

THE MUNICIPALITY OF THE CITY OF HAMILTON
COUNCIL DELEGATION REQUEST
JULY 8, 2024

Topic - *Challenges and Opportunities Navigating the City of Hamilton*
From.- *Hafeez Hussain*

Key Issues

- The City of Hamilton has been a challenging matrix municipality that I have experience with. Being a single-tier Municipality, taxpayers expect efficiencies and breaking silos. The city does not have a 360-degree lense of residents and taxpayer concerns. No Customer Service Charter.
- As part of Council strategic priorities for putting residents and customers first, there is no progress and as an resident who doesn't live in Hamilton, this Municipality has serious customer service and transparency issue when residents or taxpayers interact with staff.
- City Staff lack a "Customer Service" mindset, transparency and SLA, and continued to
- The City complaint handling framework is broken. It doesn't work for taxpayers.
- The City does not have any SLA when complaints are responded to in a timely matter. Unlike in Toronto and Mississauga where there is a customer service charter that have established SLA when staff will reply to your request.
- Value for Money – As we are experience increase property tax rolls, what the value of taxpayers when navigating with this City when we see a mill rate of 1.424% vs other cities with a lower mill rate. Residents don't see their tax dollars at use when they continue to be ghosted by staff and questions not answered in a timely manner.
- Continuing to not address this issue will drive investments and growth outside the city and will residents and taxpayers and will impact housing. Why should I invest, work or live in Hamilton when Halton Region, Burlington or Oakville make it more easier and customer friendly to navigate City Hall?

Ontario Ombudsman Report

- In 2023-2024, the office received a record **3,595** cases about general municipal issues – a significant increase from 2,814 the previous year.

- Based on the stats in the Ombudsman Report, the City of Hamilton has the most complaints escalated to Ombudsman Ontario per capita vs. any other Municipality in Ontario

Complexity of City Hall

- Over the last 16 month, my complaint has not been resolved to a Customer Service standard
- Only three departments have been very satisfactory (Water, Office of the City Manager, and Fire)
- The City Clerk Office has to be the most difficult and complex organization that I have faced with the City. This is the main department that I have had with this City that no one to date or this council has made it a priority to reform. With various FOI breaches with the IPC, protocol for procedures on how council meetings are conducted, and Municipal elections, the City of Hamilton and the council should be very concern on the operations of this department. I have no trust in this city democracy and its obligations under the Municipal Act and MFIPPA unless the department is reformed and have a Customer First approach.
- Other areas that remain unsatisfactory include Human Resources, Community Services, Building/Planning, and the Office of the Mayor
- Services received from By-Law and Taxation/Revenue Service was satisfactory.

Request from Council and the Mayor

- As part of this council strategic priorities, direct the City Manager and the Executive team to set timelines when a Customer Service Charter and Service Level standards are established within their respective departments. All city departments should have SLA and Customer Service charter when dealing with members of the public.
- Council – Pass a motion to the City Auditor to conduct a Value for Money Audit on Customer Service Standards – Investigate the complaint handling process for residents and taxpayers and see how many issues are not resolved, what resources it takes, the root cause of service delays, and issues, and why do many matters get escalated to external bodies such as Ombudsman Ontario and the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario
- Council to ask staff to investigate the Ontario Ombudsman Annual Report

And direct the City Manager and Executive Team to report back to council why does Hamilton have the most complaints escalated per capita in Ontario escalated to Ombudsman Ontario.

Council to direct staff to investigate training for City staff on Customer Service and how to deal with members of the public, and whether customer service and service excellence to members of the public can be put as part of performance management (i.e. Service goals, SLA, or response time to the public).

- Council to direct staff or Mayor Taskforce on Transparency and Accountability to investigate other Municipalities Customer Service Standards and report back to council how they put customers first and customer service is at the centre of everything when delivering city services.
- investigate how residents/taxpayers service standards are with other Municipalities vs. Hamilton. Why does Hamilton continue to have the most complaints to Ombudsman Ontario? Why isn't there Customer Service Standard like Toronto?
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