

2021

Durham Region Accessibility Report



If you require this information in an accessible format, please contact the Accessibility Coordinator at accessibility@durham.ca Or 905-668-4113 extension 2009.

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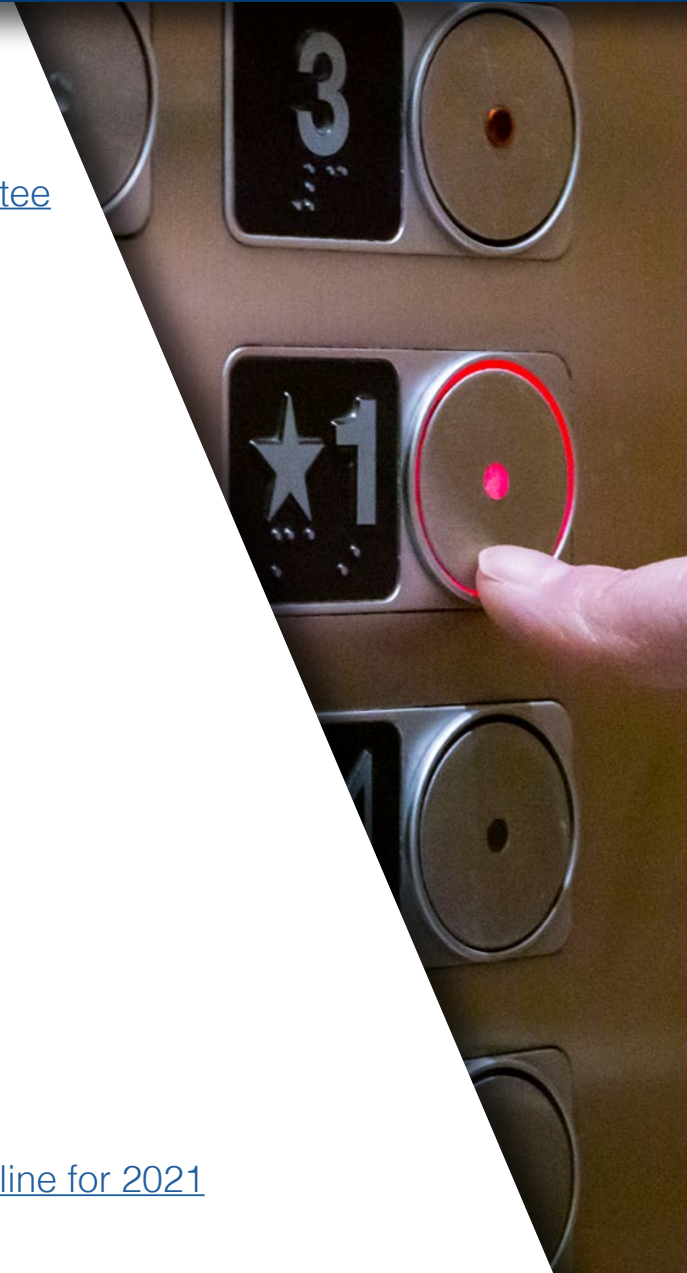
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Land Acknowledgement

The Region of Durham is located on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange among the Mississauga Peoples and is the traditional and treaty territory of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation. We honour, recognize and respect this nation and all Indigenous Peoples as the traditional stewards of the lands and waters on which we have the privilege to live.

We must acknowledge the perpetuated discrimination, numerous health crises and the uncovering of the remains of Indigenous children and unmarked graves at residential schools across the country. Indigenous world views demonstrate the importance of community members taking care of one another and building community through shared environment, tradition and knowledge. We understand that western colonization, including policies, practices and discriminatory laws, has devalued traditional Indigenous communities and we recognize the long-standing impacts this has had on Indigenous Peoples.

