
Subject: Niagara Region Advisory Committees

Report to: Corporate Services Committee

Report date: Wednesday, February 15, 2023

Recommendations

1. That the following Advisory Committees/Working Group **BE DISCONTINUED** effective immediately as alternative mechanisms have evolved which address the mandates of the Committee/Working Group:

- a) Culture Committee
- b) Economic Development Working Group
- c) Procurement Advisory Committee
- d) Smarter Niagara Steering Committee
- e) T. Roy Adams Humanitarian Committee

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to refine the number of Advisory Committees/Working Groups that Niagara Region has to ensure alignment with Council's strategic priorities.
- Regular reviews of committee structure ensures that both volunteer efforts and staff resources are being used and allocated appropriately.
- Advisory Committees/Working Groups provide an excellent opportunity for staff and Council to seek feedback on various matters; however, these groups should also reflect the priorities of Council.
- Staff are recommending the discontinuation of some of the Region's Advisory Committees/Working Groups as alternative mechanisms have evolved which address the mandate of the group or the committee mandate has been met and the committee is no longer required.

Financial Considerations

There are no financial considerations associated with this report; however, some cost savings may be achieved with respect to staff time for those groups that would normally meet outside of regular working hours.

Analysis

The Region has a number of Advisory Committees/Working Groups that serve to provide advice to Council on a variety of matters. The creation of some of these groups has evolved through Council resolutions and may have been triggered by a number of factors, including ongoing public issues or trends, contentious issues requiring study, and/or legislative requirements.

The establishment of committees or working groups should reflect the priorities of Council which focus the volunteer and staff resources on matters of importance as established within strategic or business plans of the Corporation.

It is important to respect the time commitments expended by both the public and Council members to ensure that they are warranted and used appropriately. Committees of Council also require the allocation of staff resources across the Corporation and should be validated.

In reviewing the relevance of the Committees/Working Groups, a number of factors were considered to understand their viability including:

- Has it been necessary for the committee to meet as initially anticipated?
- Does the committee achieve quorum at meetings – are the members still interested in attending?
- Are there clear lines of committee responsibility or are options available to merge similar committees?
- Has the committee completed its mandate or are there alternative mechanisms to achieve the mandate?
- Have the issues been resolved for which the committee was created?

Staff are recommending the following be discontinued effective immediately:

- a) Culture Committee
- b) Economic Development Working Group
- c) Procurement Advisory Committee
- d) Smarter Niagara Steering Committee
- e) T. Roy Adams Humanitarian Committee

Culture Committee

The Niagara Region Culture Committee has been a long standing advisory committee tasked with providing advice and recommendations through the Planning and Economic Development Committee, to help Council implement the Niagara Culture Plan. During its tenure, the Committee has successfully completed or provided direction to finalize implementation of the strategic directions and actions outlined in the plan, as directed by the mandate and mission contained in the Committee's Terms of Reference.

When the Niagara Culture Plan was approved in March 2010, Niagara Region's planning service was not centralized and was delivering services beyond the scope of land use planning. Since the subsequent merger of the Region's planning services, accommodating the delivery of the items remaining in the Niagara Region Culture Committee mandate has been challenging as the Region no longer has a role in cultural policies or programs which is more a focus of the lower tier municipalities. Over the course of the last two terms of Council, this Committee was not called upon to provide recommendations to Council within the purview of its mandate. The Committee has only averaged approximately four meetings per year, had difficulties meeting quorum requirements and has not met since 2020. It is therefore recommended that this Committee be formally discontinued.

Economic Development Working Group

In 2017, Regional Council approved the dissolution of the Economic Development Advisory Panel and the Economic Development Working Group was established. The Working Group never formally met and since then the intended purpose of the group has been addressed through ongoing collaboration with local area development offices and representatives from local area municipalities without economic development offices, the community at large and a wide range of external partners (i.e. Chambers of Commerce, industry associations, BIAs, etc.). The implementation of the 10-year Economic Development strategy is a culmination of this collaboration and demonstrates that a formal working group is not required especially in light of economic development matters being regularly reported to the Planning and Economic Development Committee. It is therefore recommended that the working group be formally dissolved.

Procurement Advisory Committee

The Procurement Advisory Committee (PAC) was established in 2015 as a redevelopment of the Bidding Process Evaluation Review Committee that was established in 2011 to review the bidding/evaluation process for awarding Public Works projects and to make recommendations on ways of improving its effectiveness and transparency. The purpose of the PAC was to review procurement matters on an organization-wide basis. As the Corporate Services Committee (CSC) is the approval body for recommendations from PAC and historically the membership of PAC has been made up of members that also sit on CSC, it seems redundant to also have a specific committee just for procurement matters. Any procurement matters can be addressed directly at CSC. It is therefore recommended that this Committee be formally discontinued.

