



## CITIZEN COMMITTEE REPORT

<b>To:</b>	Emergency and Community Services Committee
<b>From:</b>	LGBTQ Advisory Committee  _____ Jake Maurice, Committee Member
<b>Date:</b>	March 10, 2022
<b>Re:</b>	Accessible Captioning

### Recommendations

That accessible captioning is available on all advisory committee meetings through WebEx by May 30<sup>th</sup> 2022

### Background

Members of the LGBTQAC have asked for accommodations, specifically that there be captioning in meetings, so that they can participate without barriers. There has been a previous Citizen Committee Report filed through the Audit and Finance Committee on (date). As indicated on the previous report, City staff reported back that the option for accessible captioning through Webex was explored and available but not enabled or purchased at this time. We believe that it is crucial to recommend May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022 as a date for this to be implemented. This is something that the City has been made aware of for over a year. This is imperative for members on citizen committees and members of the public to have equal access to meetings.

## **Analysis / Rationale**

The LGBTQAC considers this accommodation a matter of human rights and disability justice. We are confident that this barrier can be overcome by the City of Hamilton. As the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association states, "90% of people with hearing loss can improve communication with hearing assistive technology, counseling or environmental changes".

We also recognize that this accommodation is not just important for those who are hard of hearing but for those who may have other cognitive disabilities, who experience Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), or who suffer from similar chronic conditions.

We understand that, because the LGBTQAC is a volunteer Advisory Committee, that it is not subject to the same laws, rules, and regulations that govern the City's employees, but we thought it was important to share this information posted on the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) website on November 12, 2018, entitled Individual Accommodation Plans in Ontario Workplaces. "The Employment Standard under the AODA states that all public sector organizations, and private or non-profit organizations with fifty or more workers, must develop and document a process for writing individual accommodation plans. Individual accommodation plans are written documents that list all accommodations workers with disabilities need to make their jobs accessible.

For example, accommodations that a worker might use include informational accommodations, such as documents in digital form or real-time captioning at meetings". More information about the AODA Employment Standard can be accessed by visiting <https://www.aoda.ca/individual-accommodation-plans-in-ontario-workplaces/>. While the LGBTQAC recognizes that its members are not employees, it is still participating in work in a virtual workplace with members of City staff and should enjoy the same level of accommodation as others in that workplace. We recognize that both legislation and accommodation standards are changing with respect to virtual workplaces and environments and ask that the City be forward thinking in its approach.

As far as the LGBTQAC can tell, documents like the City's Barrier-Free Design Guidelines (Version 1.1, 2006) and its Accessibility Standards (2017) have not been updated to include provisions since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic with respect to virtual environments. The LGBTQAC is asking for this to be implemented without an additional request from members of the LGBTQAC

to submit paperwork and other documents. Sufficient requests have been made and we don't think it's reasonable to place additional burdens on or barriers in front of those asking for these reasonable accommodations. Further, we do not think that this technological accommodation should only be extended to the LGBTQAC but should become part of every City meeting that is broadcast publicly. It is important that all Hamiltonians can participate in their municipal government, and we feel that this is part of the City's commitment to and response to the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (O. reg. 427/07) and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0).

While we recognize that there is not binding legislation that currently mandates that the City provide this accommodation, we feel that the examples we have drawn upon will aid the City in accepting our recommendation. NOTE - We ask that the LGBTQAC Chair be updated as to when and at what Committee the recommendation(s) in this Citizen Committee Report will be addressed so that they can speak to the matter formally at that time.