

# Staff Report



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To	<b>City Council</b>
Service Area	Corporate Services
Date	Tuesday, December 12, 2023
Subject	<b>Implementing Service Simplified: Guelph's Customer Service Strategy</b>

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## Recommendation

1. That the report titled Implementing Service Simplified: Guelph's Customer Service Strategy, dated December 12, 2023, be received.
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## Executive Summary

### Purpose of Report

To update City Council about the progress of implementing customer service and experience initiatives related to the City's Customer Service Strategy: Service Simplified.

The City's four-year Customer Service Strategy, Service Simplified, was initially approved by City Council in 2018, paused due to competing budget priorities, and restarted in 2022.

### Key Findings

#### Year one accomplishments 2022

As stated in [Service Simplified Progress Report: Implementing Guelph's Customer Service Strategy - 2022-374](#):

- Developed and implemented Guelph's Good Service Standards and employee training.
- Developed standardized customer satisfaction measurement policy and procedure.
- Added new and improved digital services (Report a Problem Map).
- Began centralizing customer service functions (ServiceGuelph now resolves 40-50 per cent of customer calls about Solid Waste Services).
- A plan to offer the City's most popular services from a central customer contact centre.

#### Year two accomplishments 2023

- More than 300 employees have completed Guelph's Good Service Standards training, since restarting the strategy last year.
- The City is using standard customer satisfaction measures for all services offered in the Report a Problem Map including Operations, Parks, and Solid Waste. Customer satisfaction is also being measured at ServiceGuelph, the City Clerk's Office and the River Run Centre. All departments offering public-facing

services will include customer satisfaction data alongside other performance measures in the next Strategic Plan Progress Report.

- The membership and mandate of the City's Customer and Digital Service Steering Committee have been updated to govern decisions about service improvements.
- The City is centralizing more customer service activities in waves over the next few years. When complete, the contact centre will offer the City's most popular services from one phone number, one email address, a service-focused website, and a digital customer service platform (Customer Relationship Management (CRM)). The customer service team could work from several locations and use standardized information to resolve 50-60 per cent of customer inquiries during the first interaction.
- In Wave 1, the team reviewed 13 services offered by the Property Tax team. The City is resolving an average of 70 per cent of customer calls about property taxes in ServiceGuelph, allowing Finance staff to manage more complex inquiries and projects.
- The City is preparing to launch a new property tax portal in early 2024 so people can view and make changes to their property tax accounts and payment plans online. Once established, self-serve options typically reduce customer phone calls and emails, allowing the customer service team to maintain service levels as the community continues to grow.
- In wave 2, an employee vacancy provided an opportunity to reconsider our approach to customer service in the Parking division. The parking email and phone number have been removed from the City's website, ServiceGuelph is resolving most parking inquiries allowing the City to reallocate employee resources to support event parking and the adult school crossing guard program.
- Wave 3 is now underway, and the team is reviewing 30 service activities currently offered in the Parks division to learn which could be delivered from ServiceGuelph in 2024.

### **Strategic Plan Alignment**

This work directly supports the City of Guelph's vision, mission, and specifically the corporate value of Service: community-driven.

It aligns with and supports [Guelph. Future-ready](#). Specifically, [Working together for our future](#) pillar to improve how the City communicates and delivers services.

- Improving services through greater use of technology and data
- Accelerating digital delivery of services
- Improving front-line customer service and communications

This work also supports the Council-approved Customer Service Strategy: [Service Simplified](#), related corporate performance objectives, and working to become a more customer-focused, performance-driven and digitally enabled organization.

### **Financial Implications**

Proposed investments in the City's Customer Service Strategy were recently discussed as part of the 2024-2027 capital and operating multi-year budget plans. These include:

- Central customer contact centre funded using reserves and efficiencies
- Improved technology and tools to support customer service:

- Corporate payment platform \$636,000 approved in 2021
- Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform \$250,000 in 2025, \$1,110,000 in 2026 \$750,000 in 2027
- A corporate customer service and experience planning and support team \$272,300 in 2027

## Report

### Year two progress 2023

#### **Guelph’s Good Service Standards are part of a more service-focused culture**

In addition to customer service training sessions, the City’s Good Service Standards are now embedded in the City’s annual Best-Self Review process for CUPE and NUME employees.

Also, this year, the City celebrated the work of frontline staff in every department and location during International Customer Service Week. The internal campaign was among the City’s most successful; employees throughout the organization won prizes for pledging to meet Guelph’s Good Service Standards and sharing “good service stories”.

