



IDEA Regina
*(Individuals with Disabilities
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Councillor John Findura
City of Regina
2476 Victoria Avenue
PO Box 1790
Regina, SK Canada
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Dear Councillor Findura

Re: Accessibility Advisory Committee

Individual with Disabilities Equity Alliance of Regina (IDEA Regina) has followed with great interest the development of the Mayor's Task Force on Access (MTFA) and its recent transition into the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC). The City of Regina has an important role in assuring that each citizen who has a disability is able to live independently and be part of our city. Because we believe this and in order to assist the City in 2005 we developed the "I love Regina ...But!" campaign which was intended to bring attention to four key issues that impact the day-to-day life of Regina's citizens who have a disability.

- the need for a comprehensive plan for accessibility,
- a policy of enforcement of accessible parking,
- the city's plan for work force diversity,
- an improved accessible public transportation system.

We were pleased to see that the *I love Regina ...But!* campaign did assist the City as it included these issue in the terms of reference when it struck the Mayor's Task Force on Access (MTFA).

In 2009 IDEA Regina published *We love Regina ... but! 2009, Progress toward a more inclusive community*. In that paper we specifically examined the progress made on the items listed in the Task Force's term of reference, we concluded:

IDEA Regina is pleased to see that the City has acted on the issues and recommendations we raised during the last civic election. The striking of the Mayor Task Force on Accessibility with a mandate to "Supports the development and implementation of appropriate guiding principles, policies, program priorities and evaluation processes ..." was a positive step towards change.

IDEA Regina believes that it took longer than it ought to have to get the Task Force organized and addressing the issue set out for it, but that aside, some of the important questions have been raised (e.g. the discussions around including "accessibility impact" as part of all reports to Council,) and are being discussed. On other issues, like accessible parking, specific strategies have been developed and we are pleased that action may be taken in the near future.

IDEA Regina is not as encouraged by the work in the area of equity employment or workforce diversity. After many years of effort there has been no appreciable change and it is manifest to us that the City needs to engage in an in depth conversation with stakeholders, especially people in the disability community, in order to find out why what it has been doing does not work.

Finally we believe that the City must begin with dialogue with the disability community on the issue of a comprehensive plan that we hope will be based on the principles expressed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

With the transition to the Access Advisory Committee (AAC) and its new terms of reference and work plan we were concerned some progress of the last few years might be lost. As we review the new terms of reference we are pleased to see that is not necessarily the case.

An initiative begun under the MTFA was the introduction of the practice that recommendations to City Council should include a statement that identifies “Accessibility Implications”. We are pleased to see that this practice continues. In this regard our question is did the MTFA provide any guidance to the city’s administration to help the various departments and committee make an accurate assessment of accessibility implications?

In addition, has the AAC considered reviewing the adequacy of “accessibility implementation” statements as a way of monitoring adherence to the city’s accessibility policy? At a minimum this process would give the AAC a good idea about how well “accessibility implications” are understood.

With the new terms of reference we do not specifically see the two of the issues noted in the MTFA: employment diversity and a comprehensive plan for accessibility. Are these still on the table for the AAC?

With the question of employment diversity we have noted that little has happened in the last four or five years. We hope that the AAC can examine this issue and advise the city of the positive steps it can take to fulfill its commitments made through the Employment Equity Program.

For IDEA Regina the key issue is the development of a comprehensive plan for an accessible Regina. The MTFA mandate made specific reference to a plan and it had established, at least on paper, a sub-committee to look at the issue of a comprehensive

accessibility plan, will this initiative continue with the new terms of reference for the AAC?

The development of a comprehensive plan is the starting point for progress on all other issues of access and we hope that it is on the AAC's agenda. As you move forward we encourage you to look to the *United Nations Convention of on the Rights of Person who have a Disability*, particularly Article 9, for guidance in the development of a comprehensive plan. From our perspective accessibility needs to be part of all city strategic planning including "infrastructure".

IDEA Regina hopes that the AAC can provide leadership to engage the citizens of Regina, especially those who have a disability, to create a more accessible and inclusive Regina.

If you have any questions or need to discuss this further we would be please to meet with you and or representative of the AAC. We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours truly,

Doug Tratch
President
IDEA Regina

cc. Mr. Bill Gray, Chair
Accessibility Advisory Committee

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