



CITIZEN COMMITTEE REPORT

To:	Emergency & Community Services Committee
From:	Seniors Advisory Committee _____ Penelope Petrie, Chair
Date:	October 22, 2024
Re:	The Hamilton Spectator Opinion Editorial (Op-ed)

Recommendation

That the Hamilton Spectator Opinion Editorial (Op-ed) respecting the Communications Survey for Older Adults of the Seniors Advisory Committee attached as Appendix “A”, be approved.

Background

At the October 4, 2024 Seniors Advisory Committee meeting, members passed a motion under Item 11 (Motions) for City Council to approve the Hamilton Spectator Opinion Editorial (Op-ed) piece containing results from the Communications Survey for Older Adults.

At the January 24, 2024 City Council meeting, Council approved the content, design, and dissemination of the Communications Survey for Older Adults by the Seniors Advisory Committee. The survey was accessible in an online format on the Engage Hamilton website (engage.hamilton.ca) and paper copies of the survey were made available at City of Hamilton seniors and recreation centres. The survey was open to residents from March 27, 2024 to May 22, 2024. During this timeframe a total of 326 surveys were completed and submitted.

With the assistance of City staff, the Seniors Advisory Committee developed an infographic highlighting key results of the survey that was included as appendix “C” in the Information Report (HSC24007) that was presented to Emergency and Community Services Committee on September 19, 2024. In addition, the infographic was shared with older adults as well as representatives from various community groups and organizations at several community engagement events including the International Day of

Older Persons that took place on October 1, 2024.

Analysis/Rationale

The goal of the Seniors Advisory Committee is to share survey results with the broader community, including City staff, community organizations, and businesses to assist them by improving their communication with older adult residents.

The Seniors Advisory Committee is a key partner with the Hamilton Council on Aging and City of Hamilton for Hamilton's Plan for an Age-Friendly Community (2021-2026). The Seniors Advisory Committee's Communications Working Group has aligned their workplan with goal 3 (Communications and Information) of the Age-Friendly Plan. One of the objectives under goal 3 is to "increase and improve access to information for older adults." More specifically, one recommendation states "improve customer services across all sectors to ensure that services are age-friendly and dementia-friendly."

Attached as Appendix A: The Hamilton Spectator Opinion Editorial (Op-ed) respecting the Communications Survey for Older Adults.

Why communicating with OLDER ADULTS is so Challenging!

Timely and accurate communications is critical in a properly functioning society. It helps build relationships and trust between people. It helps people find information to help them in their daily lives. In fact, certain communications help save lives. Communications can only be effective, if the people you are trying to reach are able to receive the information.

Communicating with people in general is challenging, but getting information to older adults with limited access to technology is even more difficult. At the Seniors Kick off event in June 2023, the Senior Advisory Committee (SAC) conducted a brief survey with older adults to gather information on how older adults access information. The results validated our understanding and helped us in coming up with an improved survey for 2024.

Our goal was to make the improved survey easier to complete and provide us with more granular data that would help the City of Hamilton provide better communications to our senior population.

Important feedback we received from 2023, was that organizations were very interested in learning more about what seniors were interested in and the best method of communicating with them.

The surprise was that email was the most frequent method of communication used by older adults followed by community information, websites, social media, and seniors' centres like Sackville Hill Seniors Centre. Additional methods of communications identified were phone calls, face-to-face interactions, flyers/leaflets, and paper mail.

The next important question the survey asked older adults was the type of information that is of greatest interest to them. The answers we received covered a wide spectrum of information, including healthcare (family physician, dentist, dementia care), financial services, retirement and long-term care living, transportation options, house cleaning, lawncare services, snow removal, legal services such as obtaining a Will, police services, physical activities, and community services.

Another key finding was the surveys that were completed by organizations who participated in the Seniors Kickoff event. They requested access to the results of the survey. Most organizations expressed interest in gaining a deeper insight into the type of information older adults wanted, as well as the best methods of communicating with them. Examples of organizations who completed the survey included real estate businesses, caregiver organizations, and post secondary institutions.

Organizations who want to communicate with older adults not only have to think about the content, but also the method of communicating.

In 2024, we revised the survey to simplify the questions and make it much easier for people to complete by using check boxes.

The total number of respondents was 326 as compared to 75 in 2023. The results at a high level are as follows. Additional detail is available on the Engage Hamilton website – [Documents | Communications Survey for Older Adults | Engage Hamilton](#)

72% of the 326 respondents completed the survey online. 28% of respondents filled out the paper survey. The top three preferred ways older adults would like to receive information are E-mail (85%), local newspaper (44%) and websites (39%). The top three topics of interest are free workshops (64%), exercise and fitness (62%), and outings (57%). Top technology learning topics are accessing/finding information online (28%), using a smartphone (24%), communication or messaging apps (24%), and accessing virtual meetings and online events (24%).

Conclusion

Our goal is to communicate the survey results to help inform City Council and staff, post-secondary institutions, community organizations/groups, and private businesses of the preferred methods of communication used by older adults, as well as the type of information they are seeking. The final goal is that we will all do a better job of communicating with older adults living in Hamilton, to ensure their needs are met.

Penelope Petrie – Chair of the Senior Advisory Committee (SAC) in collaboration with Alexander Huang - member of SAC's Communications Working Group.