



Region of Durham 2026–2030
Multi-Year Accessibility Plan
(MYAP)



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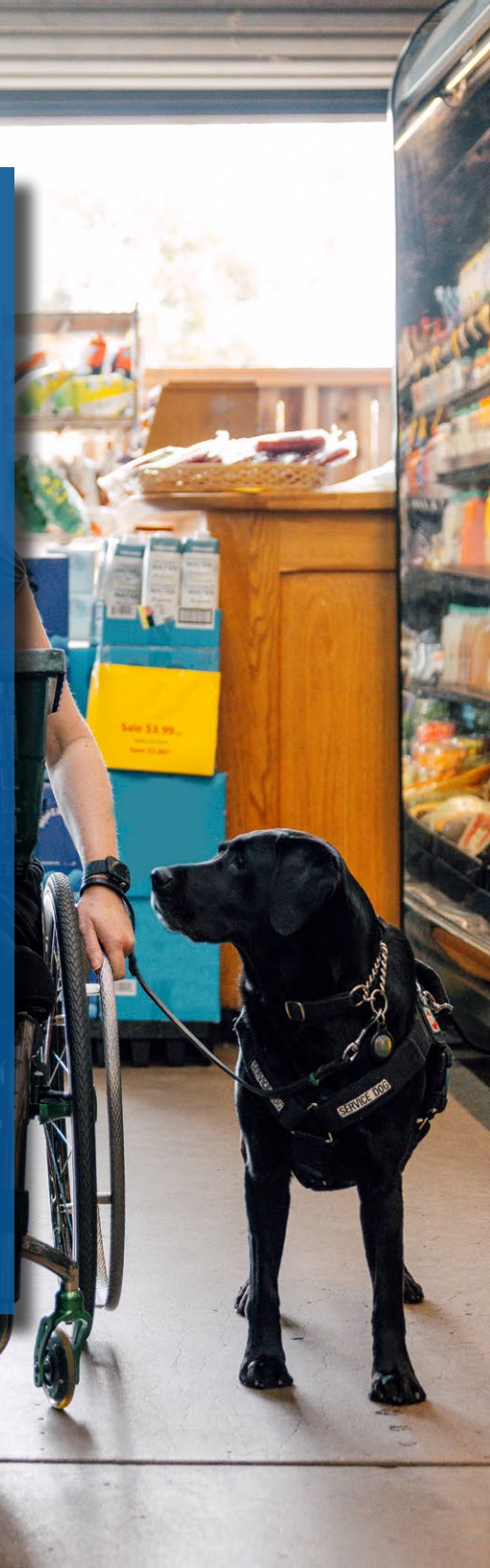
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Land Acknowledgement

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.

Shared message from the Regional Chair and CEO and Chief Administrative Officer



When people feel connected to their community, it sets the foundation for a more welcoming, resilient and thriving Durham Region. That belief is at the heart of our work. It's why we're committed to building a barrier-free region where everyone can participate and feel like they truly belong.

Our 2026-2030 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan is a bold indication of how we are creating equitable access people can count on. It ensures residents, employees, clients and visitors with disabilities can fully and independently access Regional services, spaces and information, and take part in community life.

This plan reflects our accountability as an organization. We are determined to go beyond minimum compliance requirements to create meaningful, lasting change. By embedding accessibility into how we plan services, build spaces, hire and support staff, and communicate, we're making inclusion part of our everyday operations.

Most importantly, this work was shaped by the people it's meant to support. We're truly grateful to the residents, community partners and members of the disability community who shared their experiences, ideas and insights. Your voices made this plan stronger and will continue to guide our progress.

Accessibility needs are diverse, evolving and deeply personal, and we are fully invested in improving how we do things over time—openly, thoughtfully and with measurable progress.

John Henry, Regional Chair and Chief Executive Officer

Elaine Baxter-Trahair, Chief Administrative Officer



Message from the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC)



We are pleased to participate in the development of Durham Region's 2026–2030 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. This plan sets out the important work that will continue to improve accessibility across the Region.

