



PO Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Halifax Regional Council
June 17, 2003

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: 
Geri Kaiser, Director Shared Services

DATE: June 10, 2003

SUBJECT: **Application for use of 311 for telephone Access for
Non-emergency Municipal Services**

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

The Report originates with staff and is intended to provide an overview of the Municipality's effort on establishing a 311 telephone service for HRM.

BACKGROUND

Municipal units in Canada have been researching the use of "311" for telephone access to non-emergency municipal services for several years. The City of Calgary has been leading the process and other Canadian Municipalities are looking to join Calgary in the application to the CRTC. FCM has also indicated support for this initiative.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the federal body that regulates telephone number designations in United States, granted approval in 1997 to designate "311" as the telephone access to non-emergency municipal services in the United States. This designation by the FCC in no way mandates that any / all municipalities MUST use "311" as their access point, but paves the way for any United States municipality that desires to create easier access to municipal services and information. 311 is the last remaining N11 number to be designated.

The CRTC is the regulatory body that designates telephone numbers in Canada. This report is advising Halifax Regional Council of HRM's support and participation in the application process with other Canadian Municipalities, to the CRTC to designate "311" in Canada for access to non-emergency municipal services and information. HRM hopes to Go Live with 311 in 2005 as part of the Integrated Dispatch Telecommunications Centre.

DISCUSSION

Over 15 cities in United States have implemented "311" as their telephone contact point for accessing non-emergency municipal services and information. Many of the larger cities / municipalities in Canada have implemented and promoted a single telephone contact number to access non-emergency municipal services, similar to the 490-4000 line to our Corporate Call Centre.

Halifax Regional Municipality has developed a Corporate Call Centre, using 490-4000 (or 1- 800-835-6428) as a "central" contact point to HRM, as well as consolidating many other phone numbers and services to the Call Centre. By using a three digit "N11" number it is easily remembered, a highly visible number that will help citizens access municipal government services more efficiently. This ease of access is especially important as some of our areas that use ten-digit dialing (1-800-835-6428) for access to Municipal services, as well as for people facing barriers of access including age, physical challenges, language, or literacy.

Designation of 311 will be a complement to 911 (emergency) and 211 (social and health), and result in less inappropriate use of specialized resources for emergencies. Talks are currently underway with the local United Way Agency concerning their implementation of 211 in 2006.

The CRTC application is to reserve the last remaining three-digit "N11" number, specifically "311", for telephone access to non-emergency municipal services. Several other Canadian municipalities are advising their political bodies is this initiative and it is anticipated that the CRTC application will be a 'joint' application.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There is no cost to submit a proposal to the CRTC, along with the City of Calgary as in-house legal services will be utilized for the CRTC application process. There may be some minimal costs to ensure all the joint applicants have all the available information. It is anticipated that their costs will be covered through operating budgets.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

ALTERNATIVES

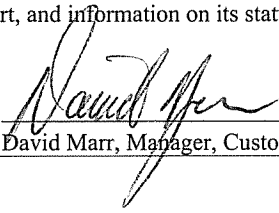
1. HRM can file an application to the CRTC independent of the other municipalities, but, it is expected that a joint application will be more effective.
2. HRM can wait and file an application with the CRTC at a later time, but, their application process can take considerable time to process and it is advisable to start the process now if we are to meet our anticipated Go Live date of 2005.
3. HRM can choose not to make an application to CRTC and retain the seven digit 490-4000 line or the 10 digit 1-800 line as the point of contact. This will not provide the ease of access HRM wants for their residents.

ATTACHMENTS

N/A

Additional copies of this report, and information on its status, can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared by:


David Marr, Manager, Customer Care

490-7178