appearance, tone of voice or behaviour. It is easier to remain gender-inclusive if gender neutral language is used. Another option is to eliminate the use of a pronoun.	Problematic: "The employee should inform his manager of any schedule changes". Preferred: "Employees should inform their manager of any schedule changes". "Employees who require schedule changes should contact the manager".
Always remember that gender identity is different from sex assignment at birth.	Someone's biological traits cannot be used as an indicator of their gender identity or as an appropriate measure of how people engage in gender expression.	Problematic: "Because you are a man, I expect you to wear a shirt and tie to the workplace". Preferred: "Dress in attire that is appropriate for the workplace".
Avoid asking people what their gender identity is. Instead, ask individuals what pronouns they prefer and let them know your preferred pronouns too. In group settings, do not single a person out publicly by asking their preferred pronouns. Instead, make it part of group introductions.	Asking for and using someone's proper pronouns is the easiest way to affirm and validate their gender identity.	Problematic: "What gender are you?" Preferred: "Let's all go around the room and introduce ourselves, our interests, and if you'd like to, please feel free to share your pronouns".

General principles	Important because...	Examples
Respect name preferences.	Transgender persons may transition to a different name from their birth name. Gender fluid/bigender or pangender persons may use a different name depending on their current gender identity. Respecting name changes can make people feel included.	Problematic: “I won’t call you by your new name because that’s not what I know you as”. Preferred: “Great to see you today, ____ [use of chosen name]”.
Respect terminology.	Gender non-conforming individuals may describe their identity and experience using a range of terms and it is important to respect their preferences. Two people with similar identities may have different terminology preferences.	Problematic: “Jane is what I think they call a transexual”. Preferred: “Jane identifies as a transgender person”.
Do not ask about the status of someone’s transition or their gender-affirming surgery.	This is a very sensitive and private topic for most individuals and should not be discussed unless it is raised by the individual.	Problematic: “Have you transitioned yet?” Preferred: This should not be raised as a question or conversation topic unless raised as a topic by the individual.

Preferred terms

The following is a list of preferred gender-related terms and the problematic versions of these terms. Please note: the problematic terms listed below are acceptable if the person’s desired terms are known.

Preferred	Problematic
Gender-neutral terms	
<i>When pronouns are unknown:</i> They/them/theirs	He/him/his, she/her/hers, his or hers
<i>When gender identity is unknown:</i> The person, individual	Man, woman
<i>When the gender identity of someone’s partner/spouse is unknown:</i> Partner, spouse	Boyfriend, husband, girlfriend, wife
“Hi everyone/folks/teams/friends.”	“Hi guys/girls/ladies/gentleman.”
<i>When the gender identity of someone’s sibling is unknown:</i> Sibling	Brother, sister
<i>When the gender identity of someone’s sibling is unknown:</i> Nibling	Niece, nephew
Gender identity, expression and sex assigned at birth terms	
Assigned male/female at birth, designated male/female at birth	Biologically male/female, genetically male/female, born a man/woman

Preferred	Problematic
Cisgender	Normal, uncomplicated
Gender-affirming surgery, gender-confirmation surgery, transitioning Please note: This a very personal topic of discussion and should not be addressed unless brought up by the individual.	Sex change, sexual reassignment surgery, gender reassignment surgery
Intersex	Hermaphrodite, she-male
Non-binary, gender non-conforming, gender variant, genderqueer	Gender confused, mixed up, undecided
Transgender people, transgender person	Transexual, cross-dresser, drag queen, transvestite, transgenders, a transgender, "It" Please note: Transgender should be used as an adjective, not as a noun. Do not say, "Tony is a transgender," or "The parade included many transgenders."
Transgender (adjective)	Transgendered Please note: The adjective "transgendered" can confuse the word tense and should not be used.
Gender	
People, human beings, humanity	Mankind
Actor (for male and female actors)	Actress
Best candidate for the job	Best man for the job
Business-person, executive, manager, entrepreneur	Businessman, businesswoman
Clerical staff, office worker, personal assistant	The girls, the ladies
Firefighter, cleaner, police officer	Fireman, policeman, cleaning lady
Chair, chairperson	Chairman, chairwoman
Utility worker, tradesperson, foreperson	Utility man, tradesman, foreman
Fair, sporting, team player	Sportsmanlike, sportsmanship
We need someone to staff the desk	We need someone to man the desk
The best person or candidate for the job	The best man for the job
Staff hours, work hours	Man hours

Indigenous Peoples



environment.

York Region is home to a growing Indigenous population. In 2016, 5,910 people identified as Indigenous, a 30% increase from 2011. Indigenous Peoples today are survivors of what has been described as cultural genocide as a result of colonization. As a commitment to reconciliation, using language that more accurately reflects Indigenous Peoples is essential for relationship-building and supports a culturally safe

Definitions of Indigenous terms

To practice inclusive language, familiarize yourselves with Indigenous related terms and meanings.

- **Indigenous** is a general term and is a preferred term in international writing and discussion. In Canada, Indigenous collectively refers to people who identify as First Nations, Métis or Inuit. More specifically:
 - **First Nations** describes people who identify as First Nations, which have distinct cultures, languages and traditions and connections to a particular land base of traditional territory
 - **Métis** is a French term for “mixed blood,” which refers to the specific group of Indigenous people who trace their ancestry to the Métis homeland and are accepted members of the Métis community
 - **Inuit** refers to a group of people who share cultural similarities and inhabit the Arctic regions of Canada, Greenland, Russia and the United States. Inuit is a plural noun, and the singular is Inuk. “Inuit” means “people,” so it is redundant to say “Inuit people”
- **Aboriginal** refers to First Nations, Métis and Inuit people and is no longer the preferred term; Instead use the term Indigenous
- **Indian** is the legal identity of an Indigenous person registered under the [Indian Act](#). This is considered an outdated and derogatory term for Indigenous persons and should only be used when citing titles, works of art, etc., or when discussing history, legislation or constitutional matters
- **Elder** is a term of respect for a member of the Indigenous community who has attained a high degree of understanding of traditional teachings, ceremonies, regalia and healing practices
- **Knowledge Keeper or Carrier** refers to an Indigenous person who shares knowledge about traditional practices such as ceremonies and medicines
- **Treaty Indians** are Indigenous people who are members of a community whose ancestors signed a treaty with the Crown and, as a result, are entitled to treaty benefits
- **Colonization** refers to when Europeans migrated to North America, took control of the land and imposed their cultural values, religion and laws on Indigenous Peoples
- **Residential Schools** is a term for government-sponsored religious schools that were established to assimilate Indigenous children into Euro-Canadian culture
- **Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)** was officially launched in 2008 as part of the [Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement \(IRSSA\)](#). Intended to be a process that would guide Canadians through the difficult discovery of the facts behind the residential school system, the TRC was also meant to lay the foundation for lasting [reconciliation](#) across Canada

General principles

Here are some general principles for inclusive language on the topic of Indigenous Peoples.

General principles	Important because...	Examples
<p>Be aware of the use of the term Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous peoples</p>	<p>There are three distinct groups of Indigenous Peoples in Canada: First Nations, Métis and Inuit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Indigenous Peoples” is commonly used as a collective term for all of the original or first peoples of Canada and their descendants • “Indigenous people” with a lower case “people” refers to more than one Indigenous person rather than the collective group of Indigenous Peoples. If a person is working with a specific group that identifies as First Nations, Inuit or Métis they are encouraged to use the more specific name rather than the broader term 	<p>Problematic: “Indigenous people are diverse.”</p> <p>Preferred: “Indigenous Peoples are diverse.”</p>
<p>Recognize that Indigenous Peoples come from different nations with distinct languages, cultures and customs</p>	<p>To be respectful of different nations, the specific nation, community or band name should be used when possible. You are encouraged to use the spelling that the Indigenous group prefers.</p>	<p>Problematic: “The Indigenous group has a growing population.”</p> <p>Preferred: “The Chippewas of Georgina Island have a growing population.”</p>
<p>Be cautious about vocabulary that implies ownership</p>	<p>To avoid insinuating that Indigenous people belong to any person or government, language must be used that avoids ascribing ownership. Instead of describing Indigenous Peoples as “belonging” to Canada, as in “Canada’s Indigenous Peoples,” it is more respectful to say, “Indigenous Peoples living in Canada.”</p>	<p>Problematic: York Region’s/Ontario’s/Canada’s Indigenous Peoples, our Indigenous communities</p> <p>Preferred: Indigenous People living in what we now recognize as Canada</p>
<p>Capitalize formal titles and maintain consistency</p>	<p>Capitalization demonstrates respect and recognition of a person’s title.</p>	<p>Problematic: “We invited elder Snow”.</p> <p>Preferred: “Elder Vera Snow will attend the event”.</p> <p>NOTE: When it is a part of a person’s title, capitalize “Chief,” “Hereditary Chief,” “Grand Chief,” and “Elder.”</p>

General principles	Important because...	Examples
		Capitalization is also necessary when referring to “Nation” or “Nations.” Do not a term that is not a part of someone’s title, for example, “She is an elder.”

The following is a list of preferred Indigenous related terms and the problematic versions of these terms to avoid using.

Preferred	Problematic
Indigenous Peoples	Indian (unless stating from a legal document), Native (unless stating title of organization), Aboriginal (some legislation uses this term), Native Americans
Aboriginal People Please note: The term can be used when referring to Constitutional Rights or organizations and/or groups with ‘Aboriginal’ in the title.	Indians, Natives, Native Americans
First Nations	Indians, Natives, Aboriginals, Native Americans
Métis	Indians, Natives, First Nations, Inuit, half-breed
Inuit	Indians, Natives, First Nations, Metis, Eskimo
Elder	Old Indian, old geezer, senior
Traditional medicines – Sage, sweetgrass, tobacco and cedar	Marijuana
Colonization	Settlement, European arrival
Reconciliation	Helping Indigenous persons, giving Indigenous persons special treatment

There are various online tools to inform inclusive language related to Indigenous Peoples you can explore, including:

- [Ayisinowak – A Communications Guide](#)
- [A Guide to Indigenous Protocol](#)
- [Indigenous Peoples: A Guide to Terminology](#)
- [Twenty-Three Tips on What Not to Say and Do When Working Effectively With Indigenous Peoples](#)

Low-Income Status



Between 2010 and 2017, 25% of York Region residents experienced low-income at some point, a 24% increase from a 2006 to 2013.

People who experience low-income status have historically been socially judged or blamed for their situation. In recent years, there has been growing recognition that low-income status is often a result of intergenerational circumstance rather than bad choices.

General principles

Here are some general principles for inclusive language on the topic of low-income status.

General principles	Important because...	Examples
Do not phrase low-income status as something someone chooses or is responsible for	Low-income status is often not the result of bad choices or actions. It is often the result of intergenerational poverty or uncontrollable circumstances. Language that suggests people are responsible for being in low-income may be considered offensive.	Problematic: “They are choosing to remain on social assistance”. Preferred: “They have had to remain on social assistance”.
Do not advise persons experiencing low-income on how to lift themselves out of their current situation unless providing advice is part of your job.	Persons experiencing low-income are likely to have engaged with the social service system and are aware of the supports available to them. Providing income, housing or other related advice may be taken as patronizing, especially if you are not informed about their unique situation. Income and housing advice should only be given if you are a professional.	Problematic: “Have you tried looking for rent-geared to income apartments? I hear that they can help people in your situation.” Preferred: “Have you talked to a social services professional?”
Do not use negative stereotypes about persons experiencing low-income status.	Anyone may experience low-income at some point in their lives. Perpetuating that those experiencing low-income are inferior to others is counter-productive to helping people move out of low-income status.	Problematic: “He is still on Ontario Works”. “He is so lazy”. “If you do not go to university, you will end up working a low-paying job the rest of your life”. Preferred: Follow the recommendation of the general principle.
Use person first language when referring to people experiencing low-income status.	Using person first language emphasizes that people experiencing low-income are people first, and their income status comes second. It also reinforces that low-income is not permanent.	Problematic: Poor person, impoverished person, low-income person, homeless person Preferred: Person experiencing low-income, person experiencing

General principles	Important because...	Examples
		homelessness, person on social assistance

Preferred terms

The following is a list of preferred low-income related terms and the problematic versions of these terms to avoid.

Preferred	Problematic
Person experiencing low-income, person with low-income status	Street person, couch surfer, beggar, poor person, poverty stricken, impoverished people, person in poverty, person experiencing poverty, poverty (as a noun) Please note: Due to the stigma associated with the word “poverty”, it is recommended that this word is avoided unless delivering or referring to federal/provincial legislation/policy that uses this terminology.
Person accessing social assistance or Ontario Works, person with a disability accessing Ontario Disability Support Program	Welfare seeker/user, food stamper
Person in a shelter, person experiencing homelessness, person experiencing insecure housing	Homeless person, shelter hopper, the homeless, street person, beggar, bum Please note: It is acceptable to describe actions to address homelessness as “homelessness programs”, but people should not be identified as homeless people
Person experiencing food insecurity	The hungry poor, the hungry
Person in conflict with the law	Criminal, gangster, squeegee kid, hoodlum, street kid, thug, street person

Marital Status and Family Status



Marital and family status refers to a range of family compositions, including lone-parent and blended families, families where parents are in a common-law relationship or families where the individual has no children or partner. Individuals do not always have control over their family composition, and there are no set roles that need to be filled in a family structure; there is no *right* family composition.

Outdated concepts about the ideal family composition may lead to prejudicial language that excludes and offends people with diverse family types. Language used must be sensitive of these facts and inclusive of all forms that a family may take.

The number of people living alone in York Region increased by 24% from 2011 to 52,465 people [in 2016](#), outpacing growth in all other family types. Multiple-family households increased by 15% to 2,650 households between 2011 and 2016, and the number of lone-parent families increased by 13% to 43,915 during the same period.

The [Ontario Human Rights Code](#) protects individuals from discrimination based on family status in the protected social areas. According to the [Human Rights Commission](#), family status is defined in the Code as “being in a parent and child relationship”, including a parent and child type of relationship based on care, responsibility and commitment. This includes parents caring for children and children caring for parents.

General principles

Here are some general principles for inclusive language on the topic of marital or family status.

General principles	Important because...	Examples
<p>Avoid referencing someone’s marital status by using people’s names.</p> <p>Use the first name of the person you are interacting with in a business or casual situation. There may be some situations where the person you are interacting with would prefer a formal title. In some cultures, it is a sign of respect to refer to someone by their given title or last name.</p> <p>When interacting with someone you do not know, ask the person how they would like to be addressed.</p>	<p>A person’s marital status may be a sensitive topic due to recent changes or factors outside of a person’s control.</p> <p>Inclusive language should not ascribe value or importance to marital status. Titles like Mr., Mrs., and Ms., should be avoided if possible, as their use reinforces the importance of marital status to personal identity.</p>	<p>Problematic: “It’s great to meet you, Mrs. Nassif”.</p> <p>Preferred: “It’s great to meet you, Aalia”.</p>
<p>If a person is in a relationship, do not make reference to their wife, husband, boyfriend or girlfriend, unless those terms are preferred by the individual.</p> <p>Use the name of the person’s partner where possible.</p> <p>If the name is unknown, use partner or spouse.</p>	<p>The terms “husband”, “wife”, “boyfriend” and “girlfriend” may not be preferred terms in all circumstances.</p> <p>For example, a person may be in common-law relationship, but does not want to refer to their partner as a boyfriend or girlfriend.</p> <p>Married persons may have preferences about the terms used for their partners and they may choose not to use husband or wife.</p>	<p>Problematic: “How is your husband doing? [While in conversation with someone who is not married]”</p> <p>Preferred: “How is your partner doing?”</p>
<p>Do not ask if someone, or someone’s child, was adopted.</p>	<p>This can be considered invasive and personal. People may not be comfortable discussing this, and</p>	<p>Problematic: “Adopted children may need additional support</p>

General principles	Important because...	Examples
Never use language that suggests adopted children are disadvantaged when compared to non-adopted children.	some people, including children, may not know their own adoption status.	when transitioning into a new school environment.” Preferred: “Some children may need additional support when transitioning into a new school environment.”
Do not ask same-sex parents who the “mommy” or “daddy” is in the relationship.	This reinforces gendered family roles and suggests that same-sex parents must take on a gendered role to complete the “normal” family structure.	Problematic: “Is Andre the mommy in the relationship?” Preferred: “You and Andre seem like such good parents”.
Do not ask lone-parents or individuals from blended households about previous relationships.	Lone-parent and blended families may be created for a variety of reasons. It is no one’s right to know what those reasons are, and the privacy of the person coming from a lone-parent or blended household needs to be respected.	Problematic: “Why did your partner leave?” “Why did you remarry?” Preferred: Respect the privacy of the individual.
Be mindful of your comments to one-parent families due to their lone-parent status.	Uncalled for sympathy for lone-family households reinforces negative stereotypes about single-parents, including that they are struggling or unhappy.	Problematic: “I don’t know how you manage the kids alone”. Preferred: “You are a fantastic parent”.
If necessary, it is preferable to refer to someone’s “birth parent” rather than “natural parent” or “real parent.”	The terms “natural parent” or “real parent” imply that an adoptive family is unnatural or not real.	Problematic: “It was nice meeting your real parents.” Preferred: “It was nice meeting your birth parents.”
Do not ask when someone will have a child or why someone has chosen not to have children.	Some people are childless by choice but find questions on the topic invasive and judgemental. Some people are unable to have children (childless by circumstance) and find questions about having children hurtful due to the implication it was a choice	Problematic: “When are you and Derek going to have kids?” “Why did you and Derek never have kids?” Preferred: This is not a topic of conversation that should be raised, unless brought up by the individual.
Do not provide fertility advice to those childless by circumstance.	Unless it was asked by the individual, providing suggestions and recommendations suggests that the person who is childless by circumstance is doing it wrong.	Problematic: “Have you tried... [x] to help with fertility?” Preferred: “How can I support you?”
Do not tell people who are childless by circumstance they are lucky for not having children.	This can be hurtful towards those that cannot have children.	Problematic: “You are lucky to not have to deal with kids.” Preferred: Do not assign value to having or not having children.