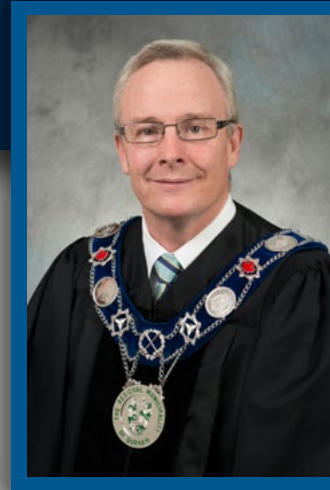
Durham Region is committed to engaging and nurturing relationships with Indigenous community members through building trust, reciprocity and respect. We are committed to joining in the healing by connecting the past to the present and the future.

Miigwech/ Nia:wen/ Marsi/ Thank you / Merci



Regional Chair and Chief Administrative Officer message

Durham Region is made up of diverse communities where every person has the right to feel a sense of belonging and is empowered to participate fully. As a Region, we strive to identify and remove barriers to participation to ensure our facilities, programs and services, are accessible, equitable and reflect the diversity of the region. We are committed to addressing accessibility in a manner that upholds the principles of dignity and independence and strives to provide integrated services and equal opportunity for everyone.



Vibrant, diverse neighbourhoods make up Durham Region—a caring community, where every person is treated with dignity and respect; where people of all ages and abilities can thrive as they live, work, play, visit and invest in our region.

This was a historic year. As we prioritized public health across Durham Region, we ensured that COVID-19 vaccination was as accessible and convenient as possible, through specialized support and free transit to vaccine clinics (thanks to a partnership with Ontario Power Generation). Our teams worked around the clock, pivoted operations, and administered more than one million vaccine doses. On top of it all, we continued to implement—and improve—award-winning programs and services. We underlined our commitment to accessibility by advancing several banner initiatives.

We concluded the Age-Friendly Durham Strategy and Action Plan, and became a member of the World Health Organization's Global Network for

Regional Chair and Chief Administrative Officer message

Age-Friendly Cities and Communities. Work completed on the 67 action items supported the creation of a strong and vibrant community where older adults remain active, enjoy better health, and are more engaged and informed.

Regional Council adopted the Community Safety and Well-being Plan, which will intentionally align existing relationships, plans, and strategies at the regional, municipal, and community level to optimize resources, best practices, and facilitate effective cross-sectoral collaboration. Safety and well-being are the cornerstones upon which healthy, prosperous communities are built.

And, we formally established a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Division within the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer to foster welcoming, fair, respectful and inclusive communities. Key components of our regional DEI strategy include ensuring staff of all abilities are valued, included and supported and regional programs and services are available and accessible to all. It is important that the Region of Durham is a place where diversity is embraced and each one of us is valued and included. Creating a strong sense of belonging helps us harness individual differences in ways that drive leadership, co-operation, innovation and service excellence.

We're confident these strategies will be important steps on our journey to ensure that Durham Region is an accessible place that everyone can be proud to call home. The 2021 Accessibility Award recipients demonstrate how our community is continuously moving toward this vision.

We offer our gratitude to the Region's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) for guiding this work. Durham Region is committed to making our programs and services reflective of the people who live here. Working together, we can achieve this goal for all communities within the Region of Durham.

Message from the Chair, Durham Region Accessibility Advisory Committee



It is an honour to serve as chair of the Durham Region Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) alongside a dedicated group of individuals who live across the region and bring a wide range of personal experiences and perspectives to ensure Durham Region remains committed to building a safe, accessible and inclusive community.

Despite navigating yet another year of on-and-off pandemic restrictions, the Accessibility Advisory Committee remained committed to serving the community through a variety of educational and consultative initiatives. The AAC provided advice to Durham Region Transit's Specialized Transit on topics such as the importance of accessible transportation for people with invisible disabilities.

We also provided feedback to the Durham-Scarborough Bus Rapid Transit project on topics including bus shelter design (door openings and lighting); visual and audio prompts for people with low vision, to notify them when a bus has arrived; the importance of having signage; an education campaign for the project; and concerns with pedestrians crossing the street to get to shelters.

I want to congratulate all of the 2021 Accessibility Award recipients. We recognize your accessibility efforts throughout the region. It is the work of these champions that help translate our committee's work into tangible results for the community.

As we move into 2022 let us remember that disability does not discriminate. We all have a lifetime of changing needs and by keeping accessibility at the forefront of all conversations our result will always be a more inclusive community.

Dawn Campbell, Chair, Durham Region Accessibility Advisory Committee

Durham Region Accessibility Report



The Regional Municipality of Durham 2022-2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and previous Accessibility Reports can be found at durham.ca/accessibility.

The Regional Municipality of Durham's 2021 Accessibility Report is an annual update on the implementation of standards and timelines outlined in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and the 2022-2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. The AODA legislation supports the identification, removal and prevention of accessibility barriers throughout the organization's provision of goods and services, facilities and employment.

The Region of Durham has a population of more than 700,000 people. Of this, 22 per cent of community members identify as having at least one disability (2021 Statistics Canada report)—approximately 154,000 residents of Durham Region.

Durham Region's work is guided by the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan and aligns with the goal of a healthy, inclusive, age-friendly community where everyone feels a sense of belonging.

Accessibility Awards



The Region of Durham's Accessibility Awards celebrate accessibility as an essential foundation of our vision for a healthy, prosperous community for all. The awards honour community leadership and innovation in eliminating barriers for people with disabilities. Acknowledging and celebrating individuals, services and businesses that demonstrate commitment to accessibility, helps us to build a community that values and respects each person.

Nominations for these awards are made by the Accessibility Advisory Committees of all the municipalities within Durham Region. Gratitude goes out to every committee and the various community partners who recommend and support the nominations.

Accessibility Award recipients



Ajax—Liz Wallis recognized that many children in the community have communication challenges and use Core boards or Picture Exchange Communication Systems to communicate. Town of Ajax staff are actively pursuing the project and sought budget approval for pilot installation in key locations for 2022.



Brock—The Nourish and Develop Foundation led by Zoe Levitt took their farmers' market on the road. The Mobile Food Market went to numerous locations around Brock Township and surrounding areas twice a week, providing fresh local produce, meal kits and prepared meals at an affordable price to everyone.



Oshawa—The Oshawa Senior Community Centres 55+ team led by Executive Director, Sandi Black rapidly and creatively modified the services that they offered due to COVID-19 limitations. They offered online programs, grocery and frozen meal order and delivery service, a telephone outreach program, Zoom chats, porch visits, social connecting through Facebook, activity package delivery, outdoor programs when permitted and free rides to the Oshawa Vaccine Clinic.



Pickering—Ajax-Pickering Adult Day Program led by Colleen Paris, Day Program Coordinator. Initially, due to the pandemic lockdown, the Adult Day Program and services for community members were closed. Colleen and her staff called all participants to see how they were doing, arranged Zoom meetings, engaged in activities and distributed baskets of goodies to participants homes. As rules permitted, Colleen was able to arrange a day program for four or five participants at a time with protocols in place.

Accessibility Award recipients



Scugog—Applewood Farm and Winery Owners, Matt and Stephanie Passa Fiume have shown a commitment to accessibility and disability rights through creating a more accessible experience for all by providing accessible wagon rides, washrooms and picnic tables.



Uxbridge—Terry Baskin was a previous member and Chair of the Uxbridge Accessibility Advisory Committee where he demonstrated a persistent and passionate commitment to advancing accessibility in his community. He is an active consultant and advocate of the Downtown Revitalization Committee and the Uxbridge Lions Universal Club Playground Committee, providing education and expertise around the AODA standards.



Whitby—Founding partners, David and Kara Onofrio, of Redwood Employment run a family-owned business, inspired by individuals living with Autism, including their 'Justin,' as their why. Partnering with the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work, Redwood Employment helps individuals with autism gain and keep meaningful employment. From their journey, their own charity AutismAngels.com was born.



Region of Durham 2021 Achievements and Highlights

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Division

In 2021, following the mandate of Regional Council, Durham Region established a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Division within the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer to foster welcoming, fair, respectful and inclusive communities with established measurable goals. The DEI division prioritized and supported the development of new tools and best practices to empower and engage diverse communities within the organization and across the region.

