

Options for the Public Appointments Process for the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee

Date: February 22, 2022

To: Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee

From: City Clerk

Wards: All

SUMMARY

This report presents options for the public appointments process for the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee for the 2022-2026 Council Term. It has been prepared in consultation with the Indigenous Affairs Office and the City Manager's Office.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Clerk recommends that:

1. The Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting held October 1 and 4, 2021, City Council requested the City Clerk, in consultation with the Indigenous Affairs Office and the City Manager's Office, to report to the first meeting in 2022 of the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee on options for a revised public appointments process for the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee for the 2022-2026 Council Term:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.EX26.10>.

COMMENTS

Members have discussed the appointments process and governance structure of the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee

During this term of Council, discussions on the composition, governance structure, meeting procedures, and public appointments process have been a part of numerous meetings of the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee (AAAC). These discussions focused on changes that would better meet the purpose of the AAAC, as articulated by the Committee's membership during those meetings. One result from these discussions was a recommendation from the committee to City Council, which City Council adopted at its meeting on October 1 and 4, 2021, to amend the Terms of Reference for the AAAC to allow for members of the community at large to join the committee for the first time. Previously, the Terms of Reference for the committee allowed only for representatives of Aboriginal organizations.

At the same meeting, Council also directed staff to report back on options for a revised public appointments process. The options presented in this report are based on the AAAC's current Terms of Reference including its current composition and governance structure.

Because the structure of a committee can have an impact on the public appointments process, other options for recruitment, selection, and nominations could be explored if City Council were to establish the committee with a different structure in the next term of Council. Council Advisory Bodies like the AAAC are established by City Council. City Council must approve the Terms of Reference for Council Advisory Bodies in accordance with Chapter 27, Section 16.6 of the Toronto Municipal Code. The City Manager's Office reviews and updates the Terms of Reference for Council Advisory Bodies recommended for establishment by Council to ensure compliance with relevant legislation, City by-laws and policies.

New members were recently appointed to committee

In the fall of 2021, following Council direction, staff from the Indigenous Affairs Office and the City Clerk's Office worked together to recruit members to fill the ten vacancies on the committee. Outreach was conducted through local organizations and community leaders, social media, by sharing the opportunity with existing committee members, and through other networks. Interested candidates applied through the Public Appointments website.

All applications were reviewed by a team of five Indigenous City staff who work in various City divisions that complement the mandate and focus of the AAAC. The panel selected candidates and conducted interviews. A report nominating the ten candidates recommended by the panel was considered by the Civic Appointments Committee and adopted by City Council at its December 15, 16 and 17, 2021 meeting.

The process described above is consistent with the process for appointing members to other Council Advisory Bodies such as:

- Confronting Anti-Black Racism Advisory Committee
- Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Advisory Committee

Previous recruitments were based on direct contact with organizations

Before City Council adopted changes to the committee's composition in October 2021, the recruitment of AAAC members was led solely by staff from the Indigenous Affairs Office and previously by staff from Equity, Diversity, and Human Rights Division.

Local organizations were contacted directly by staff to seek a representative for the committee and a report with the recommended members was submitted to the Civic Appointments Committee and then considered by City Council. An online application hosted by the Public Appointments Secretariat was added to the process in the spring of 2019. Previously there were no interviews with candidates because staff relied on the organizations represented to do their own internal selection.

Options for a revised public appointments process

A revised public appointments process for the AAAC should consider ways to respect Indigenous sovereignty, self-determination and how the process and the committee can advance the City's Reconciliation Action Plan. If a unique process is adopted that is distinct from that used by other Council Advisory Bodies, it should try to reflect the mandate of the AAAC and the ways in which Indigenous communities in Toronto would like to participate.

Outreach and recruitment

Building off the recent process, outreach would continue to include connecting with local Indigenous organizations and service providers, contact with previous applicants, the use of social media, and the Public Appointments e-updates list, for example. New additions could include:

- Holding information sessions to talk about the committee's work, how members contribute to City decision-making and how to apply. These sessions could be co-hosted with local Indigenous organizations and held online or in-person as permitted.
- Posters advertising the opportunity could be distributed to local Indigenous community centres, service providers, and gathering places.
- The language, messaging, and imagery used in outreach could be developed in consultation with the Indigenous communities in Toronto to ensure it better connects with and reflects First Nations, Inuit and Métis in Toronto.

The application process

The online application portal hosted by the City Clerk's Office is a practical way for candidates to share their information, and for staff to manage the applications that are submitted. It also allows staff to analyze and report anonymously on the confidential demographic data that is a voluntary component of each application.

To better reflect Indigenous practices and traditions, this step in the process could be enhanced so that the online application is used primarily to collect contact and demographic information. For example, rather than only allowing applicants to provide written responses to questions, applicants could instead have the option of submitting:

- A written attachment that doesn't follow the structure of the questions in the current application and which allows for a more creative and personal voice.
- An audio or video file that allows candidates to express, orally, why they want to join the committee, what they hope to contribute, and anything else they would like to share.

Selection and interviews

Several options could be considered and combined as part of a revised interview process. Candidates could be shortlisted and interviewed by:

- A panel of Indigenous City staff from various divisions whose work compliments that of the committee, as was done in the most recent round of appointments.
- A panel of Indigenous residents - who are not members of any participating organizations - appointed by City Council to select, interview, and nominate committee members. Under this model, Council would have to consider how the members of this panel would be recruited and selected.
- A panel with both staff and Indigenous residents.

A revised interview format could include group sessions with multiple candidates that are more collaborative and based around discussion rather than the standard interview format. Elders could be present to ensure these sessions happen in a good way and that support is available for participants. These group sessions could be followed-up by holding smaller or one-on-one discussions between the panel and individual candidates in order to reach the stage of final nominations.

If vacancies arise in the middle of a term, staff or any established nominating panel could consult with the co-chairs and members of the committee on what skills and voices are needed.

Nominations and Appointments

Unless City Council makes significant changes to its governance structure, appointments to the AAAC would continue to be guided by the City's Public Appointments Policy and nominations will continue to first be considered by the Civic Appointments Committee with final decisions made by City Council. This aligns with other Council Advisory Bodies, as well as other City boards and committees with members appointed by Council. If the committee exists in a different form in the future, other options for nominations and appointments may be possible.

Other Opportunities

In addition to options for the public appointments process, changes to the AAAC's Terms of Reference, its meeting procedures, and how it is structured and governed could also be considered for the 2022-2026 term of City Council. These changes could

considered by staff from the City Manager's Office, the Indigenous Affairs Office, and the City Clerk's Office in consultation with the Indigenous communities in Toronto.

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SIGNATURE

John D. Elvidge
City Clerk