

## Councillor Jeniny Gerbasi



The Access Advisory Committee proudly presents this progress report, which discusses who we are, what we've accomplished and which future challenges we plan to work on.

Trouble-free access to services, buildings and information shouldn't be a concern but for many Winnipeggers, it is. It's important to have civic information, services and

properties that include everyone. Regardless of ability, each and every citizen of Winnipeg deserves the same rights and the same services.

In my three years as Committee Chair, I've seen a sign language interpreter at the *Pan Am Games* and an accessible "Get Together Downtown" result from the Committee's advice. When people can easily participate in their community, they lead freer, happier lives.

With the proactive approach of Civic Administration, it's been proven that an accessible Winnipeg doesn't necessarily cost more. Proactivity means thinking ahead and considering people's needs rather than reacting after the fact. Because of a strong connection with Administration, the Committee's advice regarding

barrier-free access is sought prior to construction or development.

The Committee is putting the city of Winnipeg on the cutting edge when council approved a Universal Design Policy in December of 2001. Drafted in community partnership, this type of policy with a philosophy of universal accessibility is unique to Canada. The policy outlines parameters, information, communication avenues and goals to make civic information, services and properties more accessible for everyone.

For the first time in history, a fully accessible Council building will be the result of Committee-recommended City Hall renovations. Improvements such as a levelled chamber floor, stairs with colour and texture contrasts, accessible washrooms, auditory and Braille elevator buttons, visual alarms and a forthcoming elevator mean both citizens and future City Councillors can comfortably move around City Hall.

This past year, a Sign Language Interpreter Policy was introduced, making Winnipeg *the only city in Canada* with this type of policy. The Deaf Community can now interact with and participate in city government, access city services, as well as communicate in emergency situations.

Committee members are zealously working toward user-friendly city services. We eagerly approach new information to learn, future goals to tackle, and new connections to make in our efforts to create an accessible city of Winnipeg.

Physical access issues affect mobility, agility, hearing and vision.

Providing information, recommendations, and monitoring the progress regarding accessibility is the ongoing role of the AAC. They provide a link to three different groups – City Council, City Administration and the community. The AAC is a bridge that informs the public while advising Administration and Council.



The AAC's voting members are citizens with a disability or those having an interest in accessibility matters, as well as a provincial government representative. Reporting to the Executive Policy Committee, the Committee has

a history of receiving support from both civic leaders and Administration.

With monthly meetings, subcommittees of the AAC work on different tasks: Communication/Education, Policy and Management.

The AAC is kept well informed regarding access technology, products, services and initiatives of other cities through continued communication with individuals and organizations that deal with accessibility solutions.

## Highlights

Interest, will and effort have precipitated remarkable strides toward universally available civic resources.

While considering the **Information** element of their mandate, the AAC has:

- established positive communication channels and working relationships with Civic Administration, particularly Planning, Property and Development, Community Services, Winnipeg Transit, Public Works and Corporate Services.
- welcomed representatives from the provincial government Minister Responsible for Persons with Disabilities.
- fostered relationships with community groups addressing the needs of persons with disabilities.
- aided with conference planning and preparation for the Canadian Centre of Disability Studies International Conference and the National Access Awareness Breakfast, in cooperation with community groups.

While addressing the **Properties** portion of their mandate, the AAC has:

- partnered with Civic Administration and the community to generate recommendations for the creation of a Universal Design Policy.
- advised Administration on the user-friendliness of Main Street North, Waterfront Drive, Winnipeg Riverbank Parkway System, Water Taxi Docking System (CAR RAC), Downtown Pilot Recycling Bin Project and Audible Traffic Signals.
- assisted with design plans for City Hall renovations intended to enhance accessibility.

While embracing the **Services** component of their mandate, the AAC has:

- created a Sign Language Interpreter Policy with Council to ensure communication options are available to the Deaf Community. The AAC monitors the implementation of the policy.
- facilitated dialogue for both citizens and the Administration regarding transit, shaved curbs, curb cuts, pedestrian concerns, sidewalk access, sidewalk snow removal, and civic building access.
- initiated a survey targeted to civic Administration to assess awareness around accessibility topics. The Committee analyzed information gathered from the survey in preparation for an education initiative related to Universal Design.
- contributed to the City of Winnipeg Equity and Diversity Initiative regarding issues of employment access (Assistive Devices Program).



## Background/Terms of Reference

The **Access Advisory Committee** (AAC) was created by City Council in 1989 with a mandate to address barrier free access. The Committee was formed to advise the Mayor and Council on the present and future status of the City of Winnipeg's *information, properties and services* accessible for persons with disabilities to the benefit of all citizens. Access issues affect all people but in particular people with physical, cognitive/developmental and emotional disabilities.

## Future Goals

Working within the framework of their mandate, the Committee will:

- implement a detailed communications strategy to increase the AAC profile within the civic structure and amongst the general public, while raising access awareness.
- launch a new strategic planning session in 2002 to outline an Action Plan for a two-year period including both short and long-term goals.
- revamp the AAC Web Page, ensuring Universal Design Standards are met.
- develop an education plan for a Universal Design Policy, working with a Universal Design Implementation Team.
- initiate dialogue with Council and administration about the development of the policy regarding street furniture and obstacles to sidewalk approachability.
- review Parking Permit Program legislation and provide recommendations for improvement.
- organize the Winnipeg Business Accessibility Award in partnership with community groups.



# ACCESS

## Advisory Committee

## Access Advisory Committee Members

### Chair

Councillor Jenny Gerbasi

### Ex-officio

Mayor Glen Murray

### Vice Chairperson

Doug Strong

### Committee Members

Robert Bruce Beatson

Diane Caley

Yhetta Gold

RoseAnn MacKinnon

Tim McIsaac

Susan Morrow

Sandy Popham

Theresa Anne Swedick

Tanis Woodland

### Alternates

Councillor Gord Steeves

### Provincial

#### Representatives

Jim Derksen

Brenda Hollier

### Committee

#### Administration

Judy Redmond

Carol Freeman

Jennifer Ridge

### Past Committee Members

Marilyn Henzel

Ben Harnish

Mary Pankiw

Shelley Saunders

### CAO Secretariat

#### Administrator

James Allum

## Financial Report 2001

### Revenues:

Council Funding ..... \$62,000

### Expenditures:

Meeting Costs (operating) ..... \$ 3,650  
 Meeting Costs (facilitating) ..... \$ 500  
 Education ..... \$ 9,555  
 Administrative Support ..... \$47,255  
 Administrative Capital ..... \$ 1,000

Total ..... \$61,960

*This report is available in Braille or on disc.*

## Acknowledgements

*The AAC offers thanks to Tim Sale, Minister Responsible for Persons with Disabilities who co-ordinates the development and co-ordination of policies across provincial government department to remove barriers and create accessible programs and services. The AAC is pleased to be in partnership with provincial representatives.*

*The Committee extends a special thank you to Mayor Glen Murray for his support in addressing access interests. Mayor Murray is an Ex-Officio Member of the AAC.*

*The Committee expresses gratitude to the "pro-access" civic Administration for their willingness to make universal access a reality.*



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