



2023 Durham Region Accessibility Report





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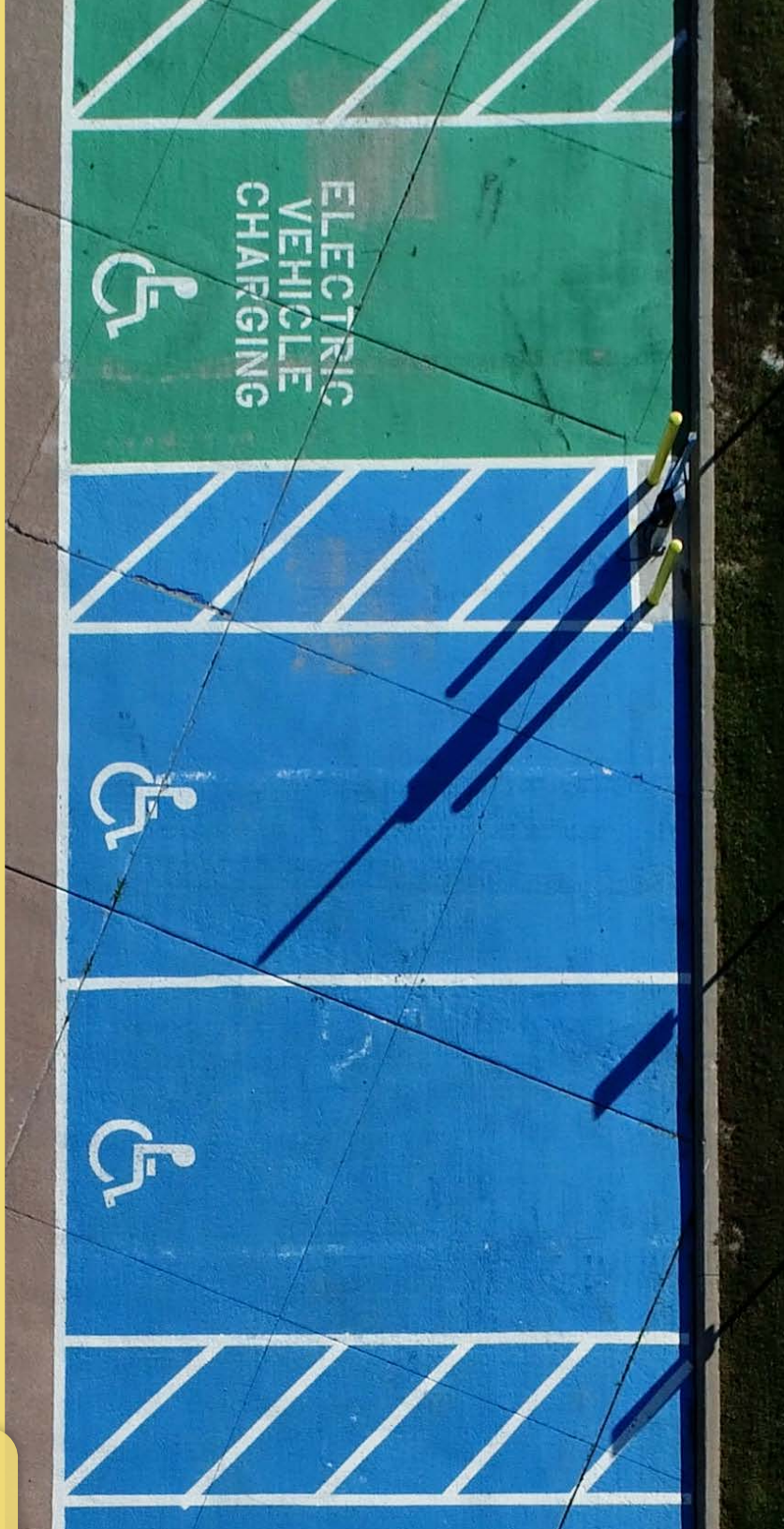
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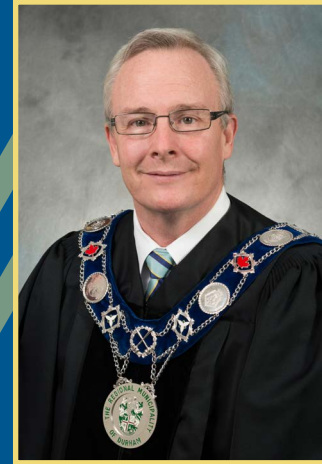


