

Request for Decision

Closed Captioning of Council and Committee Meetings

Presented To: Finance and
Administration
Committee

Presented: Tuesday, Dec 08, 2015

Report Date Tuesday, Oct 20, 2015

Type: Managers' Reports

Recommendation

THAT the City of Greater Sudbury receives the report from the Executive Director, Administrative Services and that Option _____ be selected with regards to Closed Captioning of Council and Committee meetings.

Option One: That staff be directed to bring this item back in 2018, by which time updates to the technology, which will allow for captioning of both live and on-demand videos and more affordable costing options, are anticipated to be available.

Option Two: That staff be directed to prepare an Option, for decision as part of the 2016 Budget process, to implement delayed Closed Captioning of the Council and Committee archival webcasts at an annual operating cost of \$53,500 and a one-time capital cost of \$5,000.

Option Three: That staff be directed to prepare an Option, for decision as part of the 2016 Budget process, to implement real-time Close Captioning of the Council and Committee cable television broadcasts and webcasts and the archival webcast at an initial budgeted operating cost of \$131,000 and a one-time capital cost of \$74,500.

Signed By

Report Prepared By

Danielle Wicklander
Legislative Compliance Coordinator
Digitally Signed Oct 20, 15

Recommended by the Department

Caroline Hallsworth
Executive Director, Administrative
Services/City Clerk
Digitally Signed Oct 20, 15

Recommended by the C.A.O.

Kevin Fowke
Acting Chief Administrative Officer
Digitally Signed Nov 17, 15

Finance Implications

If option 2 or 3 is approved, a budget enhancement option will be prepared for consideration during 2016 budget deliberations.

Executive Summary

This report describes options for the implementation of Closed Captioning services for the broadcasts of City Council and Committees on both cable television and through webcasts.

Background

In March 2015, Council resolved to work towards an Open Government model that is based on four principles, being Open Information, Open Data, Open Dialogue and Open Doors.

The City of Greater Sudbury broadcasts approximately 120 meetings of Council and Committee annually which translates into 400-425 broadcast hours per year in each of two mediums. The first medium is cable television. Meetings have been broadcast for many years on Eastlink, the community's local cable television channel, however viewership statistics specific to Council and Committee meetings on cable television are not available. In recent years, meetings have also been webcast on the internet via livestream.com. At any one time there are on average 71 citizens who watch the webcasts and the average viewing time is roughly 23 minutes.

According to the Canadian Hearing Society, *"Nearly 1 out of every 4 adult Canadians reports having some hearing loss"* and *"4.46% of Ontarians are deaf or hard of hearing"*. Individuals with hearing loss use a variety of techniques and technologies to accommodate their hearing needs, including raised volume, hearing aids and other assistive hearing devices, and Closed Captioning.

Closed Captioning (CC) refers to the system of displaying the text version of the spoken part of the broadcast across the bottom of the screen. Unlike subtitles which only transcribe dialogue, Closed Captioning also describes sounds and other audio information pertinent to the viewer. The Canadian Radio and Television Commission (CRTC) standards for Closed Captioning (Regulatory Policy 2012-362) include that live time captions have a lag time between the audio and the caption not exceeding six seconds with an accuracy rate of 95%. The accuracy standard for post production captioning 100% including spelling. Captioning services use a team of trained, specialized staff with considerable skills who are capable of listening and simultaneously transcribing speech at rates of up to 200 words per minute.

At present, neither the television broadcasts nor the webcasts of CGS Council and Committee meetings offers Closed Captioning. Under the CRTC guidelines, smaller, community based television broadcasters including Eastlink are exempt from Closed Captioning regulations and Eastlink has advised that they currently do not have the technical infrastructure required to directly implement this service. Larger cable television providers, including the Toronto/GTA and Ottawa markets are required under the CRTC regulations to provide Closed Captioning of all their broadcast programming. At this time, staff are not aware of any regulatory requirements for Ontario municipalities to offer Closed Captioning of webcasts.

