



WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY REPORT

Information	Recommendation ☒	Decision Request ☐	Councillor Activity ☐
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To: Mayor Zebian and Members of West Hants Regional Municipality Council

Submitted by: _____
Michel Bourgeois, Chair West Hants Accessibility Advisory Committee

Date: April 12, 2026

Subject: Report Writing Guidelines

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Nova Scotia Accessibility Act 2017

Government of Nova Scotia, Bill 96 – Dismantling Racism and Hate Act

WHRM's Equity, Anti-Racism, and Accessibility Strategy Plan

RECOMMENDATION or DECISION REQUEST

That Council directs the CAO to engage staff in the development, documentation and implementation of Report Writing Guidelines.

BACKGROUND

Property ☐	Public Opinion ☐	Environment ☐	Social ☒	Economic ☐	Councillor Activity ☐
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In April 2025, West Hants Council approved the Diversity, Equity, Anti-Racism and Accessibility Strategy. This document identified several Strategic Actions which create a framework of the Municipality's commitment to the principles of Diversity, Equity, Anti-Racism and Accessibility.

An important role of the Accessibility Advisory Committee is to advise Council in the preparation, implementation and effectiveness of its accessibility plan.

The Diverse, Equitable, Inclusive Communities Committee also advises Council on issues concerning social marginalization, equity, racism, and discrimination within the Municipality and its workplaces.

Both Committees play a pivotal role in helping the West Hants Regional Municipality achieve the goals of the Diversity, Equity, Anti-Racism and Accessibility Plan.

DISCUSSION

Strategic Action # 18 in the West Hants Regional Municipality's Diversity, Equity, Anti-Racism and Accessibility Plan describes a commitment to 'Review and update policies, procedures, guidelines, and communications through an anti-hate, equity, and accessibility lens'.

The Accessibility Advisory Committee 2025/26 Work Plan, approved by Council in Oct 2025, also identified "Accessibility in Reports" as an action item.

The 'staff report' is an important method of communication between WHRM Staff and Regional Council.

Application of a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) Lens across the actions of the municipality may require a review of processes, policies and procedures.

One of the more effective ways to effect change is to embed the tools in processes and procedures.

The Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Guidelines (DEIA) help report authors and collaborators to inform the direction of municipal services, programs, and projects with a clearer focus on meeting the needs of underrepresented groups. This approach ensures that inclusive participation of all residents can be achieved, and that the insights from groups who face systemic barriers and inequities are sought and reflected in reports, recommendations, and outcomes.

If consistently applied, such guidelines will simply become an accepted part of report writing. By identifying and understanding the DEIA considerations around a particular action, the likelihood of 'missing something' is diminished.

The suggested action is not intended to become an administrative burden or extend timelines by default. The application of such a policy is expected to be proportional. By creating, documenting and implementing DEIA guidelines for report writers, the municipality can set a powerful example for the broader community, demonstrating a genuine commitment to dismantling systemic barriers and promoting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility.

It is not the mandate of the AAC/DEICC to write policy. Appendix A represents a suggested path based on discussion at Committees and a review of other Municipal Units policies on the matter.

NEXT STEPS

In response to this report, Council may:

- Direct the CAO to engage staff to develop and document Report Writing Guidelines

- Choose not to proceed

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications to the Municipality regarding the filing of this report.

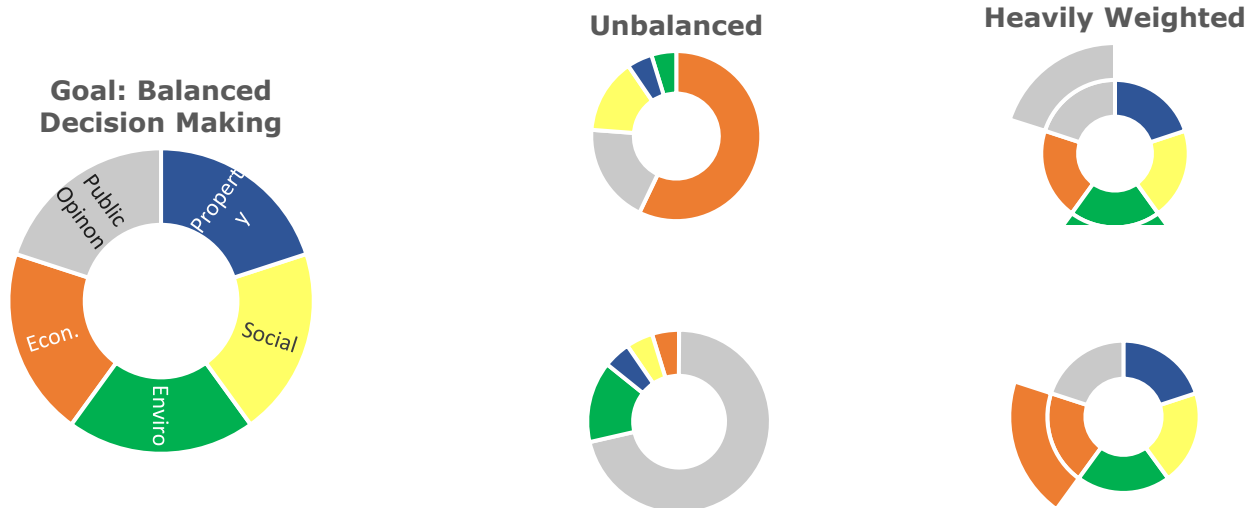
ALTERNATIVES

There are no alternatives identified in this report.