Land Acknowledgement

The Region of Durham exists on lands that the Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg inhabited for thousands of years prior to European colonization. These lands are the traditional and treaty territories of the Nations covered under the Williams Treaties, including the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation, Alderville First Nation, Hiawatha First Nation, Curve Lake First Nation, and the Chippewa Nations of Georgina Island, Beausoleil and Rama.

We honour, recognize, and respect Indigenous Peoples as rights holders and stewards of the lands and waters on which we have the privilege to live. In our efforts towards reconciliation, we continue to build and strengthen relationships with First Nations, as well as the large Métis communities and growing Inuit communities here in Durham. We commit to learning from Indigenous values and knowledge, building opportunities for collaboration, and recognizing that we are all connected.

Message from the Regional Chair and Chief Administrative Officer



Message from the Chair, Durham Region Accessibility Advisory Committee

It has been an absolute pleasure to serve our community on the Accessibility Advisory Committee this past year as Chair; and in previous years as a fellow committee member. I am privileged to serve alongside strong vocal advocates who are passionate about breaking down accessibility barriers, as well as enhancing the “language” of accessibility in our Region.

Although we said goodbye to some committee members this past year, their contribution to our community was invaluable. I know that they are continuing through advocacy and participating in enhancing accessibility in their respective communities. At the same time, we welcomed new committee members who add to, and reflect the diversity of, the committee and the Region. Our personal experiences and efforts contribute to fostering a more inclusive and accessible Durham Region. As a committee, we have held our six annual meetings in a hybrid format, allowing committee members to be online when necessary and in-person at other times. In our role, we provide both lived experience and foresight in accessibility accommodations—through

consultations with Regional departments, when they begin new initiatives or are undergoing upgrades. We regularly connect with the Planning and Economic Development, and we have committee representatives on various Regional committees, including Durham Region Transit.

We also partner with the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Division at Regional Headquarters. Our contribution this year is too much for me to mention here, so I encourage you to look closely through the report. I hope that everyone in our communities can access all aspects of our community for business, home, play, recreation, and sport with no barriers. We are better when we really are included.

Rosanne Purnwasie
Chair



Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC)

The Durham Region Accessibility Advisory Committee was established as a requirement of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA). The AAC has been making contributions to our communities, and all the services the Region of Durham provides by sharing their expertise and input on projects, establishments, and services. One notable contribution was partnering with Durham Region to recognize significant contributions towards accessibility and inclusion in the community.

The ACC organizes the Joint AAC awards annually with representatives from the Region of Durham. This informative and collaborative function brings partners and community members together to celebrate excellence in inclusion and accessibility for those living with disabilities. Each year, the AAC nominates individuals, businesses, or organizations based on their efforts in identifying, removing, and preventing barriers for individuals living with a disability. Accessibility champions are honoured with an Accessibility Award, to recognize their dedication to making the Region more accessible for people of all abilities.

