



Durham Region Accessibility Advisory Committee

Terms of Reference

May 2026

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To provide advice to Regional Council on the preparation, implementation and review of its annual accessibility plan and other accessibility related issues within the Region to reduce and prevent barriers to inclusion and promote full participation for all Durham Region residents and visitors.

2. Mandate

- 2.1 The Durham Region Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) is a volunteer Advisory Committee established by Regional Council in accordance with the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA 2001) and these Terms of Reference.
- 2.2 The Terms of Reference provide for the AAC to advise and assist the Region in the development of an annual accessibility plan(s), Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and for the AAC to be proactive and advise on matters identified on its own initiative, provided it satisfies the requirements under the ODA 2001.
- 2.3 Issues, barriers and concerns faced by people with disabilities may be referred to the AAC from Regional Council. The AAC will report to Regional Council through the Finance and Administration Committee, under the purview of the Chief Administrative Officer, on substantive matters as determined by the requirements of the ODA 2001, and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

3. Scope of activities

- 3.1 The scope of the AAC will include the following activities:
 - a) participating in the annual development of the Region's Accessibility Plan(s) which is intended to improve the quality of life for all Regional citizens, including people with disabilities;
 - b) advising the Region on the implementation and effectiveness of its annual Accessibility Plan(s) to ensure that it addresses the identification, removal and prevention of physical and non-physical barriers to people with disabilities in the Regional by-laws, and all its policies, programs, practices and services;
 - c) selecting and reviewing in a timely manner the site plans and drawings for new development, described in section 41 of The Planning Act;

- d) reviewing and monitoring websites, forms, documents and any relevant content produced for public consumption;
- e) reviewing and monitoring existing and proposed procurement policies of the Region for the purpose of providing advice with respect to the accessibility for people with disabilities to the goods or services being procured;
- f) reviewing access for people with disabilities to buildings, structures and premises (or parts thereof) that the Region purchases, constructs, significantly renovates, leases or funds; and
- g) The AAC will also have sub-committees/working groups responsible for specific business areas or projects decided by the committee, such as education and transit.

4. Composition

- 4.1 The AAC will be comprised of up to eleven members in total. The majority of members shall be people with a disability as defined by the ODA 2001. Voluntary disclosure of a person's social identity, including disability, gender, family status and ethnicity or race is included in the application form. An eleven-person committee may typically be comprised as follows:
- a) At least six members shall be persons with disabilities. These Committee members shall represent diverse identities and different types of visible and invisible disabilities noted in the ODA 2001;
 - b) Five members shall be persons who may not have a disability. These members shall be comprised of:
 - one member of Regional Council,
 - two citizen members of which one member shall be a family member of a disabled person, and
 - two members who are professionals from the stakeholder community.
- 4.2 Membership shall be a 4-year term corresponding with the term of Regional Council. However, citizen members shall continue to serve until their replacements are appointed by Regional Council. If a member chooses to resign, the Region will seek a replacement in accordance with Section 5.
- 4.3 At the discretion of the AAC, non-attendance at three consecutive meetings will be sufficient grounds for replacement.
- 4.4 The AAC shall strive to maintain a high level of relevant technical expertise and competence in disability issues within its membership.

- 4.5 The AAC may establish subcommittees and ad hoc working groups as deemed necessary to address specific issues; noting that secretariat services will not be provided to these teams/groups. These subcommittees/working groups shall draw upon members from the AAC as well as staff support/outside resources as deemed necessary. The Chair of a subcommittee/working group shall be a voting member of the AAC. The purpose of a subcommittee/working group shall be to make recommendations on a particular issue to the AAC or to assist with the implementation of an assigned project.

5. Membership selection

- 5.1 Durham Region will place an open call for individuals interested in appointment to the AAC, in accordance with the Public Appointments Policy. Interested individuals will be required to submit a completed application form to the Regional Clerk outlining their interest and qualifications.
- 5.2 The CAO's office shall contact appropriate agencies and community organizations and invite individuals to volunteer for the AAC. Interested individuals will be required to submit an application form to the Regional Clerk and provide a brief resume outlining their interest and qualifications.
- 5.3 The CAO's office will review the applications received. Qualified applicants will be interviewed by a panel of Regional staff in the CAO's office and will recommend individuals for appointment to the AAC. Members shall be chosen for their special expertise, experience, dedication and commitment to the mandate of the Committee. Preference will be given to people who have lived experience and knowledge of accessibility matters, including accessibility legislation and disability awareness.
- 5.4 All members of the AAC shall be appointed by the Finance and Administration Committee and Regional Council.
- 5.5 Regional Council shall appoint a representative and an alternate to the AAC from the members of the Finance and Administration Committee.
- 5.6 In the case of a vacancy, the approach described in Section 5 will generally be followed.
- 5.7 Any resignations will be submitted to the Accessibility Coordinator and/or the Committee Clerk.

6. Officers

- 6.1 A chair and a vice-chair will be elected annually by the membership of the AAC. The Committee Clerk will chair the inaugural AAC meeting for the voting process.

7. Support services

- 7.1 The Region's CAO's Office liaison or the Accessibility Coordinator shall serve as staff liaison to the AAC. The staff liaison will provide administrative, procedural and technical support to the AAC and will utilize the staff support group noted in Section 7.2 as deemed necessary.
- 7.2 If required, a staff group of accessibility champions/ambassadors/allies will provide support to the AAC on an as needed basis.
- 7.3 The staff liaison or Accessibility Coordinator will co-ordinate all requests for advice from the AAC, through meeting agendas. AAC responses to such requests shall be coordinated by the staff liaison or Accessibility Coordinator through the Finance and Administration Committee to Regional Council.
- 7.4 The Region will provide secretarial and other support services. Regional Council will provide a budget to cover the operational expenses of the AAC and this budget will be administered by the CAO's office.
- 7.5 The staff liaison or Accessibility Coordinator may circulate content to members through alternative means (email or on MS Teams) in order to obtain informal feedback for that particular item, especially those items that are time-sensitive in nature.

8. Meetings

- 8.1 The AAC will establish a meeting schedule at its inaugural meeting, taking into account the business needs and the schedule of Regional Council and the Finance and Administration Committee. Special meetings may be held at the call of the Chair.
- 8.2 Regularly scheduled meetings will be held at Regional Headquarters, unless otherwise stated. Meetings may be held in an electronic or hybrid meeting format with electronic and in-person participation. Individuals may participate electronically using an approved platform.
- 8.3 All meetings will be open to the public, unless otherwise determined in accordance with the Municipal Act. As a formal Advisory Committee to the Region, the AAC is subject to the Regional Procedural By-law, unless otherwise specified in the Terms of Reference.
- 8.4 A quorum for AAC meetings shall be a majority of the sitting members.

- 8.5 If a quorum is not present within fifteen (15) minutes after the time appointed for a meeting, the Clerk or their designate shall record the names of the Members present and the meeting shall stand adjourned until the date of the next regular meeting or special meeting called in accordance with the Terms of Reference.
- 8.6 Members shall inform the staff liaison in advance of all planned absences, late arrivals, and early departures from a meeting, with as much notice as possible.
- 8.7 An agenda package, including accessible meeting materials and previous meeting minutes will be shared with the committee members one week in advance of the meeting date.
- 8.8 The Committee may participate in meetings with the Accessibility Advisory Committees (AACs) of surrounding area municipalities at a frequency mutually established by all committees. The purpose of such meetings shall be to share best practices and enhance cross-border collaboration.
- 8.9 Members shall be responsible for reviewing all materials sent by the CAO's Office or Committee Chair and respond in a timely manner to ensure the business of the Committee is not delayed. All communication should always be provided in an accessible format.
- 8.10 Community and organizational members of the AAC will be compensated for their time and work. Each member will be paid \$75.00 per meeting (attendance is a requirement for this compensation) and an hourly rate of \$25.00 for travel time and work outside of the scheduled meetings that has been pre-approved by Durham's Director, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Reimbursement will occur twice a year, in May and in November, up to a maximum of \$600 per member per year.

