

Subject: Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee Revised Terms of Reference

File Number: ACS2025-OCC-CCS-0062

Report to Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee on 3 July 2025

and Council 23 July 2025

Submitted on June 20, 2025 by Caitlin Salter MacDonald, City Clerk

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Ward: Citywide

Objet : Mandat révisé du Comité de l'agriculture et des affaires rurales

Numéro de dossier : ACS2025-OCC-CCS-0062

Rapport présenté au Comité de l'agriculture et des affaires rurales

Rapport soumis le 3 juillet 2025

et au Conseil le 23 juillet 2025

Soumis le 20 juin 2025 par Caitlin Salter MacDonald, Greffière municipale

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Quartier : À l'échelle de la ville

REPORT RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee recommend Council approve its revised Terms of Reference, as outlined in this report and attached as Document 1.

RECOMMANDATION(S) DU RAPPORT

Que le Comité de l'agriculture et des affaires rurales recommande au Conseil d'approuver son mandat révisé, tel qu'il est énoncé dans le présent rapport et dans le document 1 ci-joint.

BACKGROUND

At its meeting of December 7, 2022, Ottawa City Council considered a report titled, "[2022-2026 Council Governance Review](#)" (ACS2022-OCC-GEN-0030). In approving this report, Council approved that revised standing committee Terms of Reference be submitted in draft form to the respective committees at their first meeting in 2023 for consideration and recommendation to Council for approval. On March 8, 2023, Council approved the [Terms of Reference](#) for the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee (ACS2023-OCC-CCS-0020).

[Rural Summit 2024](#) was held on November 2, 2024, and included discussion of various matters such as transportation, transit and infrastructure; environment and agriculture; community and social services; planning and economic development; and governance.

On December 11, 2024, Council considered the report titled, "[Acquisition of property at 5689 Ferry Road](#)," and approved Motion No. 2024-48-18, which in part directed the Office of the City Clerk, "to amend the Terms of Reference for the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee to include matters related to rural land acquisition, further to the Rural Summit."

On January 29, 2025, Ottawa City Council considered the report titled, "[2022-2026 Mid-term Governance Review](#)" (ACS2025-OCC-GEN-0001). Council approved mid-term renewal measures for standing committees, including maintaining the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee. The report also noted that staff intended to bring forward proposed updates to the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee's Terms of Reference to strengthen the committee's mandate and ensure that reports with significant rural implications should be considered by this committee, further to consultation conducted for the Rural Summit and the Mid-term Governance Review report.

Council directed that revised Terms of Reference for the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee be submitted in draft form to the committee as soon as practicable but no later than June 30, 2025, for consideration and recommendation to Council for approval. The draft Terms of Reference were submitted to Committee and published on Ottawa.ca as part of the July 3rd ARAC Agenda on June 23, 2025.

DISCUSSION

The draft revised Terms of Reference for the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee (ARAC) are attached as Document 1. The Terms of Reference:

1. Reflect proposed changes arising out of the Rural Summit, Mid-term Governance Review, and recent Council direction.
2. Address commitments arising from the Rural Summit to strengthen the committee's mandate and ensure that reports with significant rural implications should be considered by ARAC, and other associated matters as outlined in the Mid-term Governance Review report.
3. Highlight ARAC's mandate to consider matters with significant or distinct rural implications, reinforcing the language in the existing Terms of Reference.
4. Include provisions to support staff and committee Chairs in determining when and how matters may be brought to ARAC.
5. Add additional specific responsibilities as directed by Council or as identified by staff in line with the committee's overall mandate.
6. Preserve Council's authority as final decision maker unless that authority has been previously delegated to ARAC.
7. Include various housekeeping and formatting updates.

Document 1 sets out the proposed key changes to the ARAC Terms of Reference. Proposed minor amendments related to matters such as grammar, style, City department names and organization are included in the document but are not indicated.

