

UNITED COUNTIES OF LEEDS AND GRENVILLE

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

To the Warden and Members of Council of the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville

Members, We, your Accessibility Advisory Committee, beg leave to report as follows:

The Accessibility Advisory Committee met February 20, 2024 at 9:00 a.m. in the Council Chambers, 25 Central Avenue West, Brockville.

Members Present: Dana Farcasiu, Chair
Brant Burrow, Mike Emberson, Evelyn Pott, Jeff Shaver, Claire Smith, Bill Steenkamer, Calvin Turner, Rob Wright

Staff Present: Geoff Clarke, Interim County Clerk
Shannon Brown, Manager of Children's Services
Sheri Getz, Policy Analyst
Andrea Bolton, Deputy Clerk and Accessibility Coordinator
(Recording Secretary)

Others Present: Sharon Steenkamer

1. Call to Order

Recording Timestamp 0:00:02

Ms. Farcasiu called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

2. Adoption of Agenda

Recording Timestamp 0:00:28

Resolution No. AAC-001-2024

**Moved by Claire Smith
Seconded by Calvin Turner
THAT the Agenda for the February 20, 2024, meeting of the Accessibility
Advisory Committee be adopted as circulated.**

CARRIED

3. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and General Nature Thereof – Nil

Recording Timestamp 0:01:48

4. Adoption of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Recording Timestamp 0:02:15

4.1 Meeting Minutes Dated November 21, 2023

Recording Timestamp 0:02:15

Resolution No. AAC-002-2024

Moved by Rob Wright

Seconded by Jeff Shaver

**THAT the Minutes of the Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting held on
November 21, 2023, be adopted as circulated.**

CARRIED

5. Delegations/Presentations

Recording Timestamp 0:03:08

**5.1 Shannon Brown and Sheri Getz, Children's Services re: The Child Care
and Early Years System**

Recording Timestamp 0:03:08

Ms. Brown, Manager of Children's Services, introduced herself and Ms. Getz, the Policy and Review Analyst, and highlighted their roles in Children's Services. She

described the Children's Services Department as one of three departments within the Community and Social Services Division, primarily funded by the Ontario Ministry of Education but now requires municipal contributions. She pointed out some of the work being pursued by the Accessibility Advisory Committee aligns with some of the initiatives undertaken within the Children's Services Department. Ms. Brown wants to facilitate potential collaborative projects between the Committee and Children's Services to enhance accessibility in programs over the next couple of years. She emphasized the department's commitment to accessibility and invited feedback and partnership opportunities with the Accessibility Advisory Committee. Ms. Brown provided the Committee with a summary of what Children's services does in Leeds and Grenville and conveyed the Children's Services Department has grown significantly over the past six years, adding staff to support the roll-out of \$10 per day childcare and integrating Special Needs Resource Services in-house.

Ms. Brown announced the provincial and federal governments have introduced the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care System (CWELCC) with the goal of establishing a national licensed childcare system across Canada. The plan includes an increase to the number of new spaces to 397 by the end of 2026, with a request for an additional 240 spaces pending approval. The focus is to provide these new spaces to underserved families, including those living in low-income households, children with special needs, francophone families, indigenous families, racial minority families, and new immigrants. The licensed childcare system is intended to offer a safe, high-quality environment for children while also serving as an early learning platform, the foundation of the education system. Ten communities have been identified to receive the (CWELCC) direct-to-growth strategy spaces, grouped into five different regions across the Counties. Ms. Brown explained communities were chosen based on data analysis, which identified significant populations of priority groups were underserved by existing childcare spaces. Ms. Brown highlighted the department's commitment to high-quality, accessible, and inclusive early learning and childcare services across Leeds and Grenville. Ms. Brown expressed the department's desire to collaborate with the Accessibility Advisory Committee by visiting or looking at photos or videos of early learning spaces to enhance equity and accessibility in licensed childcare sites. The partnership aims to develop resources and consult on program site design during the construction phase, potentially creating tip sheets for partners.

Recording Timestamp 0:26:33

Mr. Steenkamer posed a question about the education and training required for staff working in the childcare programs, specifically regarding supporting individuals with disabilities. Ms. Brown said Registered Early Childhood Educators are required to have 2-year college diplomas covering areas like child development, mental health, and motor skills. The department also provides ongoing professional learning opportunities, including an annual conference and an upcoming on-demand training platform.

Recording Timestamp 0:30:54

Mr. Burrow asked if the Children's Services Department had ever received any feedback from the audience they serve regarding accessibility issues. Ms. Brown acknowledged they had not specifically asked for feedback broadly and saw it as an opportunity to look into developing key performance indicators around accessibility.

Recording Timestamp 0:32:32

Ms. Farcasiu asked if the Children's Services Department was responsible for identifying sites or assisting organizations with building new accessible playgrounds within the Counties. Ms. Brown explained while the Children's Services Department does not directly oversee or build public playgrounds, they are open to providing input on accessibility considerations and will be focusing on accessibility in the design of any new playgrounds associated with their childcare expansion projects.

Recording Timestamp 0:35:13

Ms. Farcasiu asked about the Forget-Me-Not flower which Ms. Brown had presented, and whether it was something the Committee could obtain to wear or use. Ms. Brown said the Forget-Me-Not flower graphic which represents the Children's Services Department's vision and principles, will be shared by Ms. Brown through Ms. Bolton as a way to further collaborate and show support by the members of the Accessibility Committee.

