

Chair's Report Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee

July 3, 2020; 9:30am

Virtual Meeting

Chair's Report

- **Toronto Office of Recovery and Rebuild Presentation**
 - On April 24th, The City of Toronto established the Toronto Office of Recovery and Rebuild. The goals of the office are twofold: save livelihoods and live safely with COVID-19. The Toronto Office of Recovery and Rebuild is to be guided by several themes including, building preparedness through City divisions and agencies, resilience, equity, business and cultural development, and government and fiscal renewal. As these issues are relevant to the TAAC mandate, I have invited the Chief Recovery and Rebuild Officer to bring a presentation forward at today's meeting. Members will have the opportunity to learn about the recovery effort and provide feedback and advice.
- **ReelAbilities Toronto Film Festival**
 - The ReelAbilities Toronto Film Festival ran from May 20-24, this year. Artistic Director, and TAAC Member, Liv Mendelsohn worked hard to re-imagine the festival - in consideration of COVID-19 – and deliver a remarkable program. ReelAbilities Toronto is Canada's largest film festival showcasing disability and Deaf culture and narratives. It is 100% digital and entirely barrier-free. Over the past four years, ReelAbilities Toronto has launched programs alongside the festival in the spring of each year. Programs such as the ReelAccess Guide and the CBC-ReelAbilities Breaking Barriers Film Fund have helped build this Toronto festival into a mainstay of the city's disability and cinematic fabric. The ReelEducation program has brought films and lesson plans about equity and inclusion into 118 schools across the province, in 28 school boards.
- **Housing Now Initiative and Accessibility**
 - On June 15th, at the Planning and Housing Committee, I put forward an amendment aimed at increasing the number of accessible units and units featuring universal design elements, within the City of Toronto's Housing Now initiative. This amendment directs the Housing Secretariat to form a working group - comprised of accessibility stakeholder groups, and representatives from the construction and development industry - tasked with exploring the feasibility of expanding beyond the current accessible requirements. This amendment was generated through meetings I convened with the Accessible Housing Network and the Housing Secretariat. A report, on the findings of the working group, is due back to the Planning and Housing Committee in the 2nd quarter of 2021.

- **Persons with Disabilities Poverty Reduction Action Plan**
 - On June 22nd, the Executive Committee considered an item titled the Persons with Disabilities Poverty Reduction Action Plan. This agenda item was generated by a TAAC recommendation from our February 3, 2020 meeting, to create a specific action plan for people with disabilities, as part of the larger Poverty Reduction Strategy. The Executive Committee amended the TAAC recommendation, to read the following:

1. Requested the Deputy City Manager, Community and Social Services, to engage persons with disabilities while developing implementation plans for the 2019-2022 Poverty Reduction Strategy Action Plan activities to ensure that initiatives appropriately consider the specific experiences and barriers that persons with disabilities face, particularly within the context of the City's COVID 19 recovery and rebuild efforts, and to report back to the Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee in the fourth quarter of 2020 with the request that any recommendations arising from such consultations be forwarded to the 2021 Budget process.

Staff in the Social Development and Finance Administration have made a commitment to work through an iterative process with TAAC, including regular updates to the committee.

Flag Raisings and Proclamations

- **Easter Seals Month**
 - The City of Toronto proclaimed March as Easter Seals Month. Easter Seals provides programs and services to children and youth with physical disabilities, to help them lead fuller lives and help kids be kids, including fully accessible summer camps. It also provides families with funding for essential mobility and accessibility equipment so kids can enjoy greater independence and dignity. This year marks Easter Seals' 98th anniversary.
- **National Accessibility Week**
 - National Accessibility Week celebrates the contributions of people with disabilities and highlights and promotes inclusion and accessibility in our cities and communities. This is a week to recognize our progress and to be inspired to further break down accessibility barriers. An inclusive Toronto is one where all Torontonians can participate and have an equal opportunity to succeed in their workplaces and communities.

- **National DeafBlind Awareness Month**
 - **The City of Toronto proclaimed June as National DeafBlind Awareness Month. This month recognizes that deafblindness is a combination of sight and hearing impairment that affects how people communicate, access information and get around. It also acknowledges that with the appropriate supports, those who live with deafblindness can lead informed and meaningful lives. The hard work of support workers, including intervenors who supply sensory information to those living with deafblindness, helps provide what is needed to access information to lead safe independent lives. Mayor John Tory noted, that as we move to the recovery period from this pandemic, it is important to raise awareness and advocate on behalf of those people in our communities who live with deafblindness and renew our commitment to accessibility.**