

**ANNUAL ACCESSIBILITY PLAN**  
**FOR THE**  
**YORK REGION DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**



**YEAR FIVE REPORT**

**OCTOBER 2007**

**Bill Hogarth**  
**Director of Education**

**Bill Crothers**  
**Chair of the Board**

## **Mission**

We unite in our purpose to inspire and prepare learners for life in our changing world community.

## **Vision**

We are the faces of public education. We understand our gifts and challenges. We are motivated by our dreams and act towards their fulfillment. We respect and celebrate our differences. We invite and value the spirit of community, creativity, and personal growth. We support each other. We have joy in who we are and who we are becoming.

## **Values**

- We recognize and celebrate excellence, and the heart-felt efforts and contributions of our community.
- We strive for equity, inclusiveness, and diversity in all our programs, practices, facilities, and people.
- We value dedication and commitment.
- We value and will respond in an appropriate manner to the voices, ideas, and understanding of all our community members.
- We believe it is the right and responsibility of everyone to ensure a safe nurturing community.
- We embrace the spirit of innovation that acts to realize opportunities to transform our vision into reality.
- We are all responsible for our words and actions.

*“It is our hope that all parents, students and employee groups become familiar with accessibility issues and work together to fulfill our mission of providing a community that is safe, inviting and fully accessible to all.” (Bill Hogarth, Director of Education)*



Learning in York Region's public schools is a sacred trust. As publicly-supported and accountable employees, we believe that York Region District School Board students have a right to feel safe, academically challenged, nurtured, and respected. Each one is a capable learner and, as a system, we are responsible for preparing them to become contributing citizens within our global economy.

A supportive learning community, however, is incomplete without the assistance of parents and regional partners. With your support, we can improve the quality of educational programs and services for all students. With your involvement, we can ensure that York Region public school students develop their skills, interests, and talents to the fullest potential.

If after reviewing this report, you can think of ways to make our school board more informative and accessible, please drop us a line. We are particularly interested in identifying, removing and preventing all barriers that limit the full participation of our students, their families and our staff members.

Yours truly,

Bill Hogarth

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# **1. INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA) is to improve opportunities for people with disabilities and to provide for their involvement in the identification and removal of barriers. To this end the ODA requires YRDSB and all school boards to prepare an annual accessibility plan; to consult with people with disabilities in the preparation of this plan; and to make the plan public.

People with disabilities represent a portion of the YRDSB population. To that end, enhancing the ability of these members of our community, whether they are students, teachers, support staff, parents, volunteers or other community members, will have only positive effects for our Board and the quality of their life. This annual plan is prepared by the YRDSB “O.D.A. Team”. The plan describes:

- The measures the YRDSB has taken over the past year; and
- The measures the YRDSB intends to take over the next year.

The plan will be accomplished with the financial resources of the Board and its ability to fund the projects.

## 2. DEFINITIONS

A number of terms used throughout the Plan are clarified by the following definitions.

### BARRIER:

-anything that prevents a person with a disability from full participation in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including:

- Physical barrier: - objects added to the environment: doors, windows, elevators, furniture, workstations, recreational facilities, playgrounds, bathroom hardware, etc.
- Architectural barrier: - building design, area adjacent to the building, shape of room, size of doorways, etc.
- Information barrier: - inadequate or incomprehensible signage, difficulties reading brochures, forms, manuals, web sites, fax transmissions, equipment labels, computer screens, etc.
- Communication barrier: - difficulties receiving information in person or by telephone; difficulties interacting with receptionists or other staff; difficulties receiving training.
- Attitudinal barrier: - staff who do not know how to communicate with people with disabilities; staff who refuse to provide service; discriminatory behaviours.
- Technological barrier: - computers, photocopiers, fax machines, telephones and switches, inadequate or inappropriate assistive technologies.
- Policy or a practice: - rules, regulations and protocols that prevent one from performing his/her job satisfactorily; or from serving the public; or that restrict public participation.

## DISABILITY:

- a. Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes, mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
- b. A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- c. A learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- d. A mental disorder, or
- e. An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

## ACCESSIBILITY:

Ability to be reached; easy to approach, enter, speak with or use.

### **3. GOAL OF THE PLAN**

Our goal is to make YRDSB accessible to all stakeholders including students, their families, staff members and visitors. We aim to ensure conditions that invite the full participation of the community.

### **4. OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN**

In order to ensure optimum accessibility for all, this plan:

- a. Describes the process for identifying, removing and preventing barriers that limit the participation of people with disabilities.
- b. Outlines the process for reviewing our progress in addressing barriers.
- c. Lists the accomplishments in the area of “barrier removal”.
- d. Describes goals for next year’s accessibility improvement initiatives.

### **5. COMMITMENT TO ACCESSIBILITY PLANNING**

The YRDSB is committed to working with members of the O.D.A. Accessibility Team in taking a pro-active approach to barrier identification/removal/prevention. This will be done by:

- Ensuring a regular review of policies and procedures to ensure compliance with the goals of the Accessibility Plan
- Improving access to programs, facilities and services for all stakeholders
- Establishing and maintaining an O.D.A. Accessibility team that includes representation from all employee unions/federations, trustees and staff
- Conducting regular consultations with people with disabilities

## **6. ACCESSIBILITY WORKING GROUP MEMBERS**

The team members include representation from the following groups:

- Superintendents
- Trustees
- ETFO
- OSSTF
- CUPE 1734
- CUPE 1196
- ETFO-OT
- Public Affairs (Communications)
- SEAC (Special Education Advisory Committee)
- YRAC (York Region Administrators Council)
- Regional Special Education Team
- Disability Management (Employee Services)
- Curriculum and Instructional Services
- Plant Services
- Planning Services

## 7. BARRIER REMOVAL INITIATIVES

### PLANT SERVICES

Accessibility Projects Completed during 2006 – 2007 School Year

School	Description	Cost Estimate
Aurora Heights Public School:222	Reconfigure automatic openers at front doors	4,000
Aurora High School:202	Install automatic door opener on cafeteria door	2,000
Bayview Secondary School:303	Install elevator	350,000
Buttonville Public School:421	Provide automatic door opener at main entrance.	15,000
Dr. G.W.Williams Secondary School:218	Install new bell in lift	1,000
Dr. J.M.Denison Secondary School:102	Install door openers for cafeteria & library doors	10,000
Flowervale Public School:434	Install ramp and door opener at front entrance	15,000
Glen Cedar Public School:132	Install automatic opener on interior door at front	3,000
Glen Shields Public School:337	Provide barrier free parking spaces (2)	1,500
Huron Heights Secondary School:105	Install door openers on library / caf doors and install hold open devices on corridor doors	18,000
	Replace lift	75,000
Lester B. Pearson Public School:253	Install ramp for portable	5,000
Middlefield Collegiate Institute:405	Correct curbs and make accessible	4,000
Prince Charles Public School:165	Provide stage lift and front door opener	65,000
Sir William Mulock Secondary School:112	Cut out curbs for access to school	5,000
Thornhill Secondary School:408	Improve signage at washrooms	5,000
Grand Total		578,500

## **PLANNING SERVICES**

The York Region District School Board continues to be one of the fastest growing school boards in Canada, and has grown by 5,880 elementary and 2,500 secondary school students from 2002 - 2006.

The York Region District School Board has constructed a total of 56 new elementary schools and 10 secondary schools since 1998, as well as 35 additions to schools. At the present time an additional 14 new elementary schools, 6 replacement schools, 1 secondary school and 2 additions are under design or have started construction. All 124 school projects outlined above have been designed to improve accessibility by providing buildings which are physically accessible and have barrier free washrooms.

The Planning department includes within the prospectus document which governs school design sections related to accessibility, and examines with plant staff and each school architect ways to improve accessibility for staff, students and the community within school buildings.

With respect to the renovation of existing schools to improve accessibility, the Board has through the capital plan submission to the Ministry of Education, identified several schools for improvements to accessibility, and has committed to making all buildings accessible over a ten year timeframe subject to funding being made available.

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

Our staff members at **Regional Special Education Services** have experienced first hand the impact that education has on reducing attitudinal barriers which may prevent some individuals from fully participating in society.

The work of the O.D.A. committee serves as a catalyst to many of our existing programs to further educate individuals and groups towards more inclusive learning environments and workplaces.

**The Abilities Awareness Program** is one example of how a group of motivated individuals in the York Region District School Board have come together to make a significant difference for students, staff, and community members. The program has been in place for 11 years in YRDSB.

The Abilities Awareness Program is an experiential, school-based initiative designed to increase awareness of people with differing abilities and demonstrate how you can treat all people with respect and empathy.

The program strives to promote the key themes of respect, empathy, and responsibility.

Abilities Awareness is a dynamic, experiential workshop in which participants rotate through stations that provide activities simulating a variety of disabilities.

