

Highlights of Selected Accessibility Initiatives July 2007 – June 2008

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Region of Peel - Liveable Peel

The Liveable Peel initiative was created to help the Region of Peel plan for growth 30 to 50 years into the future. Peel Region is currently facing significant growth pressures, an aging population and an increasingly diverse community fuelled by strong immigration. The Region is currently examining these and other trends into the future and determining their potential implications for Regional programs and services, in order to ensure that Peel residents continue to enjoy a high quality of life over the long-term. An important aspect of ensuring a high quality of life in Peel is providing human services that meet the diverse needs of the population; therefore, trends concerning the increasing population of older adults (55+ years) and persons with disabilities are important considerations for Liveable Peel.

Liveable Peel is a valuable initiative for the Region's Executive Management Team (EMT), which has established an internal Liveable Peel Steering Committee made up of senior staff from across the Corporation. In August 2006, the committee established a number of priority project areas: immigration and examination of human capital and employment needs; housing; and the impacts of growth on watersheds.

In terms of housing, the Region is experiencing changing needs due to rapid population growth, significant immigration, and changing socio-economic and demographic conditions. The 2006 Census data reveal that the Region has an older adult population making up about 19% of the total population, which is 3 per cent more than this group's share in 2001. It is estimated that by 2051, 38 per cent of Peel's population will be older adults (55+) and half of them will be 70 years or older. The growth in the aging population will have an increased demand for safe and accessible housing and health services. The

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current practices of developing standard suburban style communities that promote segregation of land uses will need to be changed. The municipalities will have to take these demographic trends into consideration and find innovative tools and options to encourage the development of new communities to be ingrained with accessibility features and supportive services.

Regional staff are consulting with the area municipalities and working together on a Housing Strategy to identify housing issues, needs, and demand and develop strategic actions to provide opportunities for a full range of affordable, accessible and appropriate housing for Peel's current and future residents. The comprehensive housing strategy is planned to be completed by December 2008. During the course of this project, three discussion papers, a background paper, an issues paper and the final housing strategy will be prepared. The papers will address different housing issues and areas:

- 1) housing availability throughout the life-cycle;
- 2) diversity of housing needs;
- 3) housing affordability;
- 4) best practices and tools for addressing housing needs
- 5) summary of discussion papers and background paper

The discussion paper on housing availability throughout the life-cycle will address the needs of the older adult population, including the future needs for long-term care and retirement homes. As people grow up and grow old, their housing needs change. The goal of achieving housing availability throughout the life cycle is to allow Peel residents to live in the same community throughout their lives, even if their life stage or lifestyle change, by providing a variety of housing types and choices in collaboration with supportive services. The discussion paper on diversity of housing needs will address the current and future needs for accessible, special-needs and social

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housing, factors that hinder the supply, and tools and options available to increase the supply of these types of housing. This discussion paper will explore innovative options and concepts such as Universal Design for providing safe and accessible homes to the diverse range of ages and abilities of people.

The third discussion paper will identify affordability issues, the factors that influence housing demand and affordability in Peel and alternative sources to provide affordable housing. This paper will also examine new opportunities for the municipalities to permit secondary suites and garden suites as a result of the recent changes to Ontario's Planning Act (Bill 51: Planning and Conservation Land Statute Law Amendment Act, which received Royal Assent in 2006). The final housing strategy will build on the work and data collected for the three discussion papers and establish short-term and long-term priorities and formulate strategic actions, accompanied by an implementation plan. The recommendations coming from the housing strategy for priority actions will be presented to the Council for information and approval.

SHS Consultants was retained in December 2007 to develop the housing strategy. SHS has completed more than 12 housing strategy studies and more than three dozen municipal housing statements. In summer 2008, the research and analysis phase of the project was conducted in preparation for the discussion papers. Census, property assessment, housing activity, and other data sources were collected and analyzed. As for consulting stakeholders, surveys were distributed to housing providers to better understand the demand for these types of services and any service gaps associated. Consultation will continue into fall 2008 as SHS will conduct focus group sessions or interviews with Regional staff, Area Municipal staff, Regional Councillors, and community agencies.



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In conclusion, the Liveable Peel initiative and its associated projects are mindful of the needs and concerns of the aging population and persons with disabilities.