

TORONTO STAFF REPORT

April 19, 2004

To: Policy and Finance Committee
From: Chief Administrative Officer
Subject: Submission of the City of Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines

Purpose:

To provide for the committee's information and endorsement, the City of Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines as a resource guide of best practices.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

There are no financial implications from the adoption of this report. The Chief Administrative Officer and the Commissioner of Corporate Services will report to the Policy and Finance Committee by September 2004 on a multi-year implementation strategy for the Accessibility Design Guidelines.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- (1) the Accessibility Design Guidelines be forwarded to Council for endorsement as the City's resource guide on best practices; and
- (2) the Accessibility Design Guidelines be forwarded to the Province of Ontario to meet the City's Accessibility Plan as submitted under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act; and
- (3) this report be provided to the Roundtable on Access, Equity and Human Rights and the Disability Issues Advisory Committee for information; and
- (4) the appropriate City Officials be authorized and directed to take the necessary action to give effect thereto.

Background:

The “City of Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines” is the result of discussions and effort to make facilities owned by the City of Toronto accessible for persons with disabilities. The Guidelines were developed in consultation with various departmental staff, selected members of the community and Associated Planning Consultants. The City of Toronto’s Community Advisory Committee on Disability Issues provided direction and support throughout the process and endorsed draft guidelines. An Inter-departmental staff group was established to co-ordinate finalisation of the Accessibility Design Guidelines and to prepare a multi-year implementation strategy for submission in September 2004. Corporate Services, Facilities and Real Estate Division, was responsible for coordinating and chairing the meetings of this sub-group, as well as reporting on the outcomes.

Prior to the 1998 amalgamation, the former municipalities had established committees to address access, equity and human rights issues for people with disabilities. After amalgamation, Toronto City Council also established a Task Force on Community Access and Equity to address the harmonisation of policies, the establishment of structures for citizen input and the allocation of resources. In addition, City Departments continued to work towards making Toronto an accessible city for everyone.

During the development of the City’s Official Plan, the Toronto Joint Citizens Committee for Persons with Disabilities (TJCC) provided input for the development of the plan in their submission, “Planning A Barrier-Free City of Toronto – A Statement of Principles”. In October 2000, Toronto City Council approved a process to develop new accessibility standards and to initiate an accessibility audit (Administration Committee, Report No. 19, Clause 39). During this process 70 City-owned facilities were audited as a pilot project. The report noted that new Accessibility Design Guidelines were needed to conduct accessibility audits and to ensure uniform standards throughout the City. Toronto City Council requested that the submission from TJCC be used to guide the development of the City’s new accessibility standards.

At its meetings of February 29, March 1 and 2, 2001 and November 8 and 9, 2001, Toronto Council reiterated its commitment to, and call for, a strong effective and mandatory Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA) and reaffirmed Council’s commitment to making Toronto a barrier free City by 2008.

In September 2003, Toronto City Council approved the City’s Accessibility Plan for submission to the Province of Ontario under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act. The City’s Accessibility Plan included the preparation of the Accessibility Design Guidelines.

In January 2004, the Auditor General completed a report to the Audit Committee with a review of the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Task Force on Community Access and Equity. Recommendation #8 of the Auditor General’s review states that “The Commissioner of Corporate Services, in consultation with the Chief Administrative Officer and Departmental Commissioners, report to the Policy and Finance Committee by September 2004 on the Accessibility Design Guidelines, including a City-wide strategy to implement the Guidelines on all City facilities and the resource implications”. The Management Response provided by the

Chief Administrative Officer to the Audit Committee advised that two reports would be prepared, the first of which would be a submission in May 2004 of the Accessibility Design Guidelines as a resource best practice to be followed by an implementation strategy in September 2004 on the Guidelines as they relate to City facilities.

Comments:

Toronto has a long-standing goal of becoming an inclusive society where all residents, many of whom are people with disabilities, are able to participate in the social, cultural, recreational, economic and political life of the City.

A recent Statistics Canada survey (PALS 2001) estimates that approximately 1.5 million Ontarians have a disability, representing 13.5% of more than 11 million people who reside in the province. About half of Ontario's population is concentrated in urban centres like the Greater Toronto Area.

The development of some form of disability increases with age. It is estimated that by 2011, one in every six Ontarians will be over the age of 65 and that the over 75-population will more than double. The Final Report of the City of Toronto's Seniors Task Force, "Toronto – Building A City for All Ages" September 1999, estimated that "the proportion of seniors is expected to increase to about 20% of the total population by the year 2029."

The Accessibility Design Guidelines is an important resource guide to help the City of Toronto achieve its goal of becoming a barrier free city. The completion of these Guidelines support the the City's Official Plan to create an attractive and safe city that evokes pride, passion and a sense of belonging; a city where people of all ages and abilities can enjoy a good quality of life. The Official Plan enunciates the following accessibility principle: "A key city-building principle is that public buildings, parks and open spaces should be open and accessible to all members of the public including people with disabilities."

The Accessibility Design Guidelines also implements one of the objectives under the City's Accessibility Plan which was submitted to the Province of Ontario in September 2003 to meet the City's obligation under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act. These Guidelines provide practical examples of solutions for optimising accessibility with respect to both public and privately owned facilities. They can guide the design, planning and construction of accessible facilities as well as the preparation of accessibility audits.

Conclusions:

The City of Toronto continues to demonstrate its leadership in bringing forward strategies and tools aimed at removing and preventing barriers for people with disabilities. The "City of Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines" can be used by all sectors to conduct accessibility audits and to plan developments as we work towards making Toronto a "barrier free"

community. Endorsement of the Guidelines will be a step towards identifying changes needed in City facilities to achieve accessibility for people with disabilities. The Design Guidelines will be an important tool when considering or developing capital projects and will also be a building block in the development of future policies, standards, guides and other initiatives that serve the needs of persons with disabilities.

The City of Toronto's goal is to optimise accessibility for people with disabilities by making city facilities, information and activities more accessible; to identify and eliminate disparities; and to create an accessible workplace.

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Attachment:

City of Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines