

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF OTTAWA-CARLETON  
MUNICIPALITÉ RÉGIONALE D'OTTAWA-CARLETON

REPORT  
RAPPORT

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Our File/N/Réf.                    **31 02-96-0039-H, 03-96-0119-H**  
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DATE                                18 December 1996

TO/DEST.                        Co-ordinator  
                                      Planning and Environment Committee

FROM/EXP.                      Environment and Transportation Commissioner

SUBJECT/OBJET                **RESPONSE TO OUTSTANDING P&E INQUIRY NO. 17**  
                                      **COMMUNICATIONS MEASURES TAKEN FOR THE**  
                                      **VISUALLY IMPAIRED**

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**DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION**

**That the Planning and Environment Committee receive this report for information.**

**BACKGROUND**

On 9 July 1996 at Planning Environment Committee, Councillor Munter asked what measures are taken or could be taken to make information about garbage and recycling available to the visually impaired and other persons with disabilities (for example, providing documents in alternative formats)? What steps are being taken or could be taken to make the community aware that such services exist?

**PUBLIC NOTIFICATION PROGRAMS**

Earlier this year, the Solid Waste Division undertook an extensive public communications program on the Regional recycling program, focusing on the theme *Blue Box & More*. Because of the amount of information which had to go out to the public, the main communication vehicle used was a brochure that was delivered door-to-door. Notification to watch for the brochure was announced via a multi-media approach including radio, newspapers and busboards.

The advertising of routine items is usually handled through a combination of radio and newspaper advertisements. In order to accommodate the visually impaired, before any documents are finalized, consideration is regularly given to such matters as font size and layout. In addition, residents are referred to the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton's (RMOC) one number, 24 hour information service, Window on the Region, at 560-1335. Window on the Region staff are regularly briefed and provided with details of upcoming plans. In preparation for the *Blue Box & More* program, Window on the Region staff were informed of the details related to recycling materials and collection day changes, and were generally able to meet the information requests of the public.

## DISCUSSION

To follow-up on this inquiry, the following practices have been identified as options to improve accessibility for the visually impaired and other handicapped residents:

- continue to use a multi-media approach including radio;
- advise the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) in advance of upcoming programs, and have them direct any related calls to Window on the Region at 560-1335 for details;
- at a cost, the CNIB provides National Transcription Services to produce materials in alternative formats including Braille or audio cassette;
- make available diskettes of RMOC publications to residents who have computer voice access capability.

The Region received very few requests for assistance from the visually impaired during the *Blue Box & More* communications program. Most requests were handled by telephone and, in some cases, either a personal visit to the residents or an electronic diskette met their requirements.

## CONCLUSION

Future programs will continue to be designed to utilize a cost-effective multi-media approach to reach all members of our community. Where it is important to provide the residents of Ottawa-Carleton with considerable information in the form a reference document, alternative formats or techniques should be made available.

*Approved by  
M.J.E. Sheflin, P.Eng.*