Key components of the DEI strategy included ensuring staff of all abilities are valued, included and supported and regional programs and services are available and accessible to all.



To support staff, the DEI division conducted the following activities:

- Held an “Equitable and Inclusive Engagement Practices” workshop for employees.
- Launched a Discrimination and Harassment Anonymous Reporting Tool.
- Hosted a session for staff on Universal Design and Planning for Accessibility in the Workplace during National AccessAbility Week.

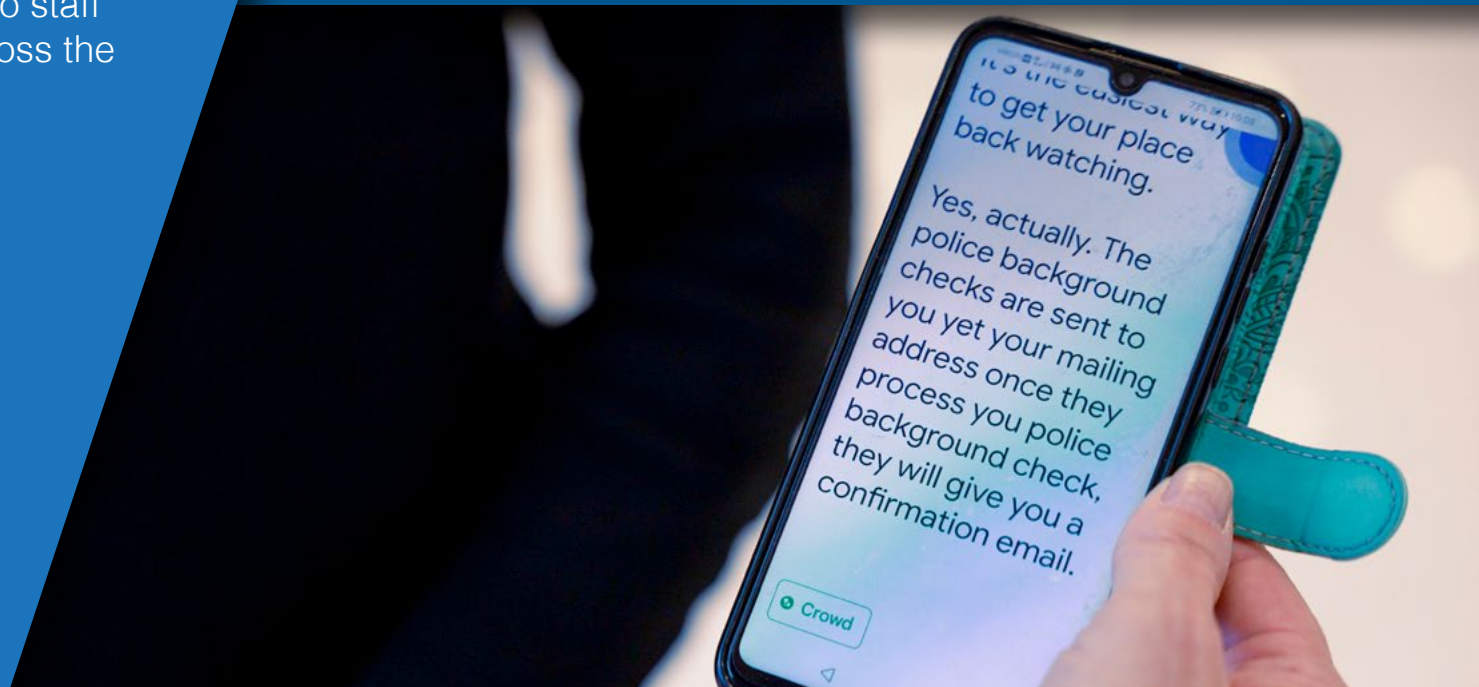
The establishment of a DEI division ensured that the Region embedded an equity lens across all departments. In addition to employing dedicated accessibility-focused staff, the Region convened a Disabilities Subcommittee to address and champion the needs of employees and community members with disabilities.

