

Letter to General Issues Committee in Support of Councillor Nann's Motion respecting Integrating an Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Framework to the Policies and Procedures of the Selection Committee and Interview Sub-Committees respecting the Appointment of Citizens to the City's Agencies, Boards and Committees

The Hamilton Status of Women Committee is writing to communicate our support for Councillor Nann's proposed motion. Over the past month, there has been a considerable amount of discussion over the selection process for a variety of committees, the most well known of which are the LGBTQ+ Committee and the Police Services Board. It is the understanding of our committee that there is no consistent process that governs committee selection and we believe Councillor Nann's motion will rectify that. We also believe that having a consistent process in place will lead to greater transparency in the future, which is a vital step toward achieving equity.

In addition, we are excited that Councillor Nann's proposal is to apply an equity and diversity lens to committee selection. According to the city's "Equity and Inclusion Policy", "all stakeholder communities... have the right to barrier free access to resources, decision-making, expertise, experience, connections, information and opportunities through solutions that meet their needs". The notion of equity is further defined in the city's draft "Equity Diversity Inclusion Handbook" as "recognizing diversity and disadvantage, and directing resources and disadvantages towards those most in need to ensure equal outcomes for all".

Taken together, these city statements affirm the need for true diversity on all our committees, and it is quite evident that this diversity is lacking at the present time. It seems clear that the current committee selection process is inadvertently functioning as a barrier and we would like to invite the city to take steps to dismantle this barrier. As a first movement toward this, we would like to suggest establishing a firm guideline for a minimum number of seats on boards and volunteer advisory committees to be reserved for people of colour and for youth. These seats, where possible, should not be combined; for example, a seat held by a youth of colour should not count as both a youth seat and a person of colour seat. Further, we recommend these seats reflect as wide a diversity as possible, as clearly not all people of colour and youth share all their communities in common. For example, when considering people of colour for a committee great care should be exercised in assuring that a variety of ethnicities, ages and economic circumstances are represented¹. The reason for this recommendation is that it is our experience, in our various communities, that when people can identify with people in positions of leadership they are far more likely to seek such positions themselves. It is our hope that this will lead to a more equitable balance of committee members in the future, and if this hasn't been the outcome after one full city term, we suggest the approach be re-evaluated, as new systems cannot succeed without constant evaluation.

It is also the position of the Status of Women Committee that addressing the makeup of committees is only one small step toward the ultimate goal of barrier-free access for all. To this end, we would like to point out that the application process itself limits the ability of some folks to apply due to varying levels of education, economic privilege, and access to specialized resources, such as the internet. The City of Hamilton's website is also quite confusing to navigate even for those who do have sophistication in computer use. In addition, a lack of adequate childcare provided to committee members limits the ability of many to take part in our committees. There are also cultural differences to

1 It is important to be aware of and consider the demographics of the city of Hamilton in the selection of all committees.

consider, including how we would handle those who are not fluent in English on our committees, and different models of community engagement, such as those practised by indigenous communities.

The Hamilton Status of Women Advisory Committee