

DUFFERIN-PEEL CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

REPORT TO THE BOARD

DECEMBER 12, 2007

SUBJECT: SEPTEMBER 30, 2007 ANNUAL ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

PURPOSE

To receive approval of the Board's Annual Accessibility Plan, as required under the Ontarians With Disabilities Act, 2001.

BACKGROUND

The Ontarians With Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA) requires that school boards prepare annual accessibility plans that describe measures the organization has taken and will take in the coming year to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities. The ODA extends similar requirements to provincial and municipal governments and the broader public sector.

The September 30, 2007 Annual Accessibility Plan, attached as Appendix A, constitutes the Board's fifth annual accessibility plan.

COMMENTS

As previously reported, the Board has three main obligations under the ODA:

1. To prepare an annual accessibility plan
2. To consult with persons with disabilities and others in preparing the plan
3. To make the accessibility plan available to the public

Accessibility plans must address identification, removal and prevention of barriers to persons with disabilities in the organization's bylaws, policies, programs, practices and services.

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) was passed in June 2005 and applies to the full range of disabilities, both visible and invisible. It aims to eliminate barriers for people with disabilities by creating an accessible, inclusive society where every Ontarian has the opportunity to participate to their potential. This will be done by developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards concerning goods, accommodation, facilities, buildings and employment in the public and private sector. Improvements will be phased-in over 20 years.

A transition period has commenced whereby the government and parts of the broader public sector, including school boards, continue to have planning and other obligations under the ODA until they are repealed. Planning requirements specified in the ODA will not be repealed until they have been replaced by standards imposed under the new AODA.

Access Dufferin-Peel, the Board's accessibility advisory committee, has met regularly since

2003. This year, Access Dufferin-Peel has again focused on information and public awareness as main priorities. Progress made in these key areas is detailed in the attached Annual Accessibility Plan.

September 2007 marks the most significant change to date in Access Dufferin-Peel membership and assigned staff. Terms for the Chair, Vince Nichilo and Vice Chair, Bob McCloskey, both original Committee members, ended August 31, 2007. Joe Geiser, Superintendent of Employee Relations has been appointed Chair. Several other long-standing Committee members also ended terms on August 31, 2007. All replacements were designated as of September 1, 2007.

Nancy Tallevi, Planner, the founding Access Dufferin-Peel Accessibility Coordinator since 2001, also ended her Accessibility responsibilities on August 31, 2007. These responsibilities were assigned to Chris D'souza, Equity and Diversity Officer, effective September 1, 2007. As part of the transition in Accessibility Coordinator responsibilities, the September 30, 2007 Accessibility Plan constitutes a joint submission from the former and new Accessibility Coordinators.

All Access Dufferin-Peel membership and staff assignment changes are denoted on page 7 of the September 30, 2007 Accessibility Plan, under "Access Dufferin-Peel – Members & Role."

The provincial government continues to provide no funding (\$0) to school boards for accessibility planning. This total lack of funding continues to increasingly impede the degree to which the Board is able to identify, remove and prevent barriers. Trustees previously directed that several letters be sent to the provincial government expressing concern regarding the absence of funding to support legislated ODA and AODA requirements. No reply or acknowledgement of any kind has ever been received.

The Annual Accessibility Plan must be made available to the public upon Board approval. Information regarding the Plan will be provided to employees by email and in the next issue of Access Dufferin-Peel newsletter. The Accessibility Plan itself will be posted on the Board website. Hard copies will be provided upon request to the Equity and Diversity Officer.

RECOMMENDATION

1. THAT THE REPORT TO THE BOARD REGARDING THE SEPTEMBER 30, 2007 ANNUAL ACCESSIBILITY PLAN BE RECEIVED.
2. THAT THE SEPTEMBER 30, 2007 ANNUAL ACCESSIBILITY PLAN FOR THE DUFFERIN-PEEL CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD BE APPROVED.

Prepared By: N. Tallevi, Planner
C. D'souza, Equity and Diversity Officer

Submitted By: N. Tallevi, Planner
C. D'souza, Equity and Diversity Officer
J. Geiser, Superintendent of Employee Relations

11-26-07