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Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee
City Hall, Committee Room 1
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Committee Members,

Re: City of Toronto COVID-19 Response and Accessibility

The City of Toronto has undergone rapid changes, over the past three months, brought on by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the subsequent declaration of a State of Emergency. This situation is unprecedented, and the Emergency Operations Centre - led by Mayor Tory, Medical Officer of Health Eileen de Villa, and Toronto Fire Chief Matthew Pegg - has moved swiftly to bring forward new programs to safeguard public health and safety, and aid in economic recovery.

The need for accelerated, emergency action is understandable, however it must also be acknowledged that the Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee (TAAC) has a mandated role in providing advice to City staff, regarding policies, programs and services affecting people with disabilities. Several City of Toronto initiatives have come forward in recent weeks, which due to canceled meetings this Committee have not had an opportunity to review nor be consulted on. These initiatives include transportation programs such as ActiveTO, CurbTO and CafeTO. The City has also formed the new Office of Recovery and Rebuild, focussed on supporting economic resilience. People with disabilities contribute a unique perspective on transportation, use of public space, employment, and economic resilience. As such, TAAC must be meaningfully engaged in reviewing these new initiatives and allowed to provide critical advice, as our mandate requires.

As normal City business begins to resume, City staff will now have the opportunity to bring forward presentations for TAAC review. It is important, therefore, that this committee identify priorities, make recommendations to request presentations from specific City Divisions and programs of interest, and advocate to improve any service enhancement or change that will impact the city life of people living with disabilities.

KWT/lh

TAAC must continue to fulfil its mandate of ensuring that any new or existing programs or initiatives are able to receive advice that will enhance their inclusivity of people with disabilities. This is particularly important during this current time of social and economic upheaval, when historically disadvantaged groups are left particularly vulnerable.

Recommendations:

1. City Council direct the Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration, the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, and the Executive Director, Housing Secretariat on Community and Social Services to bring forward presentations on how the City is specifically supporting vulnerable people with disabilities in Toronto during and beyond COVID-19, to the September 24, 2020 meeting of the Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee.
2. City Council direct the General Manager, Transportation Services, to bring forward presentations on CurbTO, ActiveTO, CafeTO, and any other new transportation programs and initiatives to address COVID-19, to the September 24, 2020 meeting of the Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam

Chair, Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee
Ward 13, Toronto Centre