

## Profile: City of Kingston's Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee

(B.Kaplan; Nov.16-09)

Under the *Ontarians with Disability Act, 2001 (ODA)*, all public sector organizations of 10,000 or more residents must establish an accessibility advisory committee. The City of Kingston's Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee (MAAC) advises Council on how to make the municipality more accessible to people with disabilities. The City of Kingston's MAAC has the following Terms of Reference:

- 1) To address the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to persons with disabilities in the municipality's by-laws and its policies, programs, practices and services.<sup>1</sup>
- 2) To review in a timely manner the site plans and drawings described in section 41 of the "Planning Act" that the MAAC selects (s.5a).
- 3) To facilitate audits of City-owned/leased buildings and properties to recommend appropriate barrier-free features and services modeled after Universal Design principles.
- 4) To communicate its recommendations to City Council.

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<sup>1</sup>The city's annual accessibility report-plan is the most visible direction given to the City concerning barrier identification and reduction. According to s.3 of the ODA, the annual accessibility plan will have the following components:

- A report on the measures the municipality has taken to identify, remove and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities;
- The measures in place to ensure that the municipality assesses its proposals for by-laws, policies, programs, practices and services to determine their effect on accessibility for persons with disabilities;
- A list of by-laws, policies, programs, practices and services that the municipality will review in the coming year in order to identify barriers to persons with disabilities;
- The measures that the municipality intends to take in the coming year to identify, remove and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities.

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- 5) Comment on, from an accessibility perspective, the drafts of plans of various City of Kingston projects, as determined by the MAAC, and using City of Kingston protocols.

In 2005, the McGuinty government introduced a second accessibility law - *the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act, 2005 (AODA)*. The AODA provides precise direction to public and, as a result of this new legislation, private sector organizations in the province, about how to become accessible. The AODA expands the authority for an MAAC to advise the municipality about specific accessibility issues in five areas: Customer Service, Information and Communications, Employment, Built Environment, and Transportation.

The City of Kingston's MAAC was established in 2003 with six members. The City of Kingston's MAAC currently includes fourteen volunteers from our community and a City Councillor representative. Members serve terms of one to three years. The majority of MAAC members have a visible or self-declared disability. MAAC plenary meetings are held monthly.

For information about some of the City's successes regarding accessibility, and for more information about the MAAC and municipal accessibility planning, visit:

<http://www.cityofkingston.ca/cityhall/committees/accessibility/index.asp>

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