The Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities Presents Report 08-006 and Respectfully Recommends:

1. Terms of Reference (Item 4.2(a))

That the amended terms of reference, attached as Appendix A hereto, be adopted.

2. Protecting the Taxi Scrip Program from the Recent Increase in Taxi Fares (Item 5.2)

That Council adopt two measures to restore the purchasing power recently lost due to the increase in the taxi meter rate in the City of Hamilton:

(a) That the rate of subsidy of the Taxi Scrip Program be restored to its original 50 per cent from the current level of 40 per cent.

(b) That Council increase the monthly amount of Taxi Scrip which eligible users may purchase from $120 to $160 (3 books to 4 books).
3. Resignation from the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities (Item 6.1)

That the resignation of Deborah Eker from the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities be received.

FOR THE INFORMATION OF COMMITTEE:

(a) PRESENTATIONS (Item 4)

(i) Strategic Planning (Item 4.2)

(a) Update on Strategic Planning Sessions

Jane Lee provided an update on the Strategic Planning Sessions and advised that an amended Terms of Reference was attached to the agenda.

(b) Next Steps: Accessibility Plan Priorities

Maxine Carter addressed the Accessibility Plan Priorities. She advised that she would remove the items that are no longer relevant from the list. A copy of the accessibility plan will be mailed out for comment.

Committee requested that staff provide minutes of the meeting at which the assessment of social housing in Hamilton was presented.

The Chair suggested that there be a discussion at the next meeting respecting which action items fall within the framework of the strategic plan.

(c) Consultation Activities

Jane Lee advised that this item was attached to the agenda for information purposes.

On a motion, the staff presentation was received.

(e) SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES (Item 5)

(i) Transportation Sub-Committee Update (Item 5.2)
Aznive Mallett provided an update on the Transportation Sub-Committee meeting held on July 22, 2008.

Committee agreed that the wording on the second page of the report respecting Taxi Scrips (attached as appendix B hereto) should be amended to read: “…this will help restore purchasing power”, as it is inaccurate to say that it will “fully” restore purchasing power.

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Nolan, Chair
Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities

Mary-Ann Meyer
Legislative Assistant
August 12, 2008
Mission Statement:

The Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities exists to raise awareness of the impacts of disabilities, and to identify issues and make recommendations in order that the City of Hamilton prevents and eliminates barriers for persons with disabilities.

Vision Statement

Hamilton is an inclusive community where ALL people can live, work, play and participate fully, free from barrier or discrimination.

Values

Accountability
Excellence
Honesty
Innovation
Leadership
Respect
Teamwork
Equity
Inclusiveness
Cooperation
Dignity
Tolerance
Mandate:

The Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities recommends to the City of Hamilton policies, procedures and guidelines that address the needs and concerns of persons with disabilities.

Composition:

Sufficient members of the committee will be persons with disabilities in accordance with the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001.

Terms of Reference:

1. To advise Council annually about the preparation, implementation, and effectiveness of its accessibility plan required pursuant to the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and related regulations.

2. To provide advice and recommendations to City Council and staff with respect to the implementation of Provincial standards, and policies, procedures and guidelines that address the needs and concerns of persons with disabilities.

3. To ensure that the right of access for persons with disabilities to programs and services provided by the City is sustained, maintained, and/or improved in accordance with Provincial legislation, regulations and City standards.

4. To review and comment to Council and other levels of government on pertinent reports, proposed legislation and studies which affect all persons with disabilities, where appropriate.

5. To provide a forum where persons with disabilities and service representatives can express their concerns, share information and recommend improvements to the existing level of City services for persons with disabilities.

6. To educate and increase awareness of the City on issues which affect people with disabilities.
7. To support the work of the committee through sub-committees and working groups, as required, and specifically related to the Provincial standards, including Customer Service, Transportation, Employment, Built Environment, and Information and Communications.

8. To maintain knowledge of the work of the committee through attendance at meetings and review of agendas and supporting materials.

9. To regularly review the progress and measure the success of the committee and its activities.
To: Mayor and Members Committee of the Whole

From: Tim Nolan
Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities

Date: August 14, 2008

Re: Protecting the Taxi Scrip Program from the Recent Increase in Taxi Fares

Recommendation:

That Council adopt two measures to restore the purchasing power recently lost due to the increase in the taxi meter rate in the City of Hamilton:

a) That the rate of subsidy of the Taxi Scrip Program be restored to its original 50 per cent from the current level of 40 per cent.

b) That Council increase the monthly amount of Taxi Scrip which eligible users may purchase from $120 to $160 (3 books to 4 books).

Background:

The City’s Taxi Scrip Program provides seniors and people with disabilities with subsidized access to taxis. As such it enables spontaneous travel using any of the City’s fleet of over two hundred taxis. Currently the user pays $24 for a booklet containing $40 worth of taxi scrip coupons. The program is an immense success. In 2007, people eligible for the program made almost 200,000 subsidized taxi trips. Of these, 15,000 were by people in wheelchairs using accessible vehicles. Everyone who is eligible for DARTS also qualifies for taxi scrip. When a DARTS client uses taxi
scrip instead of a DARTS bus, the City’s net cost is about $8.00 versus $22.00 for a DARTS trip.

However, the recent 23 per cent increase in the taxi fares in Hamilton has dramatically reduced the buying power of the Taxi Scrip users, many of whom are on very modest fixed incomes. As of July 18, it now takes $20 in taxi scrip coupons to pay for a taxi ride that would have cost only $15 prior to the increase.

The City therefore has the opportunity to protect the effectiveness and safeguard the purpose of the Taxi Scrip program by restoring this lost buying power through two measures:

1) Restore the subsidy rate from the current 40 per cent to rate of 50 per cent, which was the original rate of subsidy when the program was introduced. This would help restore the purchasing power lost through the taxi meter rate increase.

2) Raising the maximum amount of taxi scrip that can be purchased per month from the current $120 to $160. This would enable people with substantial travel needs, such as people taking daily dialysis treatments in hospital, to continue to use taxi scrip for most, if not all of their travel needs.

Analysis/Rationale:

The Taxi Scrip Program is Council’s least expensive means of improving mobility for seniors and people with disabilities. It offers spontaneous travel on any of the City’s more than 200 taxis, some of which are capable of taking people in wheelchairs. The program stimulates taxi travel and is an important assistance that helps maintain the City’s important taxi industry vibrant and strong, able to invest in improved vehicles and technology. Restoring the purchasing power of Taxi Scrip users, which has been reduced by the recent 23% rise in taxi fares will protect the original purpose of the program, and enable transportation-disadvantaged people in Hamilton to remain as independently mobile as before.