



**CITY OF HAMILTON**  
**CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE**  
**Digital, Innovation & Strategic Partnerships**

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| <b>TO:</b>                | Mayor and Members<br>General Issues Committee  |
| <b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b>    | August 14, 2023  |
| <b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b> | Our City Survey (CM23011(a))   |
| <b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>  | City Wide  |
| <b>PREPARED BY:</b>       | Aimee Tan (905) 546-2424 Ext. 5332<br>Lisa Zinkewich (905) 546-2424 Ext. 5312            |
| <b>SUBMITTED BY:</b>      | Cyrus Tehrani<br>Chief Digital Officer & Director of Innovation<br>City Manager's Office |
| <b>SIGNATURE:</b>         |  |

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- a) That the triennial undertaking of the Our City Survey, be stopped.
- b) That the associated operating budget of \$65,000 remain in the Digital & Innovation Office and be used to support other performance-based initiatives such as tracking of 2022 – 2026 Council Priority progress.

**FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

**Financial:** An operating budget of \$65,000 was Council approved as part of the Our City Survey business case (BC-08) ([Report CM19002](#)), where \$130,000 was approved on a biennial basis (\$65,000 annually). This will be used used to support other performance-based initiatives such as tracking of 2022 – 2026 Council Priority progress.

**Staffing:** There is no staffing impact as resources to support the Our City Survey was through temporary contracts.

**Legal:** N/A

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The first Our City Survey was conducted between January 15 and February 6, 2018, with results presented as part of [Report CM18016](#). The second iteration was undertaken September 9, 2019 through January 8, 2020, with results presented as part of Report [CM20009](#). The third iteration was undertaken between November 1 and December 18, 2022, with results presented as part of Report [CM23011](#), at the May 3, 2022 General Issues Committee (GIC) meeting.

As part of the 2022 Our City Survey, 2,500 online surveys were collected, where a response was provided for at least one survey question and 1,052 phone surveys were completed, with a margin of error +/-3.0%, 19 out of 20 times. Although the undertaking of the 2022 Our City Survey is considered statistically significant, the Council approved margin of error was not met for either the City or ward level, although the time the survey was active was extended by 10 days (total 6 weeks). Challenges in meeting the Council approved margin of error for the phone survey began with the 2019 survey and will continue to be a challenge going forward due to changing social practices related to answering calls from unknown numbers, along with on-going concerns related to:

- survey format (high-level nature of questions)
- survey methodology (random phone versus self-selected online)
- number of diverse topics included
- time commitment to complete; and
- lack of availability of actionable insights to drive continuous improvement.

These concerns were expressed by staff as part of internal consultation around how the survey results were being used and shared by members of Council at the May 3<sup>rd</sup> GIC meeting.

## **POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS**

There are no policy implications.

## **RELEVANT CONSULTATION**

### **Internal Consultation and Collaboration**

When the 2022 Our City Survey results were presented to Senior Leadership Team and Departmental Leadership Teams, including service area leads for service areas included in the Our City Survey, the value of the survey was discussed. During these conversations, the main feedback expressed by staff was that the survey results did not provide enough detail to provide actionable insights to drive continuous improvement. In addition, concerns were raised around the multiple diverse topics covered by the survey and if the methodology used gathered a true understanding of the quality, impact

and satisfaction of each City service, given the high-level nature of the questions, perception-based structure and random nature. In addition, some service area leads noted that more detailed resident feedback was gathered outside of the Our City Survey. Examples include:

- Long-term Care annual surveys with key stakeholders, including the Annual Resident Satisfaction Survey and Annual Family Satisfaction Survey of services;
- Building Division Customer Service Survey which invites building permit applicants to provide feedback on the building permit application process;
- The My ride on-demand Transit app which asks riders to rate their ride; and
- Level of Service feedback being gathered to inform the development and execution of the City's Corporate Asset Management Plans, which is a required component of [Ontario Regulation 588/17](#).

As part of consultation around the evolution of the Our City Survey staff spoke with the Community Initiatives team, who are responsible for leading the development of the City's Public Engagement Policy and Framework, to discuss how the forthcoming policy and framework would inform how and when public engagement takes place. Regarding survey purpose, the Community Initiatives staff reinforced the importance of value-based or meaningful public participation to ensure broad representation of community voices; that all contributions, regardless of methodology used, be shared in a thematic or overall summary; and that engagement be decision-orientated and goal-driven. Staff also noted that if feedback from specific questions would not inform decisions or influence discussions, that there be consideration towards removing those questions, and that if the public had recently been engaged on similar topics via City-led engagement initiatives, staff consider using that data to inform work as opposed to re-asking comparable questions.

### **Municipal Best Practice Research and Consultation**

A best practice review with 15 comparative municipalities that have conducted similar surveys was completed. This review looked to understand survey objectives, survey frequency, methodology, survey administration and result use. This research revealed that many of the municipalities experience the same challenges related to methodology and utilization, with some also noting they were in the process of reviewing survey effectiveness as well. The review identified that these types of surveys varied extensively between municipalities with phone sample sizes ranging from 500 to 7,600 and survey budget ranging from \$14,500 to \$125,000 depending on survey length, survey sample size, time of year and vendor.

### **ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

Staff's recommendation is to not undertake any future iterations of the Our City Survey. This is supported in the feedback received internally to the organization and confirmed through the City's best practices research, that the value-add provided by the survey is

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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.

limited given the survey results do not provide enough detail to define actionable insights to drive continuous improvement. This is in addition to the other challenges noted around survey format and methodology that were also expressed by some members of Council.

Given the foundation for the recommendation is to stop the survey, detailed analysis related to recommendations on methodology, resourcing, and data integration opportunities are not included, however municipalities consulted with identified similar concerns, particularly challenges in meeting the Council-approved margin of error for phone methodologies.

Staff also believe that there are opportunities to revisit how to best meet the initial intentions of the Our City survey through the newly identified 2022 – 2026 Council priority outcomes of Improved Public Engagement and Efficient Customer Service and Communications. Through the work that will be undertaken to support the achievement of the Council Priority outcomes, staff will look for opportunities to revisit how to gauge satisfaction with services and present feedback to illustrate service performance and drive improvements consistently across all City services.

#### **ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION**

The status quo of a triennial (every three years) Our City Survey phone survey (sample size of 1,500, City level results accurate to +/-2.5% at the 95% confidence level, and ward level results accurate to +/-9.8% at the 95% confidence level) and open-link online survey is not recommended based on:

- Comments and concerns noted by Councillors on the value and format of the survey
- Feedback from staff related to utilization of the data gathered from the Our City Survey, particularly that the Our City Survey does not provide enough detail to provide actionable insights to drive continuous improvement activities
- On-going challenges related to existing methodology and survey format

#### **APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED**

N/A