9. Delegations at committee meetings

- 9.1 Any person(s) wishing to appear before the AAC as a delegate must submit a request to the staff liaison in the CAO's office/Accessibility Coordinator and/or the Legislative Services Division/Committee Clerk, advising of the topic or item to which they wish to speak. All requests for delegations must be received at least two weeks prior to the meeting to ensure that the delegation is included in the agenda. Any person wishing to address the AAC as a delegate, who has not previously arranged to do so, may be granted permission to do so only by Committee resolution.

9.2 Only one spokesperson at a time per group/organization shall be permitted to speak on a matter. Individuals shall be limited to speak for no more than 10 minutes. A five-minute extension to speak may be decided, without debate, by a majority of committee members present.

9.3 Members shall be permitted to ask questions of delegate(s) but shall not make statements to enter into debate with the delegate(s).

10. Minutes and agenda

10.1 The minutes of each AAC meeting will be submitted for approval at the next regular meeting. Unapproved minutes will be circulated to members of Regional Council as part of the Council Information Package (CIP) prepared by the Regional Clerk.

10.2 The AAC agendas will be prepared by the staff liaison/Accessibility Coordinator and/or the Legislative Services Division/Committee Clerk, with input from the AAC chair or vice-chair, and AAC members. Agendas will be distributed the week prior to upcoming meetings.

10.3 Staff liaisons and/or those staff and committee members with a forecasted agenda item shall submit agenda content to the staff liaison/Accessibility Coordinator and/or the Legislative Services Division/Committee Clerk by no later than noon, two weeks prior to the scheduled meeting date.

11. Committee resolutions

11.1 The AAC will seek to achieve consensus on decisions. Recommendations are 'carried' if supported by a majority unless otherwise specified in these Terms of Reference or Regional Council Rules of Procedure. Only resolutions as they appear in the adopted Minutes may be considered as officially representing the position of the AAC.

12. Annual reports and workplan

12.1 An annual workplan with an estimate of the resources necessary and any suggested revisions to the Terms of Reference for the coming year shall also be prepared by the AAC for consideration and approval by the Finance and Administration Committee and Regional Council. To avoid duplication, the AAC shall ensure that the workplan is coordinated with other disability initiatives in the Region.

12.2 An annual review of the AAC by the Chief Administrative Officer, on behalf of Regional Council, will be completed to evaluate the effectiveness of the Committee and to ensure continued improvements.

13. Rules of order

13.1 Members are encouraged to ask questions, engage in discussion and share feedback following presentations and delegations. The Committee Chair shall maintain order and decorum during the meeting and decide the order of questions.

13.2 Members shall indicate to the Chair their desire to speak and wait to be acknowledged by the Chair before speaking.

13.3 A conflict of interest may arise for Committee members when their personal business interests conflict with the duties and decisions of the Committee. Municipal conflict of interest requirements as defined by the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act will apply to the Committee.

13.4 Members who have declared an interest on any matter may not move, participate in the discussion, or vote on the matter or attempt to influence others on the matter.

13.5 Any member asked to speak publicly to an organization or professional association as a member of the Durham Region Accessibility Advisory Committee must notify the CAO's Office liaison or Accessibility Coordinator prior to accepting the request.

13.6 Any member who is approached by the media will refer all inquiries to the Region's CAO's Office liaison or Accessibility Coordinator who will defer to the Communications and Engagement department.

13.7 Members shall not approach the media on behalf of the Committee. If they are expressing personal views these must be clearly stated as such and that they do not represent the views of the Committee. As active members of the AAC, personal views expressed publicly cannot be contradictory to the mission and mandate of the AAC.

13.8 Any member will not use their personal email, social media accounts or other modes of communication to represent the opinions or policies of the Region.