Through consultation with municipalities and service providers it has been found that the demand is growing for Closed Captioning of meeting broadcasts, however the technology has not caught up to the demand and the cost of implementing the service is not a cost effective or affordable option for many municipalities. While many municipalities offer streaming services or cable television coverage of meetings, only a handful of Ontario municipalities have integrated Closed Captioning into their webcasts because of these constraints.

The industry is in the process of making changes to support better accessibility in a more affordable model that will better support on-demand captioning and more affordable costing option; however these developments are currently in progress and though not yet available are anticipated to be more widely available within two to five years. This shift in technology may require different platforms or equipment should current methodologies be replaced by new solutions.

Should either Option 2 or Option 3 be selected, staff will issue an RFP for the captioning/webcast services and will order the necessary equipment, all of which will require installation and testing before going live. It is anticipated that it will be the summer of 2016 before the service can be fully implemented for both mediums.

Option 1: Implement Closed Captioning in the Next Term in Office

In this option, the status quo is maintained for this term in Office and staff is directed to bring this item back in 2018, by which time lower cost, real-time, technology based solutions are anticipated to be available.

Option 2: Prepare a Budget Option for Delayed Closed Captioning of Webcast Only

In this option, staff is directed to prepare an Option, for decision as part of the 2016 Budget process, to implement delayed Closed Captioning of the Council and Committee webcasts at an annual operating cost of approximately \$53,500 and a one-time capital cost of \$5,000.

In this option, the real-time Eastlink cable TV and live streamed webcasts would be broadcast without captions. Within a period of 12 to 48 hours after the meeting has concluded, captions would be prepared by the webcast service provider in partnership with a third party captioning service. Once the captions are ready, the web based archival meeting video would be updated to include captions.

| Option 2 | Capital | Operating | Total Year 1 |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Streaming Services | | \$7,500 | \$7,500 |
| Implementation | \$5,000 | | \$5,000 |
| Post Production Captioning Services | | \$46,000 | \$46,000 |
| SUBTOTAL | \$5,000 | \$53,500 | \$58,500 |

Should Council wish to proceed with Closed Captioning in this term of office, this approach provides the lowest risk, fiscally responsible and reasonable solution in our environment. The produced captions would be required to meet the 100% accuracy post production standard for captions thus ensuring that citizens have all information required to follow the actions and activities of their municipal government.

Option 3: Prepare a Budget Option for an Interim Real-Time Closed Captioning Solution of Live and Archived Broadcasts.

In this option, staff is directed to prepare an Option, for decision as part of the 2016 Budget process, to implement real-time Closed Captioning of Council and Committee cable TV broadcasts and webcasts, as well as captioning of archival broadcasts at an estimated annual operating cost of \$131,000 and a one-time capital cost of \$74,500.

In this option, meeting broadcasts will be captioned in what is essentially real-time. While webcast service providers can add captions to the feed, Eastlink does not have the technology in place to add captions to the feed after it is received. Therefore, in this option, staff will work with the service providers to research and invest in solutions that allow us to caption the video once in all formats and then send the captioned feed to Eastlink. There is some chance that there may be challenges with the quality and stability of the feed that the City provides to Eastlink which will need to be addressed as the model is implemented. This is likely to change as new technologies emerge that would allow for captioning to be shared across formats.

After the live broadcast is completed, captioning would be reviewed in post production for accuracy and corrected as required to meet the broadcast standards and the web archive updated to include the finalized closed captioning text.

| Option 3 | Capital | Operating | Total Year 1 |
|--------------------|----------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Streaming Services | | \$7,500 | \$7,500 |

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|---|-----------------|------------------|------------------|
| Equipment, Software and other Real-Time Communication Costs | \$59,000 | \$4,500 | \$63,500 |
| Archival Data Transfer and Customizations | \$5,000 | | \$5,000 |
| Technical Contingencies, Wiring, Electrical Upgrades etc. | \$10,500 | | \$10,500 |
| Live Captioning Service | | \$73,000 | \$73,000 |
| Post Production Captioning Service | | \$46,000 | \$46,000 |
| SUBTOTAL | \$74,500 | \$131,000 | \$205,500 |