Stations that are frequently presented include: People with Physical Disabilities; People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing; People who have Developmental Disabilities; People who are Blind or Visually Impaired; People who have Speech or Language Disabilities; People with Learning Disabilities and People with Autism or Pervasive Developmental Disorders.

At each station, students and staff participate in a variety of activities that stimulate discussion and encourage thinking about issues of equity - for example, students may have to negotiate through narrow doorways in a wheelchair, or they may be asked to take notes from a lesson while experiencing a simulated hearing impairment. Discussions about appropriate strategies to assist in each situation are facilitated following the simulation exercises.

The program travels to schools and presents the stations in the regular school environment.

The Abilities Awareness Program has been enthusiastically received by elementary and secondary schools within York Region over the past decade - thousands of students and staff have participated.

This program was originally designed to educate children and it has evolved into an educational program for people of all ages.

In addition, the program has been presented annually to Teacher candidates at York University, other school boards and through teacher workshops.

Many of the themes presented and reinforced by Abilities Awareness provide a natural connection to Board initiatives; for example, Respectful Workplaces and Character Matters.

Themes presented include respect and empathy for others; and the concepts that we are “More Alike than Different” and we understand others when we are able to “Walk a Mile in their Shoes”.

Other important concepts the program communicates are that:

- Everyone has unique abilities and talents
- Our attitudes are important in determining how all people experience community
- It is important that we see the person first and the disability second and
- "Its what's inside that counts"

Schools request presentations through the Organizing Committee of The Abilities Awareness Program. The committee is a multidisciplinary team consisting of Physical and Occupational Therapists, Specialized Teachers, Work Experience Coordinators, Speech Language Pathologists, Hearing and Vision Teachers and Educational Assistants within Special Education.

This program is extremely popular and in high demand, which is a true indication of how our school communities continually strive to create accessible and equitable learning environments.

## **DISABILITY MANAGEMENT (EMPLOYEE SERVICES)**

Our Disability Management team consists of professionals who work to support employees who are having difficulties attending work due to a disability. Each year we assist hundreds of employees to either return to work or apply for suitable disability benefits.

Our program is based on human rights legislation and is a joint effort between management and the union/federation, aimed at supporting employees. All cases are dealt with in a consistent manner; however, each accommodation is unique to the individual's particular abilities and working environment. Specific accommodations are put in place in order to ensure that employees are able to participate and contribute, with dignity, to the best of their ability. All medical information gathered throughout the process is confidential.

## **8. GOALS FOR NEXT YEAR'S ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENT**

During the 2007/2008 school year the committee will begin work to implement the new Customer Service Regulation under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (A.O.D.A.). This will be carried out along with our plans to continue addressing the needs identified within our system and raise awareness of our communication vehicles such as "barrier buster" and the "Access for All" brochure.

## **9. REVIEW AND MONITORING PROCESS**

Regular O.D.A. Accessibility Team meetings will be held in order to review and monitor our progress to attaining our stated goals. An annual report is made by the Superintendent of Employee Services to the Coordinating Council of Superintendents. This report is also presented to the Board each fall. The annual report is posted on the York Region District School Board website ([www.yrdsb.edu.on.ca](http://www.yrdsb.edu.on.ca)) along with any additional material that will be useful in the identification, removal and/or prevention of barriers to people with disabilities.

## **10. COMMUNICATION OF THE PLAN**

The posting of the Annual O.D.A. Accessibility Plan is to be communicated to all York Region District School Board locations through a memo to the system from the Superintendent of Employee Services, posted on the Board's Enterprise Portal. This will occur each fall immediately following the posting of the Plan.

## **Appendix: O.D.A. ACCESSIBILITY TEAM MEMBERS**

**Loralea Carruthers, Trustee**

**Mary Cromwell, President (CUPE 1196)**

**Lesley Crossley, Vice-Principal**

**Beth Dolson, Administrative Assistant**

**Christina Doyle, Teacher (ETFO)**

**Janet Hicks, Manager, Employee Services**

**Sarah Kahan, President (CUPE 1734)**

**Lynn Lockhart Menzies, Teacher (Regional Sp. Ed.)**

**Flora MacDonald, Member of SEAC**

**Rose McCarthy, Employee Relations Officer**

**Lewis Morgulis, Manager, Facility Planning**

**Chris Tulley, Superintendent of Employee Services**

**Ross Virgo, Public Affairs Officer**

**Sandra Ware, Teacher (OSSTF)**

**Kathy Wosnick, Principal**