Fostering an inclusive community included building partnerships with community service organizations that have an accessibility mandate and work to reduce barriers for residents. Durham Region will continue to work with Abilities Centre to deliver targeted programming and community events; and with Ready, Willing and Able to enrich the region’s workforce through inclusive recruitment practices.

Training and education

The Region places a strong focus on barrier-free information, including accessible reports, forms, templates and open captioning in video messages.

- Trained 864 staff on creating accessible documents.
- Developed new internal learning resources for accessible documents.
- Created a monthly internal Accessibility Champions recognition program.
- Offered 61 virtual corporate learning courses to 8,189 participants.
- Provided several education and training sessions on Indigenous cultural safety, mental health, and resilience to staff from community agencies across the region.



Court Services



In 2021, 38,466 virtual court appearances took place. Counter loop systems and tablets were implemented for court users with hearing disabilities.

Age-Friendly Durham

In 2021, Durham Region became a member of the World Health Organization's Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities, demonstrating the Region's commitment to making Durham an age-friendly community.

The Region's Age-Friendly Durham Strategy and Action Plan concluded at the end of 2021, completing 67 action items and supporting the creation of a strong and vibrant community where older adults can remain active, enjoy better health and are more engaged and informed. Building an age-friendly community is an ongoing process to which Durham Region remains committed. To learn more, visit [Age-Friendly Durham](#).



Inclusive Community Grant

The Inclusive Community Grant supported two projects to reduce social isolation and keep seniors connected throughout the pandemic, including:

1. Durham Region Transit: Supplied On-Demand self booking kiosks and monitors to select seniors' residences to increase promotion of On-Demand services. The monitor provides real-time display to reduce wait times and allow sufficient time to arrive at the bus stop.
2. Virtual North Durham Senior's Fair and Virtual Senior's Learning Series: In collaboration with the Township of Scugog, a virtual Senior's Fair and Learning Series was offered to north Durham senior residents. The project provided virtual education to older adults and caregivers through local partners on topics including fraud and scam awareness, bereavement education, falls prevention and financial planning.

Community Safety and Well-being Plan



Regional Council adopted the Community Safety and Well-being (CSWB) Plan in November, 2021. Community safety and well-being describes a place where everyone feels safe, has a sense of belonging, and where all residents can meet their needs for education, health care, food, housing and income, as well as social and cultural expression.

The Durham Region CSWB plan gathers leaders together to plan and strategize while sharing the responsibility of community safety and well-being.

The plan includes the involvement of persons with lived and living experiences; the not-for-profit community; and different sectors, institutions and service delivery agents, to share in the collective responsibility of creating the type of community we want to call home. The CSWB plan identifies the following priority risk factors:

- Mental health
- Substance use
- Homelessness and basic needs
- Criminal involvement
- Victimization
- Social isolation
- Experiences of racism

This Plan offers meaningful direction in getting the right services, to the right people, at the right time.

For more information, visit durham.ca/CSWBPlan.

Corporate Services

Human Resources

The Human Resources division implemented a virtual corporate employee orientation program. All recruitment and training transitioned to a virtual platform. Virtual orientation enabled new employees to access closed captioning options if they required them and provided the ability to complete the orientation at their own pace.

Service Durham Division

The Public Front Counter / Corporate Call Centre, now known as the Service Durham Division, implemented the use of Canadian Hearing Services and Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) at public front counters across the Region. This service enables people who are deaf to communicate with hearing people through an American Sign Language interpreter who is located off-site via video conferencing technology.



Corporate Services

Access and Privacy Office

Virtual service options were made available in 2021 to submit a request, pay fees and receive records electronically.

Council Services

Meetings were livestreamed on the Region's website to ensure all meetings were accessible to the public. Livestreams included closed captioning.

The nomination process for the election of the Regional Chair was updated to allow candidates to submit their nomination papers electronically, removing the requirement for candidates to travel to Regional Headquarters.

Council and Committee meetings continue to be offered in a hybrid format allowing the public to participate either virtually or in-person, reducing barriers to attendance.



myDurham 311



Durham Region launched the myDurham 311 Smart Home Device Voice Service project. The Region is the first regional municipality in Canada to bring Regional services to smart home devices. This innovative, new platform allows residents to access information about Regional services and frequently asked questions, via Google Home or Amazon Alexa, such as who your local councillor is, information on garbage pickup dates, and where the nearest bus stop is located.

