

To - Council and Mayor

From - Therese Hutchinson; Sherwood Forest/Orchard Park Delegate to CWC, March 15, 2021

RE: Due Process for Citizen Engagement in Modern Street Design

Honourable Mayor and Members,

I was a delegate at the March 15 meeting where I and every other delegate who came to present concerns about the proposed works were treated with a gross level of unprofessional disrespect, and failure by the Chair of the Civic Works Committee to stem the behaviour.

The Chair of the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) who was given first speaking position focused their presentation on publicly disparaging me and 300+ of my neighbours among others, by labelling us as "ABLISTS". That is, derogatorily saying that we are small minded, bigoted people who want to attain advantage by actively disadvantaging people with disabilities. There was a disclaimer that not every one of us is, but that most of us are -'ABLISTS', including the several delegates who have disabilities visible and invisible who also do not support a default sidewalk policy.

This public proclamation is so wrong, so unprofessional and so cruel that it is incomprehensible that it could come from a civic committee, and that it was not moderated in the public forum. Demeaning and disparaging delegates who have worked hard to succinctly and respectfully present their concerns to the Works Committee was unprofessional and unwarranted. One would expect the Chair of the AAC, and the first speaker, to bring a substantive contribution to the debate; it was shocking that the presentation was merely egregious bullying and that the meeting was not better managed to prevent it.

That the AAC has endorsed a failing policy is their problem, not our fault. Not only am I and my neighbours not 'ABLISTS' but we have reached out to the AAC Chair several times prior to the meeting to ask how we might collaborate to integrate modern accessibility features into our neighbourhood. The Chairperson has stated that the pro-sidewalk (ribbon of concrete) position having been endorsed is now politically inconvenient thus immutable. That is a flexibility problem coming from that stakeholder group, not ABLISM coming from this one.

The Civic Works meeting was not a receptive environment for citizens to comment on the proposed works. We are good citizens and good neighbours who deserve to be recognized. We are entitled to engage in good faith in the democratic process, without being labelled, disparaged and dismissed.

I ask that you please give us due process and consideration of our well-considered and legitimate requests for modern, sensitive street design that is actually in line with City priorities.

Humbly,

Therese Hutchinson.