

Efforts to Improve End-to-End Customer Experience

Date: August 27, 2025

To: Service Excellence Committee

From: Chief Technology Officer and Executive Director, Customer Experience Division

Wards: All

SUMMARY

This report responds to a request from the Service Excellence Committee to provide information on the history of 311, integration with divisions, and initiatives that are underway to improve the customers' end-to-end experience accessing City services through 311.

311 Toronto launched in September 2009 as the primary gateway to City information and services, centralizing numerous phone numbers and divisional contact centres into a single, easily remembered number (311). The launch connected existing and integrable divisional work management systems with the 311 customer relationship management system, automating information flow between 311 and the following five Integrated Service Divisions: Solid Waste Management Services, Transportation Services, Toronto Water, Municipal Licensing & Standards, and Environment, Climate & Forestry – Urban Forestry.

This integration allows the public to open service requests to report issues or request City services via 311. Information entered in the service request is automatically forwarded to the appropriate Integrated Service Division for review and action. Upon actioning, integration also allows information and some updates from Integrated Service Divisions to be automatically shared back with 311, enabling the public to obtain updates on the status of their service request, including whether the service request has been addressed.

However, information sharing is limited in some cases by legacy work management systems and business requirements, which require updates to permit the sharing of notes and status updates and/or to enable planned enhancements aimed at supporting the quality of information shared back to 311 and ultimately the public. Customers would also benefit from standardized quality notes that are available for every closed service request.

A jurisdictional scan of large North American cities shows that many municipalities are enhancing their 311 operations to meet customers' expectations by standardizing processes, fostering a customer-first culture through change management, and

updating technology to support these improvements. These process and technology changes require inter-divisional collaboration and accountability to ensure adoption. The Customer Experience Division, in collaboration with Technology Services Division and the Integrated Service Divisions, are working on two key initiatives:

- **Closing the Loop:** Focuses on enhancing the quality of information provided to customers and standardizing how service requests are managed across divisions; and
- **Enterprise Work Management Solution:** Replacing legacy work management systems with modern platforms that provide the technical foundation to support these improvements.

These initiatives complement additional improvements that have been made since the launch of 311 to enhance the customer experience, including the expansion of multi-lingual and multi-channel support and proactive customer communication options (e.g. language support for live telephone translation services, introduction of an interactive voice response to route customers to appropriate staff support based on their selection). Additionally, 311 will be providing intake services for Parks and Community Recreation, with integration planned by the end of September 2025 and end of 2026, respectively.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Chief Technology Officer and the Executive Director, Customer Experience recommends that:

1. The Service Excellence Committee receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no incremental financial impacts arising from this report.

Funding for the Enterprise Work Management Solution initiative is included in the 2025–2034 Capital Budgets and Plans for Technology Services, Toronto Water, and Solid Waste Management Divisions.

Funding for Closing the Loop initiative is included in the 2025–2034 Capital Budget and Plan for the Customer Experience Division.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial implications as identified in the Financial Impact section.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on June 23, 2025, the Service Excellence Committee adopted item SE8.3 “Transportation Services Salesforce and Maximo Integration”, which directed the Deputy City Manager, Corporate Services to report back to the Service Excellence Committee by the end of the third quarter of 2025 on the plan to integrate 311’s customer relationship management system with operational work order management systems, as well as the history of 311’s customer relationship management system.
<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2025.SE8.3>

At its meetings on June 14 and 15, 2023, City Council adopted item 2023.MM7.10 “Making Sense of 311 Reporting”, directing the Executive Director of Customer Experience, in collaboration with the General Manager, Parks and Recreation, to expand support for 311 complaints to include the operations and maintenance of parks and facilities within them.
<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2023.MM7.10>

At its meeting on June 15 and 16 2022, City Council adopted item 2022.GL31.11 “311 Toronto Annual Report – 2021”, which directed the City Manager to work with all Divisions to adjust 311 Toronto’s response process and ensure that 311 is made aware of the conditions under which their service request tickets are closed.
<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2022.GL31.11>

At its meeting on February 6 and 7, 2012, City Council adopted Item 2012.AU5.2, “311 Toronto – Full Potential For Improving Customer Service Has Yet To Be Realized”, with 12 recommendations for the Director, 311 Toronto Division, to undertake a series of recommendations to improve the operating effectiveness and efficiency of 311 Toronto, including items 2- 5 which included, streamlining processes, making improvements to service request status information and meeting and reporting on service levels.
<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2011.AU5.2>

At its meeting on February 5, 2010, the Government Management Committee adopted item GM28.6 “Progress Report on the 311 Project and Operations”, which provided an update on the 311 launch and operations.
<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2010.GM28.6>

At its meeting on June 23, 2004, City Council adopted item “‘3-1-1’ Customer Service Strategy Report,” which directed staff to begin implementing a strategy to create a multi-channel model of customer service. The City launched 311 Toronto in September 2009.
<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2004/agendas/committees/ec/ec040707/it001.pdf>

COMMENTS

1. The launch of 311

Before 311, approximately 2,700 staff across the City served as first points of contact for public inquiries. The City also operated nine call centres, over 250 additional phone numbers, and other staff-assisted access points, including counters, email, fax, and mail.