Over the next four years, Durham Region will continue to train staff on providing accessible services and creating accessible documents. The Region will also work to keep its websites accessible, even with quickly changing technology. Efforts are ongoing to ensure Regional employment practices continue to be inclusive at every stage, from recruitment to long-term employment, by providing the tools, supports and accommodations that help both job candidates and employees succeed. All this work is being designed with barrier-free access in mind.

The Region will also continue to innovate and improve public transit services so they remain accessible and responsive to the needs of the community. Improving accessibility in our services, programs and facilities is a key part of the vision guiding the Region's 2025 to 2035 Strategic Plan: connected, caring, and welcoming communities that respect the natural environment and create prosperity for all.

As the AAC, we are proud to continue providing advice and support to help advance accessibility through this plan and beyond.

Jim McEwen, Chair, Durham AAC



Introduction to the 2026–2030 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) is a public document that outlines how the Region of Durham will work to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities over a set period. It describes the actions the Region will take to improve accessibility across its programs, services, facilities, employment practices, information and communications, transportation and the built environment. The plan is developed in consultation with people with disabilities and reflects the Region's commitment to accessibility, inclusion and continuous improvement.

The MYAP helps ensure that residents, employees, clients and visitors with disabilities can access Regional services and participate fully and independently in community life. It advances fairness, dignity and equity, recognizing that disabilities can be visible or invisible, permanent or temporary, and that accessibility needs often intersect with age, language, income and other factors. By planning ahead, the Region can design services and spaces that work better for everyone, including older adults, families and caregivers.

The MYAP also fulfills the Region of Durham's legislated and human rights responsibilities under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and the Ontario Human Rights Code. It provides a clear roadmap for action, setting out priorities, timelines and accountability for accessibility improvements, while allowing residents to track progress over time. Through this plan, the Region demonstrates transparency, listens to community voices and embeds accessibility into everyday decision-making to build a more inclusive Durham for all.





Our commitment to accessibility

The Region of Durham is committed to building an inclusive, accessible and barrier-free community, where all people, regardless of ability, can live, work, travel and participate fully in Regional programs, services, and civic life. We recognize that disabilities are diverse, and that accessibility needs can change over time. Accessibility is a shared responsibility. We are committed to respecting the dignity, independence, integration and equitable opportunity of people with disabilities in everything we do.

The Region is dedicated to identifying, removing and preventing barriers across all programs and services. We will work to go beyond minimum requirements and obligations under applicable accessibility and human rights legislation. Accessibility considerations will be embedded into planning, policy development, procurement, service design and decision-making to ensure inclusive outcomes from the outset.

