

# Staff Report

Community Services Department



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**REPORT TO:** Grand River Accesibility Advisory Committee

**DATE OF MEETING:** April 24, 2025

**SUBMITTED BY:** LoriAnn Palubeski, Manager Program & Resource Services, 519-783-8058

**PREPARED BY:** LoriAnn Palubeski, Manager Program & Resource Services, 519-783-8058

**WARD(S) INVOLVED:** N/A

**DATE OF REPORT:** March 28, 2025

**REPORT NO.:** CSD-2025-181

**SUBJECT:** 2025 Terms of Reference Review – Summary of Committee Feedback

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## RECOMMENDATION:

That the Terms of Reference identified as ‘Attachment A’ of Community Services Department report CSD-2025-181 be approved and forwarded to all of the participating municipalities Council’s for adoption.

## REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The purpose of this report is to summarize the discussion that was had at the March 27<sup>th</sup> 2025 Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting (GRAAC) and share the changes that have been incorporated into the draft since that meeting.
- This report supports the delivery of core services.

## REPORT:

At the March GRAAC meeting, staff presented the draft Terms of Reference for committee feedback and comment. A copy of the draft, as well as the current version, was distributed with the March agenda package for the committee’s review prior to the meeting.

Staff provided a summary of the updates which included:

- Grammatical changes and the use of plain language
- Additional definitions
- Clarifying Committee Membership
- Standardizing the Committee Term to match the term of Council
- Committee Appointment Process
- Clarifying Meeting format
- Committee Honourariums and Reimbursement

Staff prepared the following based on the discussion and questions received at the meeting:

\*\*\* This information is available in accessible formats upon request. \*\*\*  
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### **Kitchener as the Coordinating Municipality:**

Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee (GRAAC) was established 20 years ago and since its inception, Kitchener has been serving as the municipal lead (coordinating municipality) for the Committee. Prior to the commencement of the Terms of Reference review in June 2024, it was raised with the staff coordinating committee and unanimously reaffirmed that Kitchener should continue to serve as the municipal lead (coordinating municipality) for the GRAAC. The AODA requires that each municipality have an accessibility committee but does also allow for multiple municipalities to strike a “joint” committee to address their legislated compliance. While the Committee is administered by Kitchener, there is oversight by all of the participating municipalities Council’s, participation in the joint committee is voluntary and to date has been seen as a benefit by all municipalities who participate.

### **City of Cambridge Participation:**

At the March GRAAC Committee meeting questions were raised about the City of Cambridge and their participation in the joint Committee. Staff reached out to Clerk’s staff in Cambridge in the Fall of 2024 to determine if there may be interest in joining the Committee. Cambridge staff advised that their committee was very active, and they could not speak to future interest in joining GRAAC at that time. They noted they would be interested in following along with the Terms of Reference review process and would be willing to have further discussions in 2026 when they conduct a governance review of all of their committees prior to the new term of Council. Kitchener committed to keeping them up to date on the progress of the Terms of Reference review and advised if pending their review, they were potentially interested in joining, efforts would be made to support that transition. As previously noted, there is a legislated requirement under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) to have an accessibility committee, but it is voluntary to participate in a joint committee, a decision that is based on the willingness of Council and staff to confirm that the legislated requirements are being adequately addressed.

### **Sub-Committees:**

Questions were raised about the use of sub-committees and the potential for the Committee to establish a sub-committee to address work that may be larger in scope and unable to be completed by the Committee as a Whole and within the time constraints of the monthly meetings. The comments raised were fair and an additional section has been included within the draft Terms of Reference to allow for the creation of sub-committees, pending consultation with staff that they are within the Committees scope and that staff would be able to assist in providing additional staff resources if needed.

### **Amendments made to the Terms of Reference:**

At the March meeting, several smaller amendments were requested, including the addition of definitions for intersectionality and decolonialization. With support from the Equity Team in Kitchener, the definition of intersectionality has been added to the Terms of Reference. However, after further consideration, it was determined that decolonialization falls outside the scope of the legislated requirements of the AODA (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act).