Smarter Niagara Steering Committee

The core mandate of the Smarter Niagara Steering Committee is to provide input to staff and Regional Council on cross-disciplinary urban strategies and policies that create, improve, enhance, and protect the built and natural environment, in turn enriching the social, mental, and physical well-being of the people of Niagara.

The Smarter Niagara Steering Committee was established in 2001. Since this time, Provincial planning regulations and policies have changed significantly and the delivery of planning services at the Region has correspondingly evolved. Contemporary planning, both in regulation and best practice, requires consideration of concepts represented in the mandate of the Smarter Niagara Steering Committee.

In 2016, changes to Provincial planning legislation required an upper-tier municipality to establish a Planning Advisory Committee with representation from the public. In the same year, Regional Council also approved the preparation of a new Regional Official Plan.

As there was clear synergy between the mandate of the SNSC and the content of the new Regional Official Plan, discussion was held to determine if the SNSC would adopt the role of the Planning Advisory Committee. It was decided that the SNSC would not adopt this role and a new Planning Advisory Committee was established to advise on the preparation of the Regional Official Plan.

Since the establishment of the Planning Advisory Committee, it has become evident that the role of the SNSC has become redundant. It has been difficult to bring items of discussion to the SNSC that are not already being considered by the Planning Advisory Committee. In 2019, the Committee members were advised that this Committee would be dissolved; however, no recommendation from Council was sought to formally dissolve the Committee. It is therefore recommended that this Committee be formally discontinued.

T. Roy Adams Humanitarian Committee

T. Roy Adams was an eminent Niagaran, well known throughout the Region, Canada, and abroad for his commitment to community service and good citizenship. In memory of the late Councillor T. Roy Adams, Niagara Region initiated a memorial award in 2003 in his name to honour a resident of Niagara who best exemplifies Roy's values and dedication to community service; a person who sees volunteerism as an integral part of their life. The Committee's role is to review the nomination applications received and recommend to Regional Council the recipient of the award on an annual basis.

The award has been given out annually since 2003; however, due to a lack of nominations the award was not issued in 2022.

In 2021, the Regional Chair's Office developed the Niagara Impact Awards. These awards are designed to recognize community members who have made a substantial positive impact in our communities in Niagara and include a Community Leader category. Staff are recommending that this Community Leader award be renamed to the T. Roy Adams Community Leader Award to continue to recognize the important commitment to community service that Mr. Adams had. Since the implementation of the Niagara Impact awards there has been substantial community interest and a large number of nominees are received for the various award categories. The renaming of the Community Leader Award will serve to not only honour Mr. Adams' legacy but will also enhance the prestige of the award. The Niagara Impact Awards garner significantly more nominations than those received for the T. Roy Adams Humanitarian Award which will ensure a greater pool of applicants from which to select a deserving recipient.

Next Steps

In order to ensure community members have the opportunity to apply to those advisory committees that best fit with their interests, staff will advertise for public member positions for most committees that require public members. The delay in advertising has provided

an opportunity to enhance the application process to ensure that demographic diversity is considered. Staff are also using this time to review the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee terms of reference to ensure that the Committee is structured to be able to provide Council with necessary advice and guidance on diversity, equity and inclusion matters. Further, a review of the Committees related to Transportation is being undertaken. As a result, advertisements for these Committees will not be done until proposed changes are presented to Council for consideration.

Alternatives Reviewed

Council could consider keeping some or all of these groups recommended for discontinuation; however, staff have fully and carefully reviewed the groups and are of the opinion that other mechanisms have evolved which address their mandates.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

The recommendation to discontinue some of the current advisory committees/working groups aligns with Council's Strategic priority of Sustainable and Engaging Government by ensuring the Region's advisory committees are relevant in relation to the priorities of Council and the organization as a whole it demonstrates respect for the time and effort of volunteer members and staff.

Other Pertinent Reports

None.

Prepared and Recommended by:

Ann-Marie Norio
Regional Clerk

Submitted by:

Ron Tripp, P. Eng.
Chief Administrative Officer

This report was prepared in consultation with Marian Bannerman, Grant & Incentive Program Manager, Daryl Barnhart, Chief of Staff, Governance, Michelle Sergi, Commissioner, Planning and Development, George Spezza, Director, Economic Development, Natalie Early, Director, Corporate Innovation and Strategy, and Todd Harrison, Commissioner, Corporate Services.

Appendices

None.