Transit



Durham Region Transit (DRT) is committed to providing accessible transportation to the community. Faced with the challenges of COVID-19, DRT found new and innovative ways to keep the community moving.

Transit



- Increased access to public transit services throughout the urban areas with the implementation of 24/7 service.
- **Partnership with Ontario Power Generation for free travel to vaccine clinics:**
 - Provided 1,500 trips to and from vaccine clinics. This temporary program enabled seniors and residents to access Durham Region COVID-19 vaccination sites.
- **Paramedic Mobile Clinic**
 - In partnership with The Region of Durham Paramedic Services, mobile COVID-19 testing clinics were offered throughout the Region using DRT buses.
- **Travel Training Program for Customers:**
 - Travel training empowers people to use transit and become more independent, participate more fully in the community and improve their quality of life. This program supported customers of all ages and abilities with education on how to use DRT services.
 - Individualized training sessions provided community members with opportunities to learn how to use transit services (i.e., practice boarding and disembarking the bus with a mobility device).
 - Modernized Processes Specialized Services Eligibility Appeal Forms were made available online. Virtual eligibility appeal panel hearings were implemented.
 - An eForm was created enabling customers without access to a printer to request the Specialized Services application forms.
- **Durham-Scarborough Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) plans**
 - The Durham Region AAC reviewed and provided transit input on BRT plans including bus stop design, accessibility requirements and routing.

Health Department

As the Durham Region Health Department prioritized providing vaccinations across the Region, teams also worked around the clock and pivoted operations to provide services in accessible formats to meet the community's needs.

COVID-19 vaccines were offered through hospital, pop-up, mobile, drive-thru and homebound visits, provincial mobile clinics, as well as pharmacies and health-care providers. Resources were created to share, "How community clinics are accessible for seniors" and COVID-19 Guidance. Advice for businesses and organizations were also posted to durham.ca.

The Emergency Management team ensured all locations secured for pop-up and stationary vaccination clinics offered an accessible entrance/exit, washrooms, parking and ample space for people who use mobility devices, and that wheelchairs were available on site.

The Seniors program in the Oral Health Division was expanded, including extending hours of operation, and the construction of larger clinic space to address accessibility needs.



Social Services

The Social Services Department is committed to delivering professional and high-quality services. The following actions were taken to ensure services and supports continued throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Family Services

Durham Region Family Services adjusted their customer service model to better serve the community.

- Staff moved to hub locations throughout the region to improve access to services.
- A system was developed to support clients requiring assistance with technology set up, so that they could participate in virtual services, including interpreter services for virtual and in person service delivery.
- Electronic client satisfaction surveys were provided.
- The team facilitated the delivery of virtual medical services (such as vaccine administration and COVID-19 testing) through the Primary Care Outreach Program (PCOP) for people who are living without shelter in the region. The PCOP team completed 1,900 client encounters.



Social Services

Income and Employment Supports

Income and Employment Supports found new ways to deliver the Ontario Works Program.

- Made 31 virtual workshops available to Ontario Works recipients each month to support Life Stabilization efforts.
- Began using text messaging as a communication channel to connect with clients regarding appointment times and dates.
- Purchased laptops and chrome books for several Ontario Works participants.
- Formalized outreach partnerships with local libraries to provide on-site support and services.

Business Affairs and Financial Management

- Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic the Business Affairs division adjusted processes to support clients. This included implementing an electronic document management system, where documents could be uploaded remotely and accessed by all staff regardless of location; and offering Electronic Funds Transfer as a form of payment to maintain payment schedules with clients.

Emergency Social Services

Emergency Social Services reviewed all 24 designated evacuation centre sites, including assessing sites for accessibility as a preparedness measure.



Long-Term Care

Adult Day Programs pivoted to offer their services virtually or in outdoor settings, with applicable social distance guidelines, to provide residents with connections to the programs and people that were important to them when isolation was high.

