



# Memo

**TO:** Mayor and Council  
**SUBJECT:** Accessibility Committee  
**DATE:** February 10, 2023  
**FROM:** Chief Administrative Officer

---

---

## **BACKGROUND**

The B.C. government is requiring certain public-sector organizations to establish their own accessibility committees to reduce barriers for people living with disabilities. The intent is to remove barriers and to create accessibility standards throughout the province.

The [Accessible BC Act](#) came into effect on June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021, requiring public sector bodies to establish:

- An Accessibility Committee;
- An Accessibility Plan; and,
- A process to receive public feedback on the Plan.

The deadline to meet the above obligations is September 1, 2023, and the requirement is the establishment of an Accessibility Committee.

Accessibility Committees should have:

- At least half of its members be persons with disabilities or represent a disability-serving organization, and who reflect the diversity of persons with disabilities in British Columbia;
- At least one of member who is an Indigenous person;
- The committee as a whole should reflect the diversity of persons in British Columbia; and,
- The committee may include members from within or without the boundaries of the Town of Lake Cowichan.

A virtual meet was had on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023 with staff representatives of from the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD), the City of Duncan, the Municipality of North Cowichan and the Towns of Ladysmith and Lake Cowichan on whether a regional committee vs a local committee would be preferable under the *Accessible BC Act*.

**Options for the Committee to Consider**

1. Whether the Town should form its own Accessibility (Advisory) Committee.

**Benefits of going it alone**

- Recommendations are made locally and not made from a body that does not fully represent Lake Cowichan;
- No loss of local autonomy;
- No competing interests;
- Smaller committee size; and
- May certainly be cost effective.

**Disadvantages**

- May not be able to elicit interest from members of the mandated groups such as persons with disabilities to sit on the committee;
  - Interest on serving on the committee generally may not be there; and
  - Inability to meet legislative requirements in a small community such as ours.
2. Whether the Town with the CVRD, the City of Duncan and the Towns of Ladysmith and Municipality of North Cowichan should instead form a regional accessibility committee.

**Benefits**

- Consistency of approach;
- Transference of responsibility for management to the CVRD;
- Cooperation between the regional local government partners;
- A larger pool to draw members from;
- Problem solving may easier given representation from all areas of the region;

**Disadvantages**

- Could end up with a large committee;
- Loss of local decision making;
- May require cost sharing for the regional approach; and
- There may be no consensus on approaches to solving accessibility issues.

**Conclusion**

It may be best to decide which approach the Town should be taking once it is determined what the financial implications would be if a regional accessibility committee option is selected. If council decides to consider a regional accessibility committee approach it may be appropriate for staff to work with the other local governments to ascertain the best approach.

Other CVRD municipalities are still working through that process in the meantime.



Joseph A. Fernandez