INFORMATION REPORT

TO: Mayor and Members General Issues Committee	**WARD(S) AFFECTED:** CITY WIDE
COMMITTEE DATE: June 19, 2013	

| **SUBJECT/REPORT NO:**
Redevelopment of the City of Hamilton's Website (CM12008(a)/FCS12055(a) (City Wide) (Item S of GIC Outstanding Business List) ||

| **SUBMITTED BY:**
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and

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SIGNATURE: | **PREPARED BY:**
Service Delivery Strategy Team

(Beth Goodger, Chair)

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Council Direction:

On July 12, 2012, Council approved, in principle, the strategies and expected outcomes of the Web Redevelopment. The approved strategy included a phased approach to the work and the establishment of a Sub-Committee of Council to oversee the project.

It is the intent of this Report CM12008(a)/FCS12055(a) to provide Council with an update on the overall Project status and progress of work.

Information:

Report CM12008/FCS12055 Redevelopment of the City of Hamilton's Website was presented to General Issues Committee on June 28, 2012. The goals of the web redevelopment project are to:

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- Improve the City's online image
- Improve communication to citizens and opportunities for engagement
- Improve online customer service
- Enable the city to provide services at a lower cost.

Three streams of work were identified within the strategy to achieve the project goals:
1. Establishing governance for the website
2. Rebuild of the website
3. Enhance five online services

An update on each area is provided below.

1) Website Governance

A Web Redevelopment Strategy Team (WRST) has been established to contribute to the implementation of the strategy across all departments and divisions and fulfil the governance role. The Team has been meeting bi-weekly since November 2012. A temporary Web Content Coordinator has been hired and will support the development of a new publishing standard, authoring guidelines, policies, content review and Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) compliance.

A process to review and prioritize new web projects has been developed to ensure resources are available for the Web Redevelopment while still managing time-sensitive web projects and initiatives.

2) Rebuild of the Website

Technology

Staff has conducted a Web Technology Assessment to review the benefits, costs and risks of various options for the City's new web technology platform and hosting environment. This investment is a critical component of the web redevelopment project and will impact the City for many years to come. The City engaged IBM to provide objective analysis and recommendations to staff. As part of IBM's analysis, they consulted staff, conducted public consultations, benchmarked against industry trends and interviewed other municipal governments. Staff will review the recommendations to determine feasibility and begin to build a procurement plan for implementing the appropriate recommendations later this summer.

Content and new look and feel

The WRST have been reviewing all content on the website with a target to streamline and consolidate information into a more searchable and citizen-friendly manner. The target is to remove 50% of the content on the City's website, while improving the ability for citizens to find, access and understand important information about City programs and services. By achieving this target, the City's website will be easier and less costly

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to maintain, and the City will be able to meet its (AODA) compliance obligations. Even though the City has targeted a reduction in the content on the website, all of the important City information will still be available.

City staff from across the organization participated in training and development to improve their skills related to AODA legislation and compliance requirements for accessible websites and online service delivery. An AODA compliance assessment has been completed and staff are reviewing the assessment to determine a plan for improving the compliance and accessibility of the City's web content and services. Internal processes and standards may need to be reviewed to ensure that information is created in an AODA compliant manner to enable the City to meet its obligations in a most cost-effective manner.

There are currently approximately 30 different websites being used to promote City programs and services. The WRST has identified opportunities to several of these service specific websites into the City's main website. This will enable the new publishing standards and visual design to be applied to these websites, while making it easier to maintain and ensure that the City meets its AODA obligations. A pilot was first conducted in the Culture Division of the Planning & Economic Development Department and following the pilot, a protocol will be developed to apply to websites in other Departments later this summer.

Design of the website look and feel will be the next focus of work for the project over the summer. The objective is to complete the work by the end of the year and implement the new design on the home page, at a minimum, as soon as possible.

3) Enhancing Online Services

Working through the Web Redevelopment and Service Channel Sub-Committee, the WRST has confirmed six online services for a comprehensive review during the web project. These online services include bus schedules, recreation programs, animal licensing, business services, taxation services and Clerk's services. These online services were identified based on the needs of citizens (using analytics from a number of sources), as well as, selection criteria including opportunity to improve the service experience for citizens/businesses, opportunity to migrate to self-service channels and an opportunity to increase revenues or enable efficiencies.

The online bus schedule service will be the first online service to be reviewed and staff has been working to scope the improvements. This service is used heavily by transit riders and usability and accessibility improvements have been identified. A new version of the bus scheduling software (Trapeze) is being implemented in the coming months and ongoing improvements will be monitored, measured and reported to the Web Redevelopment and Service Channel Sub-Committee.

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The remaining online services will be scoped over the summer and specific cost estimates will be determined. This information will form part of a report back on additional funding requirements and a supporting 2014 Capital Budget request.

Working through the Web Redevelopment and Service Channel Sub-Committee, an assessment of the application of transaction fees to online services was conducted and the Web Redevelopment and Service Channel Sub-Committee recommended pursuing the removal of transaction fees, identifying them as a potential deterrent to the adoption of self-service channels. A review of other municipalities revealed that most are not charging transaction fees (with some limited exceptions) and, in general, governments are encouraging citizens to use lower cost channels as applying transaction fees runs contrary to that philosophy. This information, when taken into consideration with the low value the City receives on an annual basis (i.e. approximately $7,000 excluding POA and Parking), led to the recommendation supported by Sub-Committee to remove these fees. As part of the 2014 budget process, staff will bring forward the necessary changes to the User Fee By-Law so that web transaction fees will be eliminated where there are no contractual obligations to encourage use of online services.

Noticeable changes to the website will start to take place over the coming few months and staff will be sharing this progress with Council through Information Updates as they occur.

Next Steps

The key areas of the main website redevelopment are underway and there are sufficient funds to complete the scheduled work for the remainder of 2013, based on the $960,000 in previously approved capital funding. When the phase 1 funding for the work was approved, Council also requested that a business case be brought forward to support the remaining project costs and this work is underway.   Staff will report back in the fourth quarter of 2013 on the business case, include more refined cost assessments of the remaining work to support the 2014 capital budget request. In the meantime, updates will continue to be provided through Web Redevelopment and Service Channel Sub-Committee.

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