- Co-ordinated virtual service offerings included calls with family members, access to live entertainment, local church services and programs.
- Created outdoor visiting areas designed with COVID-19 protocols for in-person visitation with residents and families.
- Reorganized and furnished exterior visiting areas to facilitate social interaction during the height of lockdown.



Durham Housing Improvements



Durham Regional Local Housing Corporation installed accessibility enhancements to support aging in place for senior residents. Enhancements included installation of 34 automatic door openers, converting unit bathrooms, and kitchen modifications to support residents with visual and physical difficulties. Property Managers identified areas that could improve accessibility for individual tenants and for visitors to the Region's sites. Housing improvements included the conversion of nine ground floor bathrooms to include nine walk-in showers, eight bathtub cut outs and the installation of 75 touchless door openers and three modified kitchens.

Economic Development, Tourism and Planning

Economic Development and Tourism Division

- **Parasport Games Legacy Fund Grant:** In partnership with Their Opportunity, Durham Region provided qualified families with subsidies to help alleviate registration costs for children and youth to participate in Parasport programs in Durham Region.
- **Parasport School Grow it Program:** In collaboration with Abilities Centre and the Durham Adaptive Sport Collective, the Region began the first phase of the Parasport School Grow It program with a teacher training session for two parasports.
- **2023 Ontario Parasport Games:** Submitted a bid to host the 2023 Ontario Parasport Games to continue to build on the momentum of the 2019 Games and elevate the profile of adaptive sport in the region.
- **Invest Durham** utilized its online platform to share events including the annual farm tour to demonstrate the importance of the agricultural sector in Durham Region, an Environmental Achievement Awards ceremony, and a Spring and Fall virtual webinar series on a variety of environmental related topics. A Public Open House for a proposed Regional Official Plan Amendment related to Major Transit Station Areas was also held virtually.



Regional Cycling Plan



During the development of the 2021 Regional Cycling Plan, the Region ensured that materials and templates were shared early on, and that accessibility specialists and groups at the Region were engaged throughout the project to ensure consultation and engagement sessions and materials were accessible.

The Region updated its contracts and bid requirements process by requiring consultants to include accessible standards and formats that go beyond AODA standards, from the onset.

Strategic Partnerships and Initiatives

Staff worked to develop a pilot program to support self-filing for taxes – a safe and accessible way for residents to file taxes on their own, with the assistance of a trained volunteer.

Staff supported and advocated for increased use of 211 Durham, including adding the 211 widget to durham.ca web pages and providing opportunities for 211 Durham to connect with community organizations to increase awareness and provide training.



Police Services



The new Education and Training Centre was designed with accessible features and is now located on one level in the building, making it easier to navigate.

Works

The Works department enhanced accessibility across the region.

- 197 traffic control signal locations equipped with an accessible pedestrian signal (APS).
- Walk times to accommodate slower walking speeds and added more countdown pedestrian signals
- 15 traffic control signal locations were retrofitted to include APS with sidewalk improvements, better crosswalk alignment and the installation of tactile plates. Nine new traffic control signal locations were installed with APS and tactile plates.
- Launched more than 20 online forms allowing customers to apply for services online.
- Installed an accessible Electric Vehicle charging station and additional touchless door openers at Regional Headquarters, and created seven additional accessible parking spaces at the front west entrance of Regional headquarters.



Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 Compliance Timeline for 2021

There is an ongoing commitment for all existing Durham Region websites and web content to meet the guidelines of WCAG 2.0 Level AA. WCAG is an international standard for making websites and web content accessible to a broader range of users with disabilities.

Staff continue to identify areas of concern and determine where more training is needed. The Region continues to work toward ensuring the accessibility of documents for both internal and external audiences. This consists of ongoing training for staff on how to create accessible documents and web content and providing resources and accessibility checklists that staff and vendors can reference to support the development of accessible documents across the organization.

Durham Region continues to work with the web service provider to correct barriers identified on the durham.ca website.



We welcome your feedback. Please let us know what you think about the Regional Municipality of Durham 2021 Accessibility Report.

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