

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (WORKING SESSION) - SEPTEMBER 9, 2003

CITY OF VAUGHAN DRAFT 2003-2004 ACCESSIBILITY PLAN – CREATING BARRIER FREE COMMUNITIES

RECOMMENDATION

The Commissioner of Community Services in consultation with the Director of Recreation and Culture and the Vaughan Accessibility Advisory Committee, recommends:

THAT the attached Draft 2003-04 Accessibility Plan – Creating Barrier Free Communities be endorsed; and

THAT the Commissioner of Community Services in cooperation with other City departments prepare a report through the budget process that outlines the necessary resources required to implement the Vaughan Accessibility Plan for 2003-04.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present Vaughan's first annual Accessibility Plan, Creating Barrier Free Communities.

Background

People with disabilities represent a significant and growing part of our population. According to Statistics Canada, about 1.9 million Ontarians have disabilities – about 16% of the population. Disability tends to increase with age. In two decades it is estimated that 20% of the population will have disabilities. Enhancing the ability of people with disabilities to live independently and contribute to the community will have positive effects on Vaughan's future prosperity.

The *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA) was proclaimed on September 20, 2002. Its intent is to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities through the identification, removal and prevention of physical and other barriers. The ODA includes specific requirements for all municipalities, including the development of an annual accessibility plan. Under the ODA, the annual accessibility plan must address the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to persons with disabilities in municipal by-laws, policies, practices, programs and services.

The province's deadline for all municipalities to have their first Council approved Accessibility Plan is September 30, 2003. The ODA also requires that the Plan be made available to the public.

The ODA also requires that the City of Vaughan establish an Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) to advise Council on the preparation, implementation and effectiveness of the City of Vaughan's Accessibility Plan. Council appointed the Vaughan Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC) in the fall of 2002. The VAAC of the City of Vaughan is comprised of three citizen volunteers and two members of Council, Councillor Susan Kadis and Councillor Linda Jackson.

Analysis and Options

The Draft Plan process included the involvement of the Accessibility Plan Technical Committee comprised of City staff who worked with various departments to identify the existing departmental accessibility achievements as well as develop initiatives for the removal of barriers in the 2003-04 Accessibility Plan.

The primary focus of the City of Vaughan's first annual Accessibility Plan is on barrier identification. This is in keeping with follow-up discussions from the Province regarding

accessibility planning. The Plan will focus on conducting audits and reviewing present practises in more detail.

The Draft Plan was also presented to the Vaughan Accessibility Advisory Committee who reviewed the document in detail and provided further recommendations and changes to the draft Plan. The Vaughan AAC was extremely invaluable on many areas of the Plan.

In monitoring the first year Plan, the Accessibility Plan Technical Committee recommends that the plan be reviewed as part of the Vaughan Vision Strategic Planning process. In addition ongoing progress reports will be presented to the Vaughan Accessibility Advisory Committee and Council.

In accordance with the Province, a public consultation meeting will take place on Wednesday, September 10, 2003 from 7:00 p.m.- 9:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Vaughan Civic Centre.

The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- gather input and feedback on Vaughan's Draft Plan;
- involve the community and individuals to participate in the plan process for future consultation; and
- demonstrate the City's commitment to enhancing accessibility to its programs, services and facilities.

In order to reach a wide audience of people in Vaughan, advertisements were placed in local newspapers along with notifications placed in community facilities. Letters of interest and copies of the draft Plan were also mailed to various special interest groups inviting them to attend the meeting and/or provide written comments to the draft.

Financial Implications

The strategies listed within the Plan are subject to Council approval and will be considered as part of the City of Vaughan's annual capital and operating budget process each year.

Conclusion

In the first year of accessibility planning, the City will focus on identifying barriers and further improving present practises. The financial resources for the Plan's implementation is subject to Council approval and will be reviewed as part of the City's annual capital and operating budget process for 2003-04. The significant work that the City of Vaughan has done in cooperation with the Vaughan Accessibility Advisory Committee illustrates the City's commitment to further enhancing accessibility for the residents of Vaughan.

Attachments

1. Attachment #1: Draft Accessibility Plan 2003-04 – Creating Barrier Free Communities. (Members of Council only) Copies available in the Clerk's Department.

Report prepared by:

Diane LaPointe-Kay, Director Recreation and Culture, Ext 8501

Respectfully submitted,

G. Doris Haas
Commissioner of Community Services