






COMMUNICATION UPDATE

TO:	Mayor and Members City Council
DATE:	December 5, 2023
SUBJECT:	311 Phone Number Update – Phase 1 Testing (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
SUBMITTED BY:	Cyrus Tehrani Chief Digital Officer & Director of Innovation City Manager's Office
SIGNATURE:	
SUBMITTED BY:	Doug Kay Director, Information Technology Corporate Services Department
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SUBMITTED BY:	Cindy Mercanti Director, Customer Service, POA and Financial Integration Corporate Services Department
SIGNATURE:	

This Communication Update is being provided to Council to give information regarding the implementation of the 311 phone number.

Implementation of the 311 phone number follows the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission's (CRTC's) Canadian N11 Notification and Implementation Guideline, which addresses the notification, planning and co-ordination of N11 numbers in Canada, as well as, the responsibilities of all entities involved.

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

The 311 phone number is scheduled to be activated on December 12, 2023. Although the number will be active, the purpose of the activation is to allow for a comprehensive technical and process testing period. Upon successful completion of that testing, a public launch of the 311 phone number is planned for late 2024.

Initially, there will be no service improvement enhancements that will accompany the public launch of the 311 phone number and no City phone numbers will be amalgamated. The service, currently offered through 546-CITY, will remain the same. This decision was made on the need to establish an Enterprise Customer Service Strategy to provide both direction and the identification of sustainable funding to support a robust 311 Solution mandate. In addition, there are technical limitations on the existing telephone system used to support the Customer Contact Centre to be addressed.

The following will be required to prepare for a public 311 phone number launch in late 2024:

- development of a communication strategy, in collaboration with Communications, to support the formal public launch of the 311 phone number and ensure the community understands what the change does and does not represent;
- approval of capital and the timing of the telephone upgrade implementation and testing (the City's telephone infrastructure platform has reached end-of-life and requires an upgrade to allow for stable and enhanced features that will support the 311 phone number technical requirements).

Expanding the 311 phone number to a broader enterprise 311 Solution in the future, in alignment with a new Enterprise Customer Service Strategy, is dependent on the following:

- approval of future capital for an enhanced Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform and implementation partner;
- approval of capital to engage a consultant to develop an Enterprise Customer Service Strategy;
- adoption, implementation and funding of recommendations from the above consultant.

If you require further information, please contact Cyrus Tehrani, Chief Digital Officer via email at Cyrus.Tehrani@hamilton.ca or by telephone at (905) 546-2424 ext. 2261.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix "A" to Communication Update – Q&A 311 Phone Number – Phase 1 Testing

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Q&A 311 Phone Number – Phase 1 Testing

Q1 What is a 311 phone number?

- 311 refers to a non-emergency telephone number that residents and businesses can call to obtain information about, or request, municipal services or report non-emergency issues. It is a common reserved-use number available to cities (only) and is utilized by a number of large municipalities. This number is similar to the 911 emergency service but is used for situations that do not require immediate police, fire or medical response. For example, people might call the 311 phone number to enquire about municipal services such as public transit schedules, garbage collection, water services, and animal services.

Q2 What is the process for securing the 311 phone number?

- The guidelines of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission’s (CRTC’s) Canadian N11 Notification and Implementation Guideline, address the notification, planning and co-ordination of N11 numbers in Canada, as well as the responsibilities of all entities involved which include:
 - establishing agreements with all surrounding municipalities prior to proceeding with the 311 phone number implementation;
 - notifying and consulting with all Telecommunications Service Providers operating in our 311 service area;
 - providing documentation to the Canadian Numbering Administrator; and
 - conducting a public awareness campaign.

Q3 Where is the City at in the CRTC process?

- The Notice of Implementation for the 311 phone number was provided to the CRTC on October 20, 2023 in accordance with the guidelines (see City of Hamilton – 311 Implementation Notice). The notification and consultation with telecommunication providers have occurred on November 15, 2023.

Q4 Why is the City looking at a 311 phone number?

- A motion was put forward during the September 21, 2022 General Issues Committee to report back through the 2023 Capital and / or Operating budget processes as to the requirements for the implementation of a 311 customer service call platform. In response to the Motion, during the 2023 Capital and / or Operating budget processes, a request was submitted and approved to direct staff to secure the 311 phone number.

Q5 What are the steps involved in the testing process??

- The 311 phone number is scheduled to be activated on December 12, 2023. The purpose of the activation is to allow for a comprehensive technical and process testing period. The testing process incorporates the controlled and comprehensive technical and process testing, which includes responding and addressing any challenges or developing requirements.

Q6 During the testing period, can residents call 311?

- The 311 phone number will be activated to allow for both technical and process testing which will direct any 311 phone calls to the testing team at the Customer Contact Centre. During this testing period, the City will not notify or promote the 311 phone number to residents in order to allow for controlled testing by City staff. However, if a resident calls 311, they will be automatically redirected to 546-CITY and the call will be answered by the testing team at the Customer Contact Centre.

Q7 Are we expanding our services to align with the launch of the 311 phone number?

- The number will operate in parallel with the main (905) 546-CITY number. There will initially be no service enhancements that will accompany the public launch of the 311 phone number and no City phone numbers will be amalgamated. The service currently offered through 546-CITY will remain the same with the introduction of the 311 phone number. The decision was made on the need to establish an Enterprise Customer Service Strategy to provide both direction and the identification of sustainable funding to support a robust 311 Solution mandate.

Q8 What is the benefit of introducing the 311 phone number only?

- The introduction of the 311 phone number will align the City of Hamilton with other larger municipalities that have adopted the number as a means to service their residents. In addition, the 311 phone number adoption is a foundational component to support the establishment and launch of an Enterprise Customer Service Strategy and future 311 service enhancement opportunities

Q9 What are the steps to publicly launch the 311 phone number?

- The following will be required to prepare for a public launch in late 2024:
 - development of a communication strategy, in collaboration with Communications, to support the formal public launch of the 311 phone number and ensure the community understands what the change does and does not represent;
 - approval of capital and the timing of the telephone upgrade implementation and testing (the City’s telephone infrastructure platform has reached end-of-life and requires an upgrade to allow for stable and enhanced features that will support the 311 phone number technical requirements).

Q10 Where does this fit with respect to Council Priorities?

- This work aligns with Outcome 1: Prioritize customer service and proactive communication
 - Measures of Success – Established City-wide customer service strategy that improves response times, accessibility and public satisfaction.