

Re: EX15.16

Date: June 11, 2020

To: Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee

Applying an Accessibility Lens to Improve Access and Inclusion in City Budget and Other Processes

Summary:

According to multiple media reports, Mayor John Tory announced that the City of Toronto may be forced to implement “terrible and devastating” service cuts to a multiplicity of essential city services including emergency, fire, recreation, shelter and transit services, as well as reducing spaces in city-run long-term care facilities as early as Fall 2020 in response to a \$1.5 billion dollar financial shortfall brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Please see the below CBC news report for further details:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/toronto-covid-19-may-22-1.5580045>

These “terrible and devastating” service cuts will have significant implications for people with disabilities and seniors in particular as the cuts include a 73.6 per cent reduction of the TTC's Wheel-Trans service resulting in a loss of more than four million rides and a 50 per cent reduction of spaces in city-run long-term care facilities, leading to the elimination of 1,321 spaces. People with disabilities have already been disproportionately affected and made more vulnerable to a greater extent than others during the COVID-19 pandemic due to limitations in physical distancing, the loss of personal support workers and the crisis in long term care exposed by the Canadian military, and the inequities experienced will only be exacerbated by these proposed service cuts.

Recommendations:

Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee recommends that:

1. City Council direct the City Manager and the Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer to ensure that people with disabilities are consulted and/or have opportunity to provide input prior to Fall 2020 on any decisions related to service cuts.
2. City Council direct the Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer, to apply a disability policy lens to all City of Toronto budget processes to ensure that accessibility and inclusion become central to budget planning and that accommodation costs and resources are addressed organizationally as per human rights legislation and Ontario Human Rights Commission Policy on Ableism 9.3:

“...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...”

3. City Council direct the City Manager and the City Clerk to review options that improve accessibility to decision making and save costs such as allowing for remote participation in Committee and consultation meetings and investigating other digital inclusion strategies.
4. City Council request the Mayor to champion and highlight the needs of people with disabilities when lobbying the Federal and Provincial Governments for financial assistance in addressing the budget shortfall expected this year.

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