

# **DUFFERIN-PEEL CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**

## **REPORT TO THE BOARD**

**OCTOBER 25, 2005**

**SUBJECT: SEPTEMBER 30, 2005 ANNUAL ACCESSIBILITY PLAN**

### **PURPOSE**

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

### **BACKGROUND**

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

The September 30, 2005 Annual Accessibility Plan, attached as Appendix A, constitutes the board's third 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.

Staff previously reported that Access Dufferin-Peel, the Board's accessibility planning working group, has been meeting regularly since September 2003. This year, Access Dufferin-Peel has

focused on communication and public awareness as main priorities. The substantial progress made in these key areas is detailed in the attached Annual Accessibility Plan.

The new Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) received Royal Assent on June 13, 2005. Like the ODA, the AODA applies to the full range of disabilities, both visible and invisible and is intended to eliminate barriers for people with disabilities by creating an accessible, inclusive society where every Ontarian has the opportunity to work, play, learn and otherwise 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.

There will be a transition period during which government and parts of the broader public sector, including school boards, will continue to have planning and other obligations under the ODA until they are repealed. The planning requirements of the ODA will not be repealed until they have been replaced by standards under the new AODA.

Despite the introduction of “tougher” legislation, the province has still not provided any targeted new funding for accessibility planning. Trustees previously directed that several letters be sent to the province expressing concern as to the lack of funding to support legislated ODA requirements. No reply has been received to any of this correspondence.

This lack of funding continues to impede the degree to which the board is able to identify, remove and prevent barriers. Access Dufferin-Peel has noted that area municipalities and other broader public sector employers have full-time accessibility coordinators, while the board has only added accessibility coordinator responsibilities to an existing position. Access Dufferin-Peel has put forth a recommendation that the Board designate the accessibility coordinator responsibility as a full-time staff position, based on the view that much more gains could be made with more human resources. Members do, however, recognize that the province has not provided any funding to support such a position.

The Annual Accessibility Plan must be made available to the public upon board approval. Information regarding the Plan will be provided to employees in an upcoming Director’s Bulletin, the Fall/Winter 2005 Access Dufferin-Peel newsletter and on the board website. The Accessibility Plan itself will be posted on the board website and hard copies will be provided upon request to the Planning Department.

**RECOMMENDATION**

1. THAT THE REPORT TO THE BOARD REGARDING THE SEPTEMBER 30, 2005 ANNUAL ACCESSIBILITY PLAN BE RECEIVED.
2. THAT THE SEPTEMBER 30, 2005 ANNUAL ACCESSIBILITY PLAN FOR THE DUFFERIN-PEEL CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD BE APPROVED.

Prepared By: N. Tallevi, Planner

Submitted By: N. Tallevi, Planner  
B. Bjarnason, Manager of Planning  
V. A. Nichilo, Superintendent of School Services & Special Projects

06-10-05