



## COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

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March 23, 2023

Mayor Shawn Watters  
Township of Centre Wellington  
1 MacDonald Square  
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Dear Mayor Watters,

I hope this letter finds you well, and that you are enjoying this new term of Council. As the new Chair of the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) I have been working with County staff to update the composition and role of the AAC to improve the representation of the seven member municipalities on the committee.

As you may know, the AAC was first created under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2001 (ODA) and continued under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005 (AODA). Both Acts enabled two or more municipalities to work together and establish a Joint AAC instead of each municipality establishing their own. Following the well-established pattern in Wellington of joining together to meet our mutual obligations, the Joint AAC was formed under the ODA 2001. The original Terms of Reference created a 12-member committee, with one member appointed by each local municipality; and five (5) members appointed by the County. This eventually transitioned to all twelve (12) members being appointed by the County. For several years this structure worked well to complete numerous initiatives such as the development and adoption of the Facility Accessibility Design Manual (FADM) for all Municipally owned buildings in the County of Wellington. Which prevented the creation of barriers in major renovations and new construction projects. The AAC also acknowledged that enhanced accessibility is a benefit to more than just people living with a disability, so the AAC championed the establishment of the Accessibility Incentive Fund Programme to support member municipalities that improve the accessibility of municipal facilities for everyone's benefit. In addition, in 2016 the County was honoured to receive the David C. Onley Award for Leadership in Accessibility, recognizing the County as a role model in the promotion of accessibility for people with disabilities.

However, while Provincial legislation has continued to develop, the AAC's Terms of Reference have remained largely unchanged. For example, the initial structure was ideal for a committee obligated to establish a set of County wide accessibility standards but under the AODA 2005 the province began the process of creating Province wide standards that are to be fully implemented by 2025. As those standards were being developed, we were proud that our facility Design Manual was used by the Province as a foundation for creating the new Provincial Built Environment Standard. We were also proud that members of our AAC serve on Provincial committees to aid in the development of other Provincial Accessibility Standards. So, while the initial structure of our AAC served us well in these achievements, the development and ultimate implementation of the various Provincial Accessibility Standards, has fundamentally changed the role that the AAC should play in service to the municipalities that the joint AAC represents.

The core function of the committee will continue to be focused on advising all Member Municipal Councils on the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers, but at the same time the revised terms of reference will enable the AAC to serve as a resource for municipal staff from all the municipalities represented by the committee. Our staff need a place where they can ask questions, seek solutions, and learn from each other as well as from people living and working with a disability. So, I am asking for your support as we update the Committees Terms of Reference to equitably distribute membership between all eight municipalities and strengthen the connection between the AAC, local staff and local Councils.

To accomplish this, each of the member municipalities and the County will be asked to adopt the revised Terms of Reference for the Joint AAC, and over time each municipal council will be asked to appoint one member to the Joint AAC as vacancies occur. Since the AODA requires that a majority of the committee members are persons with a disability; each municipality will be encouraged to appoint a resident that is living with a disability. Each municipality will also be asked to assign one staff member to attend the AAC's meetings to provide advice and local knowledge on the issues. The committee currently schedules four meetings a year in Aboyne but is only required to meet at least once per year. It has been the committees practice to only meet if there is business to discuss and I expect that this practice will continue.

County staff will continue to provide administrative support for the meetings, and offer input based on their previous experience with the AAC. The County will also continue to provide the appointed members a per diem and compensation for transportation to the meetings.

While this transition will reduce the number of members appointed to the committee from twelve (12) down to eight (8), I would like to confirm that our objective is not to dismiss any current member from their current role on the AAC but rather to set a course to take advantage of the normal ebb and flow of members to work towards a committee where each of the eight municipalities has equal representation at the AAC table.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns with this plan of action, please feel free to contact me directly at 226-962-7722 or [matthewb@wellington.ca](mailto:matthewb@wellington.ca)

Yours truly,

*Matthew*

Matthew Bulmer  
Chair of the AAC  
County Councillor Ward 7

cc: Warden Lennox  
attached: Draft Revised ACC Terms of Reference, pending Council Approval March 30, 2023