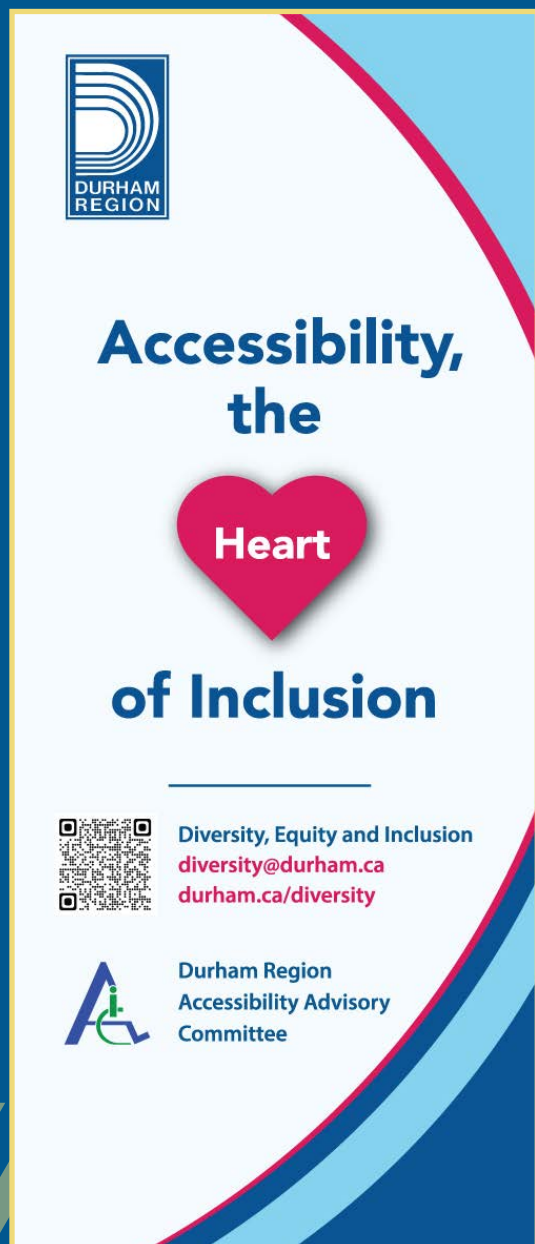


Highlights of contributions made by the AAC in 2023 include:

- Partnership in the development of the Durham Design Standard. This document outlines the building standards for Durham Region projects for new buildings and renovations.
- Support and consultation in the creation of the 2022 Accessibility Report.
- Identified barriers in Durham Region Transit service, including challenges with Specialized Transit. Made recommendations for improvement.

The ACC's main goal is to advise Regional Council on the preparation, implementation, and revision of the annual accessibility plan and other accessibility-related issues within the Region.

Durham Region Accessibility Report



The Region of Durham presents this report to highlight and celebrate our successes; built on the foundation of inclusion. Inclusion is an important value and action for the Region of Durham—both as an employer and a service provider to our residents and visitors.

The Region's accessibility goals are defined in the multi-year accessibility plan 2022-2025, which aligns with the Durham Region Strategic Plan; the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy; and our Age-Friendly Durham Strategy and Action Plan. This report demonstrates the work done in 2023 towards accomplishing these goals.

This document also serves as a status report, as required under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA). The Act was created in recognition of the discrimination against persons with disabilities in Ontario. It also aims to implement standards to achieve accessibility for all Ontarians concerning goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures, and premises by January 1, 2025.

Visit durham.ca/AccessibilityReports to review The Regional Municipality of Durham 2022 to 2026 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and previous accessibility reports.

Accessibility Success Highlights 2023

This section will highlight our successes in the world of accessibility and inclusion, by department and, in some cases, by division.



Office of the Chief Administrative Officer

The Office of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) is responsible for strategic leadership, co-ordination, operational oversight, intergovernmental relations, budget and organizational development. This department celebrates the following accessibility successes.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Division

The DEI division creates programs and strategies to celebrate our cultural identity, race, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, religious affiliation, age and any other identified parts of self not listed. The division is focused on building a region where diversity is embraced and each of us feels valued and included. In 2023, the division accomplished the following:

- Awarded the Seniors Community Grant, in partnership with Durham Region Transit (DRT), to support the creation of a resource guide for older adults and seniors. This resource guide was created to increase awareness of essential housing, health, legal, and social/recreational programs and services available to older adults and seniors. The goal is for the resource guide to reach at least 2,300 individuals. This fund also supported DRT to launch the “Get Moving with On Demand” project, which provides targeted assistance to older adults seeking support navigating the transportation system.
- Launched “Project Search Durham” in partnership with Abilities Centre and Durham Catholic District School Board. Project SEARCH is a unique school-to-work internship program for students with developmental disabilities, creating opportunities for them to acquire competitive work and employability skills. Ten interns were recruited to be hosted by various divisions throughout the Region.
- Supported the “Senior Buddies” initiative, through the Community Safety and Well-Being fund, which connects youth volunteers with older adults residing in long-term care homes. This program aims to foster positive relationships and create a sense of community for people of all ages.