### **Confirming the Process with regards to the Nominating Committee:**

To help clarify the differences between the current appointment process and proposed appointment process, staff have prepared the chart below:

Current Appointment Process	Proposed Process
<p>Open Recruitment</p> <p>Applications forwarded to the Staff Coordination Committee through the Committee Administrator (Kitchener)</p>	<p>Open Recruitment</p> <p>Applications are forwarded to the Nominating Committee (Kitchener), plus the addition of an accessibility individual/professional who will consider the applications</p>
<p>Staff Coordination Group – Reviews Applications using a scoring card, based on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GRAAC experience;</li> <li>• Person with a disability;</li> <li>• Caregiver of a person with a disability;</li> <li>• Knowledge of barrier free initiatives and accessibility issues in the community;</li> <li>• Represent a racialized or marginalized population;</li> <li>• Ability to commit to the volunteer time;</li> <li>• Place of residency; and,</li> <li>• References</li> </ul>	<p>Nominating Committee would review the applications using a scoring card, based on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum Qualifications;</li> <li>• Committee-specific Qualifications (Including consideration for a broad range of disability representation);</li> <li>• Lived Experience;</li> <li>• Demographic Data (gender equity, racialized or marginalized population);</li> <li>• Place of Residency; and,</li> <li>• Participating Municipality representation</li> </ul>
<p>The Staff Coordinating Committee would make recommendation for appointment. <i>(previously reference checks were conducted, this process was eliminated in 2024)</i></p>	<p>The Nominating Committee would make recommendation for the slate of members to be appointments</p>
<p>The full slate of names would be forwarded to all of the participating municipalities for appointment</p>	<p>Staff would provide a covering memo that would include the full committee list for appointment to all of the participating municipalities.</p> <p>The Memo would include additional information related to the recommended appointment for each municipality (i.e. summarize the names that are being recommended for appointment for Woolwich as an example)</p>
<p>The participating Councils are requested to approve the slate of ALL candidates.</p>	<p>For any participating municipality that is being recommended for member appointment, those applications, as well as any applications for individuals not being recommended (who reside in their municipality) for appointment would be shared with the participating municipalities. (e.g. 5 people who applied reside in Kitchener, only 2 people were recommended for appointment, Kitchener Council would get to see all 5 applications)</p> <p>Each of the participating municipalities, likely through a closed session, would have the opportunity to review the applications and confirm proceed with their standard appointment process if preferred. (i.e. share those applications with Member of Council in</p>

	<p>Closed Session for review and to complete the appointment process)</p> <p>If the participating municipality wished to substitute an individual recommended for appointment, they would have the opportunity to do so at this time.</p>
<p>Kitchener to ensure all those individuals who were appointment are advised of their membership on the Committee and will be included in all correspondence related to the Committee and the Committee meetings would commence.</p>	<p>Each of the Participating Municipal Councils would then confirm and approve their appointments at an open session meeting.</p>
	<p>The approvals would then be forwarded back to Kitchener to ensure all those individuals who were appointment are advised of their membership on the Committee and will be included in all correspondence related to the Committee and the Committee meetings would commence.</p>

This process was discussed by the participating municipalities and while full consensus was not achieved, there was agreement that the majority of municipalities would be willing to pilot the appointment process as proposed and further acknowledged that the Council's of the participating municipalities would actually have greater participation in the appointment of the members who will act as representatives for their municipalities on the Committee. While the Nominating Committee may make a recommendation for a member's appointment, if it was the will of the participating municipalities interest to approve an alternative appointment, it would be in their ability to do so.

Staff are pleased to present an updated Terms of Reference for the Committee's approval. The updated document provides clarity around the Committee's mandate and purpose and reflects the unique nature of GRAAC as a joint committee. Following the Committee's approval the Terms of Reference will be forwarded to all of the participating municipalities Council's for final approval.

**STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:**

This report supports the delivery of core services.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:**

**INFORM** – This report has been posted to the City's website with the agenda in advance of the council / committee meeting.

**CONSULT** – The Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting (GRAAC) was provided a draft of the proposed Terms of Reference to provide feedback on and discuss. The feedback from that meeting was received and the Terms of Reference was amended based on that feedback, the attachment included with this report is the revised document.

COLLABORATE – The staff working group for Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting (GRAAC) conducted two working group meetings starting in October 2024 to review the draft Terms of Reference. Feedback was received and incorporated as requested. Following those meetings, the Chief Administrative Officers of each of the participating municipalities were further consulted on the Terms of Reference, including the Committee Appointment process and proposed honourariums. The feedback from that engagement has also been incorporated into the draft Terms of Reference that was presented to GRAAC at the March 2025 Committee meeting. Feedback from the Committee was received and the matter was being brought forward at the April GRAAC meeting for further consideration. Following the Committee’s approval the approved Terms of Reference is due to be forwarded to all of the participating municipalities for Council consideration and adoption.

**PREVIOUS REPORTS/AUTHORITIES:**

- *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*