



City of Port Colborne
66 Charlotte Street
Port Colborne, Ont.
L3K 3C8

Dear Mayor Steele & Scott Lucy, CAO

I am writing to you today, as the Chair of the JAAC (Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee) as well as a citizen of the town of Grimsby and as a person living with a disability. The JAAC represents seven municipalities in the Niagara Region, which includes Grimsby, Thorold, West Lincoln, Lincoln, Niagara on the Lake, Pelham, and Port Colborne.

It has come to our attention, that after extensive consultation with Niagara's municipalities and residents, the Linking Niagara Transit Committee (LNTC) has endorsed the proposed consolidated transit model. On November 25, 2021, Regional Council will vote on this consolidated model. If approved, then each of Niagara's 12 local area municipalities will vote on the model.

Before any voting takes place, I would like to bring your attention to an accessibility issue that is occurring now in the already operating NRT On Demand transit system being managed by the Niagara Region. When the Region began running the NRT On Demand transit system, they didn't, in any way, consult with the JAAC even though the transit was being operated in our own municipalities and directly impacting those of us with disabilities. We didn't know anything about the transit, until some of our local papers contacted members of the JAAC, including myself, to ask us what our thoughts were on the accessibility of the new transit system. Needless to say, we couldn't comment on something we weren't aware of. I spoke to someone at the Regions' transit office and invited Mr. Robert Salewytch, Program Manager, Transit Services GO Implementation Office to speak at our upcoming JAAC meeting, to discuss the transits accessibility features.

On December 10, 2020, a presentation was given to the JAAC committee by Mr. Salewytch but he didn't know if the App to order a bus was fully accessible. As it turns out, the App is not fully accessible, which means that people with low vision or people who are totally blind do not have access to order a bus through the App. I contacted the representative, explained that the App isn't fully accessible. The representative said they would investigate the issue & resolve it ASAP. To this day, the issue still has not

been resolved. I am reluctant to believe that merging the transit systems will improve the accessibility issue that I've pointed out. Most of the separate transit systems across Niagara are fully accessible & meet the current AODA (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005).

The JAAC, would like to make it resoundingly clear that it is very important that a member of the JAAC be immediately placed on the transit committee so that, not only are the AODA standards adhered to, but also those of the IASR Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation incorporating goods & services such as, information & communication, employment, transportation, design of public spaces as well as customer service.

Having the input of the JAAC will ensure that the plans for the merging of systems meets the accessibility standards before any money is spent, preventing the need to later work backwards to fix issues related to the need to comply with Ontario provincial legislation.

Sincerely,

Stephen Barker

Stephen Barker
Chair, JAAC

SB/dh

CC. JAAC Committee
Town Clerks