- The Region of Durham Equity Audit, with the support of an external consultant, was conducted to measure how employees found the Region to be doing in terms of fair and equitable process relating to how employees are hired, promoted, and treated generally by the Region as an employer. The findings suggest that although we have some strong policies and practices there is still work to be done to achieve inclusion and equity for all employees. To assist with achieving inclusion for all employees, the decision was made to hire an implementation specialist in January 2024. This person will lead the process of implementing the recommendations.
- Through the Region's Age-Friendly Durham initiative, and supported technology donations to Brock Township Public Library and Scugog Public Library, DEI was able to address the communication, participation and learning needs of seniors and other groups vulnerable to social isolation.
- The Diversity Equity and Inclusion Initiatives survey was launched. This collected 552 residents' perceptions and recommendations on topics related to social connection, immigration, and diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Hosted a panel discussion on the needs and experiences of newcomers with disabilities. Co- led by the Durham Local Immigration Partnership and the Toronto East Quadrant Local Immigration Partnership, the Newcomer Accessibility Council (NAC) hosted the event to learn how newcomers with disabilities are accessing settlement services and disability support services. The panel was composed of individuals with lived experience and service providers who support this population. The forum was held at the University of Toronto Scarborough and attended by more than 20 service providers from Durham and Scarborough.
- The How Can I Help resource tool was created in partnership with Durham Regional Police Service (DRPS) and Lakeridge Health, to provide direction for residents experiencing acute mental illness, housing challenges, or for vulnerable community members who need advice.
- The LEAD Canada process for the Region of Durham started in 2022 and continued into 2023. This process is resulting in the organization successfully embedding accessibility and inclusion strategies across the Region. This process allows staff to feel confident in providing accessible and inclusive services to all.
- An internal Accessible Resources portal was launched in fall 2023. This self-directed, online portal acts as a guide for the creation of accessible documents; allowing staff to find answers quickly, at any time. It has proven to be a valuable resource, especially for newly hired employees. This document will be continuously updated to reflect changes in accessibility standards and organizational need.

- At every opportunity, we ensure that divisional staff are aware of accessible documents and know how to make documents accessible by current standards. Courses were consistently updated and offered to aid in the creation of Accessible Documents.
- The second annual Accessibility Conference was held virtually by the Region of Durham, in partnership with Abilities Centre on May 30, 2023. The theme was the Power of Inclusion: Moving Accessibility from Awareness to Action. The goal was met. It brought together business community members to discuss and gain knowledge on the power of inclusion in the workplace.
- Our accessible documents expert collaborated with other municipalities to facilitate training on accessible documents. This collaboration will continue into 2024.
- Building awareness through education and events for Regional employees and our local community partners:
 - International Day of Persons with a Disability recognition event.
 - Flag raising for Autism Day.
 - Guest speakers relating their lived experiences.
- In 2023, the Ontario Parasport Games were hosted by Durham Region. The DEI Division took part in multiple ways: allowing community interaction, visibility and connection with participants and other community members. Involvement included:
 - Attending opening ceremonies to cheer on athletes and participate in a monumental event for the community.
 - DEI staff members volunteered their time to support various aspects of the games, including assisting with game operations.
 - Our Accessibility team provided input around accessibility at game venues.



Meenu Sikan pg 13 Assistant Deputy Minister for Seniors & Accessibility - Government of Ontario

Corporate Services Department



The Corporate Services Department ensures the operation of the Region by providing administrative, financial, technological, legal and communication services.



Human Resources Division

Human Resources renewed their commitment to embedding accessibility in their practices through these strategies:

- Blended and hybrid learning continue to be offered, to align with operational needs and allow employees to learn in place. This has enabled people to learn in an environment that best suits their current condition.
- Continued to produce and provide information in a variety of formats, including video, scripts, and eLearning.

