

Simplifying the 311 Intake Experience

Date: April 30, 2026

To: Service Excellence Committee

From: Executive Director, Customer Experience Division

Wards: All

SUMMARY

This report responds to direction from the Executive Committee to provide a plan and phased approach to simplify the 311 service intake process by streamlining public-facing service categories and consolidating service codes, where appropriate. It also provides an overview of additional planned improvements to simplify how customers access and track City services through a clearer, more intuitive 311 intake experience across all 311 channels (phone, email, online, mobile app, X, and in person counters).

This work is being delivered through two complementary initiatives that will modernize the end to end 311 service request experience, improving access, efficiency and transparency for customers:

1. 311 Front-End Redesign:

- A simpler, more intuitive self-serve experience through a redesigned customer-centric 311 on web and mobile app interfaces with Artificial Intelligence (AI) capabilities, serving as the City's intelligent front door.
- Includes an assessment of opportunities to streamline intake questions and public-facing 311 service request codes and categories across all Integrated Service Divisions (ISDs).

2. Closing the Loop:

- Strengthened Closing the Loop practices, including more detailed service request milestones and more detailed progress updates to customers, to improve transparency, communication, and service continuity after a request is submitted across all ISDs.

The Customer Experience Division (CXD) has started implementing improvements in a phased approach, prioritizing high-impact divisions including Parks (in Parks & Recreation), Municipal Licensing and Standards (MLS), Transportation Services, and Urban Forestry (in Environment, Climate and Forestry), with enhancements for both projects scaling across ISDs, including Community Recreation (a new ISD coming by end of 2026) by Q4 2027. This work will be informed by initial customer research and

reflective of user needs, and ongoing measurement and customer feedback will inform continuous improvement to ensure the 311 service continues to evolve to meet customer needs and expectations.

By simplifying service intake, reducing the number of steps required to submit a service request, and streamlining service codes, these initiatives will reduce the time and effort required for customers to submit requests while improving the accuracy and reliability of intake. Although simplifying service intake will benefit customers using any 311 channel, it is particularly important for improving the self-serve experience. A clearer, more intuitive intake process makes it easier for customers to submit service requests correctly on the first attempt, increasing confidence and adoption of 311's digital channels.

At the same time, improvements to customer communications, transparency, and service continuity will ensure customers better understand what is happening with their requests, why work is being done, and what outcomes were achieved. Clearer milestones, improved navigation of service categories, and more consistent status updates will provide greater confidence in City services and manage expectations with clear and accurate timelines, reducing the need for follow-up inquiries. Ultimately, these initiatives will ensure that customers accessing 311 services get an integrated, user-friendly experience, regardless of which or how many ISDs are involved with the completion of the service request.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Director, Customer Experience Division recommends that:

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

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no additional financial impact resulting from the adoption of the recommendations in this report beyond what is included in the 2026-2035 Capital Budget and Plan for Technology Services.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact statement.

DECISION HISTORY

Executive Committee, at its September 29, 2025 meeting, requested the Executive Director, Customer Experience (311), the General Manager, Parks and Recreation, the General Manager, Toronto Water, the General Manager, Transportation Services, the General Manager, Solid Waste Management Services, the Executive Director,

Municipal Licensing & Standards, and the Executive Director, Environment, Climate and Forestry to report back to the Service Excellence Committee by the second quarter of 2026 with a proposed plan and phased approach to simplify the 311 service intake process, starting with Parks Operations, by streamlining public-facing service categories and consolidating service codes where appropriate.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2025.EX26.7>

City Council, at its June 15 and 16, 2022 meeting, adopted item 2022.GL31.11 "311 Toronto Annual Report", requesting the City Manager to work with all City Divisions to adjust 311 Toronto's response process to ensure that 311 Toronto 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>

COMMENTS

Background

CXD is partners with ISDs including Solid Waste Management Services, Municipal Licensing & Standards (including Animal Services), Toronto Water, Transportation Services, Urban Forestry (within Environment, Climate and Forestry), and Parks (within Parks & Recreation).

CXD intakes service requests for ISDs through various channels, including self-serve options like [the 311 online portal](#) and the 311 mobile experience, or by leveraging staff-assisted channels such as phone, email and in-person counters.

Once a service request has been submitted to 311, customers are able to track the status of their service request by opting into email or SMS notifications, using 311's online portal or by calling 311 for an update.

CXD is working closely with the ISDs, as well as the Technology Services Division (TSD), to simplify how customers access and track City service requests through a clearer, more intuitive intake experience across all 311 channels. This is being delivered through two complementary initiatives: (1) 311 Front-End Redesign and (2) Closing the Loop.

311's Front-End Redesign

CXD, in partnership with TSD, is transforming the 311 self-serve experience into the City's intelligent front door. This will be delivered through a redesigned 311 front-end, including a new homepage, an improved 311 mobile experience, and AI capabilities, including a public-facing chatbot, to create a simpler, more intuitive way for customers to submit service requests and access information about City services.

The redesign leverages user-centred design principles to reduce complexity and improve self-serve success rates, with intuitive navigation, fewer steps, and clearer service categories. The intake experience will be simplified by reducing intake questions and 311 service request codes and categories, making it easier for customers to connect to the right services. Service request codes ensure that when a service request

is submitted, the information is routed to the correct division for fulfillment. Simplifying the codes and categories that the public sees and uses by designing them in a customer-focused manner ensures that customers can submit service requests more easily without needing to understand internal City structures and jargon. The redesigned front-end experience will be accessible and useable across mobile, tablet, and desktop devices, ensuring a consistent and reliable experience wherever customers choose to engage.

This work will be informed by a comprehensive and multi-pronged customer research strategy, led by CXD, which will involve engaging customers through various research methods, including user and usability testing, category navigation activities, and surveys. This multi-pronged approach will enable CXD to build a well-rounded understanding of user behaviour by triangulating what users do, how they think, and what they say. Each method contributes distinct, complementary insights, resulting in more confident and actionable findings.

Key Milestones

311 Front-End Redesign is being implemented through a phased approach that delivers incremental improvements over time. Each phase builds on user research and prior learnings, with early, visible enhancements followed by more comprehensive redesigns.

Key milestones include:

- **Q1 2026 - Initial Data Analysis (Complete):** CXD has reviewed 311 service data and error logs to identify potential opportunities to streamline public-facing service codes and categories, where feasible.
- **Ongoing and Iterative (Commencing Q2 2026) - Understanding Users' Needs (in progress):** Conducting qualitative user interviews and current state usability testing to understand customer needs and behaviours and define the ideal 311 self-serve experience. Further user interviews and usability testing will take place to align with each phase of the project.
- **Q2 2026 - Analyzing Opportunities for Further Intake Simplification - Parks:** Testing with customers is currently underway to further streamline service codes and categories and enhance the overall service request intake process.
- **Q3 2026 through Q1 2027 - Intake Simplification with Integrated Service Divisions:** Analyze opportunities to streamline intake questions and public-facing codes across ISDs, starting with Urban Forestry and Transportation Services, followed by Solid Waste Management Services, MLS, and Toronto Water. This will reduce the time and effort needed to submit a request while improving accuracy across both self-serve and staff-assisted channels. By streamlining intake without removing critical operational details, it will reduce errors, misrouting, and rework for service areas.

- **Q4 2026 - New 311 Homepage:** Launch the initial version of a redesigned 311 homepage, reflective of user needs and mindsets, as informed by user interviews and testing. Launch a public facing AI chatbot on 311's website to support customers with general inquiries, as well as test new AI search functionality with customers.
- **Q3 2027 - Redesigned Intake:** Fully launch the redesigned 311 online self-serve portal with improved search and navigation, and simpler, more intuitive public-facing service request and complaint flows. CXD will work with ISDs to ensure alignment on the redesign, supported by user research. This will also involve working with TSD to architect a solution that enables an improved customer experience, while ensuring that ISDs still receive the relevant information required to fulfill a service request.

Beyond these milestones, CXD will deliver an improved 311 mobile app experience and explore account functionality for personalized tracking of 311 service requests. Work for the 311 mobile app experience and account functionality will begin in 2028, informed by learnings, including user research and customer feedback, from 2026 and 2027. ISDs will be consulted throughout the redesign, to ensure a seamless end-to-end service delivery experience.

Closing The Loop

The Closing the Loop program improves how customers track and follow-up on 311 service requests, by setting clear expectations, enhancing customer communication, and creating status transparency throughout the service request lifecycle.

Closing the Loop is being delivered in a phased approach, prioritizing improvements to high-impact divisions, implementing first with Parks, MLS, Transportation Services and Urban Forestry and scaling improvements across all ISDs by end of Q4 2027.

Key Milestones

Improvements will be made to customer communications throughout the service request journey, so customers receive clearer, more consistent, and more meaningful updates, whether they choose to opt in to email or SMS notifications, use a service request number to track request status online or contact 311 directly for updates. These improvements include:

- **Clearer timelines:** More accurate date estimates based on actual operational timelines and notification updates to help set expectations.
- **More informative status updates and milestone tracking:** Plain-language explanations of what work is underway, why it is happening, and what to expect next, particularly for complex requests.
- **Clearer outcomes:** More detailed completion notes and photos where appropriate, so customers understand how their request was resolved.
- **Better service continuity:** Improved reassignment of requests within and across City divisions to reduce gaps in communication and ensure smoother hand-offs.

Closing the Loop will be informed by customer and staff-facing research and testing, to ensure that resident and staff needs are being met.

311 supports more than 600 service request codes, each with different processes, timelines and complexity. As a result, a one-size-fits-all approach to customer communication is neither practical nor effective. Some service requests can be resolved quickly with minimal interaction, while others require multiple steps, longer timelines, and/or coordination across divisions or repeated progress updates to customers. To ensure improvements are scalable, sustainable and focused on the greatest customer need, the Closing the Loop program is being advanced through a structured framework, prioritizing service requests where improved communication will deliver the most value, and balance customer expectations with fluctuating operational realities. The Closing the Loop Framework outlines three levels of communication, based on the complexity, communication requirements and customer impact of a service request:

- **Level 1 - Simple:** This level provides customers with confirmation and closure for straightforward service requests. Customers know their service request is received, when it is being actioned, and when it is complete. This level of detail will include high-level service request information only, such as basic status (new, in progress, completed), generic resolution reasons, and general service level agreements. It will not include photos or detailed request notes. For example, Missed Garbage Pick-up service requests.
- **Level 2 - Milestone:** This level is intended to provide customers better visibility into the steps involved in the fulfillment of high-volume, predictable service requests. Customers get a preview of key milestones the City will take to address their service request. This level of detail will include service request-specific details in progress updates, including work milestones and status update reasons, static service timelines at the request or milestone level, and may include supporting content such as photos or select investigation notes. For example, Tree Removal service requests that require inspections first.
- **Level 3 - Complex:** This level is reserved for complex service requests that require more detailed communication with customers. Customers receive detailed information during progress updates, including investigation or fulfillment outcome notes and photos where applicable. For example, Report an Encroachment on City Property service requests that are not as predictable and will rely on notes and photos.

Key Milestones include:

- **Q2 2026 - Sharing Notes with Parks Customers:** Customers will receive clearer status updates for Parks service requests, including more detailed notes explaining how requests were handled.
- **Q2 2026 - Pilot Priority Milestone Tracking:** Sharing descriptive "simple" and in-progress updates for new service requests across 8 high-priority service codes (high volume and/or Priority 1 service requests that involve more urgent response) in Transportation Services, MLS, Parks and Urban Forestry.
- **Q3-Q4 2026 - Photo Sharing and Priority Milestone Expansion:** Enabling photo sharing for select Parks service requests and sharing more descriptive progress updates to additional select service requests across Transportation Services and

Parks and Urban Forestry. Photos will be included for high-priority service requests where the outcome is visual and can be easily photographed to clearly demonstrate the result of the request, providing evidence that work was done.

- **By Q4 2027 - Onboarding Additional Service Requests Across all ISDs:** Sharing more descriptive progress updates, notes & photos to customers across select service requests in all ISDs, following the Closing the Loop framework.

Expected Outcomes

Together, the 311 Front-End Redesign and Closing the Loop will modernize and strengthen the end-to-end 311 service request experience, from intake through to resolution, across all 311 channels. By simplifying service intake, reducing the number of steps required to submission, and streamlining service codes, these initiatives will reduce the time and effort required for customers to submit requests while improving the accuracy and reliability of intake. Although simplifying service intake will benefit customers using any 311 channel, it is particularly important for improving the self-serve experience. A clearer, more intuitive intake process makes it easier for customers to submit service requests correctly on the first attempt, increasing confidence and adoption of 311's digital channels.

At the same time, improvements to customer communications, transparency, and service continuity will ensure customers better understand what is happening with their requests, why work is being done, and what outcomes were achieved. Clearer milestones, improved navigation of service categories, and more consistent status updates will provide greater confidence in City services and manage expectations with clear and accurate timelines, reducing the need for follow-up inquiries.

These initiatives will ensure that customers accessing 311 services get an integrated experience, regardless of which or how many ISDs are involved with the completion of the service request. Customers will see and understand the outcome of their service request without needing to understand internal City processes.

Delivered through a phased, user-centred approach, these initiatives prioritize early, high-impact improvements while building the foundation for scalable enhancements across all ISDs. Ongoing measurement and customer feedback will inform continuous improvement, ensuring the 311 service continues to evolve to meet customer needs and expectations. Together, these changes support a more accessible, efficient, and transparent service experience for the City of Toronto's customers.

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SIGNATURE

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