Preferred terms

The following is a list of preferred marital and familial related terms and the problematic versions of these terms that must be avoided.

Preferred	Problematic
Use people's names in written and oral communication.	Mr., Mrs., Miss, or Ms.
Spouse, partner	Husband, wife, boyfriend, girlfriend
<p>Grownups, adults, caregivers, guardians, family</p> <p>Use with caution: Parents.</p> <p>Parents can be an exclusive term if it is used in a setting where all children may not have parents and instead have non-parental caregivers/guardians. Please make sure you know your audience before using "parents."</p> <p>Use grownups, adults, caregivers, guardians and family if parental status is unknown.</p>	Mother and father, mothering/fathering, mums/moms and dads
<p>Adults/caregivers with children, expecting adult(s), person expecting a child</p> <p>Use with caution: Expecting parent(s).</p> <p>Expecting parent denotes that the person will be taking care of the child after its birth. This may not always be the case. If the audience is unknown, be careful with this language.</p>	Parents with children, expecting mother/father
Children or child	Son, daughter
Blended family	Divorced family, stepfamily, mixed family
Childless by circumstance, childless not-by-choice	Childless family, childless couple, infertile parents
Family members	Members of a household
Person's last name or previous last name	Maiden name, married name

Mental Health and Mental Illness



Many people go through periods of positive and negative mental health in their lives. Some people who live with mental health conditions, such as anxiety or depression, may experience more frequent fluctuations in their mental wellness or longer durations of poor mental health. Every year, [one in five people in Canada](#) will experience a mental health problem or illness,. By the time an individual reaches the age of 40, one in two will have experienced a mental illness. Mental illness can affect anyone of any age, education, income level, or culture.

Because mental health and illness is invisible, no one can ever truly know the state of another person’s mental health. Using inclusive language in relation to mental health illness or conditions can lessen the risk of offending or stigmatizing those who are experiencing mental health illness and conditions.

According to the [Ontario Human Rights Commission](#), the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#) protects individuals with mental health disabilities and addictions from discrimination and harassment under the ground of disability in the protected social areas.

Help to promote mental health by finding a shared language

The [Centre for Addiction and Mental Health \(CAMH\)](#) Health Promotion [video](#) explains the separate but interconnected concepts of mental health and mental illness. Mental illnesses are where our thinking, mood and behaviours severely and negatively impact how we function in our lives. Mental illnesses can include anxiety, depression, schizophrenia and other mood disorders. Mental health, like the term health, is a positive concept. It relates to our ability to enjoy life and to manage it to help us reach our goals. It is a sense of spiritual and emotional wellbeing. Mental health is more than the absence of mental illness.

Research shows that we should think about mental illness and mental health as separate, but interconnected continuums. A person without mental illness is not necessarily experiencing good mental health if they are going through difficult life circumstances. Similarly, a person with a mental illness does not necessarily experience poor mental health day-to-day.

General principles

Here are some general principles for inclusive language on the topic of mental health and mental illness.

General principles	Important because...	Examples
Do not ask about a person’s mental health condition or diagnosis.	Mental health conditions can be a private topic. Openly asking for a diagnosis or condition may be considered rude and intrusive.	Problematic: “What is your mental health condition?” Preferred: “How are you?”
Do not assume people’s behaviour based on their condition or diagnosis.	Mental health conditions impact people differently and can vary day-to-day.	Problematic: “I thought schizophrenics were supposed to be delusional”. Preferred: Treat and talk to persons with mental health conditions as you would anyone else.

General principles	Important because...	Examples
Do not assume the absence of a mental health condition in the absence of any physical indicators.	Mental health is invisible in many circumstances, and it is important not to make assumptions about an individual's condition. Due to the social stigma attached to mental health illness or disability, some people may be hesitant to disclose their condition.	Problematic: "None of my staff have mental health struggles, they are all well and act well." Preferred: "Let me know if you need support or a break in any way."
Do not equate suicide with a crime or with success.	The terminology around suicide must be sensitive of the fact that suicide happens to people, it is not committed by people.	Problematic: "They committed suicide." Preferred: "They died by suicide."
Do not equate diagnosis with identity.	People who have a mental health condition are not defined by it. It is important to use language that recognizes people have identities outside of their diagnosis.	Problematic: "They are schizophrenic." Preferred: "They have schizophrenia."
Be cautious about portraying a person as "courageous" or "special" just because they have a mental health diagnosis.	Describing a person with a mental health condition as "courageous" or "special" because they have "overcome" a mental health condition implies that it is unusual for people with a mental health diagnosis to have the ability to contribute to society.	Problematic: "She is courageous for coming to work despite her depression." Preferred: Treat and talk to persons with mental health conditions as you would anyone else.

Preferred terms

The following is a list of preferred terms relating to mental health and the problematic versions of these terms that must be avoided.

Preferred	Problematic
Person with a mental health condition, person with depression/anxiety/other diagnosed mental health disorder, person living with a mental health problem	Crazy, crazy person, unstable, having mental disorders, insane, lunatic, mental, nuts, psycho, Schizo, manic, temperamental, hormonal, disturbed, psycho, mentally ill
This bothers/annoys/frustrates me.	This drives me crazy.
This individual lives with/is experiencing depression	This individual suffers from depression
Died by suicide	Committed suicide, successful suicide
Survived a suicide attempt	Failed or unsuccessful suicide attempt

Preferred	Problematic
Substance use, substance use disorder	Substance abuse, substance misuse, addiction issues
A person with a substance use disorder	Drug user, a person with a drug habit, an alcoholic, drunk, addict
In recovery, on the path toward recovery, not currently using substances	Clean, sober, staying clean
Medication-assisted treatment, medication for addiction treatment, medication, treatment	Replacement, substitution therapy Please note: Replacement and substitution therapy suggests that addictive substance use is being replaced by an alternative . Valid medical treatments stop substance use, they do not replace them.

Race or Ethnic Background



York Region is home to a mosaic of races and ethnicities. About 230 distinct ethnic origins were reported in York Region in the [2016 Census](#), and 49% of the population identified as a “visible minority” (see below for further discussion on the use of this term). The diversity of York Region’s population is expected to continue to grow as the population grows and reinforces the importance of using language that is inclusive as possible.

The [Ontario Human Rights Code](#) protects individuals from discrimination based on ancestry, colour, race and ethnic origin or place of origin in the protected social areas.

When practicing inclusive language around race or ethnic origin, remember the history of racism in Canada and how language has been used to perpetuate discrimination and hate. Race is a social construct, which means “race” has historically been used to classify people into different groups based on physical differences. The process of social construction of race is called “racialization.”

The Ontario Human Rights Commission has adopted the use of the term “racialized person” and “racialized group” in recognition of the fact that race is a social construct. These terms are used in place of the more outdated and inaccurate terms “racial minority,” “visible minority,” “person of colour” or “non-White”.

There are some exceptions for when the use of “racial minority,” “visible minority,” “person of colour” or “non-White” could be considered appropriate:

- When you are referring to legislation, data or other federal/provincial policies and programs that use this language. The *Employment Equity Act*, for example, uses the term “visible minority”
- When you are referring to groups, organizations or collectives that have used this terminology in their name, such as the [Support Network for Indigenous Women and Women of Colour](#)

- The individual or organization requests you describe them using the outdated terms above. For example, a person may identify as a person of colour and request you refer to them as such if ever necessary

It is also important to use appropriate terminology when referring to addressing racism. You can access the Ontario Racism Directorate’s [Glossary](#) to learn more about various terms such as anti-racism approach, anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Black racism and more.

Use of Black, Indigenous and Person of Colour (BIPOC)

In early 2020, the term BIPOC emerged as a way to recognize the unique experiences and inequalities faced by Black and Indigenous people in particular, and by other racialized groups in general. Although this term is largely used to call attention to systematic oppression, the use of “Persons of Colour” within the acronym to refer to a wide range of racialized groups has been contested by some. The argument is that the misuse of the term “BIPOC” could lead to the overgeneralization of racialized groups and the inequalities they face. Some people also object to the use of “Persons of Colour” within the acronym due its similarity to the term “coloured persons” and the continued suggestion that white individuals are colourless. For more information, read this article [“Why the term “people of colour” is offensive to so many”](#).

It is recommended that BIPOC is used with thoughtful consideration and with the points below in mind:

- When talking with or about individuals or smaller groups of people, avoid defaulting to umbrella terms such as “BIPOC” because these tend to be less accurate
- Do not refer to social inequalities as inequalities faced by the BIPOC community if they do not apply to Black, Indigenous AND other racialized groups. For example:
 - If you are bringing up the inequalities Black children may face in the education system, say “Black students” rather than “BIPOC students”
 - If you are discussing the high maternal death rates among Black and Indigenous women, do not say “BIPOC women,” since other racialized groups do not face the same risk
- You might find yourself defaulting to “BIPOC” when talking about a friend, classmate or co-worker, but if you know their ethnicity and it is relevant to the conversation, use the most specific language possible

General principles

All racial and ethnic groups practice unique ways of naming and referring to themselves. Inclusive language in relation to race and ethnicity supports the diversity of Canada’s population in positive ways and does not perpetuate stereotypes associated with appearance, language or cultural practices.

Here are some general principles for inclusive language on the topic of race and ethnic origin.

General principles	Important because...	Examples
<p>Do not assume a person's race, culture or ethnic background.</p>	<p>If you are not told by someone what their racial/cultural/ethnic background is, you should not make assumptions about this based on appearance. This could lead to inaccurate assumptions and may perpetuate offensive stereotypes.</p>	<p>Problematic: "My co-worker looks Chinese and may require time off for Lunar New Year." Preferred: "My co-worker has been working hard and may appreciate some time off."</p>
<p>Do not assume that people who share similar physical characteristics have similar racial/cultural/ethnic identities.</p>	<p>Assuming two people who appear similar in appearance share racial/cultural/ethnic similarities reinforces stereotypes.</p>	<p>Problematic: "Have you met my new co-worker? He is also Asian. You two will get along." Preferred: "Have you met my new co-worker?"</p>
<p>Do not use racial, ethnic, cultural or other identity references if they are not necessary.</p>	<p>Referring to someone's racial, ethnic or cultural background, when unnecessary, could make a person feel isolated and treated differently than others.</p>	<p>Problematic: "My staff member is a Chinese Canadian and has worked for us for three years." Preferred: "My staff member has worked for us for three years."</p>
<p>Consider when terms such as "visible minority," or "person of colour" are relevant. Never purposefully identify a person by their racial or ethnic identity unless you know that person consents and it serves a legitimate purpose to the conversation.</p>	<p>Both the term "visible minority" and "person of colour" are considered outdated. Before using such expressions, carefully consider if they are relevant or if a better expression or more specific identifier is available.</p>	<p>Problematic: "My colleague is a person of colour." Preferred: "My colleague has identified herself as Black and may like to know about the Employee Resource Group for Black staff." Please note: Statistics Canada currently uses the term "visible minority" in its surveying. To accurately reflect data findings, it is recommended that the terminology used during data collection is also used in data reporting.</p>
<p>When it is necessary to refer to someone's racial, cultural or ethnic identity, find the most appropriate and widely accepted version of that terminology. If/when referring to a specific individual, check what their unique preferences are.</p>	<p>Terminology can change and evolve at a rapid pace and can also vary by location. Terminology can be personal and widely accepted terms might not reflect someone's individual preferences. There are innumerable racial, cultural and ethnic identities across the globe. While this Guide provides the current and widely accepted, terminology for several racial, cultural and ethnic groups, it can never fully capture the diversity</p>	<p>Problematic: Outdated terms including coloured people, people of colour, non-whites, oriental. Preferred: More modern and accepted terms, including person from Asia, person from the Black community, etc.</p>

General principles	Important because...	Examples
	of people that may live, work or play in York Region.	
Capitalize the proper names of nationalities, peoples and culture.	This demonstrates respect for the nationality of the person.	Problematic: black, indigenous people, Caucasian, arab, asian, etc. Preferred: Black. Indigenous people. Caucasian. Arab. Asian.
Use person first language when describing a person's place of regional origin, nationality or language.	Person first language demonstrates respect for the individual before defining them by their racial/ethnic identity.	Problematic: Pakistani. Blacks. Asians. Preferred: A person from Pakistan. A person from Asia. A person from the Black community.
Racial and ethnic stereotypes and generalizations must be avoided.	Any type of generalization or stereotype contributes to the idea that people belonging to a group are the same and may perpetuate negative connotations associated with groups.	Problematic: "Chinese people don't park well." Preferred: Follow the recommendation of the general principle.

Preferred terms

The following is a list of preferred race- or ethnic-related terms and the problematic versions of these terms that must be avoided.

Please note, not everyone will choose the same way to describe themselves. Use the language preferred by the individual to ensure you are not making assumptions or perpetuating stereotypes.

Preferred	Problematic
A person of Asian heritage/background/descent.	Oriental. Asians.
A person of Black heritage/background/descent. A person from the Black community. A person who identifies as Black. A person who identifies as an African-Canadian. Please note: Some people refer to themselves as "Black" and others prefer "African-Canadian." Please check with the individual what their preferences are.	Coloured. Person of colour. African-Americans. Non-whites. Blacks.
A person of East Asian heritage/background/descent. A person of specific East Asian heritage, for example: - Person of Chinese heritage/background/descent	The/those East Asians [or specific nationality].

Preferred	Problematic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Person of Japanese heritage/background/descent - Person of Korean heritage/background/descent 	
<p>A person of South Asian heritage/background/descent.</p> <p>A person of specific South Asian heritage, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Person of Indian heritage/background/descent - Person of Pakistani heritage/background/descent 	The/those South Asians [or specific nationality].
<p>A person of Southeast Asian heritage/background/descent.</p> <p>A person of specific Southeast Asian heritage, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Person of Indonesian heritage/background/descent - Person of Thai heritage/background/descent 	The/those Southeast Asians [or specific nationality].
<p>A person of Middle Eastern heritage/background/descent.</p> <p>A person of specific Middle Eastern heritage, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Person of Egyptian heritage/background/descent - Person of Iraqi heritage/background/descent - Person of Israeli heritage/background/descent 	The/those Middle Easterners [or specific nationality].
<p>A person of Latin American heritage/background/descent, person who identifies as Hispanic.</p> <p>Please note: Some people refer to themselves as “Latin-American” and others prefer “Hispanic” or “Latina” or “Latinx.” Please check with the individual what their preferences are.</p> <p>A person of specific Latin American heritage, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Person of Brazilian heritage/background/descent - Person of Costa Rican heritage/background/descent - Person of Mexican heritage/background/descent 	The/those Latin Americans [or specific nationality].

Preferred	Problematic
<p>A person of European heritage/background/descent, person who identifies as Caucasian.</p> <p>A person of specific European heritage, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Person of German heritage/background/descent - Person of French heritage/background/heritage - Person of Italian heritage/background/descent 	<p>The/those Europeans [or specific nationality].</p>
<p>Bi-racial. Multi-racial individuals.</p>	<p>Mixed race. Half or half-breed.</p>
<p>Developing world.</p>	<p>Third world.</p>
<p>Equity-<i>deserving</i> groups</p> <p>Please note</p> <p>The emphasis on deserving recognizes that groups' barriers to equal access, opportunities and resources are due to marginalization created by attitudinal, historical and environmental barriers.</p> <p>This term is not limited to racialized groups and can be applicable to other marginalized groups.</p>	<p>Equity-<i>seeking</i> groups</p>

Sexual Orientation



Sexual orientation refers to the characteristics and attributes someone is attracted to. Sexual orientation is *not a choice* and people's sexual orientation can change as they grow older or experience different life events. Sexual orientation is also a spectrum and people can be attracted to a range of characteristics between the male/female binaries.

Sexual orientation is not the same as **gender identity**. Sexual orientation is the outward attraction people feel for others, while gender identity is how we describe our gender to others.

The [Ontario Human Rights Code](#) protects individuals from discrimination based on sexual orientation in the protected social areas.

Phrases and terms that have historically been used to convey negative connotations towards the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Two-Spirit plus (LGBTQ2S+) community are not acceptable in inclusive language. For example, referring to something as being "gay" to suggest it is bad perpetuates negative and demeaning attitudes around people who are gay or lesbian. Inclusive language for sexual orientation should be respectful of the range of sexual orientations that exist and should not portray any underlying opinion or judgement.

Definitions of terms related to sexual orientation

To practice inclusive language, one should familiarize themselves with the terms and meanings related to different sexual orientations.

- **Heterosexual** is a term for people who are physically and emotionally attracted to persons of the opposite sex
- **Straight** is a colloquial term specifically for heterosexual persons. (This phrase is outdated, and use is not recommended.)
- **Gay** refers to a person who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to members of the same gender identity. This term can be used to describe men, women and non-binary people
- **Lesbian** refers to people who identify as woman that are attracted to people who identify as woman
- **“Bi” or Bisexual** refers to people who are physically and emotionally attracted to persons of more than one gender
- **Pansexual** refers to people who are not limited in their ability to develop attraction to people of any gender identity, sex assigned at birth or gender expression
- **Asexual** refers to a lack of sexual attraction to others
- **Queer** is an umbrella term for sexual and gender minorities that are not heterosexual or cisgender
- **Questioning** refers to persons who are exploring their sexuality
- **Homophobia** refers to fear or contempt for people who are gay or lesbian
- **Heteronormativity** refers to a cultural state in which heterosexuality is considered “normal” and gay and lesbian behaviour and related activities are considered “deviant”
- Refer to Indigenous Peoples section to review the definition of “Two-Spirit”

General principles

Here are some general principles for inclusive language on the topic of sexual orientation.

General principles	Important because...	Examples
Do not ask what someone’s sexual orientation is.	Sexual orientation is a very personal subject. Asking someone about this can be considered intrusive and offensive.	Problematic: “Do you like guys or girls?” Preferred: Follow the recommendation of the general principle.
Do not assume what someone’s sexual orientation is	Someone’s appearance or behaviour cannot be, and should not, be used to assess their sexual orientation. Assumptions about sexual orientation can create inaccurate and hurtful stereotypes.	Problematic: “Eduardo does a lot of cleaning; it makes me wonder if he is gay.” Preferred: Follow the recommendation of the general principle.

General principles	Important because...	Examples
Do not use terms and phrases that associate being gay or lesbian negatively.	This is offensive to persons who are gay and lesbian and creates stigma.	Problematic: “That is so gay.” Preferred: “That sucks.” “That is not good.”
Do not ask who the “man” or “woman” is in a same-sex relationship.	This insinuates that persons who are gay or lesbian have a gender role to play in a relationship.	Problematic: “Is Sergio the woman in your relationship?” Preferred: Follow the recommendation of the general principle
Do not call relationships between same-sex couples “same-sex” relationships unless it is necessary to clarify.	This unnecessarily treats same-sex relationships different from heterosexual relationships.	Problematic: “Suki is in a same-sex relationship.” Preferred: “Suki is in a relationship.”
Do not go out of your way to state that you are not gay or lesbian.	This could be considered offensive as it denotes you consider being gay or lesbian as problematic or to be avoided.	Problematic: “I’m not gay, but I support gay rights.” Preferred: “I support gay rights.”

Preferred terms

The following is a list of preferred terms relating to sexual orientation and the problematic versions of these terms that must be avoided.

Preferred	Problematic
Lesbian. Gay. Gay and lesbian community. LGTBQ2S+ community.	Queer (as an insult). Homosexual. Please note: Some members of the gay/lesbian community reject the term “homosexual” due to its historical use to frame attraction to the same sex as a disease. For more information, refer to GLAAD’s Media Reference Guide – Glossary of Terms: LGBTQ
Sexual orientation.	Sexual preference.
Relationship. Same-sex relationship. Same-sex couple. Gay couple. Lesbian couple. Please note: Only use “same-sex relationship” instead of “relationship” if clarifying the “same-sex” nature of the relationship is necessary to the point being communicated.	Homosexual relationship. Homosexual couple.
Gay lives. Lesbian lives. Gay and lesbian lives.	Gay lifestyle. Homosexual lifestyle.
Bisexual.	Person who swings both ways.
Heterosexual.	Normal. Straight. Please note: Some members of the gay/lesbian community reject the use of the word “straight”

Preferred	Problematic
	due to the potential implication that gays and lesbians “deviate” from normalcy.
Issues relating to persons who are gay/lesbians.	Gay agenda. Lesbian agenda. Homosexual agenda.
Partner. Spouse.	Boyfriend. Husband. Girlfriend. Wife.

Promoting the use of inclusive language

While language is not always intended to exclude a person or a group, it may unintentionally have that effect. Becoming conscious of how language impacts others can help prevent feelings of exclusion and discomfort.

We all have a role to play in preventing the use of offensive rhetoric, narrative and language, and promoting the use of inclusive language. Here are some ways you can promote the use of inclusive language in your workplace, home, school or social setting:

- **Challenge yourself to use this Guide** to better understand the various topics and principles to learn the preferred terms to use when communicating in your community and workplace
- **Stay up-to-date with current terminology.** Language preferences and trends can evolve and change – sometimes quickly. Being aware of current terminology can help you be more inclusive in your communications
- **Recognize that all audiences are diverse.** Use language that is inclusive of everyone in your intended audience to celebrate and support diversity and inclusion in the community and in the workplace
- **If/when you make a mistake with your language, apologize.** Do not make excuses or ignore your mistake. Apologizing shows a commitment to learning and is a step in the right direction
 - If you find yourself in a situation where offensive and derogatory language is being used around you or about you, **turn the situation into a learning experience.** Strategies for reacting to offensive and derogatory language include:
 - **Rephrasing the term you heard (indirect):** Switching unacceptable terms with appropriate language in your responses back to the person you are having a conversation with. This provides what is known as a “social cue” - a spoken or non-spoken message that we give when responding to others. In this context, the social cue is that the language they are using is not appropriate and makes yourself and others uncomfortable
 - **Stopping, questioning and informing (direct):** Stopping an individual from using the language, questioning their use of the language and informing them why it is offensive. This strategy should only be used if you feel safe and comfortable doing so. You should never put yourself in a situation that feels unsafe or threatening. If you hear a colleague, friend or family member use language that makes you uncomfortable, you should take the opportunity to teach them about inclusive language
 - **Walking away and reporting (indirect):** This strategy should be used if you do not feel comfortable rephrasing offensive terms or informing the individual you are speaking with why the term is offensive. If you feel unsafe or uncomfortable, the appropriate action is to walk away and report the incident to the appropriate party, such as the person’s parent or

spouse (in a familial setting), a teacher (in a school setting) or a supervisor (in a workplace setting)

Let Us Know What You Think

We welcome your feedback. If you have any questions or feedback about this Guide or to request an accessible format, please contact us at:

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Committee of the Whole (1) Report

DATE: Tuesday, October 31, 2023

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: MULTI-YEAR ACCESSIBILITY PLAN 2023-2027

FROM:

Michael Coroneos, Deputy City Manager, Corporate Services, City Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

This report seeks Council's approval of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) for 2023-2027, which outlines the City's strategic approach to advancing accessibility and inclusion for all residents, visitors, and businesses in Vaughan.

Report Highlights

- This report presents the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) for 2023-2027, outlining the City's strategy to improve accessibility and inclusion for everyone in Vaughan.
- The MYAP was developed through extensive community consultations and staff engagement, ensuring diverse perspectives were considered.
- The plan's implementation will require collaboration across departments and regional partners, sharing knowledge and resources to enhance accessibility initiatives.
- By approving and implementing the MYAP, the City of Vaughan will demonstrate its commitment to creating a barrier-free environment for all residents, visitors, and businesses.

Recommendations

1. That the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2023-2027 be approved for implementation;
2. That staff be directed to monitor progress and provide annual updates to Council;

3. That necessary resources be allocated for the effective execution of the Plan;
and
4. That relevant departments and community stakeholders be engaged in the implementation process.

Background

The City of Vaughan is committed to fostering an accessible and inclusive environment for all individuals, regardless of their abilities. The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan was developed to ensure compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and demonstrate the City's dedication to going beyond compliance and envisioning a truly barrier-free community.

The MYAP outlines various strategies, goals, and initiatives that aim to enhance accessibility within the city. Consultations with individuals with disabilities, community stakeholders, and accessibility experts have informed the plan's development. The proposed plan offers the most comprehensive and effective approach to addressing accessibility barriers and fostering an inclusive environment.

Previous Reports/Authority

[Internal Audit – Accessibility Audit Report 2022.](#)

[2019-2022 City of Vaughan Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.](#)

[Annual Accessibility Status Report 2021 \(PDF\).](#)

[Annual Accessibility Status Report 2020 \(PDF\).](#)

Analysis and Options

The evolving population of Vaughan requires the City to adapt to meet the needs of all residents, including those with disabilities. It is a common misconception that disabilities are typically present from birth; however, approximately 80% of disabilities are acquired after age 16. As people age, the likelihood of experiencing visible or invisible disabilities grows, affecting their vision, hearing, speech, cognition, or mobility. By 2031, one in five residents in the Regional Municipality of York is projected to be over 65 years old. Additionally, an estimated one in 10 children lives with some form of visible or invisible disability, mental health challenges being among the most common.

According to the Canadian Survey on Disability (Statistics Canada 2017), out of a total population of 253,850 people in Vaughan, 54,450 have disabilities. This means that more than one-fifth of the population in Vaughan has a disability, and this proportion is increasing. It is likely to be a low estimate due to different definitions, stigma, and gaps in awareness. Vaughan has the highest proportion of people with disabilities among all nine municipalities in York Region.

To support the growing and aging population, especially those with disabilities, it is crucial to ensure that they can age in place in their homes and neighborhoods, and are engaged in local communities and economies. Creating healthy, active, and inclusive communities is essential, and planning toward an enabling environment for people with disabilities is the best guarantee of improved outcomes for everyone, including those with disabilities and their families and friends.

A crucial element in the development of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) was the extensive community consultation process and staff engagement. This process ensured that the voices of individuals with disabilities, community stakeholders, accessibility experts, and City staff were heard and integrated into the plan's strategic approach.

Development of the MYAP

The development of this MYAP has been shaped by a more extensive range of internal, community, and sectoral consultations than ever before. The consultation process has involved individuals with disabilities, organizations focusing on disability and inclusion, and associations representing people with disabilities in Vaughan, York Region, and beyond.

The City has accomplished this through community mapping and outreach to local and regional groups and networks with specialized expertise, community leaders working on advancing accessibility and inclusion, and the Vaughan Accessibility Advisory Committee. Consultation methods included surveys and one-on-one interviews conducted by a third party, ensuring candid and open feedback by guaranteeing anonymous reporting. The consultation process also provided opportunities for staff to respond through surveys and interviews, informing aspects of the MYAP that focus on the AODA's employment standard. Broader public engagement involved community mapping and a digital storytelling platform (Have your say!) that utilized digital tools to expand our reach and collect a more diverse range of inputs.

Throughout this rigorous 8-month process, the City of Vaughan has ensured the inclusion of diverse perspectives with respect to the consulted individuals with disabilities, as disability is itself a broad and often misunderstood category. For example, common stereotypes suggest that disabilities are primarily congenital (from birth) or visible to others. However, most disabilities are acquired, and the majority are invisible. Disabilities can also be temporary due to accidents or injuries, may be related to aging, or may involve chronic conditions or sensory or neurological differences that are not always apparent to others, but significantly impact inclusion and accessibility for a significant number of people.

Another pillar of the current MYAP is the City's past work on advancing accessibility and inclusion to achieve the AODA's goals. Activities span every department and portfolio of the municipality. Assessing the City's current state and working towards developing, implementing, and reporting on policies, programs, and processes to enhance accessibility requires the engagement of a corporation-wide Accessibility Technical Advisory Committee (ATAC). The Accessibility TAC has representation from all portfolios. This internal technical committee, along with the public Vaughan Accessibility Advisory Committee and the City's staff in 'inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility' (IDEA) functions, all contribute to informing the annual status reports that are part of the regular MYAP review process, under City Council oversight.

Municipalities aim to fully embody the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) but creating a fully accessible province or city is a complex task. The world was designed with a narrow demographic in mind, making it difficult to adapt. Therefore, establishing and mainstreaming review and governance processes with a reasonable, achievable, yet forward-thinking approach is crucial.

A pillar of the City's next MYAP is to meaningfully engage and consult with the municipal AAC and beyond, including disability advocates, leaders, organizations and networks in partnerships and pilots that inform empowering and impactful inclusion practices. This will help position Vaughan as a model for other municipalities by 2027.

The consultation process involved the following steps:

Identifying Key Stakeholders:

The first step was to identify key stakeholders, including individuals with disabilities, organizations working on disability and inclusion, associations representing people with disabilities in Vaughan, York Region, and beyond, as well as City staff from various departments. Community mapping was used to identify local and regional groups and networks with specialized expertise.

Engaging Stakeholders and Staff:

A variety of engagement methods were used to gather feedback and input from stakeholders and City staff. These methods included surveys, one-on-one interviews, focus groups, and public meetings. A third party was engaged to conduct the surveys and interviews to ensure anonymity and encourage open, candid feedback.

Digital Storytelling Platform:

Broader public engagement was achieved through a digital storytelling platform called "Have Your Say!", which allowed community members and staff to share their experiences, insights, and ideas related to accessibility and inclusion. This platform leveraged digital tools to increase reach and collect a diverse range of inputs.

Ensuring Diversity of Perspectives:

The consultation process aimed to ensure the inclusion of diverse perspectives with respect to people with disabilities and staff members. Special attention was given to acknowledging the various types and degrees of disabilities, including invisible disabilities, temporary disabilities, and those related to aging or chronic conditions.

Interdepartmental Collaboration:

The process also involved collaboration with other City departments to ensure alignment with their respective goals and initiatives. This collaboration helped identify potential operational impacts and facilitated the incorporation of relevant strategies into the MYAP.

Reporting and Feedback:

The feedback and input gathered during the community consultation process were analyzed and incorporated into the MYAP. A summary of the findings and recommendations was presented to the Vaughan Accessibility Advisory Committee and City Council for their review and input.

The community consultation process and staff engagement played a vital role in shaping the MYAP, ensuring that it is reflective of the diverse needs and aspirations of the City of Vaughan's residents, visitors, businesses, and employees. This inclusive and collaborative approach has resulted in a comprehensive plan that will guide the City's efforts in creating an accessible and inclusive environment for all.

Financial Impact

The MYAP will require allocation of resources for its effective implementation. Funding will be sourced from the existing budget, and any additional costs will be identified and included in future budget and business planning process.

Operational Impact

The plan's execution will necessitate consultation and collaboration with other departments to ensure alignment with their respective goals and initiatives. Potential operational impacts will be identified and addressed throughout the implementation process.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

The MYAP's implementation will contribute to the accessibility and inclusion efforts within the broader York Region. The plan recognizes the importance of collaborating with neighbouring municipalities, regional partners, and relevant organizations to create a more cohesive and integrated approach to accessibility in the region. This

collaboration will foster the sharing of best practices, resources, and knowledge, enhancing regional accessibility initiatives and strengthening the collective impact.

The MYAP's alignment with the broader York Region Accessibility Strategy plays a crucial role in fostering a more accessible environment across the entire region. By implementing initiatives and strategies that contribute to this regional vision, the City of Vaughan enhances accessibility and inclusion throughout the area.

Cross-jurisdictional collaboration between the City of Vaughan, neighbouring municipalities, and other levels of government facilitates the development and implementation of joint accessibility initiatives. This cooperation leads to more effective and efficient use of resources, resulting in significant and lasting improvements in accessibility and inclusion.

Active participation in regional forums, conferences, and networks focused on accessibility and inclusion allows the City of Vaughan to share experiences, best practices, and lessons learned with other municipalities and organizations. This knowledge-sharing contributes to the ongoing improvement of accessibility initiatives across the region.

The City of Vaughan can enhance its accessibility initiatives by leveraging partnerships with regional organizations, service providers, and advocacy groups. These partnerships provide additional resources, expertise, and support to help the City achieve its accessibility goals.

Engaging in advocacy efforts at regional, provincial, and federal levels enables the City of Vaughan to promote progressive policies and legislation that support accessibility and inclusion for all Canadians. By actively participating in these efforts, the City can influence decision-makers and help shape the broader accessibility landscape.

The implementation of MYAP will contribute significantly to broader regional impacts and considerations. By actively engaging in regional collaboration and partnerships, sharing knowledge and best practices, and advocating for progressive policies and legislation, the City of Vaughan will play a vital role in fostering a more accessible and inclusive environment across the York Region and beyond.

Conclusion

The approval and implementation of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2023-2027 will further the City of Vaughan's commitment to accessibility and inclusion. It will help ensure that residents, visitors, and businesses experience a barrier-free environment

where individuals of all abilities can thrive. Upon approval, staff will begin executing the plan and provide annual updates to Council on its progress.

For more information, please contact: Zincia Francis, Diversity and Inclusion Officer

Attachments

1. 2023-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.
2. 2023-2027 MYAP Engagement Report.

Prepared by

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Approved by



Michael Coroneos, Deputy City Manager, Corporate Services, City Treasurer and CFO


Reviewed by



Nick Spensieri, City Manager

2023-2027

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan



We respectfully acknowledge that the City of Vaughan is situated in the Territory and Treaty 13 lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. We also recognize the traditional territories of the Huron-Wendat and the Haudenosaunee. The City of Vaughan is home to many First Nations, Métis and Inuit people today. As representatives of the people of the City of Vaughan, we are grateful to have the opportunity to work and live in this territory.

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To request an accessible format of this report contact accessibility@vaughan.ca, Service Vaughan at 905-832-2281 or by TTY at 1-866-543-0545.

MESSAGE FROM

Mayor Steven Del Duca



At the City of Vaughan, we are committed to treating everyone in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in integration and fair access for

residents, visitors and employees with visible or non-visible disabilities.

Vaughan must be barrier-free, and our goal is to become a completely accessible municipality. The City wants to ensure Vaughan is welcoming, inclusive and a place where people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds can thrive.

Planning for this goal is no small task – it's an essential part of Vaughan's future, and we are dedicated to working with our partners and residents to ensure we can achieve it. We are stronger together, and it's only together that we can accomplish our ambitious goals.

Our Multi-Year Accessibility Plan charts our path forward and will keep us on the right track.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Del Duca'.

Steven Del Duca

Mayor of Vaughan

MESSAGE FROM

Accessibility Advisory Committee Chair, Councillor Gila Martow



As the Chair of the City of Vaughan's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC), I am honoured to play a role in the development and implementation of our City's Multi-Year

Accessibility Plan. This comprehensive strategy is designed to prepare the way for a more inclusive and accessible Vaughan, where every resident has the opportunity to actively participate in our vibrant community.

Our vision is grounded in the belief that inclusivity enhances the overall well-being of our residents and visitors and serves as a cornerstone of our diverse city. The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan encompasses a wide range of initiatives, each aimed at breaking down barriers and ensuring people of all abilities can enjoy equal access to the resources and opportunities our city offers.

The plan covers many facets of accessibility, including the creation of user-friendly public spaces, improvements in transportation services, and the development of more accessible

communication channels. It also emphasizes the importance of inclusive employment practices, support for accessible workplaces, and the provision of recreational and cultural programs that cater to the diverse needs of our community.

To bring this plan to life, we rely on the dedication and collaboration of our City staff, local businesses, and community partners. As Chair of the Vaughan AAC, I am committed to working closely with stakeholders, disability advocates and residents to ensure the Plan remains effective, adaptive and reflective of our community's diverse perspectives.

Together, let us strive to make Vaughan a shining example of accessibility and inclusivity, where every individual has the chance to contribute to our city's success and enjoy a fulfilling life.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gila Martow". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Councillor Gila Martow

Chair, Accessibility Advisory Committee

MESSAGE FROM

City Manager Nick Spensieri



The City of Vaughan is committed to creating a barrier-free community and workplace with universal access to its programs, services and facilities.

The 2023-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan builds on the successes of the [2019-2022 Accessibility Plan](#) (PDF) and reinforces the City's priority to foster an active, engaged and inclusive community, as outlined in Vaughan's [2022-2026 Term of Council Service Excellence Strategic Plan](#).

This plan addresses how staff will continue to design barrier-free public spaces, enhance transportation and customer service, and use accessible communication and information channels

to meet the diverse needs of the community. It also underscores the significance of championing inclusive employment practices and accessible workplaces.

Thank you to the City staff, the Technical Advisory Committee and the Vaughan Accessibility Advisory Committee, chaired by Councillor Gila Martow, for preparing this comprehensive plan.

I look forward to making further advancements in accessibility and continuing to improve the quality of life for all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Spensieri', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Nick Spensieri
City Manager

Commitment to an Accessible Vaughan

Welcome to the City of Vaughan's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) for the years 2023-2027. This comprehensive five-year plan aims to create an accessible and barrier-free environment for all the city's residents, visitors and businesses.

The 2023-2027 MYAP reflects our shared commitment to an inclusive and accessible city. Aligned with fostering Active, Engaged and Inclusive Communities – a strategic priority in the City's 2022-2026 Term of Council Service

Excellence Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan) – this MYAP aims to create a vibrant, diverse and equitable city for all residents, valuing the contributions of people with disabilities. Additionally, the City strives to apply the 'Social Model' of disability in accessibility planning. This model considers barriers to accessibility as issues in the environment that must be resolved. The more prevalent 'Medical Model' generally frames the individual's difference as a problem to solve.

In alignment with the principles of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*, our vision is to make Vaughan a model city for accessibility and inclusion. The MYAP outlines various strategies, goals and initiatives that will ensure people of all abilities can enjoy equal access to opportunities, services and facilities within the City.

The MYAP is the result of extensive consultations with community members, stakeholders and accessibility experts. It is a living document, designed to be flexible and adaptive to the evolving needs of our community. The plan will be reviewed, assessed and updated regularly to ensure its continued effectiveness and relevance.



It is essential to consider the various levels of government jurisdiction and their different roles in promoting accessibility and inclusion in the context of this MYAP. The City exercises direct control over municipal services, infrastructure and programs, enabling the implementation of accessibility initiatives at the local level. As part of the Regional Municipality of York, Vaughan benefits from an area of influence that facilitates collaboration and the sharing of best practices with neighbouring municipalities. This regional co-operation allows for developing cohesive and integrated accessibility initiatives across the broader community.

Finally, the City advocates at the provincial and federal levels, pushing for progressive policies and legislation that support accessibility and inclusion for all Canadians. By actively participating in these different spheres, the City strives to advance accessibility across all levels of government, ensuring our community remains an exemplar of inclusivity and equal opportunity.

Accessibility Advisory Committee Members



Gila Martow
Ward 5 Councillor
Chair, Accessibility
Advisory Committee



Rudy
BARRELL



Noor
DIN



Nazila
ISGANDAROVA



Paresh
JAMNADAS



Nida
KHURSHID



Michael
NIGRO



Michelle
ZALDIN

Guiding Principles

This MYAP represents a collaborative effort between the City and stakeholders from all over Vaughan, as well as subject matter experts and partners across York Region and beyond.

As part of the development of this MYAP, the City actively engaged with diverse communities to gain insights into their idea of an accessible

city. Drawing from the community's valuable feedback, the City has derived five guiding principles to shape this plan and guide our actions.

The City is committed to:

Health and Safety: prioritizing the health, safety and wellness of the community and promoting equitable opportunities for all.

Clear and Accessible Information: providing clear and accessible communication to the public, ensuring everyone has the necessary information, resources and support to thrive.

Inclusion and Equity: equitable processes to foster a welcoming, flexible and inclusive environment that respects the unique needs of our diverse community.

Accessible City: an inclusive community that strives to eliminate physical, technological and attitudinal barriers for people with visible and invisible disabilities.

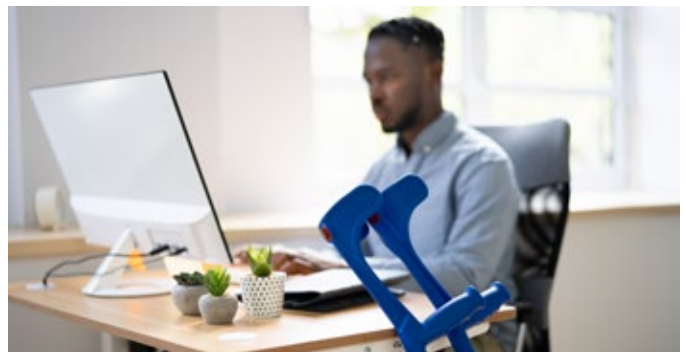
Continuous Improvement: receiving feedback and making the necessary changes to our policies, procedures and services to continuously enhance accessibility and inclusion.



General Requirements

The AODA outlines requirements organizations must follow to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities. These requirements encompass various areas, including customer service, information and communications, employment, transportation and design of public spaces. By adhering to these standards, the City aims to foster an inclusive environment that promotes equal access and participation for all individuals, regardless of their abilities.

The General Requirements contain guidelines on establishing and maintaining an accessibility plan to remove barriers for people with disabilities. This involves considering accessibility during procurement and installing of self-service kiosks. Organizations must also provide relevant training on accessibility standards and the Human Rights Code, and ensure there are accessible feedback processes.



Training

AODA training is required for all City employees, including volunteers and interns, public appointees or officials providing goods, services or facilities on behalf of the City of Vaughan.

The City is committed to:

1.1 Enhancing employee knowledge and commitment to accessible customer service, equity, inclusion and human rights.

Key activities:

- Implement an inclusive training program that incorporates an intersectional approach and covers various types of disabilities, including mental health or cognitive conditions, invisible and episodic disabilities.

Procurement

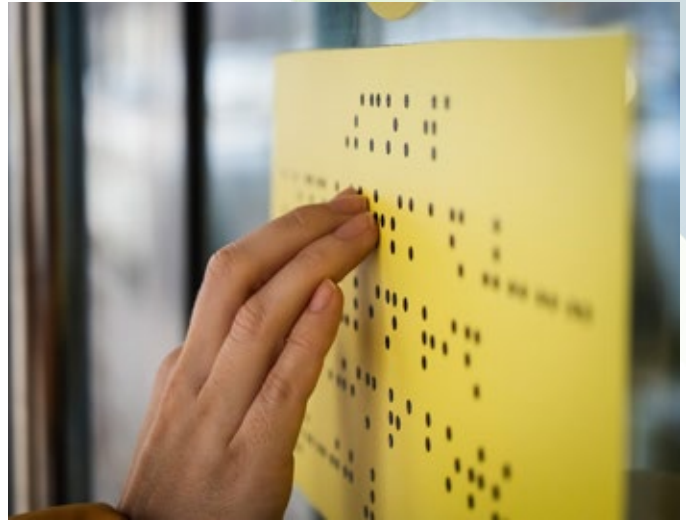
The AODA requires organizations to include accessibility criteria in procuring goods, services and facilities. This means accessibility is a component of all bids and contracts.

The City is committed to:

1.2 Integrating accessibility considerations into the procurement process, ensuring all procured products and services meet or exceed accessibility standards.

Key activities:

- Revise language in all bidding documents and contracts to incorporate explicit accessibility and training requirements exceeding the standard AODA statement.
- Ensure vendors follow applicable guidelines or standards on topics such as accessible documents, presentations, meetings, features and tools, and incorporate requirements into procurement evaluation criteria.



Information and Communications

The AODA Information and Communications Standards lays out rules for organizations when creating, providing and receiving information and communications that people with disabilities can access, to give everyone an equal chance to learn and be active in their communities. The City has initiated the Information and Communication Accessibility Project to ensure the accessibility and usability of web-based services and information for all users.

The City is committed to:

2.1 Ensuring equal access to information for all users, regardless of their abilities.

Key activities:

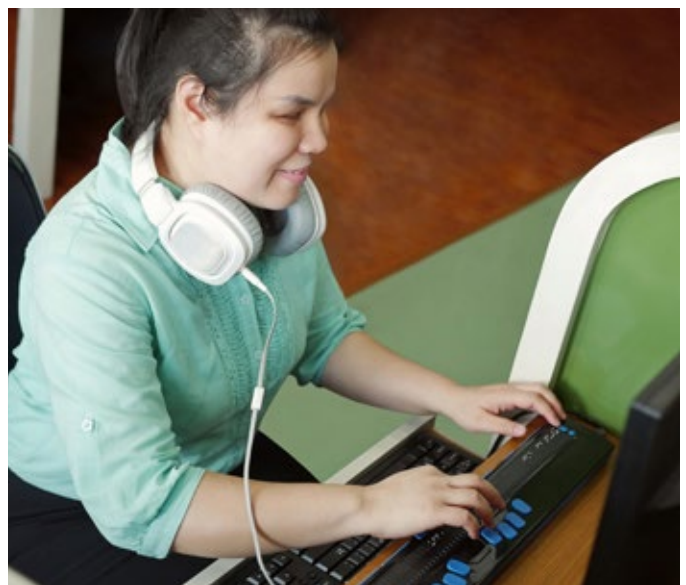
- Conduct an evaluation of accessibility compliance to identify areas of opportunity, establishing a baseline for future improvements.
- Develop recommendations and implementation plans to ensure the City meets or exceeds the AODA Information and Communications Standards.

- Build staff capacity through training focused on producing inclusive digital content across diverse platforms and formats, and promote the use of inclusive and plain language guides and best practices.

2.2 Establishing accessibility standards for all external meetings.

Key activities:

- Proactively plan and arrange for accommodations and ensure participants are provided with clear instructions on how to request any additional support.



Customer Service

The AODA Customer Service Standard outlines requirements for service providers to make their goods, services and facilities accessible for customers with disabilities. For municipalities, this means recognizing the rights, dignity and independence of people with disabilities, and working towards equal access to any of a City's services, goods or facilities for residents and visitors of all abilities. Full compliance requires the City to remove barriers that are attitudinal, systemic and physical.

The City is committed to:

3.1 Improving accessibility and inclusivity in service provision and communication for people with disabilities.

Key activities:

- Enhance accessibility of citizen and business surveys by offering accessible alternate formats on request; considering additional accessibility options for telephone surveys; and incorporating
- Update the Accessible Customer Service Policy to ensure continued relevance and effectiveness, and provide accessible customer service training that exceeds

AODA requirements and promotes inclusive language, increasing awareness of disabilities, and improved program implementation, adaptation and behaviour management.

- Develop a strategy for training and raising awareness among employees, the public, and third parties providing services on the City's behalf about the rights of people with disabilities to enter City facilities with a support animal, and the right of support persons to have free access to recreational services.
- Develop and implement inclusive services in alignment with the City's Accessible Customer Service and Accessibility Policies, while pursuing a strategy to procure and replace adaptive equipment and assistive technologies to continue making recreational programs more accessible.

The City's MYAP is driven by engagement with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) and consultations with disability-focused organizations, as well as the public and internal partners.

The City is committed to:

3.2 Fostering an inclusive and accessible City by regularly engaging with people with disabilities.

Key activities:

- Continue public engagement activities and consultations, particularly with the City's AAC and diverse disability communities, to ensure that programming, policies and services relating to customer service for people with disabilities are informed by a diverse range of lived experiences with disability.
- Maintain feedback loops through regular consultations with the City's AAC and leverage the City's and Region's growing networks of local and regional disability communities and organizations for further insights to inform strategies with expertise and analysis drawing on lived experience.
- Launch a wayfinding and accessibility pilot in partnership with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) to evaluate a technology solution for improving independent navigation of City facilities by people with vision-related disabilities.



Employment

The AODA Employment Standard aims to eliminate barriers and discrimination in all aspects of employment, including recruitment, selection, hiring, training, advancement and accommodations. Its goal is to create inclusive and accessible workplaces where people with disabilities have equal opportunities for employment and can fully contribute their skills and talents.

The City is committed to:

4.1 Developing an Accommodation Policy and Guide to foster an inclusive culture that prioritizes accessibility and continuous improvement in managing accommodation processes.

Key activities:

- Enhance staff awareness across all departments about available accommodation types and the process to discuss a request.
- Develop and implement a People Leader training program to ensure effective management of accommodation requests, promoting a supportive work environment that empowers staff to seek assistance as needed throughout their employment, including during role transitions.

- Promote a culture of accessibility and inclusion among staff by launching Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) to engage those with lived expertise or relevant life experience.

4.2 Fostering an inclusive workplace by provision of accessible formats and communication supports for all staff, and by expanding employment and co-op opportunities for people with disabilities.

Key activities:

- Develop comprehensive accessibility guidelines for all virtual, hybrid and in-person meetings, considering and addressing accommodation needs across the organization and ensuring guidelines are communicated and standardized.
- Leverage strategic partnerships with community agencies or local business networks and employment programs to enhance co-op and employment opportunities for people with disabilities, thereby promoting workplace accessibility, diversity, equity and inclusion.

Transportation

The Transportation Standard of the AODA aims to make it easier for everyone to travel in Ontario. Elements of the Transportation Standard apply to organizations and agencies that provide transportation services such as public transit, taxicabs and school boards, hospitals and universities who provide such services (e.g. shuttle buses). Transit-related points are covered further on in this report as they fall under York Region's jurisdiction.

Under the Transportation Standard, municipalities are mandated to promote or facilitate the availability of accessible taxicabs to ensure equal opportunities for people with disabilities. Accessible taxis and the ability to travel with greater independence support social inclusion by enabling free movement, access to community activities, economic engagement and workforce participation.

The City's overall strategy on maintaining and managing transportation infrastructure promotes best practices, as well as AODA compliance.

The City is committed to:

5.1 Advocating and promoting accessible methods of transportation to provide inclusive options for individuals with disabilities.

Key activities:

- Engage with the AAC and use public forums to gather community inputs, collaborating with people with disabilities to understand their specific needs and preferences.
- Evaluate feedback to establish the optimal proportion of on-demand accessible taxicabs needed and develop a plan to promote adequate availability of accessible taxi services for the community.
- Promote accessibility by requiring AODA compliant transportation infrastructure and accessible on-street parking, while continuing to promote active transportation.
- Create and implement standardized AODA requirements in design criteria relating to sidewalks, cycling facilities and roadways.



- Complete an asset review of traffic calming infrastructure (crossings, crosswalks, pavement markings, etc.) and develop recommendations to improve accessibility and reduce barriers or unsafe passage for young children, older adults and people with diverse disabilities.
- Develop an Intelligent Transportation Systems strategy to promote technological innovation that increases accessibility. This strategy will help plan and install equipment and technologies to support accessible and touchless traffic signals.
- Conduct a Wayfinding Signage Pilot that is part of the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (VMC) Parks and Wayfinding Master Plan. The pilot will gather feedback from the community to evaluate the effectiveness of five new signs, helping the City better respond to the way people understand and move through Vaughan's downtown and its parks and open spaces. Building on this pilot, the City will improve guidelines on signage and wayfinding in public spaces.

Design of Public Spaces

The AODA Design of Public Spaces Standard is central for municipalities to achieve inclusion and accessibility in community infrastructure. It provides guidelines for designing and constructing public spaces, ensuring equal access for people with disabilities. Compliance with this standard enables the creation of inclusive spaces that consider the needs of all community members, promoting independence and quality of life.

The City is committed to:

6.1 Implementing a comprehensive accessibility improvement plan with regular audits and upgrades to enhance accessibility of municipal facilities and infrastructure and promoting compliance by external stakeholders.

Key activities:

- Prioritize building upgrades based on a Building Accessibility Assessment, starting with sites with highest actual and potential use by people with disabilities, showing progress each year, and

conducting an inventory of accessibility gaps, determining the level of urgency and need for upgrades, current and upcoming.

- Formalize a process to include AODA compliance in development application plan reviews for both developer build and capital projects, incorporating consultations with the AAC.

6.2 Advancing compliance and best practices in wayfinding and signage, recreational trails, facilities, parks, playgrounds and outdoor spaces as the City constructs, redevelops or upgrades.

Key activities:

- Establish new signage standards and guidelines for trails and public spaces maintained by the City and audit all signage in recreation sites to meet accessibility standards.
- Develop and implement standardized AODA-compliant design criteria for sidewalks, cycling facilities, roadways and other infrastructure.

Excellence in Accessibility

Advocacy and commitment to social change are priorities for the disability communities who have generously participated in consultations to develop this MYAP. As such, the City is committed to promoting accessibility and inclusion in areas outside of our jurisdiction where the City may have varying degrees of influence, and to promoting a broader culture of innovation and inclusion towards accessibility for all.

Accelerating Accessibility Coalition

The City joined the Accelerating Accessibility Coalition convened by the Urban Land Institute (ULI) Toronto. This new coalition aims to promote the creation of accessible housing, and Vaughan will be the first local government to join.



Accessibility Champion Awards

The City acknowledges and honours accessibility champions, in collaboration with the AAC, to highlight innovative contributions towards greater inclusion and accessibility.

Inclusive Transit

The City is committed to promoting inclusion in transportation beyond its own jurisdiction, including accessible public transit. As part of this effort, the City will collaborate with York Region and transit partners to address gaps in accessible transit across cities and regions.

Key activities to advance this aspect of the AODA's Transportation Standard that is out of the City's jurisdiction will be to:

- conduct outreach, public meetings and surveys to gather feedback on transit needs and preferences to ensure community inputs inform planning and implementation of transit solutions in alignment with the specific requirements of different neighbourhoods and demographics.

- identify areas where transit gaps exist, such as underserved neighbourhoods or routes with greater barriers to accessibility, to ensure transit planning and implementation processes prioritize equity and inclusion. Establish regular communication channels to discuss transit issues, share data and exchange ideas on closing the gaps identified. Support York Region and transit partners in the design of targeted solutions for closing transit gaps based on the analysis conducted.
- research funding sources such as government grants, public-private partnerships and community initiatives to help secure the financial resources needed for addressing transit gaps. Explore opportunities for collaboration with neighbouring municipalities and transit authorities to create a seamless and interconnected regional transit network. Co-ordinate efforts and share best practices to address transit gaps that extend beyond York Region's borders.



Connect, Engage and Stay Informed

This MYAP is the result of community, internal, regional and sectoral collaborations that rely on continuous engagement. The City will revisit this plan regularly in the years ahead and provide annual reports to the public that share updates on progress to continue to foster communication, transparency and Service Excellence.

As such, the City is grateful for questions, thoughts and constructive feedback, and hopes residents and visitors to Vaughan will reach out with any inputs.

Contact accessibility@vaughan.ca or Service Vaughan at 905-832-2281 or by TTY at 1-866-543-0545 with any feedback or inquiries, or to request an accessible format of this report.

You can also [subscribe](#) to receive information, email updates and notices of community engagement activities relating to this plan.

For more information on the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA)* and *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*, contact:

Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility
777 Bay St., Suite 601A
Toronto, ON M7A 2J4

Telephone: 416-849-8276
Toll Free: 1-866-515-2025
TTY: 416-326-0148
TTY Toll Free: 1-800-268-7095
Fax: 416-325-9620

accessibility@ontario.ca
**Ministry for Seniors
and Accessibility webpage**



APPENDIX:

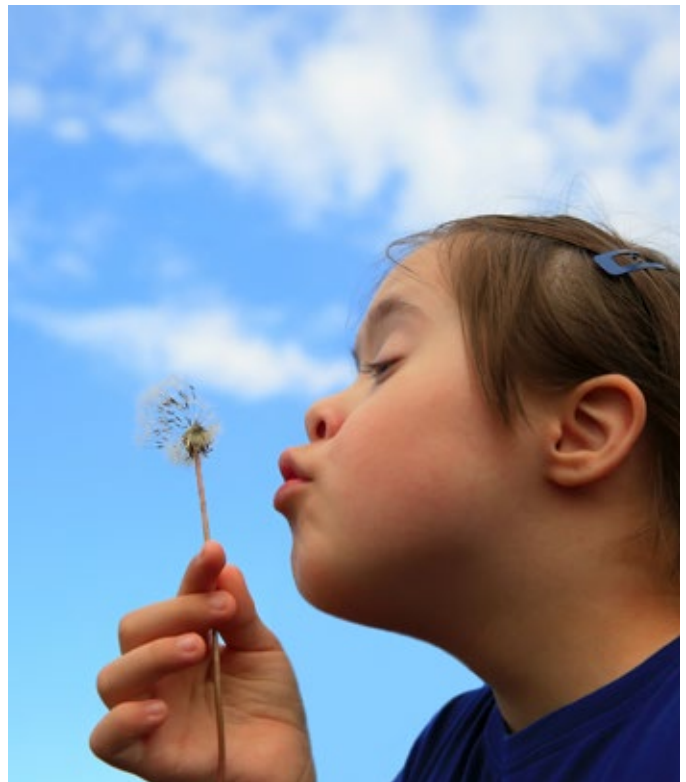
Snapshot of Disability in Vaughan

A snapshot of disability in Vaughan and York Region provides valuable insights into the diverse needs of our community members, enabling us to better tailor our accessibility initiatives to address these needs effectively.

In Vaughan, more than 20 per cent of the population has reported living with some form of disability, which includes mobility, vision, hearing, cognitive and other conditions. The prevalence of disabilities in any community increases with age, with seniors accounting for a significant proportion of those experiencing accessibility challenges.¹ As such, the City conducts planning specifically for disability communities through multi-year accessibility plans, and for an aging population, through the [Age-Friendly Community Action Plan](#) (PDF).

Similarly, within the broader York Region, close to 20 per cent of the population identifies as living with a disability. The disability profile across the region is diverse, with varying levels of severity and functional limitations. The most common types of disabilities reported include mobility, flexibility, pain-related and cognitive or mental health-related disabilities.

The demographic trends in Vaughan and York Region indicate a growing and aging population, which is likely to result in an increased prevalence of disability in the years ahead. These trends underscore the importance of prioritizing accessibility and inclusion in our community planning efforts, thereby promoting the ability of Vaughan residents to age in place while simultaneously contributing to a community more inclusive of diverse people with disabilities.





By understanding the unique needs and challenges faced by people with disabilities in Vaughan and York Region, we can develop and implement more effective strategies and initiatives as part of the MYAP. Building on our community engagement and deepening relationships of trust with diverse disability communities and subject-matter experts will help us effectively deliver on this MYAP. Demographic data, community consultations, user feedback

and other measures to evaluate progress on this MYAP will strengthen future decision-making on policy, planning and practice.

This data-driven, evidence-based approach will enable us to create a more accessible and inclusive city that fosters equal opportunities and an enhanced quality of life for all residents, businesses and visitors.

¹ Note that data is drawn from the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD). Statistics Canada is scheduled to begin releasing results from the 2022 CSD by early 2024.

City of Vaughan
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Vaughan, ON L6A 1T1
accessibility@vaughan.ca
vaughan.ca/accessibility



Multi-Year Accessibility Planning: Stakeholder Engagement Report

Community engagement data summary by
Ehl Harrison Consulting
Report development by City of Vaughan



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Vaughan is currently in the process of updating its **Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP)**. Critical to the MYAP update is understanding the experiences of community members, Council Members and staff.

Between January and April 2023, a multi-pronged engagement strategy – including interviews conducted with community organizations, individuals, and members of Council – was undertaken to reach diverse people with a range of accessibility-related experiences. Community members were also invited to share their accessibility stories through an **online portal**, and a staff survey was conducted to understand experiences in the workplace. The Accessibility Advisory Committee also provided valuable insight. More than 75 people generously offered their time, experiences and ideas.

Several key themes emerged under the five standards of the **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)**:

- Customer service
- Employment
- Information and communications
- Transportation
- Design of public spaces

Through the feedback from various organizations and individuals, the project team heard about a range of barriers that exist across all areas covered by the AODA. Participants also shared that they have observed and experienced positive and improved accessibility.

Insights gained from this engagement that are within the City's scope and capacity will inform the 2023-2027 MYAP. The plan will be presented to City Council to seek approval and allocation of resources. Because a municipal government such as Vaughan has a specific jurisdiction which is not always well known by participants, some advice was offered that falls outside of the City's jurisdiction. Feedback will be shared with those other organizations, wherever possible. For example, feedback provided by participants that falls under the jurisdiction of the Regional Municipality of York will be shared with relevant departments from the Region.



SECTION 1: BACKGROUND

The **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)** requires municipalities in Ontario to develop and update multi-year accessibility plans to achieve full accessibility for people with disabilities by 2025. To comply with the AODA, businesses and organizations must follow these five standards that address various areas of accessibility:

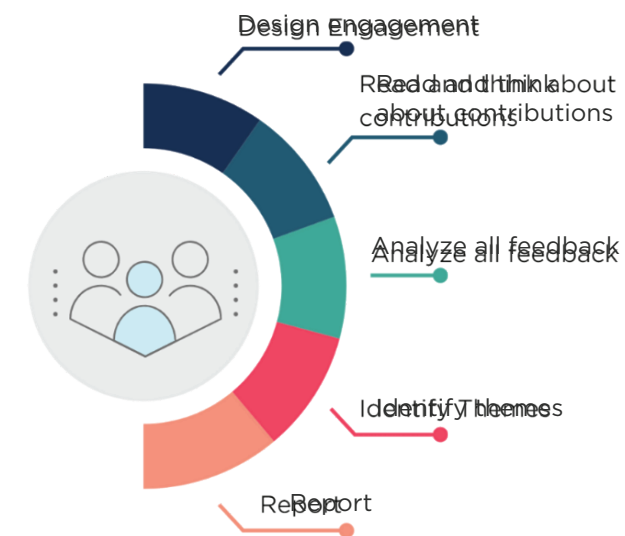
- Customer service
- Employment
- Information and communications
- Transportation
- Design of public spaces

To update its Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, the City completed a multi-pronged engagement strategy to reach diverse people with a range of accessibility-related experiences. The strategy included interviews with community organizations and Council Members, an online portal for members of the community to share accessibility stories, a staff survey and interviews, and touchpoint meetings with the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

People were invited to participate in interviews through a direct e-mail. Those interested were invited to book a time through a web-based application, and to select their preferred way of meeting: in person, via Zoom or on the telephone. Interviews were conducted through all three formats.

Members of the community were invited to share their accessibility stories on the City's **Have Your Say platform**. The City promoted this opportunity through a number of its channels, including public service announcements and social media.

The general flow of engagement activities is shown in the image below.



By the Numbers

More than 75 participants between Jan. 26 and April 2, including:

- Eight Council interviews
- 14 community member and community organization interviews
- 10 digital storytelling participants (16 stories)
- Eight Accessibility Advisory Committee members

Figure 1 The flow of engagement activities is depicted in the chart, starting with 'Design engagement', followed by 'Read and think about contributions', 'Analyze all feedback', 'Identify themes' and 'Report.'



What We Talked About

During interviews, surveys, touchpoints with the Accessibility Advisory Committee and in the 'Have Your Say' stories, people shared their visions for accessibility in Vaughan, as well identified what was working well and what barriers they have faced or observed. We also asked participants to identify their priority actions so these could be meaningfully incorporated in the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan where possible. Through community conversations, it became evident that achieving a barrier-free Vaughan must be a team effort between all levels of government, community organizations and residents. Each has specific roles, yet all share responsibility and interest in an accessible Vaughan.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the community organizations, community members, the Accessibility Advisory Committee, Vaughan Council Members and staff for taking the time to share their experiences, wisdom, stories and guidance. Their insights are being utilized by the project team to inform development of the City's next Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

We acknowledge the following community organizations, and encourage ongoing partnerships so that together, the shared vision can be achieved.

- Bridge North
- Clarico Place
- Bruno Haché, Autism Advocate
- Creating Alternatives Day Program
- Canadian Hearing Services
- Dani's Place
- Dignity Transportation
- Flex For Access
- Hanging Out Together
- Jaffari Community Centre
- Joe Baker & Co.
- Sandgate Women's Shelter
- Viability
- Vita Community Living Services

The next section of this report summarizes the insights and priorities shared by more than 40 external stakeholders. The detailed input provided by staff regarding workplace accessibility is being considered internally.

SECTION 2: OVERVIEW OF THEMES

This section identifies the themes that emerged across all engagement activities, related to accessibility matters within the City of Vaughan’s jurisdiction. More detailed accounts of stakeholder interviews, stories contributed by the public and advice offered by the Accessibility Advisory Committee are provided in Appendices 2 and 3. Additional stakeholder insights that are outside the scope of this project have been excerpted and included in Appendix 4.

In this section, contributors are referred to as “stakeholders” to acknowledge that everyone in the community is impacted by, or has a stake in, accessibility.

Vision for Accessibility

Stakeholders describe an accessible city as one with no barriers and accessible to all that can be experienced by everyone. Several stakeholders expand this definition adding that an accessible city needs to include safety, belonging and inclusion. Stakeholders highlight the need to look at accessibility broadly and include invisible disabilities, such as mental health and hearing loss, so everyone has opportunities to thrive. Policies, processes, procedures and people must be flexible to meet individual needs. Effectively sharing meaningful information is critical to achieving this vision.

Keywords that were used by participants included:

- barrier-free
- for all, everyone
- health and safety
- belonging
- inclusion
- flexible
- sharing information
- leads by example
- understanding
- genuine striving
- ongoing reflection
- accessible viewpoint

The stories shared during the public engagement process represent the community’s vision for a person-centred approach to accommodating people with disabilities within the areas of civic life that fall under the City’s jurisdiction. These stories are based on first-hand experiences and observations of the current state of accessibility. While some improvements have been made, there are still areas where gaps exist. For instance, the presentation stage for the Accessibility Champion Award ceremony was inaccessible to some participants, sending a mixed message. People with disabilities should have a voice in determining how they are included, rather than having decisions made for them.

Given the diversity of people and the accommodations required to ensure their full participation in civic life, the update process presents an opportunity to re-evaluate existing practices and consider a more comprehensive approach with adequate resources. It was proposed that the City establish an Accessibility Office to prioritize accessibility throughout all aspects of civic life. This office would provide a dedicated focus on creating a fully accessible city for everyone and could serve a pivotal role in co-ordinating efforts across various departments.



Strengths and Barriers

Lived experience with accessibility is quite diverse. Some stakeholders acknowledge and appreciate steps the City has already taken. Many describe a range of barriers that still exist including specific physical, attitudinal barriers or information and technology barriers.

STRENGTHS

Many stakeholders noted positive enhancements across the city, including physical infrastructure such as more automatic doors or additional curb cuts on roads. Stakeholders acknowledged that new buildings and developments are more accessible.

Offering multiple ways for someone to get information or participate, such as online options for engagement (online voting or virtual meetings) is appreciated. Many stakeholders also highlighted they feel the City is open to learning from and working with staff and community partners to become more accessible, emphasizing that the City does listen.

Furthermore, there was recognition of the diverse work being carried out by the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion team at the City.

BARRIERS

While stakeholders identified positive achievements, several barriers still exist. These have been grouped according to AODA standards. An additional category, City Services, was also added to capture ideas that do not neatly fit into other categories, but are within the City's jurisdiction.

Information and Communications

- There is a lack of awareness about where to access information about accessibility. For example, stakeholders were not aware of information currently available on the City's website and felt that it should be centralized and promoted.
- There are barriers for people who are deaf or hard of hearing in accessing information both in person and online. More generally, a range of accessible formats are necessary to support neurodiversity, and the specific needs of different disabilities.
- City's updated website presents challenges for users.

Transportation

- Many of the stories shared by community members were focused on transportation-related challenges.
- Scheduling and timing of specialized transit is often not meeting needs.
- There are no cross municipal border public transit options available.
- There is a lack of accessible on-street and lot parking.
- There is a lack of announcements/notifications on YRT buses.

Design of Public Spaces

- There is concern about safety of sidewalks and crosswalks (uneven walkways, lack of curb cuts in some areas, not enough time to cross intersections, uncleared sidewalks during the winter).
- Push button, automatic doors are found to be non-existent or malfunctioning in public and private buildings.
- There is a lack of Hoyer lifts in community centres.
- Acoustics at City Hall can be a barrier for people who are deaf or have hearing loss.
- Fully accessible washroom facilities in some public facilities.



City Services

- There is a necessity to clear snow in a timely way from sidewalks and paths so people can move freely around the city.
- There is not enough direct engagement with vulnerable populations.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

Stakeholders identified overarching opportunities to improve accessibility in Vaughan, including:

- increase engagement with people with lived experience.
- reduce and eliminate attitudinal barriers and stigma that exist about disabilities.
- take concrete actions to make a substantive difference in accessibility.
- establish a dedicated Accessibility Office and promote employment opportunities for people with disabilities.
- advocate to the Province for an updated strengthened AODA.

There was also a suggestion to develop a robust communication plan and implementation plan, with goals that were measurable for the next MYAP.

Opportunities for action related to specific AODA standards relevant to the City's jurisdiction were also identified.

Information and Communications

- Improve ability to communicate with people who are deaf and have hearing loss (i.e., use of technology at customer service counters, sharing information on website).
- Identifying required accommodations in advance can ensure full participation in committee processes.
- Expand methods for distributing/sharing information (i.e., use of videos).
- Strengthen communication tools for community members to notify the City of accessibility issues.
- Use inclusive language in communication materials and on website.
- Create a central location on the City's website for information and for questions/requests (for community). This should also include a central telephone number to call for answers and information.
- Explore options for Hearing Loop Systems at City Hall and for sign-language interpretation at public events.

Employment

- Create more employment and volunteer opportunities for people with disabilities at the City. Consider partnership with the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce.
- Ensure policies and procedures consider invisible disabilities as well as visible disabilities.
- Develop policies should be person and equity centred.

Transportation

- Support and advocacy by the City for transit enhancements to York Regional Transit. Opportunities for advocacy include:
 - » Promote provision of cross-border public transit options (i.e., option to travel from Vaughan to Toronto at no additional cost).
- Identified need for information about the public transportation system and specialized on-request transportation options such as Mobility Plus. This could also involve directing people to information sources at York Region.

Design of Public Spaces

- Continue upgrades/enhancements within buildings and spaces across the city, in particular older buildings:
 - » Ensure accessible entrances and pathways (including ramps)
 - » Consider long push button bars and automatic doors versus smaller push button door openers
- Ensure parks and playgrounds are accessible for diverse abilities.
- Reduce barriers on sidewalks such as snow piles or cracks to ensure safety.
- More crosswalks and sidewalks are needed for pedestrian safety and to reduce the distance to cross a roadway.
- Actions are needed to accommodate people with vision loss and blindness.
- Ensure accessible washrooms in all City buildings and spaces. This comment was more broadly given regarding washrooms in private buildings as well.
- Enhance/revise accessible parking strategy.
- Conduct community accessibility audits.
- Increase signage in City facilities and outdoor spaces.

City Services

- Create additional programs for people with disabilities (e.g., sewing/knitting, other clubs, extended day programming).
- Provide discounts and/or free programs for people with disabilities.
- Increase conversations/education on diversity of accessibility needs by creating opportunities for engagement with people with lived experiences.
- Increase wayfinding in City facilities and outdoor spaces.
- Champions at all levels are needed to lead by example and include accessibility in the design of city processes.
- Neighbours can play an important role in the lives of people with disabilities, and the City could assist by conveying information about being mindful of their needs.

These themes provide important direction for the City in updating the MYAP. The themes, however, should be read alongside more detailed feedback in the appendices, which give a more nuanced view of accessibility experiences, positive and challenging, along with priorities of the people who graciously contributed their ideas.



SECTION 3: CONCLUSIONS

Through this engagement effort, community organizations, individuals, staff and Council Members provided their insights and ideas about how Vaughan can continue to improve accessibility across all five areas of the AODA. While some of the comments are outside of the City's jurisdiction, they were also captured and will be shared with the Region or other organizations, as appropriate.

The next steps are for the staff team to integrate these findings, connect them to specific actions with priorities and seek approval through Vaughan Council. Providing feedback to all who have been involved about how their guidance was utilized is also critical to building interest and partnerships to achieve the comprehensive vision shared during this engagement.

Any questions associated with the insights provided by stakeholders can be directed to Tracey Ehl, Principal, Ehl Harrison Consulting at tracey@ehlharrison.com or 925-825-9870.

Appendix 1: Community Stakeholder Interviews

A total of 14 interviews with external community stakeholders were completed. Of 14 interviewees, five self-identified as people with disabilities.

QUESTION-BY-QUESTION RESPONSES

- 1. Thinking about all the AODA categories for accessibility (customer service; employment; information and communications; transportation; and the built environment, including indoor and outdoor spaces), what does an accessible community look like to you? Please provide your vision in one or two sentences. Similar to other stakeholder groups, external stakeholders envision a community without barriers for people with disabilities, where safety and freedom of movement are guaranteed. Additionally, they desire a community that is fully accessible and inclusive, allowing everyone to participate and be heard.**

It's worth noting that for these stakeholders, accessibility extends beyond physical structures to include equality, acceptance and freedom from bias. They emphasize the importance of accommodating invisible disabilities, such as mental health and neurodivergence, and creating a community that is free from discrimination.

To achieve this vision, stakeholders used terms like appreciation, equality, respect and inclusion, emphasizing the need for people to feel comfortable and free to participate in the community without feeling ostracized. Overall, stakeholders hope for a community that is accessible and accepting for all individuals.

- 2. How does your experience in the City of Vaughan compare to this? What would you say are Vaughan's strengths that you have seen or experienced when it comes to accessibility?**

According to many stakeholders, the City is actively working to improve physical accessibility. They cited examples such as widening of sidewalks, incorporating accessible features into new buildings/spaces, and enhancing community centers, housing options and the City's website.



Overall, stakeholders felt the City strives to meet its AODA requirements and expressed a positive sentiment towards the City's willingness to learn and collaborate with residents and partners to make the city more accessible. One stakeholder even praised the City's receptiveness, stating that "they (Council and staff) do listen."

Some stakeholders believe the City is already doing well in terms of accessibility. A service provider representative mentioned they are receiving an increasing number of inquiries from staff seeking information on how to eliminate barriers, indicating a proactive approach.

Additionally, stakeholders acknowledged the value of York Regional Transit (YRT) as a community asset frequently used by their program participants. Another stakeholder recognized the City's by-laws and enforcement teams as an asset in improving accessibility.

3. What would you say are the barriers that you have seen or experienced to accessibility in City programs, services, policies, facilities right now? Who experiences them?

During consultations, several stakeholders identified persistent physical barriers in accessing public and private buildings across Vaughan, including examples such as steep or poorly designed ramps, snow not being cleared from bus stops, non-flush building entrances, malfunctioning automatic doors, and lack of accessible washrooms and wider aisles. One stakeholder emphasized challenges experienced by the deaf community in communicating at service counters and accessing information on websites, while another highlighted the need for subtitles on videos and screen reader friendly website designs.

Several stakeholders identified issues with the Mobility Plus service, including scheduling difficulties, limited cross-border transportation options and difficulties in navigating the transit system. Transportation barriers were also noted as a primary hindrance for clients with physical disabilities accessing programs and services.

Other barriers identified include the need to improve accessibility in recreation spaces, reduce the cost of support workers and program space rentals, increase engagement, reduce stigma, and hire people with disabilities. Additionally, some stakeholders identified the lack of regulations safeguarding survivors of sex and human trafficking and the scarcity of affordable and supportive housing as significant barriers.

4. Do you feel that people with disabilities in the City of Vaughan have meaningful opportunities to engage in City policy-making, planning, and programming? How? Where? Strengths? Improvements?

According to some stakeholders, people with disabilities have meaningful opportunities to engage, including through the City's Accessibility Advisory Committee. These stakeholders feel the City is listening to their concerns, although more action is needed. They also noted more opportunities to engage virtually.

However, many stakeholders expressed there are not enough opportunities for people with disabilities to engage meaningfully. They suggested more community roundtables, better outreach to advocacy groups and hiring people with disabilities to help change policies. Some stakeholders acknowledged they were not sure of the opportunities that exist. One stakeholder suggested improving communication through more visual materials and having a centralized location for accessing program information.

5. Do you feel people with disabilities in the City of Vaughan have opportunities to share concerns or issues as they relate to accessibility? How? Where? Strengths? Improvements?

The stakeholders' perspectives on opportunities for people with disabilities to share concerns or issues related to accessibility varied. While many stakeholders acknowledged the existence of such opportunities, some noted the process may not be widely known, and there is a need for more effective communication. Additionally, some stakeholders suggested that opportunities to share concerns may be limited to organizations rather than individuals. Suggestions for improvement included a central location on the website and a central contact number for raising concerns. Some stakeholders also expressed doubts about the impact of feedback, with input and feedback not actively sought out or not leading to changes. Finally, three stakeholders reported being unsure about the existence of opportunities for people with disabilities to share concerns or issues related to accessibility.

6. With all of this information in mind about the way things are today, let's shift to thinking about what the future could look like. What are the top three ways accessibility can be improved in the City of Vaughan? What should we build on or do more of, and what changes do you suggest?

Stakeholders provided various suggestions on ways to improve accessibility in Vaughan, which have been categorized under AODA Integrated Standards. Here are some of the key suggestions:

EMPLOYMENT

- Create more employment and volunteer opportunities for people with disabilities in partnership with the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce.
- Provide disability training as part of onboarding for new City staff.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

- Increase the accessibility of the City's website by using videos with subtitles and ensuring plain and inclusive language in materials.
- Explore increased interpretation at public events and use technology like on-demand interpreters to assist people who are deaf or have hearing loss to communicate with City staff.

TRANSPORTATION

- Support/advocate for enhancements to York Regional Transit, including cross-border transportation and more routes.
- Ensure all spaces are accessible by public transit.
- Develop additional information about the transportation system, including how to use it, routes and options.

DESIGN OF PUBLIC SPACE

- Enhance the physical accessibility of the city by providing safe and even sidewalks, sufficient lighting, Hoyer lifts, adequate space in changerooms, accessible washrooms, accessible housing and accessible parks.
- Examine older buildings, including the theatre.
- Consider a Loop system at City Hall and other community spaces where people gather.
- Consider community audits of public buildings and spaces to have a baseline and goals to work towards.

CITY SERVICE

- Create more programs for people with disabilities, such as sewing and knitting clubs, as well as educational programs like digital literacy.
- Provide discounts and/or free programs for people with disabilities.
- Enhance communication of available programs and services for persons with disabilities.
- Provide more education about various disabilities, mental health and the diverse needs of people with disabilities.
- Ensure meaningful inclusion of people with disabilities and provide them with a voice at a community leadership table and all places where decisions are being made on their behalf.

Additional suggestions were offered that do not fit neatly into AODA categories, relating to a focus on gender-based violence/human trafficking relating to groups at high risk for acquiring life-changing injuries. There is also a growing need for housing options and support across communities, with a focus on accessibility for people with disabilities and an aging population. The community also wants to see more specific recreational and educational programming for people with disabilities, as well as discounted or free programming to promote accessibility. Finally, stakeholders advocate for an updated and enforced AODA.

Although not all of these suggestions fall under the City's jurisdiction, the feedback received from the community regarding regional government and services will be shared with the relevant parties. The priorities expressed by community members are crucial in guiding the City's future planning.

7. Which communities/people should we be reaching out to so we can create the best plan possible?

Stakeholders had several suggestions on communities and people to engage:

- People with lived experience**
- York Regional Police*
- Reena*
- Canadian Hard of Hearing Association
- Ontario Association for the Deaf
- City's Diversity Equity and Inclusion Officer
- 360 Kids
- Autistics 4 Autistics
- Community Living
- Sara Elizabeth Centre
- CAMH
- Children's Treatment Centre
- Vaughan Fitness
- Tourist attractions/businesses (Art Gallery, Pioneer Village, Vaughan Mills)
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- Family Support Services
- Safe Haven
- March of Dimes
- Housing providers
- Kayla's Children's Centre (KCC)

Asterisks (*) are placed after suggestions that were made multiple times.

8. We will be bringing all of the responses together to develop some themes. Would you like to be kept in the loop about this project?

All stakeholders expressed they would appreciate being kept in the loop about this project. Most emphasized they would be happy to continue to be engaged and "to be a resource to the City." Two stakeholders asked to be credited within the report for providing input into the City's MYAP update.



Appendix 2: Council Interviews

This appendix contains a summary of the information provided during the interviews with Council Members or their written submissions.

QUESTION-BY-QUESTION RESPONSES

1. Thinking about all of the AODA categories for accessibility (customer service; employment; information and communications; transportation; the built environment, including indoor and outdoor spaces), what does an accessible community look like to you? Please provide your vision in one or two sentences.

In general, Members of Council agree an accessible community should be barrier-free, providing access to all individuals regardless of their abilities. They envision a city that can be enjoyed by everyone, with policies in place to ensure equal treatment and accessibility as a fundamental right. One interviewee emphasized the importance of removing negative stigmas associated with disabilities. Additionally, there was recognition that an accessible community should be multicultural.

While there was a consensus on the vision for an accessible community, some Members of Council pointed out the challenge of finding a balance between funding and accommodations. It's important to strike a balance between financial considerations and the need to provide necessary accommodations for individuals with disabilities.

2. How does your experience in the City of Vaughan compare to this? What are you hearing from your constituents, particularly those who are people with disabilities (PWDs) or caregivers and family members of PWDs (thinking of accessibility issues broadly, so including seniors, those with temporary disabilities, etc.)? Who experiences barriers and challenges and what are they experiencing?

In general, Members of Council reported they do not receive a lot of concerns or complaints regarding accessibility, with one interviewee noting a significant reduction in concerns over the years. However, when concerns are raised, they tend to focus on sidewalk and crosswalk safety, such as insufficient crosswalk timing, uneven sidewalks and snow-covered pathways. These concerns are particularly relevant for seniors, and accessible parking availability also raises issues, such as not being able to park on the street with an accessible parking permit.

There are concerns about transportation and accessibility issues for constituents crossing borders from York Region to Toronto for appointments.

3. Can you point to two things the City does well to ensure accessibility? (Think about policy, physical infrastructure, communicating about accommodations, problem-solving, etc.)

Members of Council acknowledged the progress made in improving accessibility within City facilities, citing changes such as the installation of more automatic doors, ramps and enhanced safety measures on stairs. They also highlighted the City's efforts to ensure new buildings are accessible, which has been successful.

The City has also received positive feedback for its communication with the community, offering a wide range of programs for individuals with disabilities, examining policies to reduce barriers to adult day programs, developing design guidelines with a focus on accessibility, introducing new technology for individuals with visual impairment, adding more curb cuts on roads, improving signage and establishing the Accessibility Advisory Committee. These efforts have been well-received by the Members of Council, and the City is seen as making significant strides towards creating a more accessible community.

4. Can you point to two things the City must do differently to ensure accessibility for all? (Think about policy, physical infrastructure, communicating about accommodations, problem-solving, etc.)

Members of Council identified several areas where the City can improve accessibility, including:

- improve accessibility into and within older buildings.
- ensure everywhere is accessible (hotels, restaurants, businesses).
- enforce standards and regulations.
- reduce barriers on sidewalks and increasing walkways throughout the city.
- ensure pathways are connected and accessible (e.g., from parking lots to facilities/buildings).
- design and enforce ramps (many are too steep and do not have enough space for a wheelchair to turn).
- continued improvements to winter operations.
- use long push button door openers (rather than smaller button-style).
- increase number of public washrooms.
- enhance accessibility parking strategy.
- consider use of scooters when planning roadways, sidewalks.
- keep people informed of accessible features, and how to inquire or make requests.
- ensure good signage.
- consideration beyond physical accessibility (e.g., for people who have hearing loss or are deaf, people who have vision loss).
- include additional supportive housing models.
- provide more programs during the day for adults with disabilities (potential for City programs as well as working with community partners).
- include an evaluation or tracking mechanism within MYAP implementation plan so the 'accessibility status' is known.
- minimize barriers to communication.

5. How can the outcomes of this process be most useful to your constituents or to you and your team as you serve your community?

Members of Council recognized the MYAP could serve as a powerful tool for improving communication with residents and providing information on City events and activities for individuals with disabilities. They suggested using social media platforms to disseminate this information and recommended including a communication plan as part of the MYAP.

Members of Council suggested conducting an accessibility assessment of the City could be helpful, providing a status report on current initiatives and identifying areas where more efforts are needed. They also noted the MYAP could bring more attention to current issues and vulnerable individuals in the community.

Members of Council emphasized creating a more accessible community would provide opportunities for individuals with disabilities to contribute to the local economy, leading to a more vibrant and inclusive community overall.

6. Are there any specific community members we should talk to about accessibility? Would you provide their contact information or an introduction?

Members of Council had some suggestions on community members that could be contacted for the purpose of this engagement including Accessibility Advisory Committee members, seniors and people with lived experience, Reena and the business community. All specific contacts were followed up on by the engagement team.



Appendix 3: Stories Contributed by Community Members

LIVING WITH PROGRESSIVE MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

"I am a person living in Vaughan with Progressive Multiple Sclerosis with my wife and adult children in the New Westminster and Clark community. I don't use public transit as it is not available to me. I could use transit and combine it with accessible public transit in Toronto, but too much of a process to complete (doctors). The traffic lights do not give enough time to cross the road and not pushing the signal on Fridays and Saturdays because I follow Shabbat. and so on!"

SEATING AROUND THE CITY

"Years ago, I was struck by a car when I was a pedestrian. This left me with (sometimes extreme) lower back pain. I'm often looking for a seat while trying to enjoy a walk outside or even indoors at places such as Vaughan Mills mall. I need to sit for a brief period before I can continue enjoying my walk. Benches are very lacking considering the aging population of many citizens in Vaughan. I'm in my early 60's but unfortunately this has been my lifestyle for many years now. Hoping something can be done to accommodate many of us. Thank you."

IF YOU DO NOT HAVE A DISABILITY, PLEASE DON'T PARK IN THIS SPOT

"I have Primary Progressive Multiple Sclerosis and at this time I am still capable of driving. What upsets me the most is when I see fully capable drivers who do not have any disability park in the handicap spots so they can save time to go into a Tim's or a convenience store just for a minute to buy lotto tickets or a coffee or whatever. I have been with our members who use walkers and powered wheelchairs waiting for a spot for these inconsiderate drivers to return to their vehicles. I have confronted these drivers, asked what their disability is other than being inconsiderate and ignorant. On a few occasions I have parked very close to their driver's door so they could not enter their vehicle. I wish there were enforcement on these illegal parking with heavy fines. These fines in turn will be used to make improvements on sidewalks, parking lots, accessible ramps for those who use accessibility vehicles to get around the city."

ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL!

"I personally have been affected physically because of my MS (multiple sclerosis). I have had numbness in my extremities due to my MS since the age of 16 years old. At the age of 19 my right hand was completely paralyzed for 4 months. I was unable to write, hold small change or even doing usual things using my right hand. I unfortunately was unable to go to university that year which was 1985 so I worked as a cashier initially at McDonald's in the drive through and my colleagues would assist me writing grill slips for orders that had exemptions and then once my hand improved (about 4 months) I worked at Shopper's Drug Mart and eventually was the head cashier. Going to university was my dream to become a teacher.

Summer eventually arrived and my hand totally improved. I then worked at Sears warehouse in Rexdale fulltime over the summer and then continued working there for saving my money for the following school year again to actualize my dream of becoming a teacher. I never focused on my disability and just worked towards making my dream become a reality. I took two buses to get to Sears warehouse from where I lived.

I was very fortunate as my right hand improved and was able to get to university the following year. So I applied to York University as an undergrad for the first year and then applied to the concurrent program in the faculty of Education and was able to actualize my dream.

I was not even thinking about my disability and just needed to go forward and do well in school because eventually become the teacher I dreamed about. I continued taking the bus to York University which was close to where I was living with my parents.

It took me 5 years in the Faculty Ed in the concurrent program. I could take the Pioneer Village bus which was a 10 min was from my house to get to York University. I continued working at Sears part time while at school and then got full time summer hours to make money for tuition.

Today, I am close to retirement and am still dependent on TTC to get around. I did drive when I worked as a high school English and French teacher and then eventually as a Guidance Counsellor but my MS has progressed, so I no longer drive. I am dependent on wheel trans now with may connecting buses. I no longer have balance due to my MS. I am very dependent on my trans help connecting buses and do require benches to sit on in the transit areas as well as public washrooms.

MS is a progressive disease for which they do not know the cause so of course they cannot work on a cure. In the meantime, at least I can get around with buses for which I am most grateful.”

YORK REGION MOBILITY TRANSPORTATION

“I had to cancel 3 trips to Sunnybrook Hospital last year for testing. Going to and from the Toronto hospitals from Vaughan is a day full of anxiety, frustration, and a whole day wasted. For a 1-hour appointment with a specialist it takes roughly 7 hours between YRT Mobility and Wheel Transit. Maybe for a normal person that is not bad but for a challenged person that is frustrating. YRT Mobility should be able to go across the border and simplify our trips and give us back some dignity.”

THE AODA

“There are many establishments in Vaughan that take could easily be made accessible, but because of the Grandfather Clause in the (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act) some establishments have no respect for the disabled and I have a very hard and frustrating time visiting them. These establishments are the closest to my residence and therefor have no other choice otherwise I would not give them my business. The AODA should be reviewed and updated to ensure a better quality of life for the challenged not only in Vaughan but throughout Canada.”

DOCTOR PRACTICES

“I cannot go to my family doctor and get a full physical or to any walk-in clinic because their examine tables do not have height adjustment. Incredible, we can go lightyears away in space but not 4 or 5 inches up and down on earth. Most hospitals that I visited have the same problem.”

BUS TRIPS FOR THE DISABLED

“I have been a member of a Woodbridge Seniors Club for many years. Never was I able to join the group on any of their outings because when the time came to decide if they should use a bus with washrooms or an accessible bus, washrooms was chosen.

I volunteered for a camp in Parry Sound for three months each year and on my day off I was able to get on an accessible bus to go to Casino Rama in Orillia. Why is it that in a small town of approx. 6,850 citizens can accommodate the disabled and a city such as Vaughan with approx. 400,000, cannot accommodate?”

ACCESSIBLE EQUIPMENT IN OUR COMMUNITY CENTRES

“One way to encourage our disabled community to become more active, to exercise on a daily routine, to free us from our anxiety, become more fruitful, fulfilled, and have a sense of belonging our community centre gyms should be first of all accessible, more affordable and accessible equipment that are easy to get on and off safely.

All our community centre pools should also be equipped with lifts to easily access the water. Swimming is the best exercise for the whole body.”

MOVING THE DISABLED AROUND VAUGHAN, TORONTO AND THE GTA

“My son Anthony is 46 years old, disabled and needs a wheelchair. Currently I drive him to his therapy appts, usually in Toronto area. I am a widowed senior (73 years old) who wants to stay living in Vaughan, but when I can't drive anymore, Anthony will not be able to go to these appts. To go from my home to the 404 & Finch, it would take almost 4 hours, accessing YRT & TTC Wheel-Trans.

I am requesting: a) allowing the YRT to take him into Toronto & the TTC Wheel-Trans to bring him home. OR b) open up the blockade at Steeles Ave. and allow the disabled to travel freely, amalgamate the accessible travel.

It would take less time and energy to use only 1 bus to destination and only 1 bus to go home. I have hoped for years that this amalgamation would happen but we are still at the starting gate.”

SNOWBANKS BLOCKING ACCESS TO SIDEWALKS

“The snowbanks and piles of snow that are blocking each intersection have made stepping out of your home impossible. Those with a cane, a walker, mobility issues or mothers with strollers can not get around. I am so disappointed in those responsible for clearing snow in Vaughan and their lack of consideration for those who have mobility issues. Please revisit the way snow is cleared to ensure accessibility is maintained on our streets. Do better Vaughan.”

ACCESSIBILITY & PARKING

“In response to this subject, as a senior with some days of very bad arthritis when all joints are highly inflamed, I wish something was in place, for public parking as well as in shopping malls for spaces dedicated to seniors.

Many are already in place for mothers with young children but they are way more mobile than seniors with arthritis on very bad days. I was a young mother with three young children and managed regular parking just fine.

Also there should be service gasoline stations available in Maple (and elsewhere) for people who have difficulty getting out of their car to gas up. On bad arthritis days, even pumping gas is a challenge when one has no strength in their hands.

Please consider your seniors with physical challenges at all levels which will demonstrate respect that is so important to model to our young generations.”

ALL NEW BUILDS SHOULD BE ACCESSIBLE

"I spent time in a wheelchair unable to walk and was brought out to dinner to try and cheer me up after my first few days of rehab. We went to a new plaza who didn't do a final paving of the parking lot and we couldn't safely get me and my wheelchair over the ledge. I had to cling onto a post while my partner moved the wheelchair onto the sidewalk so we can proceed inside. The struggle, embarrassment... it did a number on my mental health... I understand that roads aren't taken over and construction is still occurring but if the city allows occupants (homes / business) and sidewalks are built then there shouldn't be gaps / ledges or any obstacles at crosswalks or in parking lots. We should be allowed to access our community mailboxes, parks, stores etc. and shouldn't have to wait years (it's been 9 years and counting in my "new" 2014 neighbourhood) before the roads are assumed and these issues corrected."

ACCESSIBLE PARKS AND SWINGS FOR KIDS TO PLAY!

"My daughter has a cerebral palsy but is very active! She loves walking to the park and using the playground and swings. Unfortunately, she is now 4 years old and does not fit into the baby swing seats. She does not have enough core strength to stay on the 'big kid seats' and will easily fall off. Our dream is to make our local 'Crofter Park', in Woodbridge an accessible park for her to play in with foam floors instead of wood chips and to at least have an accessible swing for her and other children with disabilities to use and enjoy at the park."

DC

"I am a 78-year-old wheelchair user. I am unable to use any bathroom in any of Vaughan's bathrooms as well as many other establishments that have the accessibility sign posted. I have met with the city's management and was told that beside other reasons, one was that they are afraid that the kids might fall off and get hurt. Wow so much for really caring for the disabled of our community. Here is the City of Vaughan's commitment. Really, I guess they are telling me to take my business somewhere else. The City of Vaughan is committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. The City believes in integration and fair access for residents, visitors, and employees with visible or non-visible disabilities. The City promises to meet the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner by preventing and removing barriers to accessibility, and supporting the goals of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)."



Appendix 4: Opportunities Outside of the City's Jurisdiction

Community engagement activities are an essential aspect of any project or initiative that seeks to involve the public in decision-making. During these activities, participants may sometimes offer comments or suggestions that are unrelated or outside the scope of the project or initiative. It is important to acknowledge these comments and express appreciation for the input while ensuring careful consideration is given to project scope.

There are several reasons why comments from community engagement activities that are out of scope are separated. Firstly, it is essential to maintain a clear focus on the project's objectives and goals to ensure the initiative stays on track. Incorporating out-of-scope comments in the body of the report may dilute the project's core objectives (i.e., to update the City's MYAP according to the Provincial mandate) and confuse stakeholders.

In addition, incorporating comments outside the project's scope may create expectations the project cannot fulfill, and can lead to unnecessary delays and costs, leading to disappointment among stakeholders. It is essential to communicate clearly with stakeholders about why certain comments were not included, and to ensure all participants feel heard and valued. Below are comments that were either too vague or out of the jurisdiction and influence of the City.

Customer Service

- Cost barriers are presented when there are additional fees for caregivers to accompany individuals to programs, appointments, services and other outings in Vaughan.

Transportation

- Ensure broad coverage of accessible by public transit.
- Identified need for information about the public transportation system and specialized on request service.

