

Report

Date June 7, 2023

File:

Subject Accessibility Advisory Committee Electronic Participation

PURPOSE

To authorize the Accessibility Advisory Committee to conduct their meetings electronically.

BACKGROUND

In 2021, the Province of British Columbia passed the *Accessible BC Act* to make B.C. more inclusive. Accessibility entails identifying, removing, and preventing barriers to interacting with the Municipality. North Cowichan has been amending practices to be more inclusive as an organization and uplift the voices of equity-deserving groups in the Council decision-making process.

DISCUSSION

An **electronic meeting** is where all members participate electronically regardless of where they are participating from. Public participation must also be allowed electronically.

Electronic participation in a meeting is when a member attends an in-person meeting by electronic means. Any member of the public wishing to observe the meeting would have to attend the physical location.

Council's Procedure Bylaw allows for electronic participation by Council members at Council or Committee of the Whole meetings if the member is unable to participate in person. However, this same provision does not apply to committee members. Committee meetings themselves may be conducted by means of electronic or other communication facilities but only when authorized by resolution at least 72 hours before the meeting.

The ability to participate electronically in Accessibility Advisory Committee meetings is seen as a vital tool for removing barriers to participation. However, as there is no provision for the electronic participation of committee members in Council's Procedure Bylaw, a resolution from Council is required to enable the first meeting at which business will be conducted to be held electronically.

It should be noted that the Accessibility Advisory Committee will hold an inaugural informational meeting on June 8 that will be conducted electronically. The first meeting at which regular business will be conducted will follow the resolution from Council, enabling the meeting to be held electronically.

OPTIONS

1. **(Recommended Option)** THAT Council direct that the next meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee be conducted by means of electronic or other communication facilities.

- This option allows committee members to participate electronically in meetings if they are unable to participate in person. It helps remove barriers to participation by enabling access via whatever method is most appropriate for the individual.
- At the next meeting, the committee can decide which future meetings will be held electronically.

IMPLICATIONS

Enabling electronic participation of committee members does not require meetings to be live-streamed and thus does not impact budget or staff resources. It does, however, reduce barriers to participation and is more inclusive, allowing individuals with different needs to participate in meetings in a way that is most appropriate for them.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council direct that the next meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee be conducted by means of electronic or other communication facilities.

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Approved to be forwarded to Council:



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