

Review of Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee

Date: April 30, 2024.

To: Executive Committee

From: City Manager and City Clerk

Wards: All

SUMMARY

This report presents findings from a governance review of the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee (AAAC) and recommends that Council adopt the proposed Terms of Reference for this committee as described in Attachment 1 to enable the AAAC to resume operation. It is also recommended that the AAAC review and make recommendations for any amendments to the mandate or Terms of Reference of the Advisory Committee by the end of 2025.

During the 2018-2022 City Council term, members of the AAAC raised questions and concerns about the structure and procedures of the committee. It was expressed by some previous AAAC members that the Simplified Rules of Procedure, under which Council Advisory Bodies (CABs) traditionally operate, are colonial practices that do not reflect Indigenous governance, offer little opportunity for real consideration of issues, and do not effectively support advancing the relationship between Indigenous communities and Toronto City Council as reflected in the principles of reconciliation. In February 2023, City Council re-established an AAAC for the 2022 to 2026 term and requested a governance review and engagement with the Indigenous community before adopting its Terms of Reference.

Two Indigenous facilitators engaged with members of the 2018-2022 AAAC and local Indigenous communities about their experiences and recommendations to inform the governance review ([Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee Review webpage](#)). The findings reflect a desire for City Council to establish meaningful ways to engage and receive advice and advance the relationship between City Council and Indigenous communities to address important issues and advance truth, justice, and reconciliation.

Further to the work undertaken by the consultants, the City Manager and staff engaged in discussions with the Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council (TASSC) to consider a path forward. TASSC is composed of Indigenous social services agencies in Toronto and many members are original members of the AAAC with long relationships with the City.

From the review findings and these discussions, it is evident that more work is needed for the City and Indigenous partners to co-create an advisory body that is reflective of

Indigenous governance practices, advances self-determination and is empowered with decision-making authority. It is also evident that an AAAC should resume meeting to avoid gaps in important conversations and collaboration between City Council and Indigenous communities and to enable this longer-term co-creation and relationship building to continue.

The City Manager and City Clerk recommend that Council adopt the attached Terms of Reference for an AAAC, which are based on the initial terms of the 2018-2022 AAAC with updates consistent with Indigenous community input and recent Council direction on CABs, such as the provision of honoraria for AAAC members participating in meetings. The AAAC will have one Member of Council and, recognizing TASSC's experience with past AAACs and its connections in community, up to 25 public members nominated by TASSC and approved by Council.

Adopting these Terms of Reference will enable this committee to resume meeting according to Council's existing rules that are applied to CABs and propose amendments to Council once the members have begun to meet and can consider changes to how the body should operate to better reflect Indigenous governance practices. Acknowledging the diversity of the Indigenous community, it is also important that the City and the members of the AAAC consider input and feedback from the broader Indigenous community, including Indigenous organizations that are not members of the AAAC, in its consideration of future changes to its mandate and Terms of Reference.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Manager and the City Clerk recommend that:

1. City Council adopt the Terms of Reference for an Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee as described in Attachment 1 of this report.
2. City Council direct the City Clerk to canvass Members of Council for their interest in appointment to the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee for consideration by the Striking Committee.
3. City Council request the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee to review and make recommendations for any amendments to the Advisory Committee's mandate or Terms of Reference no later than the end of 2025.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

In 2023, City Council approved Terms of Reference for Council Advisory Bodies that provide honoraria of \$125 per public member per meeting. The Terms of Reference for the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee provide for honoraria for public members' attendance at each meeting. The costs for honoraria for this Advisory Committee for five

meetings per year is estimated to be \$15,625 per year, which is an upper-limit estimate based on the anticipated meeting frequency and all public members requesting compensation. These costs are included as non-program spending in the City's annual operating budget.

The Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee will be provided with program support from the City Manager's Office and meeting management support from the City Clerk's Office through these programs' existing resources.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial information as presented in the Financial Impact section.

