

Region of Queens Municipality
QUEENS ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Terms of Reference

Purpose

The purpose of Queens Accessibility Advisory Committee is to assist Municipal Council with ensuring that all parts of the Municipality's operations include increasing awareness about the barriers faced by persons with various abilities, improving access to resources for helping persons with disabilities, strengthening supports for employees and building capacity, improving access to municipal buildings and properties, improving availability of accessible washrooms and workspaces, enhancing accessibility for persons who are visually or hearing impaired, and ensuring that the recruitment, hiring and career development processes of the Municipality are accessible. The Committee will provide advice and leadership direction to the Accessibility Coordinator and Director of Planning and Development in the future development of our community as accessibility friendly and complaint.

Authority

Accessibility Advisory Committee has been granted its legal authority to assist the Municipality with overseeing the development and implementation of an accessibility strategy and plan for all municipal buildings, properties, programs, and services, by virtue of being delegated this responsibility with Council's approval on November 12, 2019, of this Terms of Reference. Council gains its responsibility and authority for accessibility through the adoption of the *Accessibility Act* in the fall of 2018, and regulations to be forthcoming, by the Province of Nova Scotia.

Scope

The scope of Accessibility Advisory Committee shall be to review and assess all aspects of the Municipality's operations including goods and services, information and communication, transportation, employment, built environment, and education to ensure equity and fairness to all residents of Queens County regardless of their abilities to create a diverse and supportive community for all, respecting the unique abilities of each person and the financial resources of the Municipality. Specifically, the Accessibility Advisory Committee shall:

1. Provide general leadership and direction to Accessibility Coordinator on all matters concerning accessibility.
2. Encourage and support research of potential new opportunities, technologies, or developments in all areas of improving accessibility.
3. Ensure that all recommendations are within current legislative frameworks.
4. Consult with Council, through preparation of reports outlining options and opportunities, on the potential development of public and private partnerships that will benefit local residents to increase accessibility in one or more areas.
5. Be engaged in supporting, participating in, and developing an accessibility strategy and plan for Queens County.
6. Prioritize and oversee the carrying out of accessibility audits in the six areas of jurisdiction of the Committee.

7. Make recommendations to Director of Planning and Development and / or Council concerning accessibility, fairness opportunities, and changes to policies that will positively impact building, property, programs and service usage for all persons reducing barriers through enhanced accessibility.

Reporting Relationship

Accessibility Advisory Committee shall report directly to the Council of Region of Queens Municipality and the Committee Chairperson and indirectly to the Director of Planning and Development for operational and administrative support.

Role of Chairperson

The Chairperson is ultimately responsible for organizing, chairing and facilitating all meetings. The Chairperson will also ensure that appropriate research, directions and recommendations are given to the Committee, including the provision for adoption of work plans, policy directions, strategies, financial commitments, human resource management, as well as all other items incidental to the effective operation and management of Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Role of Vice Chairperson

A Vice Chairperson shall be appointed and act in the place of the Chairperson during absences, unavailability or conflicts of interest of the Chairperson.

Role of Committee Member

All Committee Members are expected to prepare for and attend all meetings of the Committee unless they provide prior notice of absence to the Chairperson. Committee Members are required to always act in the best interests of the Municipality and community and set aside personal beliefs and business interests when they can potentially conflict with the objectives and strategic directions of the Committee. Advisory Committee Members may directly seek information or provide information to the Accessibility Coordinator, but all directions to the Coordinator shall only come from the Chairperson and Director of Planning and Development.

Role of Accessibility Coordinator

Accessibility Coordinator shall carry out the functions and roles as directed by the Accessibility Committee from time to time and shall act as a staff resource to the Committee. This person shall lead the research and report writing aspect of the Committee's work to ensure the Advisory Committee has the most accurate information upon which to make a decision or recommendations to Council. The Advisory Committee shall work with the Coordinator respecting the development of strategies, work plans, and research, subject to legislative and budget limitations.

Role of Director of Planning and Development

Director of Planning and Development shall work with the Advisory Committee and facilitate the development of a strategy and work plan as it relates to increasing accessibility for all residents of Queens County, in areas of goods and services, information and communication, transportation, employment, built environment, and education, with responsibility to ensure all recommendations to Council are well thought out, fiscally responsible, within the scope of the committee and its human resources capacity, and will increase accessibility equitably.

Membership

Membership on the Accessibility Advisory Committee shall include two currently serving elected representatives from Region of Queens Municipality and up to five members of the public with a disability or who represent an organization that represents persons with disabilities, duly appointed by Council pursuant to Section 24 of the *Municipal Government Act*. Members of the public appointed to this committee should have a strong understanding of accessibility issues or be a person with a disability, be willing to participate in monthly meetings, and be able to understand government and regulatory processes. Director of Planning and Development, or designate, shall act as a non-voting resource to the Committee. Members shall be sought through a publicly advertised expression of interest. Any resignation shall be tendered in writing to the Chairperson. Subsequently a replacement will be sought through the normal recruitment process to fill the remaining term of office.

Duration of Mandate

Accessibility Advisory Committee membership terms shall begin on April 1, 2020 and shall be divided with three members being appointed for a one-year term and four members being appointed for a two-year term; with the two Members of Council staggering their terms. Each April 1st thereafter, the members whose terms have expired shall be replaced by members for a two-year term. Members are eligible for re-election but shall not serve more than five to six consecutive years before being required to retire from office. Interested persons are then eligible for re-appointment again two years thereafter.