In 2023, new practices developed by Human Resources include tools that make career advancement more accessible to all:

- Launched “Strategies for Success” eLearning module for employees to assist all candidates to be better prepared for job competitions.
- Rolled out a Mentorship program for employees through an online portal. Mentorship fosters relationships that support, encourage and motivate persons interested in professional growth and development. Our mentorship program allows mentees and mentors to sign up online, identify their areas of interest, and then choose from available mentors or mentees.

Increasing accessibility one service at a time:

- Human resources reduced barriers by creating self-service tools for employees to access via The Insider (internal website). Examples include an evaluation guide, retirement resources, and pension information.

Abilities Management

In 2023, Disabilities Management changed its name to Abilities Management while remaining committed to providing support to all staff through the accommodation process.

- Development of a workshop and eLearning for managers on medical leaves and accommodation.
- Mental health, addictions resources and sick credit expiry tool were added to The Insider.

Durham Regional Transit (DRT)



Durham Regional Transit provides bus service throughout the region, connecting communities within Durham and beyond in neighbouring regions, such as Toronto. This service operates a fleet of vehicles with accessibility features allowing use by those with wheelchairs and other mobility devices. The service includes fixed routes and specialized services for those with disabilities. In 2023 these impactful milestones were met in accessibility achievements:

- Mobile COVID-19 vaccination clinics continued into 2023. The Region of Durham Paramedic Service realized the operational value of a vehicle, with the ability to treat multiple patients at once. Therefore, bringing services to people within their community.
- In 2023, the Safety and Training unit brought in a new Health and Safety Check-in campaign, which focused on a specific monthly safety topic. In March, DRT highlighted its commitment to promoting a respectful environment in which all employees and customers are treated fairly. DRT recognizes and values the diversity, self-worth and human rights of its employees and customers. It will not tolerate, ignore, or condone workplace discrimination, harassment, and violence by or against anyone.
- Starting in late June 2023, DRT Ambassadors began work to enhance engagement within local communities. Some of this work included: providing travel training to residents who want to build their confidence using DRT and public transit; engaging with customers at key stations on the network; and participating in various events and forums to promote DRT services, answer questions, and build relationships.
- DRT launched a pilot program, to help evaluate the effectiveness of the new Social Services Department's Outreach program. This initiative supports those who are experiencing homelessness. DRT is funding the equivalent of two outreach workers who specifically assist individuals interacting with, or accessing, transit. It's a program designed to prioritize the well-being of all individuals accessing transit. This includes community members who face additional barriers in accessing vital services. It will also enhance support to DRT staff; allowing safe and effective service to customers who are encountering increasingly challenging situations.
- As of November 2023, customers can now pay for transit with PRESTO in Google Wallet by tapping their Android smartphone or smartwatch on a fare payment device. PRESTO in Google Wallet enables customers to make changes (load funds or pay for transit), and see them reflected instantly on their PRESTO account's balance and transaction history. Additionally, PRESTO in Google Wallet provides customers many of the same benefits as the traditional payment cards.

Health Department

The Durham Region Health Department offers a range of services aimed at promoting and protecting public health in the region. These services include prevention and disease control, health promotion and emergency preparedness. Next, we look at the progress in accessibility for the Health Department in 2023.

The Health Department continues to meet our community members where they are. This means having in-person clinics with more accessible features and offering health services to homebound individuals. New for 2023, the Health Department visited long-term care homes to provide oral care to residents.

The Health Department also ensures their documents are accessible and that alternate formats of documents can be requested, as needed. The number of staff trained to ensure that documents are in accessible format continued to grow in 2023.

The New Health community clinic, which opened in the Oshawa Centre, shares its space with the Breastfeeding clinic and Immunization program. This offers multiple services from the same easy-to-access location by transit.



Social Services Department



Income, Employment and Homelessness Support Division

The Income, Employment and Homelessness Support Division (IEHSD) is a dynamic and ever-changing division that strives to be as inclusive, accessible and equitable as possible. Case co-ordinators now have the option to use Microsoft Teams for video calls with client interactions. This allows Ontario Works (OW) recipients to use Microsoft Teams features, which increases accessibility, such as closed captioning. This also increases non-verbal communication with video features for example facial cues, lip reading, or hand gestures.