Proposed key changes include as follows:

- In keeping with the Rural Summit objectives, the following language would be added to the mandate: "The committee will address emerging issues, study and remedy longstanding challenges, and help to build a culture of respect and understanding of rural issues and voices."
- To reinforce that all departments may bring reports to ARAC where applicable, the General Responsibilities would now include that ARAC shall be responsible directly to Council for those items outside of the urban boundary emanating from:
 - "All departments, services and/or branches on matters that:
 - i. Provide a program or service in rural areas that requires special consideration due to unique interests and requirements of those rural areas, and/or

- ii. Are responsible for issues arising from the rural areas, or with a distinct rural component or impact on rural residents.”
- To address matters of cross-jurisdiction, and in keeping with the existing authorities of committee Chairs, the following would be included: “Ensure coordination and consultation with other standing committees and departments where responsibilities overlap on issues related to the rural areas and on issues relevant to the mandate of more than one committee. In accordance with Subsection 88(1)(a) of *the Procedure By-law*, where an issue is relevant to the mandate of more than one committee, the Chairs of the respective committees shall determine which committee will be responsible for the issue, whether the issue can be considered by both committees successively, or, alternatively, whether a joint committee meeting should be held.”
- Additional language on inter-governmental advocacy for rural priorities: “Monitor federal and provincial legislation with a distinct impact on agriculture and its associated industries and make recommendations to Council on matters related to advocating for rural priorities with other levels of government.”
- Section added pertaining to rural land acquisition in keeping with direction set out in Motion No. 2024-48-18, as described in the Background section of this report: “Make recommendations to Council on real estate property transactions related to the acquisition of rural lands and buildings required for any purpose of the City of Ottawa and in accordance with the provision of the *Delegation of Authority By-law* and the Acquisition of Real Property Policy, and where delegation of authority has been lifted, including but not limited to those funded from the Natural Area Acquisition (Rural) account.” Land sale or other disposition matters would remain within the Finance and Corporate Services Committee’s purview.
- Reference added to rural infrastructure per the Rural Summit: “Make recommendations to Council on matters relating to rural infrastructure that require special consideration due to unique interests and requirements of the rural areas.”
- Provision added recognizing ARAC’s role in making recommendations to Council on rural ditching oversight and the Rural Ditch Maintenance Levy.
- Provision added to address the handling of boundary expansions: “Official Plan amendments related to Rural Village Boundary Expansions and Urban Boundary expansions where agricultural lands are at issue, in coordination with the Planning and Housing Committee as appropriate.”
- New section created to address responsibilities pertaining to transportation and transit:

- Review transportation policy matters specifically related to rural areas outside the rural boundary, and make recommendations to Council on transportation matters to reflect the distinct context of rural living, agricultural industry and rural businesses.
- Make recommendations to Council on all other transportation matters as they relate to the rural areas outside the urban boundary, including parking, one-way designations, road accesses, intersection signals and improvements, sidewalks and pedestrian paths, streetscapes, speed zoning, and traffic calming measures [note that this provision is largely included in the existing Terms of Reference].
- Make recommendations to Transit Committee and Council on public transit matters as they relate to the rural areas outside the Urban Transit Area (UTA), including rural bus service, light rail service, Para Transpo, and park and ride lots.
- Consider and approve applications for road closure in the rural areas outside the urban boundary, where an objection has been received pursuant to the *Delegation of Authority By-law*.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There is no legal impediment to adopting the recommendation in this report.

COMMENTS BY THE WARD COUNCILLOR(S)

This is not a ward-specific report.

CONSULTATION

The Office of the City Clerk consulted with all City departments in preparing proposed revisions to the Terms of Reference. Consultation also occurred with ARAC's Chair and Members.

The public was notified of this report through the weekly meeting advertisements and on ottawa.ca, and the publication of the agenda. Public delegations may be received by the committee.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

There are no specific accessibility impacts associated with this report.

DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY IMPLICATIONS

No additional delegated authority is being sought by staff as part of this report.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

No risk management implications have been identified associated with this report.

RURAL IMPLICATIONS

In addition to direction provided in the 2022-2026 Mid-term Governance Review, the Terms of Reference reflect prior Council direction from ARAC [Motion No. ARAC 2024-18-02 regarding Rural Summit](#) reporting – November 7, 2024, and [Council Motion No. 2024-48-18](#) (C. Kelly) re: ARAC Terms of Reference (arising from Ferry Road item) – December 11, 2024.

The revised Terms of Reference are intended to address commitments arising out of the Rural Summit and provide added clarity to elected officials, staff and the public on matters within ARAC's mandate.

TERM OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES

This report implements the committee mandate approved by Council as part of the 2022-2026 Council Governance Review.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Document 1 – Draft Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee Terms of Reference (proposed key changes are bolded for ease of reference – minor amendments related to matters such as grammar, style, City department names and organization are not indicated).

DISPOSITION

Upon approval of the report by Council, the Terms of Reference will become the mandate and governing authority for the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee and will be published to ottawa.ca by the Office of the City Clerk.