RECONCILIATION IMPACT

In 2022, City Council adopted the City's first Reconciliation Action Plan to advance truth, justice, and reconciliation. It builds on the City's existing commitments to Indigenous Peoples and goes further to take on 28 meaningful actions across five themes:

- Actions to restore truth
- Actions to right relations and share power
- Actions for justice
- Actions to make financial reparations
- Actions for the Indigenous Affairs Office

Page 29 of the [Reconciliation Action Plan](#) states:

The needs shared by Indigenous organizational leaders are essential perspectives that positively impact the City's decision-making processes. The City commits to working on right relations with Indigenous organizations across a range of sectors to support a strong urban Indigenous community. The City of Toronto will:

- Co-create protocols with Indigenous organizations and collectives that use Indigenous knowledge and processes to support working together in right relations.

The recommendations in this report approach relationships with Indigenous communities differently than how the City generally creates CABs, consistent with Toronto's commitment to actions to right relations and share power contained in the City's Reconciliation Action Plan.

DECISION HISTORY

On February 7, 2023, City Council re-established Council Advisory Bodies for the 2022 to 2026 term and requested the City Manager and the City Clerk to report back on the findings from the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee governance review. <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2023.EX2.1>.

On April 6, 2022, City Council adopted the Reconciliation Action Plan 2022-2032.
[Agenda Item History - 2022.EX31.1 \(toronto.ca\)](#)

On December 5, 2017, City Council supported the establishment of the Indigenous Affairs Office within the City Manager's office.
[Agenda Item History - 2017.EX29.36 \(toronto.ca\)](#)

On July 6, 2010, City Council adopted the Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal Communities - Towards a Framework for Urban Aboriginal Relations in Toronto.
[Agenda Item History - 2010.EX45.5 \(toronto.ca\)](#)

COMMENTS

History of the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee

City Council regularly establishes Council Advisory Bodies (CABs) each Council term, composed primarily of public members, with a specific mandate and purpose to provide advice to City Council on key matters. City Council has established an Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee (AAAC) for several Council terms.

The AAAC has played a key role in advising Council and supporting Council to:

- oversee the implementation of the City's Commitment to Aboriginal Communities that was adopted by City Council in 2010;
- identify 8 Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report as priorities for implementation in 2015;
- establish the Indigenous Affairs office in 2017; and
- advise on the development of the City's Reconciliation Action Plan, adopted in 2022.

In previous Council terms, the mandate of the AAAC was to:

- provide advice to City Council on the elimination of barriers faced by Aboriginal Peoples, including barriers related to City by-laws, policies, programs, and service delivery;
- act as a liaison with external bodies on barriers to the participation of Aboriginal Peoples in public life; and
- advance the achievement of social, cultural, economic, and spiritual well-being of Aboriginal Peoples.

AAAC Governance Review

During the 2018-2022 City Council term, members of the AAAC raised questions and concerns about the structure and procedures of the Advisory Committee. In the views expressed by some of the previous AAAC members, the simplified rules of procedure under which CABs traditionally operate are colonial practices that do not reflect Indigenous governance and do not effectively support advancing the relationship between Indigenous communities and Toronto City Council as reflected in the principles of reconciliation. The simplified procedures for CABs are modelled on Council's procedures reflecting *City of Toronto Act, 2006* requirements.

In February 2023, when City Council re-established a number of CABs for the 2022 to 2026 term, including an AAAC, City Council, in response to AAAC members' questions and concerns about the structure and procedures of the committee during the previous term, directed a governance review of the AAAC and engagement with the Indigenous community before adopting its Terms of Reference.

Two Indigenous facilitators engaged with members of the 2018-2022 AAAC and local Indigenous communities about their experiences and recommendations to inform the governance review ([Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee Review webpage](#)). The findings reflect a desire for City Council to establish meaningful ways to engage and receive advice, advance the relationship between City Council and Indigenous communities to address important issues and advance truth, justice, and reconciliation.