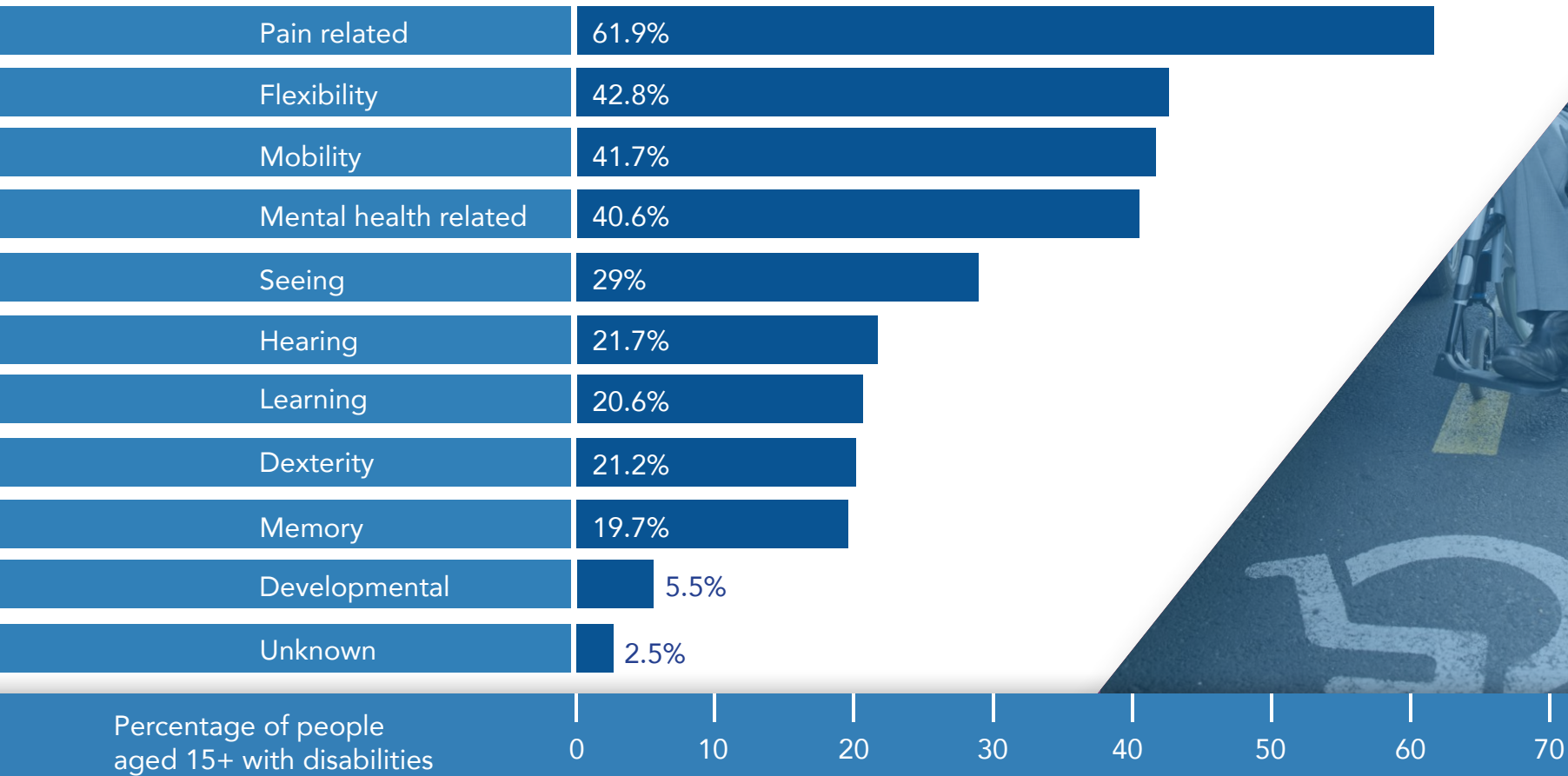
Guided by the principle of “nothing for us without us,” the Region of Durham is committed to engaging meaningfully with people with lived and living experience, caregivers, community organizations and partners. Through ongoing consultation, transparency, and accountability, we will continuously improve. Our commitment to accessibility reflects our broader goal of creating a Region where everyone feels welcome, supported and able to contribute to a thriving, equitable Durham.



Persons with disabilities in Canada and Ontario

Durham Region's estimated population of more than 800,000 residents is expected to grow to over one million by 2041. According to Statistics Canada, about 27 per cent of Canadians aged 15 and over identified as having at least one disability in 2022. This represents approximately 8 million people in Canada and an estimated 216,000 people in Durham Region.

