

**THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF NIAGARA
ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT**

REPORT 5-2008

Minutes of a meeting of the Region of Niagara Accessibility Advisory Committee (RNAAC), Ontarians with Disabilities Act held in the Regional Municipal Building, Thorold, Ontario, on Tuesday, July 15, 2008 commencing at 12:40 p.m. in Committee Room 4.

ATTENDANCE

Committee: Jocelyne Gagne, Chairperson; Jean Bennett, Geoff Eden, Councillor Cindy Forester, Janet Genge, Ian Greaves, Brian Kon, Anita MacKenzie, Griz Witlib

Regrets: Tony DiPaola, Krystine Donato, Diann Krieger, Carol Walker, Mary Lou Whitty

Staff: Janice Emeneau, Dianna Lecinski, Gord Low, Steve Murphy, Catherine O'Leary, Denise Papaiz, Penny Pitt

Staff regrets: Eric Flora, Kim Koz

Guests: Wendy Thompson, Niagara Regional Housing

Jocelyne Gagne welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order.

Introductions were made around the table for the benefit of everyone in attendance.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

38. Moved by Geoff Eden
Seconded by Ian Greaves

That Agenda 5-2008, being the agenda for the Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting of July 15, 2008 be approved.

Carried.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Moved by Anita McKenzie
Seconded by Ian Greaves

39. That Report 4-2008, being the minutes of the Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting of May 20, 2008, be approved as distributed.

Carried.

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN 2007-2008 – UPDATE

40. Diana Lecinski provided the committee with information on a report from the CAO's office of St. Catharines to Council relating to the Accessibility Coordinator position and the shared services between the City of St. Catharines and the Region of Niagara since the development of this position in 2005. The report included the reconsideration of the dual role and recommended that the Region be provided with notice to terminate the service agreement.

Diana Lecinski will continue to support the Region relating to accessibility coordination duties until the end of September and that will include drafting the new Accessibility Plan for the RNAAC to review at their next meeting on August 12, 2008. She will also draft a presentation for the RNAAC to present, along with the Accessibility Plan, when it is presented to the PH&SS of Regional Council for the consideration of the committee.

Following a committee discussion, Jocelyne Gagne noted that the Region may see fit to have the position of an Accessibility Coordinator as a fulltime position. It was decided that the committee would express their recommendations with a motion.

Moved by Geoff Eden
Seconded by Brian Kon

That the Accessibility Advisory Committee recommends that the Region of Niagara have a dedicated position for an Accessibility Coordinator.

Carried.

Diana Lecinski advised the committee that the Accessibility Plan is in the draft stages. The final draft will be ready for the August 12, 2008 AAC meeting and will be sent to committee members before then for their review and comment. If there are any questions or comment please contact Steve Murphy or Diana Lecinski.

Janice Emeneau spoke to the committee about the purpose of the AODA, 2005 which is to develop, implement and enforce standards for accessibility related to

goods, services, facilities, employment, accommodation and buildings. In addition to the AODA there is also provincial legislation that deals with accessibility through the Planning system. The **Planning Act** was updated in 2005 to reflect progress on a number of fronts and in section 2 (h1) of the Planning Act, 2005 it states that “the accessibility for persons with disabilities to all facilities, services and matters to which the Act applies” is of provincial interest. Policy 51(24) states that “in considering a draft plan of subdivisions, regard shall be had, among other matters, to the health, safety, convenience and accessibility for person with disabilities.

In the **Provincial Policy Statement**, accessibility is addressed in Section 1.1.1. Healthy, livable and safe communities are sustained by “improving accessibility for persons with disabilities and the elderly by removing and/or preventing land use barriers with restrict their full participation in society”.

In the very near future a number of local municipal official plans are anticipated to come under Regional and therefore Provincial review. These will be assessed in the light of the new provincial legislation regarding accessibility, regardless of whether there are comprehensive Regional policies dealing with the issue.

In Section 5 (Urban Areas) of the **Regional Policy Plan**, there is currently one objective and one policy dealing with accessibility issues. The objective pertains to commercial areas and deals with accessibility only as it pertains to access to commercial amenities by transit. Objective 5.8 is to support a dispersed pattern of shopping facilities that must be related to the needs of the municipalities in which they are located, in terms of location, size, accessibility by auto or by public transit, and other relevant factors”. Policy 5.5 notes that the Regional interest includes “parks and recreation policies which consider demand, accessibility, and relationships to other land uses”.

In the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) 2007 between the Region, local municipalities and the NPCA, the respective roles will be developed as a collaborative effort with the Regional policies setting the tone. Local policies and by-laws are the instruments that implement both the Provincial and Regional policies.

Regional Council has endorsed the **Melbourne Principles** which addresses equity issues and the empowerment of people. Also endorsed are the **Smart Growth Principles** which address compact, transit-friendly, and walkable neighbourhoods.

The Planning staff also works with the Niagara Regional Housing as part of a team that reviews applications for NRH projects which incorporates the principles of Smart Growth, accessibility and universal design. Staff training would be a real asset in raising awareness. Knowledge is the key to success in achieving social equity.

Gord Low suggested that accessibility sensitivity/awareness and customer service training should be given in every department with the possibility of adding it to the orientation of new hires. It was noted that current Building Codes don't include the Accessibility Plan principles and their only guideline is the FADS document. Built Environment pertains to regional buildings only and FADS should be promoted.

The committee was advised that renovations to the new Welland Public Health offices on Division Street are the current project, complying as best as possible with the FADS document. Complying with Accessibility Guidelines and Facility Accessibility Design Standards in old buildings proved to be more difficult versus new buildings. Upcoming projects also included renovations to the Regional Chair and Clerks Departments and the ongoing renovations to Council Chambers. Audible alarms are also being implemented.

It was reported that eighteen key people recently received facility audit training. The need to update the FADS document was discussed among the committee. The new facility audit tool was used to complete the Community Services site audit at 250 Thorold Road in Welland. This tool should now be implemented to identify issues that are present on all current Regional Facilities as well as leased spaces. A list of these facilities was distributed at the April 8, 2008 meeting. Staff will be reviewing the implementation of the tool on these facilities and developing a plan.

NIAGARA SPECIALIZED TRANSIT (NST) UPDATE

41. Anita McKenzie reported that the NST had provided 850 rides to date.

AODA UPDATE

42. Geoff Eden advised the committee that there would be meeting through the summer and that a teleconference was scheduled within the next few weeks. Updates could be found on the Ministry of Community and Social Services website. The Retail Council of Canada - Ontario Division has a training video designed for in-house use. The Province of Ontario also has a training video Customer Service and the availability will be checked. An invitation will be extended to the Customer Service Advisory Committee to attend an AAC meeting.

INFORMATION ITEMS

43. Summary of Information Items

Information Items AAC 66-2008 – AAC 97-2008 reviewed and received.

OTHER BUSINESS

44. Denise Papaiz will meet with Diana Lecenski and Steve Murphy to discuss the Information and Communications Standard and when it will be delivered to the Ministry.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Jean Bennett
Seconded by Brian Kon

That the Committee be adjourned at 2:40 p.m. to meet again on Tuesday, August 12, 2008 at 12:30 p.m. in Committee Room 4.

Jocelyne Gagne
Chairperson

Penny Pitt
Administrative Assistant
Council Support