

Date: June 27, 2019

To: Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee

Subject: Proposed Budget Process Changes to Remove Systemic Barriers to Hiring People with Disabilities

Summary:

In 2017, the Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee recommended to City Council that all operating and capital costs related to AODA compliance and accessibility initiatives be exempt from the 2018 budget targets. ([DI15.8 2018 Budget Process \(EX25.18\)](#)). City Council voted against the committee's recommendation. Currently, City divisions are responsible for allocating costs of all AODA compliance and accessibility within their individual divisional budgets. As a result, the committee is concerned that divisions may be less likely to be motivated to hire employees with disabilities or provide service to individuals requiring accommodations for fear that related costs whether real or perceived will exceed their allotted budget. In addition, for divisions with smaller budgets, this disincentive is greater.

A special or separate centralized fund for AODA compliance and accessibility-related expenses would ensure that accessibility measures are implemented across all divisions in a non-discriminatory manner. Pooling costs removes or at least reduces systemic barriers and biases against implementing accessibility measures or hiring individuals with disabilities.

A centralized fund or budget for AODA compliance and accessibility initiatives would align with the Ontario Human Rights Commission [Policy on Ableism and Discrimination Based on Disability, Section 9.3 Minimizing undue hardship](#) which states:

"...The costs of accommodation must be distributed as widely as possible within the organization so that no single department, employee, customer or subsidiary is burdened with the expense. The appropriate basis for evaluating the cost is based on

the budget of the organization as a whole, not the branch or unit where the person with a disability works or has made an application..."

Recommendations:

The Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee recommends to the Executive Committee that:

1. City Council exempt all operating and capital costs related to AODA compliance and accessibility initiatives from any 2020 proposed budget target reductions.
2. City Council direct the Executive Director, Financial Planning, in consultation with People, Equity and Human Rights and other relevant divisions, to:
 - a. Conduct research on and determine feasibility of options for a centralized budget/fund for all accessibility related accommodations and initiatives including but not limited to, employee accommodation costs, American Sign Language interpretation, note-taking services and captioning services; and
 - b. Provide an update on potential options and next steps to the Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee at a future committee meeting in 2019.

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Member of the Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee