

To: Susan Cassel  
City Clerk

May 13, 2020

From: Tim Higgins  
Accessibility Coordinator

Copy: Chief Administrative Officer  
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Directors

Subject: Accessibility Advisory Committee  
2019 Year End Report and 2020 Proposed Work Plan  
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The Pickering Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) is pleased to present its 2019 Year End Report and 2020 Proposed Work Plan.

## **2019 Year End Report**

The Accessibility Advisory Committee achieved the following in 2019:

### **Meetings & Membership**

- The Committee maintained its full authorized complement of 10, highly-qualified, diverse members throughout the year. As well, Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade provided a highly-qualified and engaged representative as a non-voting member of the Committee. In 2019, the Accessibility Advisory Committee held 7 regular meetings, normally on the second Wednesday of each month.
- Following a staff update on advisory boards and committees policies, terms of reference, and procedural by-laws that included considerations regarding quorum, conflict of interest, member turnover, delegations and reporting procedures, the AAC reviewed and endorsed the Committee's revised Terms of Reference.
- AAC members participated in the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility's AAC member orientation webinar.

## Awareness Activities

- AAC members developed and led the presentation of the Committee's 2018 accessibility accomplishments and its 2019 Work Plan to Pickering City Council in May 2019. The presentation profiled the AAC's recommended accessibility priorities for 2019 and provided an opportunity for an exchange of information, issues and ideas on accessibility in the community.
- AAC members participated in various City events including Your City/Artfest, Canada Day and the Durham Regional Police Children's Games to raise awareness of accessibility issues in the community, engage/consult with the public on accessibility in Pickering, and to profile the City's accessibility accomplishments. For example,
  - The AAC hosted a promotional tent and children's train ride at the Canada Day event in Esplanade Park. This event provided an opportunity to further establish the committee's profile with the public and engage with residents regarding accessibility challenges they may be experiencing or perceive.
- An AAC representative attended the Pickering Cenotaph on Remembrance Day in 2019 to lay a memorial wreath on behalf of the Committee.
- Fostered/promoted/supported submissions for local, Regional, and Provincial awards and grants to profile Pickering's accessibility commitment and achievements. For example,
  - the AAC submitted a Durham Region Accessibility Award nomination with respect to Pickering's 2019 Polar Plunge event which raised over \$20,000 for the Ontario Special Olympics.
- AAC Members attended a Holiday Lunch at the Pickering Islamic Centre on Sunday, December 8<sup>th</sup>.
- AAC member, Anthony Lue, continued his training for the national qualifiers in Quebec City for the Canadian team going to the 2020 Tokyo Paralympic Games. Anthony invited committee members to follow him and his journey on [anthonylue.com](http://anthonylue.com) or on Instagram and Facebook.
- An AAC member developed and delivered an accessibility-focussed TED Talk.

## Policies, Standards & Implementation

- The AAC reviewed and provided input to the City of Pickering's 2019 Accessibility Compliance Report to the Ontario Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility. Full AODA compliance was reported.
- The AAC received several presentations from City staff, and provided advice regarding accessibility related capital projects. The AAC provided advice on the following City of Pickering planned improvements:
  - Whitevale Park - heritage picnic shelter rebuild
  - Facilities Wayfinding Study - to make City's active and passive signage at the Operations Centre, the Recreation Complex and the Civic Complex consistent, cohesive, navigable and accessible while working within the City branding guidelines.
  - New Fire Hall and Headquarters - at Brock Road and Zents Drive to replace Fire Hall #5.

- Seaton Neighbourhood Connector Trails – on a best efforts basis to meet AODA exterior paths of travel requirements where the existing terrain permits.
- The AAC provided advice on 2019 Canada Day preparations including management of temporary accessible parking, accessible bus routes/stops, and washrooms.
- The AAC monitored new staff and volunteer training processes related to accessibility.
- The Committee reviewed and discussed issues raised in former Lieutenant Governor David Onley’s report to the Ontario Government on the AODA’s implementation progress.
- City staff presented the AAC with plans for the Pickering Heritage and Community Centre to house program, archival and storage space under one roof. AAC members discussed mobility within the facility as well as surrounding accessibility features and provided advice.
- The AAC monitored and provided accessibility advice regarding walkway reconstructions, sidewalk retrofits, new multi-use paths, installation of tactile plates at intersections, curb cuts, traffic light timing, snow clearing, parks, playgrounds, special event accessible parking, etc. For example, AAC members provided specific accessibility and safety concerns regarding pedestrian paths of travel and transit stops in the vicinity of Highway 2 and Whites Road.
- Monitored new staff and volunteer training process related to accessibility.
- The AAC provided advice on initial plans for a City of Pickering accessibility training/orientation tool for working with external contractors on City events.
- The AAC monitored local, provincial, national and international emerging accessibility legislation, regulations, policies, best practices, products and services and considered adaptations for use in Pickering; for example, with respect to employment of people with disabilities.
- The AAC’s staff representative briefed the AAC on the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals (ONAP) conference he attended in Lindsay on October 23<sup>rd</sup> entitled Accessible Education Towards Accessible Employment. The keynote address was delivered by former Ontario Lieutenant Governor David Onley and forum topics included: Universal Design Learning, Creating Inclusive Placement, Mental Health in the Workplace Life Experiences, and Workplace Accommodation.
- AAC member D. Hughes provided periodic updates to the AAC with respect to Axess Condos Pickering to be developed at the intersection of Pickering Parkway and Valley Farm Road. For example, D. Hughes presented members with a video of an interview conducted with Global News showcasing the highly-accessible Pickering development.
- Reviewed progress and planned for the 2020 update of Pickering’s 5-Year Accessibility Plan.
- The AAC held various discussions and hosted guest presentations to explore issues and identify potential solutions with respect to residential accessibility and affordability.
- The AAC monitored and discussed the emergence of the Rick Hansen Foundation’s accessibility certification program. An AAC member attended the Accessibility Professional Network (APN) 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference, arranged through the Rick Hansen Foundation.

## Consultation & Collaboration

- Pursuant to AAC discussions in November 2018, a sub-committee of the AAC was established to develop information regarding the current rules and best practices with respect to service and support animals, and related issues, particularly as they impact municipal operations and Durham businesses. Discussions were initiated with representatives of the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility to explore a potential partnership that would initially help Ontario businesses, and subsequently inform service and support animal policy development by the Province.
- A Pickering resident appeared before the Committee to share his life experiences and challenges in dealing with complex cognitive disabilities. A Committee discussion ensued with members noting issues with respect to employment for the disabled, and the need to change the psychological barriers and stigma that preclude employment opportunities. Subsequently, Participation House Durham was invited to attend a future AAC meeting to discuss its programs for individuals with disabilities to help them acquire work skills.
- A Pickering resident with visual challenges appeared before the Committee to discuss opportunities to strengthen inclusive culture in Durham. She discussed her negative personal experiences surrounding disability and alienation from the public. This topic resonated with AAC members who provided further examples of exclusionary behaviours they had experienced or witnessed. As an initial step, the resident was invited to participate in a Pickering Football Club/Trillium research study seeking to shift the Durham culture with respect to disability by fostering greater inclusion in the region's recreation programs.
- Collaborated and consulted with Regional and Provincial accessibility professionals and advocates, such as the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals (ONAP) to stay abreast of emerging issues and successful practices.
- Provided advice and supported 2019 ONAP Conference hosted by Durham Region and its network of municipal accessibility coordinators.
- Monitored Regional AAC minutes and selectively participated in/attended Regional, Provincial, Federal and U.S. learning and networking opportunities related to accessibility.
- Continued to liaise and consult with the Toronto Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), Parks Canada, and Altona Forest representatives to consider innovative methods of providing access to rugged, natural outdoor spaces. For example,
  - Parks Canada representatives appeared before the committee to provide information on accessibility features of trails at the Rouge National Urban Park such as trail head signage informing visitors about trail difficulty levels. Discussions ensued regarding specialized transit for seniors, rest areas, power stations to charge wheelchairs/scooters, and accessibility for visually/cognitively impaired individuals.
- AAC received a presentation from CNIB community ambassadors and its partner, the Pickering Public Library.
  - The Pickering Public Library has formed a partnership with the CNIB Phone It Forward Program, which asks for gently-loved smartphones to be donated. The smartphones are wiped to the highest data security standards, loaded with accessible apps, and provided to people with sight loss who need them, along with technical training, discounted

maintenance, and data plan support. Donors receive a tax receipt. Displays with full details can be found at both the Main and George Ashe Library branches.

- Further discussion ensued regarding some of the services the Library provides for the hearing impaired such as the Home Library Service which provide audio books and materials along with portable Wi-Fi; and the Maker Space that can quickly and inexpensively convert documents into alternate formats.
- The library is reaching out to their community partners to help develop further partnerships for CNIB.
- The CNIB representatives provided information on CNIB's BlindSquare navigation program.
- Provided planning advice, supported, promoted and attended the 2019 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Durham Regional Police Children's Games held on Saturday, October 26<sup>th</sup> for disabled youth between the ages of 5 and 18. The City of Pickering has actively partnered since 1985 with Durham Regional Police Services, Grandview Children's Centre, the March of Dimes and other community partners to host this annual inclusive event for young athletes with physical disabilities at the Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex.
- In December 2019, the AAC members met jointly with Pickering's Accessibility Core Staff Team for the AAC's annual festive Meet & Greet to team-build, share information and network.
- Members attended and provided input to the Metrolinx Navigation Consultation at the Pickering Go Station on January 23<sup>rd</sup>.
- An AAC member was appointed to the Metrolinx Accessibility Advisory Committee becoming the only representative from Durham Region.
- An AAC member attended a focus group meeting with respect to the Kingston Road Corridor Intensification study.
- The AAC fostered/promoted/supported submissions for local, regional, provincial and federal awards and grants to profile Pickering's accessibility achievements and commitment.
- The AAC provided advice and support to the City of Pickering's regionally-scoped camp staff training all-day inclusion workshop, as part of its Summer Camp Accessibility initiative hosted at the Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex.
- The AAC engaged with Durham Transit regarding concerns with delays for specialized transit customers crossing municipal boundaries.
- Through its Ajax Pickering Board of Trade representative, the AAC regularly shared information and issues with the local business community.

### **Site Plan Application Reviews**

- The AAC continued to work in collaboration with City planning staff through an ongoing site plan application review process to encourage the proactive integration of accessibility considerations into the City development. The AAC reviewed and provided accessibility advice with respect to the following site plans:
  - S 05/19 (Taunton Road) - sales pavilions for two builders Lebovic and Fieldgate located at Taunton and Burkholder.

- S 06/19 (Icon Forest District) - semi-detached and town homes at the northwest corner of Finch and Altona.
- S 08/19 (2620 Brock Rd.) - 30 stacked 4-storey townhouses off Brock, north of Dersan.
- S 10/19 (Chartwell) - a 22-storey seniors' residence consisting of seniors' apartments, and assisted living at the southeast corner of Valley Farm and Kingston Roads. A related discussion was held regarding the need to re-evaluate the length of traffic lights for crossing at Valley Farm and Kingston Roads.

## **2020 Proposed Work Plan**

As of March, the Accessibility Advisory Committee has achieved the following in 2020:

### **Policies, Standards & Implementation**

- The AAC has monitored and provided accessibility advice regarding walkway reconstructions, sidewalk retrofits, new multi-use paths, installation of tactile plates at intersections, curb cuts, traffic light timing, parks, playgrounds, special event accessible parking, etc. For example, the AAC expressed concern over the traffic light timings. It was noted that sufficient time was not always provided to allow people with disabilities to cross Pickering intersections safely. To inform follow-up discussions with City and Regional staff, the committee listed several intersections where traffic light timing is a concern.
- As an ongoing concern, the AAC has held various discussions and hosted guest presentations to explore issues and identify potential solutions with respect to residential accessibility and affordability.
- The AAC reviewed and provided advice on a new Accessibility Checklist for Pickering Events.
- The AAC reviewed and provided advice on a new "Respect the Space" brochure to encourage residents and visitors to respect Pickering's accessible parking spaces.
- Representatives of Participation House Durham attended the AAC meeting to discuss their range of programs to help individuals with disabilities acquire work skills and successfully pursue employment.
- The AAC monitored new staff and volunteer training process related to accessibility.
- The AAC has continued to monitor local, provincial, national and international emerging accessibility legislation, regulations, policies, best practices, products and services and considered adaptations for use in Pickering.
- The AAC reviewed progress with respect to Pickering's 5-Year Accessibility Plan 2016-2020, and planned for the 2021-2025 update of Pickering's 5-Year Accessibility Plan.

## Consultation & Collaboration

- At the January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020 City Council Meeting, Council approved Report CS 08-20, to submit the Ontario Transfer Payment Agreement to the Province and to set in motion the City of Pickering Accessibility Advisory Committee's Service & Support Animal Task Group. The project plan calls for hosting an Innovation Lab, development and publication of a Monograph, and a launch event to rollout out findings of the Task Group study.
- Representatives of the Pickering Football Club's (PFC) attended the AAC to present their new research project, funded by an Ontario Trillium Grant, which aims to investigate barriers associated with recreational and sport opportunities in the Pickering/Durham Region. PFC has identified a number of community groups who remain isolated from recreational opportunities due to barriers including newcomers, seniors, people with disabilities, LGBTQ, and indigenous populations.
- The AAC has continued to collaborate and consult with Regional and Provincial accessibility professionals and advocates, such as the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals (ONAP), to stay abreast of emerging issues and successful practices.
- An AAC member is currently working to obtain Rick Hansen Foundation certification and will be keeping the Committee up to date on the program and his progress.
- An AAC member attended a Durham Region Accessibility Awareness Group Meeting to identify opportunities for collaboration and information sharing.
- The AAC fostered/promoted/supported submissions for local, regional, provincial and federal awards and grants to profile Pickering's accessibility achievements and commitment. For example,
  - AAC members identified several potential nominees for Pickering's Civic Accessibility Award for Disability Issues; and,
  - The AAC supported a grant submission to JumpStart for a \$20,000 renovation of the tot pool in the Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex.
- Abdul Macci, Pickering's representative to the Durham Region Transit Advisory Committee attended the AAC to discuss a range of transit accessibility issues and to establish a basis for ongoing collaboration with the AAC to remove transit accessibility barriers and improve transit customer service for people with disabilities.
- The AAC continued to engage with Durham Transit regarding concerns with delays for specialized transit customers crossing over boundaries to/from other municipalities.
- The AAC hosted representatives of the CNIB who presented information on:
  - The CNIB Eyes Forward program which provides support to seniors who are experiencing limitations in conducting their everyday activities, and which plans to open a location in Pickering in September, 2020.
  - A program to donate cell phones to seniors and install a network of beacons to accommodate the navigation needs of visually impaired individuals.