Types of disabilities in Ontario (Statistics Canada, 2022)

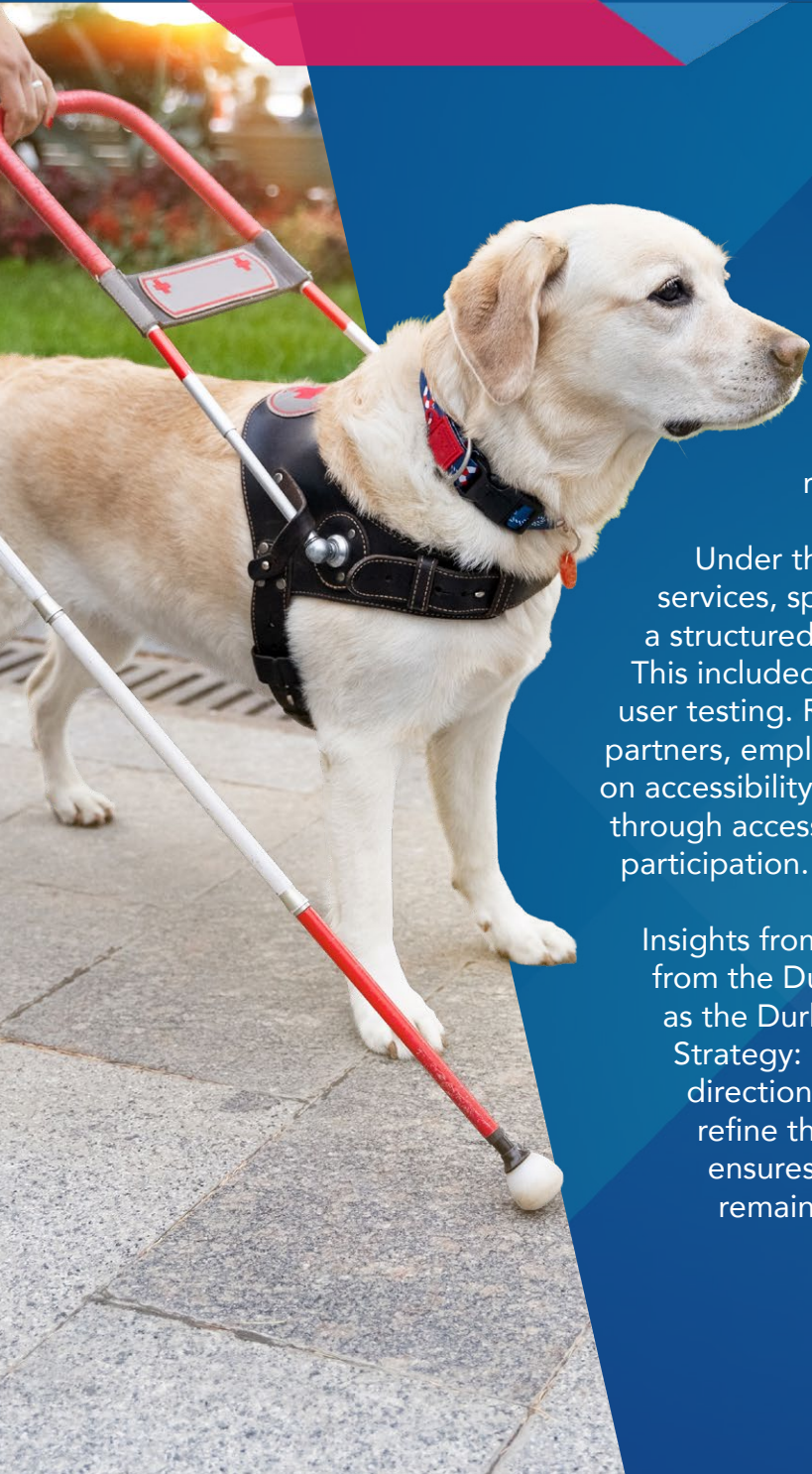


Pain-related disabilities are the most common type of disability reported in Ontario (nearly two thirds of cases). Flexibility, mobility, and mental health-related disabilities each affect over 40 per cent of persons with disabilities. Individuals may report more than one disability.



Disability in Ontario, and within Durham region is both common and multidimensional, with many residents experiencing multiple, overlapping disability types, most frequently pain-related, mobility, flexibility and mental health-related disabilities.

