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**Subject:** Draft Terms of Reference: Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC)

**Report to:** Accessibility Advisory Committee

**Report date:** Tuesday, September 26, 2023

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## **Recommendations**

That this Committee recommends to the Planning and Economic Development Committee:

That Report AAC-C 2-2023, dated September 26, 2023, respecting the Draft Terms of Reference for the Accessibility Advisory Committee, **BE RECEIVED** and the following recommendation **BE APPROVED**:

1. That the Accessibility Advisory Committee Draft Terms of Reference attached as Appendix 1 to Report AAC-C 2-2023, **BE APPROVED**.

## **Key Facts**

- The purpose of this report is to obtain approval for the proposed terms of reference for the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC).
- Embedded in the terms of reference for the AAC is the requirement that the terms be reviewed and refined every four years to keep them meaningful and current. The current terms of reference for the AAC were last updated in 2019.
- Proposals to amend the terms of reference require the approval of a majority of the members of the Committee present.

## **Financial Considerations**

There are no financial impacts as a result of this report.

## **Analysis**

The terms of reference for the Accessibility Advisory Committee was last reviewed and amended in August of 2019. Staff have reviewed the current terms of reference and are proposing some amendments, most of which are minor (i.e. resources, meetings), however, one proposed amendment is the requirement that the Committee Chair be a member of Regional Council and the Vice Chair be a public member of the committee.

This proposed amendment aligns with the terms of reference of all other advisory committees of Niagara Region, allows public members of the committee to fully engage in discussion during the meeting (as the chair is responsible for managing the meetings and is typically precluded from actively participating in committee discussions) and ensures that the committee has a champion/advocate on Regional Council.

### **Alternatives Reviewed**

The requirement that the terms for the AAC be reviewed and refined every four years is embedded in the terms of reference, therefore no alternatives were considered.

### **Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities**

This report aligns with Council's Strategic Priority of Equitable Region - to provide opportunities for a safe and inclusive Niagara by listening and responding to our community needs and planning for future growth.

### **Other Pertinent Reports**

n/a

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**Submitted by:**  
Ann-Marie Norio  
Regional Clerk

*This report was prepared in consultation with Tammy Dumas, Accessibility Advisor.*

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1              Draft Terms of Reference for the Accessibility Advisory Committee

## **ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (AAC)**

### ***DRAFT* TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**DRAFT**

**Appendix to Report AAC-C 2-2023**

**Recommended for Approval by the <name of standing committee> on <date>**

**Ratified by Regional Council on <date>**

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## **1. PREAMBLE**

On June 13, 2005, The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) received Royal Assent and is now law. The purpose of this legislation is to benefit all Ontarians by developing, implementing, and enforcing accessibility standards to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities by 2025.

The AODA requires all public sector organizations to prepare and make public a multi-year accessibility plan. An accessibility plan is prepared to address issues and barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from participating fully in life and community. It is intended to identify, prevent, and remove barriers that may impede residents and visitors from accessing and using Regional services.

The Act requires that every municipality in Ontario with a population greater than 10,000 people must establish an accessibility advisory committee.

## **2. MANDATE**

The Regional Niagara Accessibility Advisory Committee is an advisory body established by the Regional Municipality of Niagara in accordance with the Act and the following Terms of Reference. The Committee has been established to fulfill the duties as outlined in the Act and to provide advice to Regional Council on Municipal requirements as contained in the Act.

## **3. GOALS/PURPOSE**

The Accessibility Advisory Committee will accomplish its mandate through:

- Providing advice to staff and Council regarding the preparation of a five-year accessibility plan. The plan must address the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to persons with disabilities in the Region's by-laws, policies, programs, practices and services.
- Providing advice on the preparation of annual accessibility reports for Council.
- Reviewing applicable site plans and drawings as described in section 41 of the Planning Act.

The Committee may also advise on other municipal obligations under the Act, as follows:

- Accessibility considerations when procuring goods and services

- Development of accessibility policies or plans for municipally administered, subcontracted, or licensed transit providers in consultation with persons with disabilities
- Other matters as directed by Council

#### **4. REPORTING STRUCTURE**

The AAC will report to Regional Council through the appropriate Standing Committee.

#### **5. WORK PLAN**

The AAC will provide guidance to staff in the development, implementation, and effectiveness of the Region's five-year accessibility plan, including initiatives and activities to be undertaken within each of the accessibility standards to further guide decision-making and resource management related to the removal of access barriers.

#### **6. BUDGET**

The AAC shall have an annual operating budget to be used for valid Committee purposes as detailed in the budget approved by Regional Council for the current year.

The Regional Clerk shall submit a budget request each year to Regional Council for consideration and approval.

There shall be no compensation payable to the members of the Committee, with the exception of mileage reimbursement for scheduled meetings of the AAC.

#### **7. MEMBERSHIP**

##### **7.1 Composition**

Membership for the AAC shall not exceed a maximum of 14 members and the majority of members on the committee will be persons with a disability.

Membership for the AAC shall include:

- At least one member from Regional Council
- At least eight members who are people with disabilities
- Two members who are citizen or caregiver volunteers

- Three members who are community or professional stakeholders

All attempts will be made to stay within the guideline composition; however, if the applications received or the qualifications of applicants do not fully address the guideline composition criteria, the most capable and qualified applicants will be recommended for appointment to fulfill the membership composition.

## **7.2 Term**

The term of membership shall be four years, concurrent with Regional Council's elected term of office, and the membership shall be approved by Council in accordance with membership requirements in the Terms of Reference.

## **7.3 Privacy**

The meetings of the AAC are public. Members should be aware that their names will be in the public realm and a list of membership may be provided upon request. Member information, other than name or municipality, will be kept confidential in accordance with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

# **8. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

## **8.1 Chair & Vice Chair**

A Chair and Vice Chair will be elected from Committee members at the first meeting to preside over meetings and Committee business for a two-year term. The Chair of the Committee shall be a Regional Councillor and the Vice Chair of the Committee shall be a public member of the Committee.

It is the role of the Chair to preside over Committee meetings so that its business can be carried out efficiently and effectively, and to act as liaison between the Committee, Regional Council, and other committees. It is the role of the Vice Chair to preside over Committee meetings and act as a liaison in the absence of the Chair and to perform any other duties delegated by the Chair or as assigned by the Committee through a majority.

## **8.2 Committee Members**

All AAC members, including the Chair and Vice Chair, have the responsibility to help achieve the AAC's Mandate and Goals/Purposes. Committee members are also responsible for:

- Reviewing meeting materials in advance of the meetings and arriving prepared to provide a broad perspective on the issues under consideration;
- Working diligently to complete assigned activities;
- Participating on working groups, as appropriate;
- Agreeing to describe, process and resolve issues in a professional and respectful manner;
- Providing input to help identify future projects or strategic priorities for future years' work;
- Communicating activities of the Committee to groups represented or those who may have an interest and offer information back to the Committee.

## **9. WORKING GROUPS**

To fulfill its mandate and accomplish its goals, the AAC may establish working groups to deal with specific issues or projects. The working groups will meet, as needed, to review specific issues referred to them by the AAC and otherwise complete their assigned tasks.

Working groups are considered to be time-limited, project specific sub-committees of the AAC in that they are convened to accomplish a specific task (or tasks) in a narrowly defined time period.

Working groups must be comprised of at least three members of the AAC and may include community members and other individuals with relevant knowledge and expertise. Local municipal participation should be sought depending on the nature of the work being undertaken.

Working groups shall be chaired, where possible, by a voting member of the AAC and shall provide regular updates to the AAC regarding recommendations on assigned projects. Minutes of the meetings of the working group shall be recorded and submitted to the AAC for proper directing through the approval process. Working groups may meet at a time and place as decided by the members of the working group.



Administrative support shall be provided by a staff representative of the AAC or designate. The appropriate staff representative (or designate) will attend all working group meetings.

## **10. RESOURCES**

The Growth Strategy and Economic Development Department is the designated lead department providing resource support for the AAC. It is recognized that staff time and the level of participation will be dependent on other departmental priorities as determined by senior management and/or Regional Council. Additional resources may be sought as required. Additional resourcing may be required for projects with senior levels of government.

The Committee shall receive administrative support from the Office of the Regional Clerk for meeting and agenda management.

## **11. MEETINGS**

The AAC Committee shall meet at least four times per year and may meet more frequently if required. A meeting schedule shall be set for the AAC and circulated to the members for approval each year. Should a time sensitive matter arise, the AAC may meet at the call of the Chair.

The AAC meetings may be held in a virtual format, at Regional Headquarters or another suitable location as may be determined. All meetings will be open to the public.

Meetings shall be governed by the Region's Procedural By-law, being a by-law to govern the calling, place, and proceedings of the meetings of Council and its Committees, as may be amended from time-to-time.

If necessary, a schedule setting the due dates for materials to be included on the agenda will be circulated to each member pending adoption of a meeting schedule or the scheduling of a meeting date.

A committee member who is unable to attend a meeting, shall forward his/her regrets to the Office of the Regional Clerk as soon as possible. Should the Office of the Regional Clerk not have confirmation of quorum 24 hours prior to the meeting, the meeting shall be cancelled.

**12. ABSENTEEISM**

Members who miss three unauthorized consecutive meetings shall be deemed to have resigned from the Committee and will be notified of this in writing by the Committee Chair.

**13. AMENDMENTS TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Terms of Reference should be reviewed and refined at a minimum of every four years to ensure that they remain current and meaningful.

Proposals to amend the Terms of Reference shall require the approval of a majority of the members present. Proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference shall be submitted to Regional Council for approval through the Corporate Services Committee and shall take effect only upon the approval of Council.