311 Toronto launched in September 2009 to centralize many of these access points, acting as the primary gateway to City information and services, resulting in:

- The establishment of one easily remembered number (311) to access information on City services;
- A ‘no wrong door’ approach, with 311 staff responsible for service and information navigation on behalf of the public and connecting them with the right divisions when needed;
- Consistent, integrated service delivery across all access channels (e.g. phone, online self-serve webpage, mobile app); and
- The ability for the public to request updates on service requests to the point of resolution.

From launch, 311 provided 24/7 access to non-emergency City services, programs, and information via the phone channel. Services provided by Transportation Services, Toronto Water, Solid Waste Management, Municipal Licensing and Standards, and Urban Forestry (now part of Environment, Climate & Forestry) were integrated with 311. These five Integrated Service Divisions were selected based on high transaction volumes, ability to integrate work management systems with the 311 customer relationship management system, and operational readiness and alignment with 311 processes.

With the launch, the 311 customer relationship management platform was integrated with existing divisional work management systems. This allowed for a limited two-way communication between 311 and the Integrated Service Divisions, where information provided by a customer during the 311 intake was automatically sent to the respective division for fulfilment, and updates provided by the division were sent back to 311. Since launch, additional enhancements have included the introduction of limited self-service options for a small number of service requests, the implementation of centralized email intake, the expansion of language support for live telephone translation services, and the introduction of an interactive voice response system that allowed for customers to be routed to the appropriate staff support based on their selection.

1.1 311 today

With the implementation of an updated customer relationship management system in 2018 and other technical enhancements such as an enhanced self-service portal, 311 now supports intake for over 600 service request types in over 180 languages through the phone, and 130 languages through self-service options on the City’s website. Customers can also connect with 311 through the 311 mobile app, live chat, and via social media. In 2024, 311 handled approximately 1.29 million interactions, including the creation of approximately 460,000 service requests.

As customer expectations for services grows, feedback received from customers has identified the need for clear communications back to a customer when they submit a service request. Common feedback includes the need for:

- Clear expectations on the fulfilment of a service request by divisions (e.g. including service level agreements and timelines);
- Clear definitions of service request statuses (e.g. what the status of “completed” means, especially when it does not meet a customer's expectations); and
- Clear, simple and relevant notes shared back from divisions to 311 to ultimately customer explaining what was done, what may be outstanding, and why.

This feedback underscores the importance of ensuring clear and consistent business processes to share relevant information and highlights the importance of supporting adoption and compliance with processes to address customer needs.

2. Ongoing Improvements

The Customer Experience Division, in collaboration with the Technology Services Division and the Integrated Service Divisions, is advancing two major, interconnected initiatives to address customer feedback and support information sharing:

1. Closing the Loop: Communicating back to a customer to provide updates related to their service request fulfilment. Work underway includes improving the quality of information shared by Integrated Service Divisions to 311 to provide the public with relevant updates, as well as standardizing the definition of service request statuses (e.g. consistent definition of what "completing" a service request means) to enhance clarity of what has been completed (e.g. snow clearing completed). Additionally, divisional notes will become mandatory before closing a service request.

2. Divisions Enterprise Work Management Solution: Establishing a common platform and processes to manage divisional work related to service request fulfilment. This includes replacing legacy work management systems with modern platforms with the tools, processes, workflows, and best practices to support the standardization of divisional service request fulfilment processes. The goal is to ensure that the work management solution and the 311 customer relationship management solution are optimally integrated.

Together, these efforts will enable more consistent, responsive, accountable, and effective service delivery and strengthen public trust.

2.1 Closing the Loop with enhanced processes and standards

Following Council direction, the Customer Experience Division partnered with the Technology Services Division and the Integrated Service Divisions to improve communication with customers throughout their service request journey, through the Closing the Loop initiative.

Closing the Loop seeks to:

- **Improve the quality of notes for service requests:** 311 customer service representatives rely on notes left by Integrated Service Divisions to provide information to customers. Closing the Loop will improve the quality of notes and attachments provided by City divisions to 311 to ensure accurate and timely

information sharing. This includes developing standard and mandatory drop-down options for common notes and attaching pictures of completed work where possible. Divisional change management and training strategies will support and remind staff of the importance of entering relevant and simple notes, while awaiting the implementation of the broader enterprise work management system;

- **Share more information with customers:** Currently, notes on service requests are visible to 311 customer service representatives, who share this information with customers where a service request tracking number is provided. Future enhancements will allow divisional notes to be shared directly with customers, when they opt-in for ongoing communication updates; and
- **Develop a standard approach to service request-related practices:** The Customer Experience Division is working with Integrated Service Divisions to develop a common approach for managing service requests and establishing standard definitions for statuses (e.g. what “completed” means). These standards will clarify how and when to update, close or cancel tickets, and what information should be shared. For example, guidance on when a ticket should be closed or kept open if multiple phases of work are required to fully resolve an issue.

