



Committee of the Whole Report

Report Number:	CORP2025-017
Meeting Date:	May 6, 2025
Title:	Accessibility Awareness Recognition Awards- Youth Category
Description:	Introduction of a Youth Award category named in honour of Kathryn Peeters.
Author and Title:	Christine Briggs, IDEA Partner

Recommendation(s):

That Report CORP2025-017; **Accessibility Awareness Recognition Awards- Youth Category**, be received;

That a Youth Award category, named eponymously in honour of Kathryn Peeters, be created for the Accessibility Awareness Recognition Award Program; and

That this recommendation be brought forward to Council for consideration at the next Regular Council Meeting

Department Head: _____

Financial/Legal/HR/Other: _____

Chief Administrative Officer: _____

Background:

The Accessibility Awareness Awards in Kawartha Lakes commend individuals, groups, businesses and municipal staff that have gone above and beyond in removing barriers for people with disabilities and promoting accessibility awareness throughout the community.

However, there remains a notable gap in the existing structure: the absence of recognition for young people who champion accessibility. By introducing a dedicated Youth Accessibility Award, the City would foster early engagement, amplify the voices of young leaders, and lay the foundation for a future generation that prioritizes inclusion. Recognizing youth who demonstrate leadership in accessibility and inclusion not only celebrates their efforts but also instills lifelong values that contribute to a more accessible and equitable community as they grow into adulthood.

This new category would not only align with the broader goals of the awards but also encourage early awareness and action—ensuring accessibility becomes an integral part of community thinking for generations to come.

The Barbara McArthur Award of Distinction is presented in memory of Barbara McArthur, founder and first Chair of the Municipal Advisory Committee for Disabled Persons (MACDP), now known as the Kawartha Lakes Accessibility Advisory Committee (KLAAC). Like Barbara, recipients of this award have gone above and beyond in promoting public awareness and education around removing barriers for individuals with disabilities.

In keeping with the tradition of eponymous awards, it is proposed that the Youth Accessibility Award be named in honour of an individual who demonstrated exceptional advocacy for disability awareness from a young age in the City of Kawartha Lakes.

Kathryn Peeters, a former recipient of the Barbara McArthur Award, exemplified this spirit. Diagnosed with paediatric brain tumours as a child, the surgery left her legally blind, with a seizure disorder and cognitive impairment. Despite these challenges, Kathryn began raising awareness and funds for paediatric brain tumour research at just six years old. By the age of thirty-one, she had spent 25 years speaking at community events and conferences—some with audiences of up to 1,500 people.

Later in life, Kathryn sustained a spinal cord injury that resulted in paraplegia. Rather than slowing her down, this further strengthened her commitment to advocacy. Kathryn passed away in 2024, just before her 32nd birthday.

Kathryn's life stands as a powerful testament to the impact of youth engagement in accessibility. She embodied the values we strive to recognize and celebrate in the young people of Kawartha Lakes.

Rationale:

The City of Kawartha Lakes Accessibility Awareness Recognition Awards recognize individuals, groups and businesses in Kawartha Lakes that have exceeded expectations while working to remove barriers for individuals with disabilities. There is currently no category that specifically recognizes youth who are making a difference.

Introducing a Youth Accessibility Award would address this gap by:

- **Fostering early engagement:** Encouraging young people to become involved in accessibility initiatives from an early age builds awareness and commitment that can last a lifetime.
- **Amplifying youth leadership:** Many young individuals are already making meaningful contributions in schools, social settings, and community spaces. A dedicated award would shine a light on these efforts and inspire others to follow their lead.
- **Building a culture of inclusion:** Recognizing youth who demonstrate leadership in accessibility promotes values of empathy, equity, and civic responsibility—qualities that shape the inclusive leaders of tomorrow.
- **Ensuring sustainability of accessibility goals:** As Ontario continues working toward full accessibility, empowering the next generation is critical to maintaining momentum and ensuring long-term progress.

Celebrating youth who champion accessibility not only acknowledges their current efforts but also encourages a culture where inclusion is second nature. This new award category would be a meaningful addition to the City's ongoing commitment to accessibility, while inspiring ongoing community involvement for years to come.

Other Alternatives Considered:

No alternatives considered.

Alignment to Strategic Priorities

Recognizing individuals who have contributed to the betterment of the City and the promotion of accessibility, compliments the strategic priorities set out in 2024-2028 Strategic Plan. The Kawartha Lakes Accessibility Awareness Recognition Awards honour individuals that are helping to build a collaborative, supportive, inclusive and equitable community; this is directly aligned with the strategic priorities of Good Government and An Exceptional Quality of Life.

Financial/Operation Impacts:

No financial or operational impacts.

Consultations:

Manager of Inclusion and Rewards, People Services

Deputy Clerk, Office of the City Clerk

Chair and Vice Chair of the Accessibility Advisory Committee

Attachments:

N/A

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Department File: Accessibility