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Accessibility Week in Dufferin County

Written By MARNI WALSH

May 31st to June 6th was Accessability Week in the County of Dufferin. Deputy Clerk, Michelle Dunne says messaging went out on social media platforms, directing residents to the government of Canada's national-accessability toolkit.

Accessability Week followed on the heels of the May 14th announcement that the County of Dufferin and the Town of Orangeville had approved the Terms of Reference to coordinate a joint accessibility advisory committee.

?In recent years, the County's Accessibility Advisory Committee (Access Dufferin) has been struggling to find projects that would stay within the County mandate,? says Michelle Dunne. ?Many of the public-facing accessibility issues are at a local municipal level such as sidewalks, curb cuts, accessible parking.?

Warden Darren White, who decreed Accessabillity Week at the May 28th County Council meeting, told the Free Press, ?The County has always promoted accessibility issues locally and will continue to do so through its accessibility committee. That being said, we are working closely with the staff of all eight partner municipalities to facilitate accessibility, in general, in public buildings.?

Michelle Dunne says the Access Dufferin Committee has had several accomplishments that relate more to the awareness side of the issues, including: Ensuring compliance with accessible website and content regulations, hosting an Accessibility Compliance workshop for member municipalities to ensure a complete understanding of requirements, refining procedures for handling temporary disruptions when an accessible part of public spaces is not useable, incorporating accessibility criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities, except where it is not practicable to do so. and make meetings more accessible by allowing electronic participation

Warden White says, ?It's important to continue to highlight the fact that ?we aren't there yet' and people with varying abilities still face accessibility challenges.?

He says, ?No one should get left behind,? acknowledging that ?during COVID-19, the potential for an issue like accessibility to get less action is high, as everyone's efforts are directed at the pandemic.?

He says, ?Dufferin County will continue to advocate for accessibility where possible, and seek funding to expand barrier free access to those who require it.?