

**NEWS** 



Alexandra Heck/Metroland

Members of the Halton Region Accessibility Advisory Committee voiced concerns about the upcoming Provincial election affecting the development of accessibility policies.

## Don't forget about us: fears of accessibility losing priority

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The Halton Region accessibility advisory committee is concerned that with the upcoming federal and provincial elections, recent commitments could be delayed, or ditched altogether.

At a committee meeting on March 15, members voiced concerns about the delays in the federal government putting forward a national policy on accessibility, as well as the assessment of Ontario's policy.

"We don't have a perfect system and there are lots of things that can fail," said Coun. Blair Lancaster, who sits on the committee.

She is going to be speaking with regional chair Gary Carr about sending a letter to the Federal government, about their concerns.

"We just want to make sure that it does not get lost in the shuffle," she said.

One month ago, the province appointed David Onely, a former lieutenant governor, to review the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and conduct a slew of consultations across the province.

The study will focus on barriers in the education and health-care systems, not only in physical barriers, but in knowledge and awareness.

Harold Grace, a citizen representative, asked how the current election date would coincide with the timelines for the project, and if it may slow the work being done. Gabrielle Baldazzi, a senior policy adviser with Halton Region, suspects that the quick turn around for the Province's review is for that reason.

Onely's review is set to be completed this year.

The region is in the midst of drafting their second multi-year accessibility plan, which is directly taking into consideration potential changes in provincial and federal accessibility policy.

"We will be watching what's happening on a federal level," said Baldazzi, adding that Trudeau made a promise to introduce a nation-wide accessibility plan in his election campaign.

One other committee member said that with all of the representatives that are coming forward for Halton in the next election, it would be useful to see where each stand on accessibility issues.

"Right now, we don't know if things are going to change," said Lancaster. "We have to keep the issues top of mind and keep people talking about it."

This story has been updated from a previous version.