

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – JUNE 23, 2009

CITY OF TORONTO REQUEST TO ENTER INTO 311 CALL ROUTING AGREEMENT

Recommendation

The Chief Information Officer (CIO), in consultation with the Deputy City Manager / Commissioner of Finance & Corporate Services, and the Manager of Access Vaughan, recommends:

1. That staff be authorized to engage with neighbouring municipalities in order to establish 311 Call Routing Agreements, as required by the Canadian Radio and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), and;
2. That a by-law be enacted to authorize the Mayor and the City Clerk to sign the finalized 311 Call Routing Agreements with neighbouring municipalities.

Contribution to Sustainability

N/A

Economic Impact

All costs related to custom programming of wiring centres to facilitate municipal routing of 311-dialed calls will be the responsibility of the requesting municipality. Therefore, there are no immediate costs to the City of Vaughan for entering into 311 Call Routing Agreements that are initiated by other municipalities. Should the City of Vaughan consider implementation of the 311 service at a future time, related costs and resource requirements will be identified at that time and form part of the business case for the 311 service.

Communications Plan

Not required.

Purpose

In response to a request from the City of Toronto, the purpose of this report is to receive Council authority to enter into 311 Call Routing Agreements with neighbouring municipalities, as required by the Canadian Radio and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) and requested by the neighbouring municipalities.

Background - Analysis and Options

“311” has been designated by the Canadian Radio and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), as a telephone access number to non-emergency municipal services. At the request of a municipality, the local telecommunications services provider will enable routing of all “311-dialed” calls to a central location as designated by the requesting municipality. Typically, the designated central location would be the municipality’s call centre.

In order to properly route 311-dialed calls, the telecommunications services provider needs to accurately identify the municipal origin of the call. Typically, origin of calls is determined by the location of the telecommunications wiring centre which services a particular geographic area. The geographic area is not always contained within a single municipality. Wiring centres that service geographic areas which are shared by multiple municipalities need to be custom programmed by the telecommunications services provider to accurately route 311-dialed calls.

City of Vaughan shares several wiring centres with neighbouring municipalities (Toronto, Brampton, Richmond Hill, Markham, etc.). If neighbouring municipalities implement 311 access numbers, shared wiring centres need to be custom programmed by the telecommunications service provider. A CRTC regulation (General Tariff, Item 6001 – the 311 Service Tariff) requires neighbouring municipalities to formally agree to custom programming of shared wiring centres prior to the programming taking place. As the City of Toronto is preparing to activate 311 service in June 2009, they made a request for the City of Vaughan to formally agree to implement the necessary custom programming of shared wiring centres.

As per the referenced CRTC regulation, any costs related to custom programming of wiring centres to facilitate municipal routing of 311-dialed calls will be the responsibility of the requesting municipality. Therefore, there are no immediate costs to the City of Vaughan for entering into 311 Call Routing Agreements that are initiated by other municipalities. Should the City of Vaughan consider implementation of the 311 service at a future time, related costs and resource requirements will be identified at that time and form part of the business case for the 311 service.

Opportunity for Implementation of 311 a Service in Vaughan

Successful implementation of a 311 service is dependent on the effectiveness of the call centre being accessed through 311. City of Vaughan Council has committed to the development of Access Vaughan as the City's call centre. Although the launch and operation of Access Vaughan to-date has been highly successful, it still requires further development and integration with all "citizen facing" departments in order to be able to handle all citizens' inquiries. Additionally, some level of integration or interface needs to be established with the Region and potentially with other government agencies, such as school boards. A decision is also required as to who would front-end the diversity of citizens' inquiries, the Region or the municipality.

Before considering the implementation of 311 service, thought needs be given to the level of service that 311 is to provide and the resources required to maintain such level of service. For example, if the 311 service is to operate 24x7 it would require additional resources to staff Access Vaughan for 24x7 operations and potentially require increased staffing levels in departments that are integrated with Access Vaughan to handle more complex inquiries during the expanded Access Vaughan operating hours.

A prudent approach for implementation of 311 service would be to continue with the current strategy of developing Access Vaughan capabilities over time, in phases and in pace with available resources. While Access Vaughan capabilities are being enhanced and expanded, staff will engage with the Region and other government agencies to establish an understanding of how the 311 service might operate in a multi-tier municipal environment. For example, would the Region take all 311 calls and transfers them to local municipalities and agencies, or do the local municipalities take the calls?

Once Access Vaughan capabilities are developed to handle a 311 service, and a 311 protocol is determined with the Region and other municipalities then staff can develop a business case to assess potential costs and benefits of implementing 311 in Vaughan and bring appropriate recommendations to Council.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020/Strategic Plan

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council and the necessary resources have been allocated and approved.

Regional Implications

While Access Vaughan capabilities are being enhanced and expanded, staff will engage with the Region and other government agencies to establish an understanding of how a 311 service might operate in a multi-tier municipal environment.

Conclusion

City of Vaughan Council should proceed to collaborate with the neighbouring municipalities and enter into 311 Call Routing Agreements as requested by the neighbouring municipalities, provided that there are no associated costs to the City of Vaughan.

Staff will continue to develop Access Vaughan capabilities over time, in phases and in pace with available resources. While Access Vaughan capabilities are being enhanced and expanded, staff will engage with the Region and other government agencies to establish an understanding of how the 311 service might operate in a multi-tier municipal environment.

Report prepared by:

Dimitri Yampolsky, Chief Information Officer (CIO) – 905.832.8585 x 8352

Respectfully submitted,

Dimitri Yampolsky
Chief Information Officer (CIO)

Brigid LaManna, Manager
Access Vaughan