Minutes of a meeting of the Regional Niagara Accessibility Advisory Committee (RNAAC), Ontarians with Disabilities Act held in the Regional Municipal Building, Thorold, Ontario, on Tuesday, July 7, 2009, commencing at 12:45 p.m. in Committee Room 4.

ATTENDANCE

Committee: Chair Jocelyne Gagne, Jean Bennett, Geoff Eden, Councillor Cindy Forster, Christine Keith, Anita MacKenzie, Mary Lou Whitty, Griz Witlib
Committee Regrets: Ian Greaves, Brian Kon, Diann Krieger, Carol Walker
Staff: Mary Eagles, Eric Flora, Steve Murphy, Denise Papaiz, Penny Pitt, Judy Sobchak
Guests: Renee McKinley (Interpreter), Amy Zimmerman (Community Services summer student)

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

49. Moved by Geoff Eden
    Seconded by Anita MacKenzie

That Agenda 5-2009, being the agenda for the Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting of July 7, 2009, be approved as amended to include items under Business Arising: Letters to all Municipalities, Wainfleet Town Hall update and Visual Fire Alarms.
ADOPTION OF MINUTES

50. Moved by Jean Bennett  
Seconded by Mary Lou Whitty

That Report 4-2009, being the minutes of the Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting of May 26, 2009, be approved as distributed.  

Carried.

51. Guest Speaker - Kevin Bain, Regional Clerk

Jocelyne Gagne introduced the new Regional Clerk, Kevin Bain to the committee by reiterating his biography. Mr. Bain addressed the Committee and commented on the important work being undertaken by the Committee. He expressed his appreciation to the members of the Committee for their service to the Region. He also commented on his past involvement in working with the Accessibility Advisory Committee in the City of London. Mr. Bain pointed out that his is looking forward to his association with the Region’s Committee.

52. Guest Speaker – Patrick Robson, Commissioner Integrated Community Planning

Patrick Robson gave an overview to the committee of the power point presentation entitled “Niagara 2031Strategy for a Healthy, Sustainable Future.” Mr. Robson explained why a growth management strategy was needed with perspectives and objectives to be met in the servicing, health and environment, economy and finance, human services and social and cultural fields. He continued with explanations of Phase 1: Understanding Niagara, Phase 2: Anticipating Niagara and Phase 3: Three Growth Options for Niagara. A copy of the presentation will be sent to committee members and can also be seen on the regions website: www.niagararegion.ca - click on Niagara 2031.

BUSINESS ARISING

53. Letters to All Municipalities

Jocelyne Gagne apprised the committee that letters to all municipalities encouraging the use of the Facility Accessibility Design Standards (FADS) document in any new facilities or renovated buildings and a letter to the Township of Wainfleet to encourage the use of the FADS document during their current renovations have been drafted.
Moved by Griz Witlib  
Seconded by Mary Lou Whitty

That the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) recommend to the Integrated Community Planning Public Works Committee (ICPPWC) that the Chair of AAC be authorized to send the attached letter to the Township of Wainfleet to encourage the use of the Facility Accessible Design Standards (FADS) in the renovations to the Wainfleet Town Hall and to send the attached letter to all municipalities in the Region to encourage the use of the FADS document in any new facilities or renovated buildings.

Carried.

54. Wainfleet Town Hall Update

Griz Witlib was invited to meet with Scott Luey, CAO of Wainfleet to discuss the accessibility of the Wainfleet Town Hall specifically relating to the possibility of an elevator installation. The five Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act (AODA) standards and FADS document were briefly explained to the CAO and a copy of the FADS document was provided to the township at a later date. During an unofficial inspection of the elevator shaft, Griz observed that the doorway appeared too narrow with no exit or turnaround space. She was informed that on June 13, 2009, Wainfleet would be holding a public meeting regarding their official plan.

55. Visual Fire Alarms

Mary Lou Whitty provided a brief overview of an article from the Canadian Hearing Society entitled “Government urged to cover cost of visual alarms” regarding visual fire alarms. It was expressed that deaf and hard of hearing people should be afforded the safety of visual fire alarms in all public buildings. A private member’s Bill 148 introduced in February 2009 aims to require that all new provincial and municipal public buildings be equipped with visual fire alarms. It was suggested that people who receive benefits through the Ontario Disabilities Support Program (ODSP) are entitled to have visual fire alarms and the associated installation. There is no financial relief for those not on the ODSP program. A copy of the article will be sent to the committee by email.

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

56. Role of the Accessibility Advisory Committee

Steve Murphy reminded the committee that the role of the Accessibility Advisory Committee is an advisory body established by the Regional Municipality of Niagara. The committee has been established to advise the Regional Council, reporting through the Integrated Community Planning and Public Works Committee (ICPPWC) on Municipal requirements as contained in the Ontarians with Disabilities Act.
57. **Terms of Reference**

The current Terms of Reference will be revised to reflect the correct reporting committee and sent to the committee members for review and comment. It was noted that the revised Terms of Reference will require the approval of Regional Council.

58. **Changes to Committee Structure**

Eric Flora informed the committee that the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) provided advice on the installation of the Audio Pedestrian signals. They were looking for either an open invitation to attend meetings or the possibility of becoming a member of the Accessibility Advisory Committee. Councillor Forster commented that to do that may open the door for representatives from various committees to attend. Nick Rosati, Traffic Operations Technician Transportation Systems, will follow up with the CNIB regarding this matter.

**ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES UPDATE**

59. Steve Murphy apprised the committee that there were no Provincial updates at this time. Niagara Region’s compliance with the Customer Service Training Standard is well underway with sessions booked every Monday morning until November. Emergency Medical Services will be providing training to their frontline reception staff. Niagara Regional Police Services will also provide their staff with training and send the completed records to us. The recent policies adapted regarding the Customer Service Training will be used in part or entirety. Steve invited the committee members to attend a training session to provide feedback. Anita MacKenzie, Mary Lou Whitty and Jean Bennett have requested to attend and Penny Pitt will register them in a training session.

Denise Papaiz advised the committee that the Information and Communications Standard is still in its draft form.

**NIAGARA SPECIALIZED TRANSIT (NST)**

60. **Update**

Eric Flora apprised the committee that a NST update was not available at this time. He stated that at the Inter Municipal Specialized Transit Advisory Committee (IMSTAC) meeting scheduled for Monday, July 13th a memo would distributed regarding the Travel Plan for the St. Catharines Health Care Complex.

61. **Stakeholders Consultation**

Invitations were sent to municipalities, economic development offices, transit managers, school boards and post-secondary institutions, chamber of commerce/ large employers, community/ social/ health services, and key private sector players to attend a Stakeholders’ Consultation on May 27, 2009. Although contact could not be made with
all the stake-holders notably large employers, school boards and private sector businesses engaged in public transport, the input provided from the Transit Managers, Niagara College, Brock University and other stakeholders led to important insight.

Key findings/ comments:
- Dominance of student market for transit services, challenges to the service interconnections
- Needs to access to jobs/ employment
- Have the inter-municipal connections sooner rather than later

62. Transportation Strategy Steering Committee (TSSC) Workshop

A TSSC Workshop was held on June 2, 2009 and attended by the members of the TSSC, Transit Managers, and other committee reps. The discussions were mainly around exploring the service concepts and exploration of the delivery models and why or why not the municipalities want to buy-in. The Waste Management and Police Services governance models were sighted as possible leads in developing the governance structure for the inter-municipal transit.

63. Public Information Centre

A Public Information Centre (PIC) was held at Grapeview Elementary Public School on June 25, 2009 in St. Catharines. The session was attended by representatives of a private sector company engaged in the business of public transport.

Key Comments:
- Old Age, worried to travel by car
- Access to hospitals/ health care complexes (as medical specialties get relocated to centres of excellence)
- Isolation between communities
- Some form of Regional/ Joint funding with municipalities and the province

64. Niagara Health System-Transportation Improvement Plan (NHS-TIP)

The Niagara Region Inter-Municipal Transit Web Survey took place May 11 – July 2, 2009 with approximately 1200 responses. A total of 33 questions were asked from the respondents. The questions were designed in sections: demographic information, disability status, local transit services, travel patterns service features, and fares and comments. The web survey cannot be categorized as a strict statistical survey, yet the information gathered does lead close to one. The respondents to the survey are from all municipalities and the percentage respondents broadly reflect the percentage population of the Municipalities. The findings of the survey are summarized in the consultant’s memo.

