

3. PRESENTATION - ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AS AMENDED

That Council approve the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton endorse the position of the Ottawa-Carleton Chapter of the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, the Ottawa-Carleton Chapter of Ontarians With Disabilities Act Ad Hoc Committee and the Disabled Persons Community Resources with regard to the Ontarians With Disabilities Act (ODA) and request that the final legislation be an effective tool to increase access and opportunities for persons with disabilities.

DOCUMENTATION

1. Co-ordinator, Community Services Committee report dated 20 Oct 98 is immediately attached.
2. Extract of Draft Minute, Community Services Committee 29 Oct 98 immediately follows the report and includes a record of the vote.

REGION OF OTTAWA-CARLETON
RÉGION D'OTTAWA-CARLETON

REPORT
RAPPORT

Our File/N/Réf. 03-07-98-0127
Your File/V/Réf.

DATE 20 October 1998

TO/DEST. Community Services Committee

FROM/EXP. Committee Co-ordinator

SUBJECT/OBJET **PRESENTATION - ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT**

REPORT RECOMMENDATION

That the Community Services Committee receive a presentation from the Ottawa-Carleton Multiple Sclerosis Social Action Committee.

BACKGROUND

A request has been received from Mr. Alf Gunter, Chair, Ottawa-Carleton Multiple Sclerosis Action Committee, to make a presentation to the Committee on the Ontarians With Disabilities Act.

A fact sheet provided by Mr. Gunter is attached for reference.

This report is respectfully submitted.

Approved by
M. J. Beauregard

Attach: (1)

**Presentation to Community Services Committee
of the
Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton
re
ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT**

It is expected that the Government of Ontario will introduce the Ontarians With Disabilities Act (ODA) to the Legislature in November of this year. This will keep a promise made by Premier Mike Harris during the election campaign of 1995. Various groups representing the disabled community have been lobbying the Government during their entire term of office in an attempt to obtain legislation that would allow persons with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate fully in society. This would require that province-wide standards of accessibility be developed in key areas, such as transportation, employment, and the provision of services and facilities to the public. The Government finally issued a discussion document this summer. Unfortunately, the document was so restrictive in scope and lacking in several key areas that legislation based on it would be of little, if any, value to disabled persons.

The three groups before you today have all played a significant role in this lobbying process. The ODA Committee is an ad hoc committee, which represents many organizations of persons with disabilities. They prepared an extensive position paper for the government's consideration and have also appeared before government representatives and the press at every available opportunity. The Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada (MS Society) has spoken through its Ontario Division arm, and its President and the Ontario Social Action Committee, in particular. Although the MS Society represents only one disease, there are 12,000 persons in Ontario with MS, and they have a wide variety of disabilities. The MS Society appeared before the minister on August 04 and submitted a position paper on September 04. Disabled Persons Community Resources is an Ottawa-Carleton based organization that has made great strides in assisting disabled persons in this community. They have taken every opportunity available to them to lobby the government, both orally before the ministry in August and by offering a position paper.

All groups representing the disabled community, including those before you today, have similar views on the issues that need to be addressed by an ODA. Much of the legislation must be mandatory, as voluntary measures simply do not work. There must also be an enforcement mechanism, separate from the standard Human Rights Commission, which is experiencing delays in excess of five years. Also, priorities need to be established and a timetable agreed to. These are only some of the major issues that all groups consider important.

Alf Gunter, Chair, O-C MS Social Action Committee
October 1998

PRESENTATION - ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

- Co-ordinator, Community Services Committee report dated 20 October 1998

The Committee heard from Mr. Alf Gunter, Chair, Social Action Committee, Ottawa-Carleton Chapter of the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, who introduced Avril Gunter, a member of the Committee and Mr. Jean Legault, Community Resources Development Coordinator, Disabled Persons Community Resources: Mr. Angelo Nikias, Chair, Ottawa-Carleton Chapter of Ontarians With Disabilities Act ad hoc committee was present but had to leave the meeting.

Avril Gunter explained that the urgency of the appeal to Committee lies in the fact that legislation for an *Ontarians With Disabilities Act* will be brought forward in within the next few weeks. She clarified that persons with disabilities are not seeking special privileges but an opportunity to participate fully in all aspects of life in Ontario and this will be accomplished by removing barriers in the areas of transportation, education, housing, accessibility to public and private buildings and employment.

Mrs. Gunter said that, at this point, it is unclear whether the Province is willing to meet certain minimum conditions if the *Act* is to be effectively remove these barriers. It is also felt that a specific agency should be charged with enforcing the new legislation and be given the authority to investigate systemic problems and recommend appropriate corrective actions. The *Ontarians With Disabilities Act* must supercede current municipal and provincial regulations. Mrs. Gunter said that representatives of the disabled community are ready to work in cooperation with the Province in developing the regulations. She concluded by saying that, should the Province not move towards meeting key minimum requirements, the disabled community does not want an *Ontarians With Disabilities Act* since bad legislation is worse than no legislation at all.¹

In response to a question from Chair A. Munter, Mr. Gunter said he believed the Bill would likely be dealt with before the end of November so it can be adopted prior to an election call. Councillor A. Loney pointed out that, regardless of what the Committee agrees on today, it may be appropriate to provide further comment on the legislation once the Draft Bill has been circulated.

Councillor W. Byrne posited that, if the goal of the legislation is to achieve consistency in municipalities for accessibility and allow equal opportunities for disabled persons to participate fully in society, it must be effective and it must "have teeth". She indicated that the RMOC has taken a leadership role in promoting accessibility in transportation, public transit and in other areas and endorsing the position of groups before Committee will be in keeping with this direction and move things forward.

¹ The complete text of this presentation is on file with the Committee Co-ordinator

Extract of Draft Minute
Community Services Committee
29 October 1998

Moved by W. Byrne

That the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton endorse the position of the Ottawa-Carleton Chapter of the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, the Ottawa-Carleton Chapter of Ontarians With Disabilities Act Ad Hoc Committee and the Disabled Persons Community Resources with regard to the Ontarians With Disabilities Act (ODA) and request that the final legislation be an effective tool to increase access and opportunities for persons with disabilities.

CARRIED, as amended

Chair Munter informed the delegation he has requested that the issue of parking spots be brought forward to the Planning and Environment Committee to at least achieve consistent standards across Ottawa-Carleton.