



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

2007 International Day of People with Disabilities Update

Date:	July 21, 2008
To:	Disabilities Issues Committee
From:	Sue Corke, Deputy City Manager
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the 2007 City of Toronto celebration of the International Day of People with Disabilities (IDPWD). It was held on December 3, 2007 at Variety Village. The event included an open forum for the disability community to engage with a facilitator to provide valuable input as to how the City of Toronto can remove and prevent barriers to access. Key issues included: access to employment, housing, income support, transportation services, TTC, health care services, and equitable service delivery.

The report recommends that the challenges and issues raised by event participants be forwarded to appropriate City staff for information and also to address what advocacy efforts the City can take or is taking to improve access for people with disabilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Planning Group for the International Day of People With Disabilities recommends that:

1. The identified issues be forwarded to the Community Development and Recreation Committee for a response from appropriate City staff
2. The Disabilities Issues Committee give its support for this celebration
3. The appropriate City Officials be authorized and directed to take the necessary action to give effect thereto.

Financial Impact

There is no financial impact arising from this report.

All costs related to the International Day of People with Disabilities celebrations are covered by our community partners with their generous contributions both financial and in kind. In order to manage these contributions, an IDPWD cost centre for tracking expenditures and revenues for this event has been established under special projects in Social Development Financial Administration (SDFA) SDFA has assumed responsibility of monitoring, approving, processing and forwarding expenditures and revenue collections.

DECISION HISTORY

The Planning Group of the International Day of People with Disabilities presented its first report for information only on issues identified at its December, 2005 event to the Disability Issues Committee at its meeting on August 23, 2006. The Disability Issues Committee forwarded the comments from the 2005 IDPWD event to the City's three deputy city managers and received reports from Deputy City Manager Sue Corke and DCM/CFO Joe Pennachetti.

<http://www.toronto.ca/diversity/dic-meetings/20060919-agenda.doc>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The International Day of Disabled Persons is declared by the United Nations to promote an understanding of disability and to increase awareness of the contributions that persons with disabilities offer in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life. The annual observance of the International Day of Disabled Persons was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1982.

Since 2005, the City of Toronto has celebrated the International Day of People with Disabilities with a ceremonial event, showcasing access and awareness initiatives within the City of Toronto and recognizing the contributions of Torontonians with disabilities. Mayor David Miller participated in the celebration of the events and proclaimed the day. Councillor Heaps, chair of the Disabilities Issues Committee, has also participated in and addressed the celebration.

The Planning Group responsible for the annual celebration includes staff from many city divisions, working with the community and business partners, In order to ensure the continued success of the event, it was necessary to assign responsibility for the event's planning within City's administrative structure. The City Manager and Deputy City Managers agreed that Cluster A will have carriage of the International Day of People with Disabilities.

Sue Corke, Deputy City Manager, is the Executive Sponsor for the celebration.

The goals of the event are to increase awareness of disability issues and to celebrate and recognize the contributions of people with disabilities in Toronto.

Each year a speaker from the City, the disability community and business sector is invited to address the event. The MC for 2007 was Helen Henderson, columnist and feature writer at the Toronto Star. The Honourable David C. Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario also addressed the event remarking that “Without full accessibility, people living with disabilities cannot achieve their full potential and cannot be included in the economic and social life of the province”.

Highlights of the International Day of People with Disabilities for 2007 included a celebration of the achievements of Unsung Heroes of the disability movement, the Invitation to Poetry event with poems that explore disability and the Imagination Session, an open forum for ideas to enhance access and reduce barriers in the City of Toronto.

COMMENTS

The Imagination Session gave participants an opportunity to discuss how the City of Toronto can further enhance access to services and eliminate barriers that continue to exist. Barriers exist in attitudes, as well as in the limited supply of affordable housing and in the need for better public transit and respite care services.

Councillor Heaps introduced the 2007 Imagination Session which was facilitated by Chris Brillinger, Director Community Resources.

Issues and concerns raised by the participants included:

Accessibility

Access must be considered from a variety of perspectives, including people who use crutches as well as wheelchairs.

Develop an "anti-able-ism" policy and training opportunities.

Audible traffic signals

The City is doing a great job with audible traffic signals though more locations are needed. Without the audible signals, it is almost impossible to cross the street.

Employment Opportunities

More employment opportunities are needed for people with behavioural disabilities. Implement employment equity strategies to ensure the city's workforce reflects the diversity of the population with full accommodation to employees with a disability. Support the full participation of people with disabilities in the economic life of the city.

Housing

Affordable housing is a major issue. More supportive housing is needed.

Mental health

Additional access to mental health providers providing intervention beyond medication is needed.

Increase outreach to the communities of people with mental health disabilities.

Develop a general awareness campaign to help eliminate attitudinal barriers against people with disabilities.

Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)

People have difficulty in accessing benefits of the Ontario Disability Support Program even when the time period to receive a benefit is due.

The claw back of earned income and assessment of an overpayment for earned income is a hindrance to getting off disability.

Medical needs

Additional coverage is needed for drug costs.

Respite Care

The lack of respite care available to aging parents was identified as a big concern.

Parents, caregivers and relatives are worn out. Private agencies that offer respite care are too costly for families to afford. It is better when respite care services are provided at age appropriate facilities rather than a chronic care facility for a young person.

Snow clearing

The snow clearing crews pass and block the previously cleared driveway preventing access to Wheeltrans vehicles. The snow clearing crews need to be notified of Wheeltrans users or people with disabilities to avoid blocking the driveway.

Transportation TTC

The cost of transportation is a barrier to participate in life actively. Issue the same amount as the Metropass, \$109.00 instead of \$100.00 per month.

The TTC is improving in the accessibility of buses and the subway. Streetcars are very outdated and difficult to board.

Sometimes the TTC elevators are not working, are poorly maintained and overly used by people without disabilities. Ensure elevators are operational at all stations.

The ramps on the TTC buses freeze and cannot be used. People who would use the ramp must wait for the next bus.

At rush hour, it can be difficult or impossible for a person with a disability to find a seat on the TTC.

The new buses for disable persons as shown at exhibition place are not in service yet and the old ones are subject to breaks.

In some locations the bus shelter is not close enough to the bus stop for people with disabilities to board the bus.

Transportation Wheeltrans

Generally Wheeltrans is providing a fantastic and appreciated service. The kneeling buses were identified as very accessible.

Telephone access to arrange a ride remains a concern with long wait times identified and the suggestion that more operators be added to the service. The long wait time can be especially difficult when the caller is not feeling well.

The RideLine provides faster access to Wheeltrans.

The new Wheeltrans buses that have been promised and displayed are not yet in service. The older buses are being repaired and returned to service yet remain prone to break downs creating service delays for riders.

The Wheeltrans website should be expanded to allow people to book on-line. This would relieve some of the pressure on the Wheeltrans phoneline.

It was requested that Wheeltrans inform customers of service delays.

Wheeltrans offers an automated out caller service to inform riders of the trip status.

Create better communication system in booking Wheeltrans and during delays due to unforeseen circumstances

It was suggested that Wheeltrans have a survey or suggestion line for riders to give their feedback on the service.

Public education

Promote understanding, respect and interaction among people with disabilities

Service delivery

Ensure that programs and services serve the needs of people with disabilities and provide equitable benefits

Elected Office

Further improve accessibility - both in venues and in processes for people with disabilities who seek elected office, work as campaign volunteers, attend all-candidates meetings and vote.

SIGNATURE

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