Frequency of Meetings

Meetings of Queens Accessibility Advisory Committee shall be held on such day as the Committee decides at the first meeting of the Committee, with such meetings taking place at the same time agreed to by the Committee each month. Additional meetings may be held, or the above meeting dates and times changed, when agreed to by consensus of the Committee and prior notification is provided to the public.

Quorum Requirements

No decisions may be made at any Advisory Committee meetings unless a quorum of a majority of the current members of the Committee are present in person.

Agenda, Minutes and Resolutions

Minutes and recommendations of Queens Accessibility Advisory Committee meetings shall be provided to each member of the Committee within a reasonable time after the conclusion of such meeting. Accessibility Coordinator will endeavour to provide each member of the Committee with the agenda and required supporting documentation at least seven (7) days prior to every meeting.

Conflict of Interest

It is expected that all members of Queens Accessibility Advisory Committee will adhere to the *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act*, disclosing any pecuniary or indirect pecuniary interest in any matter before the Committee and refraining from taking part in, or trying to influence either before or after the meeting, any directions or decisions respecting such matters. Any breach of this guideline will require the Chairperson to ask Council to remove that member and appoint another member in their stead. If the breach is by the Chairperson, this shall be reported to Council by the Vice Chairperson. Queens Accessibility Advisory Committee will conduct its business in accordance with the Municipality's Code of Conduct Policy.

Resources

Queens Accessibility Advisory Committee shall have access to the Accessibility Coordinator and Director of Planning and Development and other appropriate municipal staff as authorized by the Chief Administrative Officer, to undertake the required research it needs in order to make the most appropriate decisions in a timely manner. Requests for resources above the annual budgeted amount for this Committee shall be made by the Advisory Committee through the Chairperson to Council, on an as needed basis. The Committee will have access to all pertinent contracts, agreements, and financial records of the Municipality and its properties, programs, services, where required and requested and subject to confidentiality when noted.

Decision Making Process

All decisions of Queens Accessibility Advisory Committee shall be made by majority vote of Committee members. Where a majority is not forthcoming, the vote shall be determined in the negative. The Committee has authority to oversee and facilitate the research and data collection process by requesting such information from the Accessibility Coordinator, other designed municipal staff, Committee members, or other private sector or government sources. All decisions of the Committee will be made without undue influence or biased decision-making favouring any Committee member's personal volunteering or business pursuits. Decisions that require additional human or financial resources not currently available or within budget, requires the Committee to make a written report and recommendation to Council with such asks.

Confidentiality

All meetings of Queens Accessibility Advisory Committee are considered public, except those matters deemed to be private and confidential in nature and subject to Section 22 of the *Municipal Government Act*. Minutes and subsequent resolutions of such meetings shall be recorded and publicly available upon approval by the Committee. Information and reports of the Advisory Committee shall be subject to normal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPOP) regulations.

Communications

All communications and messaging from Queens Accessibility Advisory Committee's work and activities shall come solely from the Chairperson or their designate. It is expected that all decisions of the Committee will be supported by all members of the Committee upon ratification. This does not limit the ability of an individual member from speaking freely with the media, but in all such cases the individual committee member should be clear that it is their personal opinion and not that of Queens Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Reporting

Bi-annually, the Chairperson shall provide written reports to Council concerning the Committee's work plan, focus and directions. An oral presentation may be requested of the Chairperson at any time if Council wishes to have further clarification or reporting on the Advisory Committee's work.

Responsibilities

Queens Accessibility Advisory Committee shall be responsible for the planning and development of an accessibility strategy and plan for Queens County as it relates specifically to municipal infrastructure, programs and services. Thereafter, the Committee is tasked with overseeing the research and implementation of fair and measurable success factors of this strategy and plan and its positive impact on persons with disabilities. The goal is to provide a quality experience for all residents of Queens County,

whether participants or supporters, in a safe environment understanding fiscal realities and our goal of access for all. The Committee is expected to make timely decisions and recommendations to Council that are in the best interests of residents and businesses. To this end, Queens Accessibility Advisory Committee shall endeavour to carry out the following functions:

Accessibility Advisory Committee's Specific Responsibilities

1. Review municipal, provincial, and federal policies and regulations related to accessibility on a regular basis and whenever considering new strategies, programs, services or opportunities.
2. Provide general guidance and direction to Accessibility Coordinator through the Chairperson and monthly through the Advisory Committee or when requested or required.
3. Complete a comprehensive review of municipal operations as they relate to accessibility in the following areas: goods and services, information and communication, transportation, employment, built environment, and education, with a goal of making recommendations for cost-effective ways to increase access for all.
4. Consider innovative approaches to fair access to municipal programs, services, and infrastructure; making recommendations to Council when appropriate and timely.
5. Review and provide input into proposed leases, agreements, and contracts being considered by Region of Queens Municipality for any new developments within or on municipal properties, or to programs and services, when requested to do so by Chief Administrative Officer.
6. Develop an annual accessibility strategy and work plan for Queens Accessibility Advisory Committee and Accessibility Coordinator with a goal of increasing access for all residents while mitigating any decrease in access or use by other users or the general public, leveraging innovation and technology, while respecting access for all.
7. Review monthly staff reports concerning updates related to the strategy and work plan of the Committee, research carried out, and make recommendations for adjustments to strategies to Accessibility Coordinator to meet overall strategy goals and outcomes.
8. Where appropriate, establish and appoint working groups or teams to address a specific issue which may include non-committee members with a specific interest or technical skills, provided the working group or team is chaired by an Accessibility Advisory Committee member.