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A: Report Writing Guidelines

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER REVIEW



(For use if report is from a Councillor. CAO to provide additional comments on background, department/staff responsible and workload, budget, options, preferred strategy. State “Not Applicable” if report is from staff which already incorporates CAO review.)

Report Prepared by: _____
(Name and Title)

Report Reviewed by: _____

(Name and Title)

Report Approved by: _____

(Name and Title)

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility

Staff Report Considerations

Aligned with the West Hants Equity, Anti-Racism and Accessibility Strategy Plan

Purpose

The West Hants Equity, Anti-Racism and Accessibility Strategy Plan commits the Municipality to embedding equity, anti-racism, and accessibility into municipal decision making.

To support implementation of that commitment, staff reports to Council will include consideration of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility.

This guidance is intended to support consistent, practical application of that lens.

The intent is to ensure municipal decisions:

- Recognize and reduce systemic barriers
- Consider environmental equity and environmental racism where relevant
- Improve accessibility across physical, digital, communication and service environments
- Support meaningful inclusion of underrepresented and equity-deserving communities

This lens should be applied proportionally to the scope and impact of the decision being presented.

Alignment with the Strategy

This guidance supports implementation of the West Hants Equity, Anti-Racism and Accessibility Strategy Plan, including actions related to:

- Including Diversity and Inclusion considerations in Council report templates
- Introducing accessibility impact considerations in staff reports
- Embedding environmental equity considerations in municipal decision making
- Integrating equity and inclusion into broader municipal decision processes

What Appears in the Staff Report

Each staff report will include a section titled *Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Considerations*

This section should briefly summarize:

- Whether the proposed decision may have disproportionate impacts on underrepresented or equity-deserving communities
- Any accessibility implications, including physical, digital, communication or service accessibility
- Any environmental equity or environmental racism considerations where relevant
- Any engagement undertaken with impacted communities
- Any mitigation measures incorporated
- Or a statement that no material DEIA impacts were identified

The section should be concise, clear and transparent.

The goal is thoughtful consideration, not length.

Key Areas for Consideration

(Internal Guidance for Report Authors)

Not every prompt will apply to every report. These questions are intended to guide analysis and development.

1. Impact and Equity

- Who benefits from this decision?
- Who may experience negative or unintended impacts?
- Are impacts disproportionate for any underrepresented communities?
- Does this decision reduce or create barriers to participation, services or infrastructure?
- Where relevant, does this decision intersect with environmental equity or environmental racism considerations?

Underrepresented communities may include, but are not limited to: African Nova Scotian communities, Indigenous communities including Glooscap First Nation, persons with disabilities, 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, Francophones and Acadians, youth, seniors, immigrants, newcomers, women and gender diverse persons.

2. Accessibility

Accessibility must remain explicit and visible in decision making.

Consider:

- Physical accessibility of spaces and infrastructure
- Digital accessibility of platforms and online materials
- Communication accessibility, including plain language and alternative formats
- Service accessibility, including affordability, transportation and participation barriers

3. Engagement and Representation

- Were impacted communities informed or consulted where appropriate?
- Were engagement approaches inclusive and accessible?
- Are lived experiences reflected in the analysis where relevant?

Meaningful engagement strengthens decision making and builds trust.

4. Financial and Risk Considerations

- Are there resource implications related to improving accessibility or inclusion?
- Could the decision create unintended adverse impacts?
- Does the recommendation build capacity or advance equitable outcomes?

Proportional Application

The DEIA lens should be applied proportionally.

Routine or administrative reports may reasonably conclude that no material DEIA impacts were identified.

Major infrastructure, policy, land use, funding, or program decisions may require deeper analysis and engagement.

The intent is not to create administrative burden, but to embed equitable and accessible thinking into municipal practice in a sustainable way.

Commitment to Ongoing Improvement

This guidance supports implementation of the Equity, Anti-Racism and Accessibility Strategy Plan and related municipal policies, including the Accessibility Plan.

As the Municipality continues to learn and evolve, this framework may be refined to reflect emerging needs and community feedback.

Proposed Staff Report Template Section

(Example for Consideration)

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Considerations

Staff reviewed the proposed recommendation through a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility lens.

Accessibility

The proposal incorporates applicable accessibility standards, including physical access and plain language communication. Digital materials will be available in accessible formats where required.

Equity and Impact

No disproportionate impacts on underrepresented or equity-deserving communities were identified.

—or—

The proposal may impact [specific group]. Mitigation measures include [brief description].

Environmental Equity

No environmental equity concerns were identified in relation to this recommendation.

—or—

Environmental equity considerations were reviewed and addressed as follows: [brief summary].

Engagement

Engagement included [brief description of methods]. Efforts were made to ensure inclusive and accessible participation.

Staff will continue to monitor implementation to ensure accessibility and equity considerations remain addressed.

Short Version for Administrative Reports**Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Considerations**

Staff reviewed this administrative matter, and no material DEIA impacts were identified.