An intersectional lens highlights that disability often interacts with other social factors—such as age, income, race, gender, geography and immigration status—shaping how residents access housing, transportation, employment, health care, and Regional services. In Durham’s diverse, growing and aging communities, these intersecting factors can compound barriers, particularly for individuals facing chronic pain, mental health challenges, learning or memory-related disabilities or limited access to affordable and accessible supports. This underscores the importance of integrated, equity-driven accessibility planning across all Regional programs and services, ensuring policies and environments are flexible, inclusive and responsive to the varied lived experiences of people with disabilities across Durham.



Methodology: how the 2026–2030 MYAP was developed

The 2026–2030 MYAP was developed through a collaborative, inclusive and evidence-informed process. Led by the Region of Durham’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) team—in partnership with the Durham Region Innovation team and the Durham Regional Police Service (DRPS)—the process was designed to meet the requirements of the AODA, while reflecting the real experiences and priorities of the community and workforce.

Under the vision of “a community and workplace where we work together to ensure services, spaces and opportunities are accessible and where everyone can participate,” a structured engagement approach was used to guide the development of the plan. This included a public survey, community vision workshops, leadership workshops and user testing. Residents, people with lived experience of disability, caregivers, community partners, employees and leaders from the Region and DRPS were invited to share feedback on accessibility strengths, barriers and opportunities for improvement. Input was gathered through accessible formats and multiple engagement methods to encourage broad participation.

Insights from engagement activities were combined with existing data, including findings from the Durham Region Equity Audit and alignment with other Regional strategies such as the Durham Region 2025-2035 Strategic Plan and the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy: 2025-2029. A draft framework made up of guiding principles and strategic directions was developed and tested with key collaborators. Feedback was used to refine the framework to ensure clarity, accountability and alignment. This approach ensures the MYAP is practical, responsive and grounded in lived experience, while remaining flexible to adapt to emerging needs over the life of the plan.

What we heard

Through a public survey and community focus groups, residents, people with lived experience of disability, caregivers, community partners and organizational leaders shared feedback on accessibility across Durham Region. Their input highlighted both areas of progress and opportunities to remove barriers and improve access.

Participants recognized improvements in accessibility across Regional services but emphasized that accessibility must be built into planning, design and decision-making from the start. Clear communication, consistent service experiences and meaningful engagement with people with lived experience were identified as essential to creating an inclusive community and workplace.





Key themes

- **Public spaces:** Respondents highlighted the need for better mobility and navigation, including well maintained sidewalks, ramps, accessible washrooms, clearer wayfinding and improved accessible parking. Sensory and cognitive accessibility, such as quieter spaces and appropriate lighting, were also identified as a priority.
- **Customer service:** Participants stressed the importance of having multiple ways to access services, including options beyond automated systems. Disability awareness, plain language communication and proactive accommodations were seen as critical to positive service experiences.
- **Information and communications:** Many respondents identified barriers related to digital accessibility, including website navigation, colour contrast, image descriptions, screen reader compatibility and accessibility of virtual meetings. Clearer, simpler and more consistent communication was a recurring theme.
- **Transportation:** While some respondents noted recent improvements to transit accessibility, ongoing challenges were identified, including service levels, wait times, shelter design, pedestrian infrastructure and the need for clear, non-digital signage and wayfinding.
- **Accessibility as a shared responsibility:** Participants emphasized the need for collaboration across departments, organizations and community partners, with people with lived experience meaningfully involved.
- **Education and awareness:** Ongoing education for staff, decision-makers and the public was identified as essential to addressing both visible and invisible disabilities.
- **Consistency and co-ordination:** Participants highlighted challenges navigating services across programs and organizations, reinforcing the need for better co-ordination and integration.

What this means for the 2026–2030 MYAP

Feedback from surveys and focus groups reinforced the need for a clear, practical and accountable multi-year plan, one that centres lived experience, improves awareness, and communication and supports co-ordinated action over time. This input directly informed the MYAP's vision, guiding principles and strategic directions.