A summary of changes for consideration from the AAAC Restructuring report includes:

- More control of the agenda
- Meaningful incorporation of culture
- Rotating (co-) chairs
- Expanded community consultation between the City and Indigenous community (aside from the AAAC)
- Improve onboarding for AAAC members
- Disband the AAAC: move City Indigenous consultation outside of colonial confines into a sovereign space—for Indigenous, by Indigenous (possibly within an Indigenous organization)
- Tying membership to responsibility and commitment, perhaps dedicated pillars/sectors/clans, instead of assumed seats for organizations
- A nomination or open-forum community process for membership
- New authorities for the AAAC to include community engagement ('town halls' and referenda)

Additionally, feedback received on AAAC Indigenous Engagement highlighted the following:

"The City of Toronto, Leadership, Executive, and Staff must continue to embark on a reconciliation journey, which includes greater Indigenous Awareness across all levels of the organization, including its committees. This awareness is essential to enabling effective, clear, and transparent communication intra-organizationally and externally to the community. Building on communication, the City must consider how the organizational units and committees will continue within its governance framework to support fulfilling the different mandates."

and

"It must be understood that this engagement's outcomes demonstrate room for improvement within the City of Toronto. With change, it is essential to acknowledge that progress will not be accomplished immediately. Instead, by revisiting and monitoring progress as the City embarks on implementing the recommendations, it will be

necessary to continually revisit and review the plan to align with the changing population, environment, and people."

Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council (TASSC)

Further to the work undertaken by the consultants, the City Manager and staff engaged in discussions with TASSC to consider a path forward, given the consultants' findings.

TASSC is composed of Executive Directors of Indigenous social services agencies in Toronto and many members are original members of the AAAC with long relationships with the City. Its mission statement describes it as "the leading not-for-profit research, policy, and advocacy organization that addresses the social determinants of health to improve and enhance the socio-economic prospects and cultural well-being of Indigenous peoples living in the City of Toronto." TASSC also has connections to treaty partners and Indigenous organizations and community members outside of its membership and social services mandate.

Recommended Next Steps

From the review findings and discussions with TASSC, it is evident that there is shared interest in strengthening communications and relationships between City Council and Indigenous organizations and community members, and that an advisory body operating with Indigenous governance approaches has potential to advance this interest and support self-determination and working together in right relations.

It will take time to examine and co-create an advisory body that reflects Indigenous governance approaches, but TASSC and the community are eager to avoid a gap in communication channels between City Council, divisions, and Indigenous communities. This report therefore recommends that Council adopt the Terms of Reference in Attachment 1 so that an AAAC can resume meeting as soon as possible and consider pressing issues and longer-term changes. The AAAC will resume meeting according to the Council's existing rules that are applied to CABs and the attached Terms of Reference, which will apply until such time as amendments are proposed to Council by the AAAC. This report recommends that the AAAC review and make recommendations for any amendments to its mandate or Terms of Reference no later than the end of 2025.

The mandate of the AAAC will continue to be to provide advice to City Council on:

- the elimination of barriers faced by Indigenous peoples including barriers related to City by-laws, policies, programs and service delivery;
- act as a liaison with external bodies on barriers to the participation of Indigenous peoples in public life; and
- advancing the achievement of social, cultural, economic and spiritual wellbeing of Indigenous peoples.

The Committee will be composed of up to 25 public members and one Member of City Council. Given TASSC's experience with past AAACs and its connections in community, the public members will be representatives of member agencies of TASSC and Indigenous organizations identified by the City and/or TASSC.

Public members will be nominated by TASSC and the City Manager will make recommendations to the Civic Appointments Committee for appointment by City Council, and Striking Committee will recommend the Member of Council for appointment. The AAAC will elect its Chair and Vice-Chair, who may choose to act as Co-Chairs, from among its public members.

The City Manager and the City Clerk acknowledge the diversity of the Indigenous community and the valuable perspectives offered by many organizations and community members in and beyond this governance review. It is anticipated that the AAAC will engage other Indigenous community members and organizations through its networks, in discussions with the community and at its meetings, and that the AAAC will consider such input in any recommendations to Council to amend its mandate or Terms of Reference.

The City Manager's Office will provide governance, program and administrative support to the Committee. The City Clerk's Office will provide meeting management support.

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - Terms of Reference for the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee