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CITY OF VANCOUVER

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT



Report Date: January 5, 2006
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Meeting Date: January 17, 2006

TO: Vancouver City Council
FROM: City Manager
SUBJECT: City of Calgary 311 Operations: Authority to travel

RECOMMENDATION

- A. *THAT Council authorize two Councillors to travel to Calgary, AB to visit the City of Calgary's 311 contact centre at a cost of \$1,000 provided from the Councillor's 2006 travel budget.*
- B. *THAT Council select the two Councillors who will represent Council.*

CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager submits the recommendation for Council's CONSIDERATION.

COUNCIL POLICY

The City Business Travel Policy requires Council's approval for travel within North America for members.

PURPOSE

This report is to obtain Council approval for two Councillors to travel to Calgary, AB to visit the City of Calgary's 311 contact centre. The Mayor will also travel, but does not require Council approval.

BACKGROUND

311 is the three digit contact number for access to non-emergency municipal government services. This number was approved for use in the United States in February 1997 and in Canada in November 2004. 311 is more than just a telephone number to access municipal services. The 311 service delivery model represents an opportunity for municipalities to move from operationally focussed services to "citizen-centric" services that addresses accessibility, responsiveness, consistency, quality and accountability. Four Canadian cities have implemented 311 operations (Calgary, Ottawa, Gatineau, and Windsor), and many others are at various stages of planning.

A 311 approach enables citizens to access one entry point to obtain most municipal services. In its full implementation, services may be obtained by calling 311 or accessing the city's web site. Citizens do not need to know or find their way through the civic organization to obtain information or services. It also enables citizens and service areas to track the response to a request for services. Information gathered from a 311 operation also provides service demand data that enables staff and City Council to make more informed decisions regarding the expansion or contraction of services, shifting of resources and performance measurement.

DISCUSSION

A feasibility study for a 311 service at the City of Vancouver is underway by city staff. Analysis of the current state of citizen access shows that the city operates in a decentralized service delivery model and that there is considerable opportunity to increase accessibility, quality, consistency and accountability for citizens.

The feasibility study and subsequent work will lead to a decision for City Council that can be made in the context of comprehensive information about the benefits for citizens of Vancouver from a 311 service and a business case, including a detailed financial model.

There are a number of options available to implement a 311 service, including various models of centralization or decentralization. Each has implications. The costs and benefits of each option will be weighed carefully to determine what could be the most appropriate model for Vancouver.

In 2005 the City of Calgary established a 311 operation for its citizens. Our staff has learned a great deal from Calgary and other Canadian cities who have been through the planning and implementation process. The City of Calgary in particular has been most generous to Vancouver staff in sharing their knowledge. We are at the distinct advantage of being able to build on their experience which greatly assists in making an assessment of the potential for such an operation for Vancouver.

As we approach the stage where our assessment is coming to a conclusion, it is important that 311 not simply be understood as an abstract idea. The City of Calgary has offered to host the Mayor, members of Council and staff to observe their 311 centre. There will also be the opportunity to talk with Calgary staff and members of Council, as desired. It is proposed that the Mayor and two members of Council make this visit.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cost of a one day visit to the City of Calgary for two Councillors will be approximately \$1,000 (flights, per diem and ground transportation) funded from the 2006 Council Travel budget. The cost of the Mayor's travel will be approximately \$500, funded from the Mayor's Travel fund.

CONCLUSION

The observation of an operating 311 operation in a municipality will be of considerable benefit to City Council in understanding the potential benefits and implications for the City of Vancouver. The City of Calgary, which has a functioning 311 operation, has offered to assist Vancouver by providing this experience and information.

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