In January 2023, e-signature capability was introduced, allowing people to sign documents electronically. MyBenefits was enhanced to allow OW applicants to upload documents electronically, rather than attending in-person. Both these enhancements provide an additional option for clients with disabilities, mental illness, and limited access to transportation.



All IESHD staff were trained in Mental Health First Aid, building on training in Non-Violent Crisis Intervention and counselling skills to ensure staff can support people facing crises, health conditions, and barriers.

The division continued offering the Accessing Affordable Technology Temporary Program. This program provides eligible Ontario Works recipients with laptops and Chromebooks to assist with their employment and education goals. This program aimed to increase equitable access to technology for low-income clients.

Each IEHSD office has also been equipped with iPads at its public-facing front counter to make service delivery more accessible.

IEHSD continued to assist with cellphone issuance to connect individuals facing multiple barriers; this could include safety risks from human trafficking or domestic violence, homelessness or precarious housing, social isolation, and mental illness.

The Income Employment and Homelessness Support Division continues to increase efforts to ensure all documents are accessible. The committee dedicated to forms (Forms Committee) continues to work diligently to ensure all client-facing forms and letters are available in an accessible format. The workshop team ensures that workshop materials are presented in advance of workshops and available in multiple formats, allowing facilitators to meet the needs of as many participants as possible.

Long-term Care Division

This division of the Durham Region oversees and manages long-term homes that provide essential services and support to individuals facing complex health and care needs. The residents within these homes have accommodation, personal care, nursing services, and recreational activities geared to their needs and preferences. While still exceeding the regulatory standards of the province for long-term care. Below we will outline the summary of strides made for 2023 with accessibility in mind.

Long-term care continues to consider various ability levels to optimize inclusive living and working in a regionally operated long-term care facility. Considerations range from making patio doors wider and making outdoor spaces more usable with wheelchair-accessible concrete pads and picnic tables, to enlarging entryways for libraries. The removal of bumpy interlocking stones—and the installation of concrete for a smoother, safer surface for those who use mobility aids—have fostered independence for some residents by allowing assistance-free access to areas within the home's property.

Long-term care homes also purchased 80 bigger beds and mattresses that fit larger and or taller bodies. This resulted in a significant increase in comfort for these individuals and more accessible nursing care.



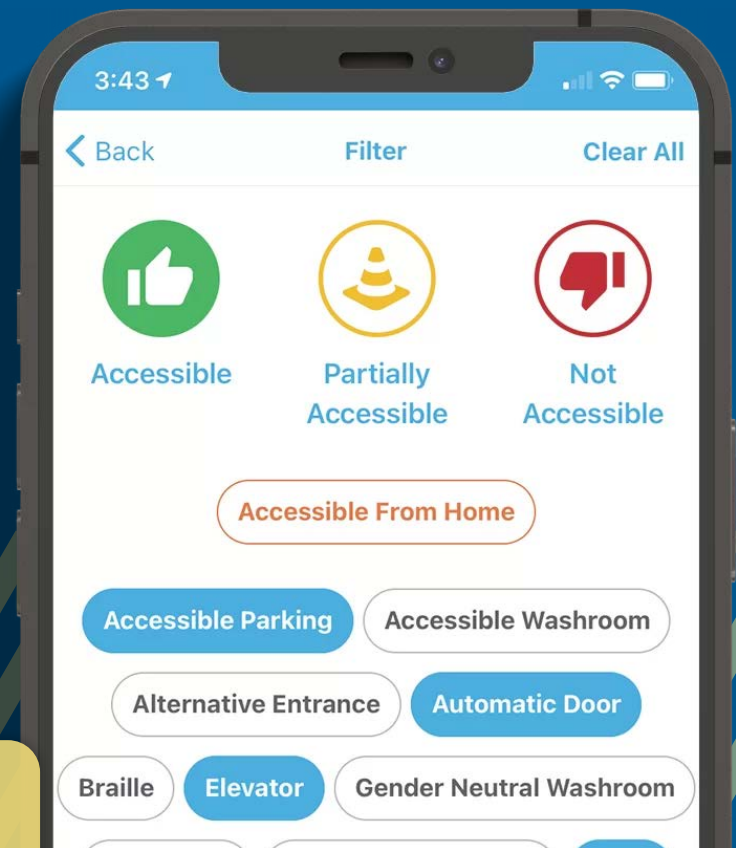
Dietary services revamped their meal tracking choices for each resident. The new software was installed, along with tablets for dining room staff, to show each resident their options for a meal and then document their choice. This information is instantly accessible by those preparing or serving the meals, resulting in more accurate and timely service.