6. Correspondence, Communications and Petitions – Nil

Recording Timestamp 0:36:39

7. Information Items – Nil

Recording Timestamp 0:36:48

8. Staff Reports

8.1 Report No. AAC-001-2024: National AccessAbility Week 2024

Recording Timestamp 0:36:55

Ms. Bolton noted National AccessAbility Week is May 26 to June 1, 2024. Ms. Bolton said in the past, the Accessibility Committee has used the Federal government's theme for the week and promoted it through social media and the website and there is a small budget available for promotions and advertising related to National AccessAbility Week. Ms. Bolton reported the City of Brockville, and the Township of Rideau Lakes Accessibility Advisory Committee are seeking to partner with other committees in Leeds and Grenville for this event. Ms. Bolton shared the recommendation from the report the Committee direct staff to contact the other Accessibility Advisory Committees in Leeds and Grenville to invite further discussion regarding plans for National AccessAbility Week 2024.

Resolution No. AAC-003-2024

Moved by Eve Pott

Seconded by Brant Burrow

THAT the Accessibility Advisory Committee directs staff to contact other Accessibility Advisory Committees in Leeds and Grenville to invite further discussion regarding National AccessAbility Week (NAAW) 2024.

CARRIED

Recording Timestamp 0:39:05

Mr. Wright requested clarification on which staff member was reaching out to other municipalities to prevent duplication of efforts. It was confirmed Ms. Bolton would lead the coordination of this outreach and planning.

Recording Timestamp 0:41:04

Ms. Bolton invited the Committee to share ideas for promoting National AccessAbility Week 2024. She expressed openness to receiving feedback and suggestions on how to effectively utilize the available promotional budget to raise awareness for National AccessAbility Week 2024 through collaboration with other local committees.

Recording Timestamp 0:41:17

Mr. Farcasiu responded to Ms. Bolton by asking if they should hold a general meeting where members from various Accessibility Advisory Committees could meet, share ideas, and discuss their work. This meeting would aim to identify ways to support each other. The Committee proposed inviting speakers from each committee to present their work and challenges, fostering collaboration. Members expressed that in-person discussions could lead to more productive brainstorming sessions compared to virtual meetings. Additionally, there was a question about the availability of funds to organize this meeting. It was noted that costs for remuneration and mileage could be covered by regular business operations, and there are extra budgeted meetings available however Ms. Bolton noted the tour of EarlyON facilities should be considered in the budget. The Committee agreed to consider planning for the next Committee meeting scheduled for April 23.

Recording Timestamp 0:45:02

The group discussed gathering information to prepare for the April meeting. Mr. Turner suggested prior to the meeting with the other committees, it would be helpful for each committee to prepare a temporary agenda or presentation outlining their specific concerns and opportunities. This could help identify common themes and opportunities for collaboration. Mr. Clarke, Ms. Bolton and Committee members discussed the importance of gathering feedback from the committees on accessibility issues in advance of the meeting for collaboration with the other Accessibility Advisory Committees.

Recording Timestamp 0:51:34

Mr. Wright cautioned for the initial meeting, they should focus on introductions and presentations. Mr. Clarke noted rather than jumping into breakout sessions

right away, suggested the breakout sessions would be better suited for future meetings.

9. Sub-Committee, Ad Hoc Committee and Member Reports – Nil

Recording Timestamp 0:54:36

10. Unfinished Business

10.1 Follow-up from November 21, 2023 Meeting, Committee Discussion re: Possible Accessibility Related Event

Recording Timestamp 0:54:56

At the previous meeting in November 2023, the Committee had discussed the possibility of organizing an accessibility-related event, potentially a "summit". Ms. Bolton provided some background, noting research had indicated the cost of organizing an event is approximately \$15,000, which is outside the Committee's current budget. Mr. Wright proposed that the Committee postpone the idea of a larger event for the time being and concentrate on the initial meeting with the regional Accessibility Advisory Committees, as previously discussed. Ms. Farcasiu recommended preparing for this event in 2025 by including it in the budget, and the group reached a consensus on this approach.

Recording Timestamp 1:01:09

Ms. Farcasiu asked about next steps for collaborating with the Children's Services Department, and it was agreed Ms. Bolton would work with Ms. Brown to arrange a site visit for the Committee to tour one of the EarlyON Centers and collaborate on future sites by viewing photographs.

11. Announcements - Nil

Recording Timestamp 1:03:09

12. Notice of By-law/Notice of Motion

Recording Timestamp 1:03:21

13. Questions from the Media

Recording Timestamp 1:03:33

There were no questions from the media.

14. Questions from the Public

Recording Timestamp 1:03:46

There were no questions from the public.

15. Closed Meeting – Nil

Recording Timestamp 1:04:04

16. Adjournment

Recording Timestamp 1:04:11

Ms. Farcasiu mentioned that the next meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee is scheduled for Tuesday, April 23, 2024. This meeting will be longer than usual, and it is strongly recommended that members attend in person.

Resolution No. AAC-004-2024

Moved by Claire Smith

Seconded by Bill Steenkamer

THAT the meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee adjourn at 10:05 a.m.

CARRIED

All of which is respectfully submitted this 24th day of October, 2024.