The Customer Experience Division and Integrated Service Divisions are working with the Technology Services Division to develop an enterprise approach to the technology that enables improvements for Closing the Loop, like the ability to share notes and pictures with customers both online and through direct communications, when opted-in. Implementation will introduce enhancements for Integrated Service Divisions integrated with the Enterprise Work Management Solution, including parts of Transportation Services, Urban Forestry and Parks.

- **Phase 1** (Q4 2025) will include service request notes and status update improvements; and
- **Phase 2** (Q2 2026) will include further enhancements, like mandatory status information, picture sharing with customers, improved notifications, and enhanced service request notes.

Additionally, the Customer Experience Division is in the early stages of establishing a governance structure that will include a Steering Committee to provide oversight and accountability for Closing the Loop, and support standardization of service request practices across divisions. This committee will be chaired by the Executive Director of the Customer Experience Division and include leadership from all existing Integrated Service Divisions as well as Technology Services Division.

2.2 Transition to the Enterprise Work Management Solution

The work management systems used by Integrated Service Divisions are now more than two decades old, and have become costly to maintain, difficult to upgrade/patch, and operate independently from each other, with multiple customizations and limited integration to other City systems. In some cases, legacy systems and business requirements have limited information sharing between Integrated Service Divisions to

311 and the public, and do not support planned technology updates aimed at increasing the quality of information provided. The Enterprise Work Management Solution Program, established in part based on an Auditor General recommendation to rationalize work management systems across the City, will transform how work is managed.

Driven by standards established through Closing the Loop, a new enterprise-level system will provide a unified technology platform to enable and support processes, workflows, and best practices for managing work activities, city assets, and service delivery. For example:

- Automated validation to ensure service requests cannot be marked as complete without a note;
- Creating pre-defined drop-down selections for simplified and standard customer notes per service request type; and
- Service timelines based on asset type. For example, road work on a major street would have a quicker response time than road work required on a cul-de-sac.

To date, Transportation Services – Road Operations, and Environment, Climate and Forestry – Urban Forestry, have moved from their legacy work management systems to the new platform, in 2022 and 2023 respectively. As more divisions switch from their legacy systems, improved two-way communication between the systems is expected to enable more consistent and up-to-date sharing of service request information. This means customers will receive clearer, more accurate updates about the status and progress of their requests, resulting in a more transparent and reliable service experience.

3. Insights: Learning from research and other data

3.1 Jurisdictional scan

The Customer Experience Division conducted a jurisdictional scan of 311 systems in Vancouver, Calgary, Chicago, and New York, to assess challenges and identify relevant best practices. The scan found that these cities have faced some of the same challenges as Toronto and have deployed different strategies to try to improve the customer experience. One key learning is that strong governance and divisional partnerships are essential to addressing not only technology-related challenges, but also the process-related issues that affect customers. As Toronto aims to address similar challenges, the Customer Experience Division can draw from the experiences and best practices of other jurisdictions.

Cities reviewed have modernized the technology that supports service request processes and digital self-serve options, with Toronto's recent customer relationship management system upgrade reflecting similar efforts. While customer relationship management system improvements and integration with work management systems enhances system communication, this scan underscores that meeting customer expectations requires technology to be paired with effective service request management and clear customer communication.

Other jurisdictions have taken a range of approaches to strengthen service request management and improve the customer experience. For example, similar to what the City is doing, their initiatives included:

- Clear divisional standards and plain language for service request handling and all customer communications;
- Divisions have consistent service request status definitions (e.g. “pothole fix completed”) and service request status communications that are visible to customers;
- Divisions have standardized service request forms to simplify the intake and ensure a consistent customer experience;
- Ongoing monitoring of high-volume service requests to improve resolution, follow-up, and adherence to service levels and customer expectations; and
- Regular quality checks and cross-functional reviews on divisions for process adherence, customer feedback and satisfaction data.

3.2 Customer Experience Division Service Insights Surveys

Building on ongoing efforts to improve service delivery and customer experience, the Customer Experience Division will begin working closely with the Integrated Service Divisions to share relevant insights, identify trends, report errors on quality gap in notes and understand feedback from the Service Insights Surveys. These post-contact surveys were launched in December 2023 and are sent to customers who interact with and make requests through 311 Toronto. The survey feedback provides an ongoing pulse on the customer experience across a wide range of requests. This collaboration with the Integrated Service Divisions will support them in using this information to improve service delivery by adjusting processes, clarifying and improving service requests fulfilment communication, and ensuring services are more responsive to customer needs.

Looking Ahead

Cross-divisional collaboration between the Customer Experience Division, the Technology Services Division and the Integrated Service Divisions is essential to establishing the required governance, standards, and tools to meet customer expectations and to ensure ongoing compliance with established processes.

Updates to legacy divisional work management system and business requirements, alongside additional technology enhancements (e.g. updates to the 311 mobile app and webpage), divisional change management, and training will support the City in enhancing accountability and transparency through the effective sharing of information across divisions and with the public to ensure service issues are addressed in a timely, clear, and appropriate manner.

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