## Site Plan Application Reviews

- The AAC continued to work in collaboration with City planning staff through an ongoing site plan application review process to encourage the proactive integration of accessibility considerations into City development. To date in 2020, the AAC has reviewed and provided accessibility advice with respect to the following site plans:
  - Jerry Coughlan Health & Wellness Centre at 2580 Brock Road - This facility will be a treatment and learning centre for children with disabilities.
  - Site Plan Review - S01/20 - TriBro (movie) Studios to be located on the Durham Live property lying immediately southwest of the Pickering Casino Resort complex.

## Adjusting to the COVID-19 Pandemic

The Pickering Accessibility Advisory Committee plans to adapt its focus and methods in light of the pervasive impact and uncertain duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. Cohesiveness, engagement, morale and momentum of the Pickering Accessibility Advisory Committee can best be maintained by transitioning to a virtual meeting paradigm as long as social distancing remains in force. Pickering Accessibility Advisory Committee plans to address the following topics/issues during this uncertain period:

- Promote awareness of, and advise on, information and resources for people with disabilities needing help during pandemic including:
    - emergency supports
    - virtual management of anxiety and mental health
  - Liaise with accessibility community of interest and stakeholders including Durham Region Accessibility Coordinators, Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals (ONAP) etc. regarding emerging issues during the pandemic such as:
    - human rights of people with disabilities
    - accessibility of emergency communications
    - availability of mobility device repairs
    - DRT accessibility
  - Virtual teamwork with respect to the Service and Support Animal Initiative including:
    - finalization of the Transfer Payment Agreement with the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility, and completion of Transfer Payment Ontario system setup
    - adapting project methodology
    - project research and analysis
    - monograph outlining and preparatory work
    - launch event planning
    - COVID-19 implications for use of therapy animals
  - Promote awareness of, and advise on City/regional COVID-19 initiatives such as:
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- virtual recreation programs under development such as the Garden Webinar Series
- virtual Farmers' Market
- Food Box
- Care Mongers
- Consult and collaborate on:
  - Pickering's 5 Year Accessibility Plan
    - reporting on current plan expiring in 2020
    - development of new plan from 2021 onward
  - Planning Pickering compliance with AODA's new communication/website accessibility standards coming into effect in January 2021
  - Update to Standard Operating Procedure ADM 120 - Access to Recreation

### **Post-Pandemic Priorities**

As normal operations resume, the Pickering Accessibility Advisory Committee has identified the following areas of priority:

- encouraging and highlighting further examples of accessibility excellence in City programs, services, and facilities especially in regard to the Pickering City Center Project;
- customer oriented, accessible transportation is key given a large and growing population with disabilities;
- improving walk-ability/roll-ability accessibility including intersection safety for people with disabilities;
- promoting more accessible housing options and inventory;
- facilitating employment opportunities for people with disabilities and showcasing related benefits to local businesses; and
- completion of the Pickering Service and Support Animal Task Group initiative.

Submitted on behalf of the Pickering Accessibility Advisory Committee members:

Peter Bashaw, Pickering Accessibility Advisory Committee Member  
 Bianca D'Souza, Pickering Accessibility Advisory Committee Member  
 Saima Fatima, Pickering Accessibility Advisory Committee Member  
 Donna Holmes, Pickering Accessibility Advisory Committee Member  
 Daniel Hughes, Pickering Accessibility Advisory Committee Member  
 Glenn Lang, Pickering Accessibility Advisory Committee Member  
 Anthony Lue, Pickering Accessibility Advisory Committee Member  
 Megan Thorpe Ross, Pickering Accessibility Advisory Committee Member  
 Susan Wilkinson, Pickering Accessibility Advisory Committee Member  
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