The role for the Niagara Region in regard to the transportation plan should be as a stakeholder given the ongoing initiatives through the Niagara Health System –
Transportation Improvement Plan (NHS-TIP) Committee, developments in the vicinity of the NHS site and its involvement in specialized transit. A final report will be prepared for ICPPWC in September.

The Region will also be commencing an Environmental Assessment later this year, for a new ramp off of Highway 406 in west St. Catharines for the hospital access.

**INFORMATION ITEMS**

65. **Summary of Information Items**

Information Items AAC 63-2009 – AAC 91-2009 were received for information.

- **63-2009** The Importance of Access – May 29 09 - Brantford Expositor
- **64-2009** Council needs to stand up – May 29 09 - Belleville Intelligencer
- **65-2009** Funding sought for rec projects – June 1 09 – Northumberland Today
- **66-2009** Breaking down barriers – June 2 09 – North Bay Nugget
- **67-2009** New award will honour “pioneer” – June 2 09 – Barrie Examiner
- **68-2009** Disabled deserve better services – June 5 09 - Belleville Intelligencer
- **69-2009** Students learn to Break the Barriers – June 5 09 - Northumberland Today
- **70-2009** All aboard! New fleet for Agawa Canyon Tour – June 9 09 – Sault Star
- **71-2009** Increasing accessibility the focus – June 9 09 - Brantford Expositor
- **72-2009** A Hansen ally keeps wheels in motion – June 9 09 – Surrey Now
- **73-2009** Mississippi Mills receives funding – June 11 09 – Almonte/Carleton Place
- **74-2009** Lockwood’s Sight & Sound celebrates – June 11 09 – Smith Falls
- **75-2009** Bus strike leaves disabled in lurch – June 11 09 - Sault Star
- **76-2009** Ontario launches review of Accessibility Legislation – June 12 09
- **77-2009** NiagaraShares.com – What’s it all about? – West Side Story
- **78-2009** Mobility a Vital West End Issue – West Side Storey
- **79-2009** Infrastructure money must not dry up – June 11 09 – Orangeville Banner
- **80-2009** Brampton transit gets provincial boost – June 11 09 – Brampton Guardian
- **81-2009** Stimulus cash coming – June 11 09 – Independent Free Press
66. **Council Renovations**

Earlier today, the Sub Committee attended a presentation in Council Chambers by Macdonald, Zuberec and Ensslen Architects Inc. In attendance were Griz Witlib, Jean Bennett, Geoff Eden, Jocelyne Gagne, Janet Pilon, Kevin Bain, Gord Low, and Penny Pitt. Harold Ensslen and Greg Redden represented the architects. Gord Low provided introductions and an updated description of the status to date. The committee perused the various proposed renovations to Regional Council Chambers and was advised that Proposal "C" Plan was the desired option. This layout was most appealing and open concept of the options. The committee was generally happy with the potential option and was in agreement that the right hand side ramp should be removed as it was not to code. The next step would be a more detailed design. Gord Low met with CMT approximately six weeks ago and is awaiting direction on how to proceed.

67. **Yellow Ramp Project**

Steve Murphy apprised the committee of a new project aimed at increasing collaboration and sharing of resources in order to increase awareness of accessibility within our communities. In other communities the Yellow Ramp Project has brought together the Boards of Education, Chambers of Commerce and other community partners to promote accessibility within the private sector as well as encourage participation and public education. Other communities have provided these brightly coloured portable ramps to retailers whose buildings were previously inaccessible to those members of the community with disabilities. At this point we are looking into the
feasibility for this project to exist to some degree within the Niagara Region. Steve Murphy will continue his research and report back to the committee.

**ADJOURNMENT**

68. The Committee adjourned at 2:55 p.m. to meet again on Tuesday, August 18, 2009 at 12:30 p.m. in Committee Room 4.

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Jocelyne Gagne            Penny Pitt
Chairperson               Administrative Assistant
Council Support