Planning and Economic Development Department

The Planning and Economic Development Department focuses on fostering sustainable growth, economic prosperity, and vibrant communities within the region. This department is responsible for long-term planning initiatives and ensures orderly and responsible growth. Below is an overview of their accessibility triumphs achieved in 2023.

As part of preparations for hosting the Durham Region 2023 Ontario Parasport Games (Games), Durham Region partnered with AccessNow to become a leader in accessibility mapping of spaces to increase inclusion confidence for residents and visitors. This free app, available on Google Play and the Apple App Store, allowed users to discover accessible and non-accessible pinned locations in 35 countries around the world. All 2023 Games venues were added to the app. The Region and its eight municipalities also committed to mapping all their facilities. Durham businesses were encouraged to add their accessibility information to the app.

Residents and visitors to our community can search, rate, and discover municipal facilities, local restaurants, hotels, shops, and attractions on AccessNow.





Durham Regional Police Service

The Durham Regional Police Service (DRPS) plays a critical role in maintaining public safety and security within the Durham Region; working with the community to ensure safe and thriving environments for all residents.

The DRPS Training Centre is upgrading its entry and bathroom doors, in addition to some desks, to ensure accessibility. In addition, online training modules were created, using accessible features, including scripts to accompany eLearning modules and alternate (alt) text descriptions for pictures and closed captioning. Into 2024, accessible features will be added to older training modules, or they will be completely revamped.

DRPS continues to operate units, such as the Mental Health Response Unit (a Police Constable partnered with a Registered Nurse who has extensive experience in mental health), Vulnerable and Autistic persons registries and Seniors Support. These initiatives that have grown into ongoing programs, show continued consideration to meet specific needs of diverse populations in the community. This department continues to have representation at community engagement tables, such as the Durham Elder Abuse Network.





Works Department

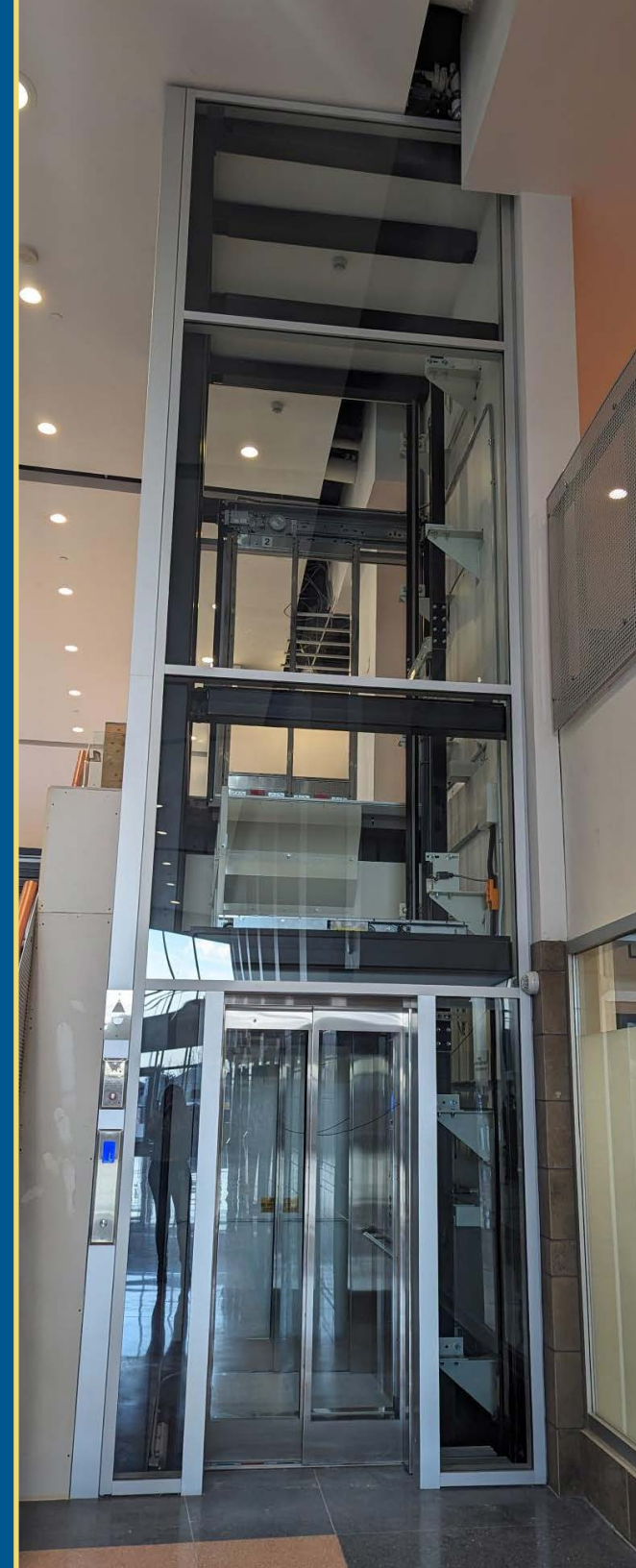
The Region's Works Department oversees services and infrastructure, including roads and transportation, water and waste management, environment sustainability, capital projects and emergency response. These important developments highlight the dedication of ensuring comfort and ease of use for everyone.