Additional Information

- Enforce accessibility regulations and standards within private buildings.
- Explore options for more affordable, accessible and supportive housing models.
- Lack of protection of vulnerable populations such as survivors of sex trafficking.
- Lack of supportive housing.
- Inaccessible equipment, such as examining tables, in health care facilities.
- People experience a lack of accessible washrooms in restaurants, health centres and other buildings.
- Some ramps to private buildings are too steep and/or do not provide sufficient space for a wheelchair to turn, or in some cases, are inaccessible.





City of Vaughan
Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer
2141 Major Mackenzie Rd.
Vaughan, ON, Canada L6A 1T1
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Committee of the Whole (1) Report

DATE: Tuesday, October 31, 2023

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: CITY OF VAUGHAN'S DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION
PLAN - ANNUAL REPORT (APRIL 2022 – OCTOBER 2023)

FROM:

Michael Coroneos, Deputy City Manager, Corporate Services, City Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer

ACTION: FOR INFORMATION

Purpose

To provide an annual update on the progress and challenges in implementing the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan and Multi-Year Action Plan.

Report Highlights

- This report is a progress of DEI initiatives from April of 2022 to October of 2023.
- The City of Vaughan approved the 2022-2026 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan in April 2022.
- The City was awarded the 2022 Excellence in Diversity & Inclusion by HR Canada.
- The City has made significant advancements in fostering an inclusive culture, implementing data-driven initiatives, promoting equitable employment, strengthening Indigenous relations, championing equity, and enhancing accessibility standards.

Recommendation:

1. That this report be received for information.

Background

The City of Vaughan takes pride in its diverse communities and recognizes their invaluable contributions to our cultural, economic, and social fabric. In our commitment to promote inclusivity and respect, we ensure that all citizens, employees, businesses, and visitors are afforded accessible opportunities for meaningful engagement and participation. The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan (DEI Plan) is a road map to this commitment, targeting systemic discrimination and inequities in service access, civic participation, and broader community involvement.

Instrumental in the formation of the DEI Plan was the guidance of the Diversity and Inclusion Task Force. Their insights have been paramount in refining our approach to ensure our programs, services, hiring, and tendering practices genuinely reflect and cater to the diverse needs of our residents. As the DEI Plan unfolds, we are making significant strides in several key focus areas geared towards realizing our overarching mission of comprehensive equity and inclusivity.

Highlights of Progress to Date (April 2022 to October 2023)

Fostering and Embedding a Culture of Belonging:

- Updated the City's Respectful Workplace, Accessibility, and Workplace Violence policies.

Data-Informed Decision-Making:

- Developed and implemented the DEI segment within the employee engagement survey.

Equitable Employment:

- Introduced and successfully executed DEI, OHRC, Truth and Reconciliation, and AODA courses, with impressive completion rates.

Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation:

- Progressing towards an MOU and formalizing a land acknowledgment.
- Organized insightful sessions to mark Indigenous History Month.
- Established the symbolic Friendship Garden.
- Organized the meaningful Sisters in Spirit Vigil and celebrated achievements via the Culture Day award.

Achieving Equity:

- Anti-Racism: The Addressing Anti-Black Racism project is on track for completion by January 2024.
- Support for the LGBTQ2S+ Communities: Celebrated inclusivity with the installation of a Pride Rainbow Crosswalk.

Continued Accessibility Excellence:

- Launched the development of the 2023-2026 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, which is expected to be implemented in Q4 of 2023.
- Developed Annual Accessibility Status Reports for 2020, 2021, and 2022.
- Initiated the Information and Communication Accessibility Project to meet compliance with requirements set out in the Information and Communication standard of the integrated [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#) (AODA).
- Spearheaded Project SEARCH, in partnership with Recreation, Animal Services, Human Resources, Facility Management, Infrastructure Delivery, Parks Forestry and Horticulture, Transportation and Fleet Management, and Vaughan Public Libraries, to develop and implement empowering internships catering to those with learning disabilities, offering them immersive experiences across diverse departments.

Previous Reports/Authority

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan and Community Consultation, Committee of the Whole \(1\), June 1, 2021](#)

[INDIGENOUS LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT, Committee of the Whole \(1\), June 1, 2021](#)

[City of Vaughan's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan and Multi-Year Action Plan, Committee of the Whole \(1\), April 5, 2022](#)

[PROJECT SEARCH – EMPLOYMENT FOR PERSONS WITH DIFFERENT ABILITIES, Committee of the Whole \(2\), June 21, 2022](#)

["Project SEARCH" Implementation Report, June 2023](#)

Analysis and Options

Accessibility

Accessibility remains a rapidly evolving area where service demand surpasses current staff resource capabilities. We are proactively collaborating across various departments to leverage internal support and resources wherever possible. The Site Plan review process, as required by the AODA, is a prime example illustrating the need for accessibility considerations to be woven seamlessly into every facet of our operations from inception.

Inclusive Programs and Services: Recreation Services continues to roll out programs and services that reflect the diverse requisites of those with disabilities. Project SEARCH is one area that has been highly successful however, it lacks staff and funding support at this time.

Accessible Infrastructure and Facilities: In partnership with infrastructure and facilities, we are committed to meeting accessibility standards required by the AODA. Our efforts include bringing existing infrastructure up to accessibility standards, incorporating accessibility into new project plans, and conducting accessibility assessments to identify and address barriers. We prioritize engaging individuals with disabilities in all Site Plan reviews, ensuring inclusion in all relevant new projects and retrospectively applying this approach to existing ones. Our goal is to create accessible and inclusive spaces that cater to everyone, ensuring all voices are heard and needs are addressed.

Accessibility Training and Education: We are continuing to ensure the City's staff is well-versed with accessibility, inclusivity, and the stipulations of AODA. Education not only increases awareness of accessibility, but also emphasizes the role in creating an inclusive environment for all, especially those with disabilities.

Community Engagement and Collaboration: It is crucial to continuously engage with individuals with disabilities, community agencies supporting them, and other pivotal stakeholders. This helps to collate feedback, pinpoint accessibility barriers, and develop strategies to address them.

Inclusive Engagement

The Addressing Anti-Black Racism Action Plan (ABR) and 20223-2026 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) projects, supported by the Engagement Team, made significant strides in their community engagement efforts. Marginalized communities have vocalized their desire for engagement but often felt overlooked or bypassed in consultation processes. The ABR and MYAP projects directly addressed this issue by revamping stakeholder lists and cultivating relationships that supported these specific projects and became invaluable for future projects. However, engagement without equity and inclusion can inadvertently perpetuate marginalization, especially for communities whose voices are often undervalued or unheard.

Incorporating DEI principles into engagement is vital to achieving comprehensive outreach and fostering a genuinely inclusive environment. Engagement rooted in diversity, equity, and inclusion captures a broader range of perspectives, experiences, and needs. This approach not only strengthens community trust but also ensures that decisions and initiatives are well-informed, equitable, and resonate with all segments of the population.

It is important to consider the integration of DEI principles in engagement strategy in order to promote innovation and inclusivity.

Project and Change Management

We are proud to highlight the introduction of dedicated Project Management to support DEI initiatives. Recognizing the multifaceted nature of diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, this strategic approach ensures the effective planning, execution, and tracking of DEI-related endeavours. Additionally, we believe that change management is paramount to the success of our DEI journey by ensuring they drive a cultural transformation. By intertwining project and change management, we are reinforcing our commitment to creating an environment where DEI principles are not just one-time projects but truly transformative.

Financial Impact

The implementation and ongoing support of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Plan have financial implications that need to be carefully considered to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of the initiatives. All requests will be submitted via the City Budget and Business Planning submission and review process.

Operational Impact

We continue to consult and collaborate with multiple departments to prioritize diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility in a cohesive approach. These proactive consultations have enabled us to adequately leverage internal support and resources, ensuring all our projects, from the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan to the Addressing Anti-Black Racism Project, incorporate equity considerations from the outset.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

N/A

Conclusion

The City of Vaughan's commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is evident in the comprehensive strides made in the DEI Plan, which seeks to address systemic discrimination and inequities across various sectors. The progress made from April 2022 to October 2023, spanning from fostering a culture of belonging to ensuring continued accessibility excellence, underscores the City's dedication to creating an inclusive environment for all its residents.

Given the positive strides, the City will continue to prioritize and invest in DEI initiatives, addressing resource constraints and ensuring continuous community engagement as they arise. The City will also focus on internal capacity building, ensuring that departments are equipped and aligned with DEI principles. By doing so, the City of

Vaughan will enhance its external image and foster an internal environment where diversity, equity, and inclusion are celebrated and upheld.

Please see the attachment for an overview of our DEI Plan Schedule, including past, present, and future.

For more information, please contact: Zincia Francis, Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer, ext. 8159.

Prepared by

Zincia Francis, Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer, ext. 8159.

Attachments

1. DEI Plan Schedule

Approved by



Michael Coroneos, DCM Corporate Services, City Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer

Reviewed by



Nick Spensieri, City Manager

DEI PLAN SCHEDULE			
Recommendations	Status	Start Date	Completion Date
Fostering and Embedding a Culture of Belonging			
Review and revise existing policies and procedures to ensure inclusivity and reduce inequities.	In Progress	2021	
• Respectful Workplace Policy	Complete	2021	2022
• Workplace Violence Policy	Complete	2021	2022
• Recruitment Policy	Not Started		
• Code of Conduct	Not Started		
Include definitions (Appendix) from the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Plan into applicable policies.	Not Started		
Develop policies and staff report to support an inclusive and equitable workplace.	Not Started		
Develop learning opportunities for all people leaders and managers to have the necessary information and skills to follow policies related to DEI.	Not Started		
Develop opportunities for meaningful staff engagement in the City's DEI initiatives, including Employee Resources Groups.	In Progress	2022	
Provide ongoing support to citizen advisory task forces and committees.	In Progress	2022	2026
Develop statement of commitment on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for the City.	Complete	2021	
Data-Informed Decision-Making			
Establish a baseline for City equity data to inform the DEI initiatives.	In Progress	2022	
Establish OKR for DEI initiatives across the City.	In Progress	2022	
Utilize DEI data to inform annual updates to the DEI Plan and corresponding Action Plan.	Not Started		
Aim to achieve best practice for attaching identity-based data to employee profiles (while being mindful of and adhering to the Ontario Human Rights Code and privacy legislation) to establish a baseline and measure progress.	In Progress	2022	

DEI PLAN SCHEDULE

Recommendations	Status	Start Date	Completion Date
Equitable Employment			
Recruitment and Hiring			
Implement targeted job advertisements to increase workforce representation from Indigenous and equity-deserving groups.	On Hold	2021	
Expand recruitment and hiring strategies to increase diversity at SLT and SLTE.	Not Started		
Review the recruitment process and application site to ensure it complies with OHRC, FIPPA and Anti-Racism Data Standards.	In Progress	2021	2025
Develop guidelines to ensure job postings are equitable and inclusive.	Scheduled	2025	
Ensure Equity Statement is included all job postings.	Complete		2021
Develop opportunities (internships, co-ops placements, etc.) to reduce barriers (i.e., Criteria for Equivalency) to hiring applicants from low-income communities and those who are negatively impacted by socioeconomic factors such as income, education, employment, and community safety and social supports.	Scheduled	2025	
Review candidate screening and selection process to limit unconscious bias.	Scheduled	2024	
Explore feasibility of Redacted Application Process to limit unconscious bias in hiring.	Scheduled	2024	
Review and, where necessary, implement changes to the interview and assessment process.	Scheduled	2024	
Expand interview matrix to include DEI competency.	Scheduled	2025	
Include unconscious bias awareness as a proficiency criterion.	Scheduled	2024	
Include emotional intelligence as a proficiency criterion.	Scheduled	2024	
Include understanding and experience of diversity, equity and inclusion as a proficiency criterion for all people managers.	Scheduled	2024	

DEI PLAN SCHEDULE

Recommendations	Status	Start Date	Completion Date
Onboarding			
Ensure onboarding for all staff and for Senior Leaders is inclusive and equitable.	Scheduled	2024	
Provide information on available diversity, equity, inclusion, and human rights-related learning for all staff and new employees at onboarding.	In Progress	2021	2024
Provide information on existing ERGs at onboarding for new employees.	Scheduled	2024	
Retention			
Utilize existing data to analyze and improve promotion and retention, and recruitment and hiring strategies.	Scheduled	2024	
Learning and Development			
Ensure that all staff have access to training on the Ontario Human Rights Code.	Complete	2022	2023
Design and deliver comprehensive Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Learning Plan to all staff aimed at increasing awareness of equity-related training, including:	Complete	2021	2023
· Unconscious Bias	Complete	2022	2023
· Unconscious Bias in Recruiting, Hiring, Retention and Promotions	Complete	2022	2023
· Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Fundamentals	Complete	2022	2023
· Systemic Racism in Canada.	Complete	2022	2023
Expand DEI-related training to topics including but not limited to 2SLBGTQ+ communities, anti-Asian racism, disability, anti-Semitism, etc.	Scheduled	2024	
Provide DEI-related training for Senior Leadership, Mayor and Council.	In Progress	2022	
Performance Management			
Develop and implement DEI learning goals for various levels of the organization.	Scheduled	2025	

DEI PLAN SCHEDULE

Recommendations	Status	Start Date	Completion Date
Succession Planning, Mentorship and Promotion			
Develop strategies to ensure succession planning includes a targeted approach to diversifying leadership.	Scheduled	2024	
Develop targeted opportunities for emerging leaders from Indigenous and equity-deserving groups advancement through existing succession and mentorship programs.	Scheduled	2025	
Achieving Equity			
Anti-Racism			
Engage with diverse Black communities in the City to develop and implement strategy and action plan to address Anti-Black racism.	In Progress	2021	2024
Religious Intolerance			
Engage Jewish communities in Vaughan to identify, develop and support opportunities to build awareness and educate the public to effectively work toward the elimination of all forms of intolerance, discrimination and bigotry.	Scheduled	2024	2026
Engage Muslim communities in Vaughan to identify, develop and support opportunities to build awareness and educate the public to effectively work toward the elimination of all forms of intolerance, discrimination and bigotry.	Scheduled	2024	2026
2SLGBTQ+ Communities			
Engage 2SLGBTQ+ communities in Vaughan to support opportunities to build awareness and educate the public to effectively work toward the elimination of all forms of intolerance, discrimination and bigotry.	On Hold	2022	2026

DEI PLAN SCHEDULE

Recommendations	Status	Start Date	Completion Date
Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation			
Review and develop acknowledgment of Indigenous people and land in consultation with Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.	Complete		2021
Continue to build meaningful relationships with Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation to develop a Memorandum of Understanding.	In Progress	2022	
Foster commitment to enhancing relationships with Indigenous people and land.	In Progress	2021	
Community Engagement and Participation			
Collaboratively work with the Corporate and Strategic Communications department to develop a community engagement and targeted outreach strategy.	In Progress	2023	
Continued Accessibility Excellence			
Develop Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (2023 - 2026)	In Progress	2022	2023
Ensure all new employee onboarding materials are in accessible format.	Not Started		
Develop guidelines to ensure learning and development programs meet accessibility standards.	Not Started		
Develop a strategic plan to targeted and intentional approach to recruit, hire and retain people with disabilities.	In Progress	2022	
Update Accessibility Site Plan Checklist.	Not Started		
Universal changerooms at new community centres.	Not Started		



SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS
ANTI-HATE, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION
ADVISORY COMMITTEE
(January to December 2024)

Meetings are held on the third Monday of every month at 7:00 p.m.,
(unless otherwise specified), or at the call of the Chair.

Meetings are held electronically via Teams.
Meetings are not scheduled in July or August
(unless otherwise specified).

11 Members / Quorum = 6

2024 Meeting Dates

February 5, 2024
(1st Monday due to Holiday)
March 4, 2024
(1st Monday due to Holiday)
April 15, 2024
May 27, 2024
(4th Monday due to Holiday)
June 17, 2024
September 23, 2024
October 21, 2024
November 18, 2024

Members

Councillor Gila Martow, Co-Chair
Councillor Chris Ainsworth, Co-Chair
Asia Nisar
Carrie Silverberg
Erol Kavaz
Hina Zahid
Hitesh Anand
Ruchi Punjabi
Sabrina Di Marco
Sam Eskenasi
Seyfi Tomar

Staff Resources

Zincia Francis, Diversity and Inclusion Officer
Anna Rose, Recreation Manager, Events, Theatre
& Studio Operations
Erynn Sally, Manager, Corporate and Strategic
Communications
Assunta Ferrante, Council/Committee Administrator