

**Subject:** Resignation from The Accessibility Advisory Committee

Following the recent attention the resignation of Jacqueline Madden from the Accessibility Advisory Committee has garnered, I have felt compelled to reassess my continued involvement as well. While initially willing to wait for committee work to resume, the response from the City, and notably the Clerk's office, suggests such a resumption is unlikely in the near future. I am further concerned by the formal complaint against the City that it is in violation of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). I believe Jackie's claim of a breach of the AODA is accurate, and I cannot, in good conscience, continue to be associated with the committee. It is a disappointing end to over 10 years of service on this Advisory Committee (as well as a number of other roles within the City) during which time my commitment and dedication to our community has never wavered, not missing a single meeting in that time. Regrettably, as Jackie also stated, I will be looking at alternate ways to support the 1 in 7 citizens who have a disability. I am not leaving in spite, or in anger, but in an effort to continue to support the community. I am hoping my departure will be cause to take note. I want to highlight a few points that I hope the city will give consideration:

The AODA mandates the existence of an Accessibility Advisory Committee, and further clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the committee (and duties of Council). Most notably, the advisory committee is mandated to "advise the Council about the requirements and implementation of accessibility standards". In other words, any action undertaken by the city to comply with the accessibility timelines established in the AODA must be brought to ACCAC.

Council is further required under the legislation to consult with ACCAC on various other aspects of municipal functioning. Council and the City have had no communication with ACCAC since it's last meeting in February, making it impossible to have fulfilled any of these legislated responsibilities.

I want to **strongly caution** members of Council, the Mayor, the City Manager, and the City Clerk that should the complaint against the City for failure to uphold the AODA be success, any or all of you could be found personally liable and be subject to fines of up to \$50,000 per day, per identified infraction. I implore you to take heed and ensure you are acting in both the spirit and the letter of the legislation.

The Clerk's office has publicly stated a meeting of ACCAC would be called if it were legislatively required. Apart from my belief the legislated requirements set out in AODA should meet this threshold, the city's own legislated Advisory Committee bylaw would seem to require a meeting be called, stating Advisory Committees are "to provide recommendations, advice and information to the Municipal Council on those specialized matters which relate to the purpose of the Advisory Committee, to facilitate public input to City Council on programs and ideas and to assist in enhancing the quality of life of the community". The handling of the pandemic, and any efforts to safely reopen services, would certainly fall within the scope of 'enhancing quality of life'.

Throughout the continuing review of Advisory Committees some have questioned the role advisory committees play, their usefulness, etc. As a long standing volunteer of more than one advisory committee (I previously served on TAC as well), this is disheartening. When allowed to work, we provide options for consideration by Council, at times eliminating the need for municipal staff to spend valuable time researching and

preparing reports. This would seem to suggest a savings exists by supporting and taking note of the work done by a dedicated group of volunteers. Over the years, I have seen ACCAC work collaboratively with many other Advisory Committees within the City (EEPAC, LACH, AWAC, TAC, and DIAAC). I've seen the city make great strides forward, becoming a more diverse, inclusive and accessible community for all. I believe all advisory committee volunteers, past and present, take pride in knowing they played a role.

In closing I want to acknowledge the great work of a number of staff, Councillors, volunteers and the public in the work so many undertake to make London a better place for all. Special recognition has to be given to Melanie Stone for her continued support to our community. I have had the privilege to work with four Councils, Five Mayors, numerous staff, and upwards of a hundred volunteers over the years. When given the chance, when working together, we can achieve great things for everyone.

Michael Dawthorne