Scope: where the plan applies

The Region of Durham's MYAP applies to programs and services delivered by The Regional Municipality of Durham and DRPS. The plan addresses accessibility across Regional- and DRPS-owned facilities, as well as the policies, practices and service delivery models that support residents, visitors and employees. The MYAP focuses on identifying, preventing and removing barriers within the Region's areas of responsibility, while working collaboratively with partners to advance accessibility and inclusion across the broader community.



The areas of responsibility are:

Region of Durham

- Community Growth and Economic Development
- Corporate Services
- Finance
- Health
- Legal Services
- Office of the Regional Chair and Chief Administrative Officer
- Social Services
- Durham Region Transit
- Works

Durham Region Police Service

- Corporate Communications
- Equity & Inclusion Unit
- Facilities Management
- Human Resources
- Information Technology
- Member Wellness, Engagement and Support





Alignment with Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy: 2025–2029

The Region of Durham’s MYAP aligns closely with the Region’s 2025–2029 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Strategy by advancing accessibility as a foundational element of equity and inclusion. Both frameworks emphasize removing systemic barriers, centring lived experience and embedding inclusive practices into policies, programs, services and decision-making. The MYAP operationalizes the DEI Strategy by translating its commitments into concrete actions that improve access to information, services, employment, transportation and public spaces, while strengthening organizational accountability and staff capacity. Together, the MYAP and DEI Strategy reinforce a co-ordinated approach to building a Region where everyone can participate fully, with dignity, fairness and a sense of belonging.

Co-ordination with local area municipalities

The Region of Durham works collaboratively with local area municipalities to advance shared accessibility outcomes across the community. The Region meets regularly with municipal accessibility co-ordinators to share information, align priorities and advance local accessibility goals. Through ongoing consultation, co-ordinated planning and the exchange of best practices, the Region supports consistency in service delivery, infrastructure planning and public engagement, while respecting municipal roles and responsibilities. This collective approach helps to consistently reduce barriers, strengthen accessibility outcomes and support inclusive communities throughout Durham Region.

How we met the goals of the 2022–2025 MYAP

The 2022–2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) guided the Region of Durham’s efforts to identify, prevent and remove barriers for people with disabilities, in alignment with the AODA. Over the course of the plan, the Region focused on strengthening accessible service delivery, improving the accessibility of information and spaces, building staff capacity and embedding accessibility into policies, planning and decision-making.



Improving access to programs and services

The Region continued to enhance accessibility across customer-facing programs and services by offering multiple ways to access information and support. Efforts focused on reducing reliance on single access points, strengthening service navigation and improving co-ordination across programs to create more consistent and inclusive service experiences.

Strengthening accessible information and communication

Accessibility was increasingly integrated into communication practices, including the use of plain language, accessible document formats and improved digital accessibility. Progress was made in raising awareness of accessibility requirements and supporting staff to design communications that are usable by a wider range of people, including those using assistive technologies.

Advancing employment accessibility

The Region advanced accessibility in the workplace by reinforcing inclusive policies and practices related to accommodation, flexible work arrangements and employee supports. Accessibility considerations were increasingly reflected in organizational processes, contributing to more inclusive recruitment, retention and career development practices.





Enhancing accessible built environments and public spaces

Accessibility considerations were incorporated into planning, design and maintenance of Regional facilities and public spaces. This included attention to mobility, wayfinding and usability in the Workplace Modernization Project, as well as efforts to address both visible and invisible disabilities through inclusive design principles.

Supporting accessible transportation and mobility

Durham Region Transit worked collaboratively with other transit and community partners to support more accessible transportation services. Improvements focused on physical access to transit networks, customer experience and information sharing, while recognizing the importance of ongoing investment and co-ordination to meet diverse mobility needs. The Region continues to meet all AODA requirements and submitted its compliance report in December 2025. The Region has also developed procedures for accessibility equipment failure. See Appendix 1.

How the 2026–2030 MYAP will meet the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation

Customer service

1. Establish a unified approach to service delivery

- Develop a Region-wide accessibility service standard to establish clear expectations, promote best practices and support accountability.
- Integrate accessibility knowledge articles into the myDurham 311 Customer Experience Management System to increase awareness of services for people with disabilities.

2. Improve service co-ordination

- Establish a cross-departmental accessibility co-ordination team that supports divisions with accessibility-related matters or requests.
- Leverage existing community hubs to improve access to Regional services, including services for youth with disabilities and Durham Region Transit resources.

3. Expand ways to access services

- Offer services in multiple languages and formats upon request.
- Extend myDurham 311 service hours or provide alternative sources of information after closing hours.
- DRPS to provide virtual options for applicable services, such as applying for police records checks.

4. Outreach and education

- Launch a public awareness campaign on regional accessibility supports.

Information and communications

1. Enhance inclusive communication practices

- Design and implement an accessible open platform to gather ongoing feedback on how to better meet residents' accessibility needs.
- Standardize use of plain language, American Sign Language (ASL), captioning and alternative formats across departments in communication about our services.
- Provide captioning for all Regional Council meetings and Committees of Council.
- Continue to ensure all public-facing websites and documents meet or exceed the current Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standards.

2. Employee capacity building

- Ensure all Regional and DRPS content creators complete mandatory training on accessible digital content creation.
- Develop an internal accessibility resource hub, including a lending library of support tools and information.

3. Strengthen public education and outreach

- Collaborate with Regional departments to launch a multi-modal Region-wide campaign on services and supports for people with disabilities, prioritizing populations who may have limited resources, such as people with lower computer skills and people without access to technology.
- Where possible, use Durham OneNet or other practical solutions to expand broadband access for people who are using information and communication technologies.

4. Develop consistent accessible messaging

- Create a centralized accessibility communications toolkit to provide staff and community partners with sustainable resources and inclusive tools.
- Co-ordinate messaging about services for people with disabilities by collaborating with other key partners including local municipalities.

Employment

1. Inclusive hiring and accommodation

- Maintain the use of inclusive job postings and interview processes to meet the accessibility needs of all applicants, including people who are neurodiverse.
- Maintain the centralized accommodation request protocols.
- Consistently partner with local organizations to support hiring people with diverse abilities and identities.

2. Strengthen leadership confidence and capacity

- Continue with and enhance accessibility leadership training modules for Regional people leaders and staff, ensuring employees with visible and invisible disabilities are included.
- Include accessibility and inclusion key performance indicators in leadership performance reviews and competencies.
- Review, as needed, corporate advancement courses or certifications to ensure employees with disabilities are included.
- Include accessibility-themed topics in management development sessions.

3. Expand and diversify employment outreach

- Collaborate with community organizations and select events to participate in, to reach people with disabilities, promoting the Durham Region and DRPS as employers of people with disabilities.

4. Prioritize accessible and supportive work environments

- Conduct timely accessibility audits of physical and digital workspaces.
- Maintain ergonomic assessments and assistive technology programs to assist employees to work in supportive physical spaces.
- Prioritize upgrades of infrastructure and spaces to meet the accessibility needs of staff and residents.

Design of public spaces

1. Promote accessibility as a core design concept

- Embed Universal Design Principles from design stage in all capital project guidelines.
- Work towards exceeding the AODA minimums using the Complete Streets Approach in the design of Regional roads.

2. Support fair and transparent planning

- Consult with the Regional Accessibility Advisory Committee on all new projects or infrastructure slated for major design or renovations.
- Use participatory design methods involving people with living and lived experience.

3. Enhance mobility and inclusive planning

- Engage people with lived experience in upgrades to ramps, wayfinding, washrooms, elevators and entrances to Regional facilities.