Transportation and Field Services (Traffic Engineering and Operations) Division

Currently, the Region has 224 traffic control signal locations equipped with accessible pedestrian signals. These features allow for safer intersection use. Adjustments include audible notifications and longer times for people to navigate intersections. In 2023, this team retrofitted 16 pre-existing signals and installed 13 new ones.

Facilities Division

Our Facilities Division continued with office modernization of our Regional Headquarters. This includes construction beginning on a passenger elevator, connecting the Lower Galleria to the Upper Galleria, with plans for completion in 2024. The most notable change was the interior office modernization of the fourth and fifth floors of the Regional Headquarters, including automatic door operators at secure doors. The typical workstation is set up for maximum flexibility, including a sit-stand mechanism at all desks, adjustable monitor arms, standardized technology connections, and a standard ergonomic chair with the greatest available range. These added features have increased the adaptability of our workstations and feelings of inclusion and acceptance. In 2024, we will be able to announce the completion of many projects, including three all-gendered washrooms at our headquarters, located at 605 Rossland Road East in Whitby.



Joint Accessibility Advisory Awards

Each year, Accessibility Awards are presented to champions for accessibility within the Region. These awards acknowledge a person, business or organization that has made considerable effort to incorporate accessibility into their operations or everyday life. Nominations are sought from each of the eight area municipalities. In 2023, awards were presented to:

Town of Ajax

Community Living Ajax-Pickering-Whitby Supported Employment Program

City of Oshawa

David McKay

Township of Uxbridge

Precious Minds Support Services

City of Pickering

Tammy Lyle-Gravlev

Town of Whitby

Melly's Place

Township of Brock

St. Joseph's Parish

Township of Scugog

The Piano Inn Café

Region of Durham

Doreen Hume-McKenna

Municipality of Clarington

Newcastle Griddle



Conclusion

This report contains many new accessibility accomplishments that the Region of Durham has achieved to eliminate barriers, in alignment with legislative requirements and regional policies. We continue to look for new and innovative ways to meet our accessibility targets. We continue evaluating our systems and practices to ensure we uphold our commitments to make sure everyone feels included, welcomed and valued. This way of thinking allows us to embed empathy and compassion in the ongoing and collaborative journey to building and sustaining a region, where people living with disabilities can fully participate.

Courtney Gilmour, Comedian





Contact Information

We welcome your feedback. Please let us know what you think about the Regional Municipality of Durham 2023 Accessibility Report.

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If you require this information in an accessible format, please contact the Accessibility Coordinator by emailing accessibility@durham.ca or calling 311 extension 2009.

