




# INFORMATION REPORT

<b>TO:</b>	Mayor and Members General Issues Committee
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b>	February 15, 2023
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b>	Hamilton.ca Website Redevelopment - Status Update (CM20011(b)) (City Wide)
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	City Wide
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<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

## COUNCIL DIRECTION – Information Only

### INFORMATION

On September 19, 2022 City staff launched a redeveloped Hamilton.ca which marked the completion of the first phase of the redevelopment of the City of Hamilton's corporate website. Timing of the overall project was influenced by the end of life of the City's former website platform and the project's focus, improving search capabilities, was influenced by feedback gained from the project's consultation effort.

Phase Two of the website redevelopment project will focus on further improvements to the website's searchability, in particular improving the site's ability to find information on the City's eScribe platform, which hosts Council documents, as well as the numerous PDF documents housed on the City's website.

These efforts will be supported by the City's Digital Strategy, which has identified the need to ensure corporate education and training is provided to ensure that documents submitted for posting on the City, as well as a Digital Accessibility Policy, which will be coming forward for Council's consideration in the coming months.

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OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

While the new website solution is enabled for superior searchability, information and documents need to be “digital ready” prior to the information being uploaded to the website and for website users to see the benefits. Public feedback identifies a common pain point for users - the City relies heavily on PDFs, burying information in a medium that is often outdated and hard to read online.

Currently, a large number of legacy documents, including scanned PDFs, presentation decks, marketing collateral, plans and strategies are delivered in large file sizes that are slow to load on desktop and mobile devices and files formatted and structured for press printing. They are not digitally optimized preventing the search function from performing at its full potential and pose limitations to overall usability.

Digitally optimized is a process that involves creating documents with recognizable text, addresses factors such as the use of colour, contrast, tags, structuring and formatting long-form copy to help users efficiently skim and scan sections that may contain the answers they seek.

As an organization we would change behaviour and not use PDFs to present digital content that could and should otherwise be a web page that is easier to scan, navigate and allows data insights into reader engagement.

Further work to ensure the City’s various digital systems, including the Drupal 9 technology that operates the City’s website and the eScribe platform that hosts Council documents, better “speak” to one another will also be a necessary step to maximize the efficiency of the website’s current search engine capabilities.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The previous version of Hamilton.ca was built on Drupal 7 technology. The Drupal Association announced that by November 2021 product support was ending for community-based updates like bug fixes, new features, or security updates.

The City’s former Drupal 7 website, developed in 2014, also had several accessibility compliance issues as well as numerous functional deficiencies that were impacting residents web experience, which needed to be addressed.

To address the concerns, staff entered into a competitive bidding process to create an updated site with newer technology and which prioritized improving users search experience as well as the experience for individuals accessing the website on mobile devices, the most common way residents access the City’s website.

Through the successful vendor, staff delivered a newly designed website for \$213,900. Costs for the new site were significantly reduced by ensuring all the migration of all

content all existing information (more than 1200 pages and thousands of links and documents) was completed in-house using existing operational resources. The City also is paying \$283,850 total for five years of web hosting costs.

## **FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

AODA compliance is a continuous improvement activity as new success criteria are approved and released and something that requires ongoing education, training, effort and monitoring to ensure continued compliance with Ontario legislation. These efforts include the requirement of all divisional staff to provide information that is digitally ready and AODA compliant when contemplated for posting to the City's website.

## **POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS**

In accordance with Ontario Regulation 191/11 made under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005* as it pertains to the Information and Communications Standard a City of Hamilton Digital Accessibility Policy will be developed.

## **ALIGNMENT TO THE 2016 – 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN**

### **Community Engagement & Participation**

Hamilton has an open, transparent and accessible approach to City government that engages with and empowers all citizens to be involved in their community.

### **Healthy & Safe Communities**

Hamilton is a safe and supportive city where people are active, healthy, and have a high quality of life.

### **Culture & Diversity**

Hamilton is a thriving, vibrant place for arts, culture, and heritage where diversity and inclusivity are embraced and celebrated.

## **APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED**

Appendix "A" - Media release: [City of Hamilton launches new website to improve user experience](#), September 16, 2022