4. Plan for growth and accessibility needs

- Integrate an accessibility lens into all infrastructure lifecycle planning, incorporating the Durham Standard.
- Use the Durham Vision Zero Road Safety Program to enhance the safety of people with disabilities by including a member of the Accessibility Advisory Committee on the Safe Systems Designs and Vision Zero planning table.

Transportation

1. Collaboration on the DRT Accessibility Plan

- Collaborate with Durham Region Transit (DRT) to support the implementation of the DRT Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2026–2030, ensuring co-ordinated approaches to improving transit accessibility across the Region.

2. Advance inclusive future-focused planning

- Enhance the digital public platform making it easier to gather ongoing feedback on how to better meet the needs of transit riders.

3. Foster integrated planning between services

- Co-ordinate with community services to enhance transit network that meet various mobility needs.
- Use Durham's [Transit Oriented Development \(TOD\) Strategy](#) to improve pedestrian access to locations such as new housing developments and new service locations.

4. Explore wayfinding and travel support technologies

- Explore accessible wayfinding tools to help commuters navigate the transit network.
- Expand the use of real-time passenger information tools and ensure they are accessible for people of all abilities.

5. Improve access to the transit network

- Through engagement with local municipalities, advocate for improved snow removal and sidewalk access during inclement weather conditions.
- Engage with local municipalities to improve accessibility of Regional pedestrian infrastructure to transit stops.
- Expand awareness of the Transit Assistance Program.

Compliance, monitoring and reporting

The Region's Accessibility Coordinator will monitor progress of this plan and co-ordinate with all departments, including DRPS, to create annual reports for Regional Council. A comprehensive implementation plan will be created and used to facilitate the monitoring process. Yearly accessibility reports will be published on the Region's website, as required under the AODA.



Appendix 1

Region of Durham accessibility equipment failure procedures

1. Purpose

This document outlines procedures to ensure the safety and accessibility of individuals with disabilities in the event of accessibility equipment failure, in accordance with Section 47 of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) under the AODA.

2. Scope

These procedures apply to all Regional facilities and services where accessibility equipment is installed, including but not limited to elevators, automatic doors, accessible transit vehicles, assistive listening systems and communication devices.



3. Procedures

Emergency backup measures

Develop and maintain contingency plans for each type of accessibility equipment.
Ensure alternative access routes or services are available (e.g., manual ramps, staff assistance).
Co-ordinate with emergency services when necessary.

Communication protocol

Notify affected individuals immediately using multiple formats, as required, (e.g., signage, email, social media, website updates).
Provide information in accessible formats upon request (e.g., large print, audio, video).
Designate staff to assist with communication and navigation during outages, where necessary.

Staff training

Train all relevant staff annually on procedures for responding to accessibility equipment failures.
Include training on safe evacuation, communication supports and respectful assistance.
Maintain records of training completion.

Maintenance and inspection

Conduct regular inspections and preventive maintenance of all accessibility equipment.
Maintain logs of inspections, repairs and service interruptions.
Prioritize urgent repairs and communicate timelines for resolution.

Responsibilities

Facilities Management: Ensure equipment is maintained and contingency plans are implemented.
People leaders and Human Resources: Ensure relevant staff are trained and maintain compliance records based on staff training.
Accessibility Coordinator: Monitor policy effectiveness and update procedures as needed.

Compliance

The Region will comply with these procedures to avoid non-compliance penalties under the AODA.

Review and updates

These procedures will be reviewed annually or as required to ensure alignment with legislative changes and organizational needs.

Feedback and contact information

Contact information

We welcome your feedback. Please let us know what you think about the Region of Durham 2026–2030 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP):

By email: accessibility@durham.ca

By phone: 311 extension 2009 or 1-800-372-1102

By mail:

The Regional Municipality of Durham
605 Rossland Road East
Post Office Box 623
Whitby, Ontario L1N 6A3

If you require this information in an alternate accessible format, please contact the Accessibility Coordinator at accessibility@durham.ca or 311 (within regional limits) extension 2009.

