

# COMMITTEE REPORT TO COUNCIL

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**DATE:** February 4, 2021

**TO:** MAYOR AND COUNCIL

**NAME AND TITLE:** Chris Gobbi, Chair, Advisory Committee on Accessibility

**SUBJECT:** Advisory Committee on Accessibility 2020 Annual Report

**ATTACHMENT(S):** Advisory Committee on Accessibility 2020 Work Plan  
Advisory Committee on Accessibility 2021 Work Plan  
Terms of Reference for Advisory Committee on Accessibility

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Council:

1. APPROVES the Advisory Committee on Accessibility 2021 Work Plan attached to the report dated February 4, 2021 from the Chair of the Advisory Committee on Accessibility; and,
2. RECEIVES FOR INFORMATION the report dated February 4, 2021 from the Chair of the Advisory Committee on Accessibility titled "Advisory Committee on Accessibility 2020 Annual Report."

## PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to update Council on the activities and achievements of the Advisory Committee on Accessibility, as well as provide the Committee's proposed 2021 work plan for Council's consideration.

## BACKGROUND:

The Advisory Committee on Accessibility is a Committee of Council with a mandate to advise Mayor and Council, and City Staff on the identification, removal and prevention of physical and social barriers, which impede the full participation of all citizens in every aspect of community life. The Committee is guided by the Advisory Committee on Accessibility Terms of Reference.

## WORK OF COMMITTEE DURING 2020:

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, on March 24, 2020 all council committees were suspended from meeting. Prior to Council approving the use of electronic participation in council committee meetings at their December 7, 2020 regular Council meeting, the Committee only met once, on November 26, 2020. Thereafter, regular monthly meetings resumed.

The lack of regular meetings throughout the 2020 term severely limited the ability of the Committee to enact the approved 2020 work plan. This has resulted in many items being deferred to the 2021 work plan.

In the limited meetings that have been held, the Committee continued to provide comment and feedback on Accessibility improvements to Civic Facilities and Parks including Masich Place and Forests of the World.

On July 30, 2020, members of the Committee toured Masich Place and provided comments and recommendations for further enhancements to the Accessibility improvements underway for that facility.

The Committee continued to have discussions with City Staff regarding pedestrian safety and access during construction and road closures. This continuing issue was to be a focus in 2020, but the lack of regular meetings and changes to City Staff prevented significant progress. This item will continue to be a focus in 2021.

#### OVERVIEW OF 2021 WORK PLAN:

Attached to this report is a copy of the proposed 2021 work plan. As in previous years, much of the work of the Committee is continuous and ongoing in nature. This is reflected in a large amount of the 2020 work plan carrying over into 2021.

As mentioned in the previous section, a priority focus for the Committee in 2021 will be continuing to work with Administration to address ongoing issues surrounding pedestrian safety around construction sites, both for City projects and private development.

The Committee will continue to advise on the accessibility of City-lead development and projects. While progress has been made in past years, the new downtown pool and library entrance being notable examples, the lack of accessibility in the new downtown parking facility on 6<sup>th</sup> avenue reveal that much work is still to be done in ensuring that new facilities are truly accessible to all.

In 2021, the Committee plans to establish working groups to focus on specific areas of the work plan. Specifically, to develop education and outreach materials, explore virtual engagement opportunities in light of the likelihood of continued restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and to thoroughly review and propose amendments to the Terms of Reference.

#### STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

The work of the Advisory Committee on Accessibility aligns with the Council Priority to *Make Prince George accessible and enjoyable for everyone, regardless of their age or ability.*

#### TERMS OF REFERENCE:

The Committee is not proposing any changes to their Terms of Reference at this time.

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:

The Advisory Committee on Accessibility is tasked with aiding in the removal of physical and social barriers, which impede full participation of all citizens in every aspect of community life. The last few years have seen the committee continue to form relationships with different departments within the City and be given the opportunity to have input into most City projects planning and development processes. 2020 was a challenging year for the committee as we are sure it was for the entire city. The Committee was unable to meet for most of 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions associated with it. Due to these

unprecedented times we have decided to carry most of our 2020 work plan forward to 2021 with some changes to wording and a few additions. The committee, even with the limited meetings, had a few things they wanted to highlight. We were very excited to see the main entrance to the Public Library and the new Downtown Fire Hall completed during the year as well as the ground breaking ceremony for the new pool. The Accessibility Committee had amazing opportunities for input into all of these projects and it is exciting to see them coming to fruition. The Accessibility Committee was also given the opportunity to tour Masich Place on July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020 in order to provide comments and suggestions during the construction process. We are happy to report that at a recent meeting we were shown the completed project, which had most if not all of our recommendations implemented.

As much as these types of projects show the inroads City Staff, Mayor and Council, and the committee have made over the past years; there is still reason for concern about accessibility in city owned properties, which was recently highlighted to us in a review of the new 6<sup>th</sup> Ave Parkade. The parkade has zero (0) accessible parking stalls on the top level, no way to exit the parking lot currently without using stairs, and other major accessibility deficiencies. Unfortunately this project never came before this committee at any stage due to the type of project. This shows us there is still much work to do to ensure all city owned properties are designed and developed using an Accessibility lens.

The Advisory Committee on Accessibility is normally able to provide input on private development through its representation on the Advisory Committee on Development and Design. While this work was severely limited in 2020 due to the ongoing pandemic, our committee still has a representative sitting on the Advisory Committee on Development and Design and is looking forward to continuing to provide input through these meetings in the future.

The Advisory Committee on Accessibility also has a representative on the recently formed Select Committee on Poverty Reduction. This committee did continue to meet in a workshop format over the last year and our representative on the committee provided an update on the work they have done over the past year at our meeting on January 7, 2021.

The Committee looks forward to continuing its work of removing barriers for all citizens in the City of Prince George. In the challenging year of 2020 we continued to see a strong focus from Mayor and Council on improving accessibility in our community. As previously mentioned no matter how far we have come there is always still room to improve and we all look forward to working with City staff and Mayor and Council moving forward as we continue to strive towards the shared goal of an inclusive, equitable and barrier free Prince George.

**RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:**

Chris Gobbi, Chair Advisory Committee on Accessibility

**APPROVED:**

Walter Babicz, Acting City Manager

Meeting Date: 2021/03/08