Embedding service into the City’s employee recognition programs is a critical part of keeping service top-of-mind for leaders and frontline service teams.

#### **Measuring customer satisfaction**

##### **City-wide satisfaction survey**

We’re preparing for a city-wide satisfaction survey in early 2024. The survey will include a service assessment aligned with the City’s Good Service Standards. This data allows us to benchmark the City’s performance among other municipalities and helps the City prioritize service improvements based on customer feedback.

##### **Departmental customer feedback surveys**

The City will include customer satisfaction data for public-facing services in the next Strategic Plan Progress Report. Meanwhile, here are a few highlights from some more recent departmental customer satisfaction surveys:

<b>Survey respondents</b>	<b>Average overall rating</b>	<b>Service met or exceeded expectations</b>
<b>Submitted a service request to the Operations department</b>	4.08/5 stars	77%
<b>Received a service at ServiceGuelph</b>	3.84/5 stars	71%
<b>Used the Report a Problem Map*</b>	2.9/5 stars	57%

\* ratings do not meet the City’s targets and will be analyzed in detail as part of the City’s annual performance/Strategic Plan report.

## **Customer and Digital Service Steering Committee**

The City updated the membership and mandate of the Customer and Digital Service Steering Committee. With representatives from Public Services, Infrastructure Development and Enterprise Services, and support from Strategic Communications and Community Engagement, Information Technology Services, Continuous Improvement, ServiceGuelph and Customer Service and Experience, the Committee is developing corporate processes and tools to guide and govern decisions about new or changing customer and digital services.

### **Central customer contact centre**

As stated in the [Service Simplified Progress Report: Implementing Guelph's Customer Service Strategy - 2022-374](#) the City used a LEAN Continuous Improvement Project to learn how a more central approach could improve service efficiency. As a result of the project, ServiceGuelph resolves 40-50 per cent of customer calls about solid waste services, and customer wait times are reduced by an average of one minute per call.

The City is using the same approach to continue centralizing more customer service functions to offer the most popular services from a central customer contact centre.

Ultimately, a central customer contact centre can include one phone number, one email address, a service-focused website, and a digital customer service platform. The customer service team could work from several locations and use standardized information to resolve 50-60 per cent of customer inquiries during the first interaction.

### **Wave 1 – Property Tax**

In Wave 1, the team reviewed 13 services offered by the Property Tax team. The team collected and analyzed data about customer service interactions, processes tools and technology.

The team redesigned those processes, updated phone systems, roles and responsibilities, developed new employee training and resources for people working in ServiceGuelph and Finance.

Two customer service representatives were hired in ServiceGuelph to ensure the City could maintain service targets (70 per cent of calls answered within 30 seconds).

The City is resolving more than 50 per cent of customer calls about property taxes during the first interaction in ServiceGuelph, allowing Finance staff to manage more complex inquiries and projects with fewer interruptions.

The City is also preparing to launch the City's property tax portal in early 2024 so people to view and make changes to their property tax accounts and payment plans online.

We expect an increase in support calls as customers learn to set up their accounts in the property tax portal. Once established, new self-serve options typically lead to a reduction in customer phone calls and emails, allowing the City to maintain customer service levels as the community continues to grow.

### **Wave 2 – Parking**

In wave 2, an employee vacancy provided an opportunity to reconsider our approach to customer service in the Parking division. The Parking email and phone number have been removed from the City's website and replaced with the City's main phone number and email address. ServiceGuelph is resolving most parking inquiries allowing the City to reallocate employee resources to support event parking and the adult school crossing guard program.

### **Wave 3 – Parks**

The third wave with the Parks department is now underway, and the team is reviewing 22 services currently offered in Parks to learn which service activities could be delivered from ServiceGuelph.

The Parks department has started documenting the current state of customer service and is preparing the service catalogue, processes, and tools needed to resolve more parks-related calls in ServiceGuelph. Project scope, timeline, and resolution targets will be established as part of the project, and the team will continue reporting on its progress.

### **Challenges**

#### **In-house expertise and capital project sequencing.**

It is important to acknowledge this work requires city-wide investment, commitment, collaboration, and cooperation. There may be some quicker wins, but there are no shortcuts.

The teams involved in service improvement projects are the same individuals responsible for day-to-day service delivery. This work may disrupt departmental work plans, as each wave requires significant attention and effort. Balancing the concurrent tasks of researching, analyzing, reviewing, and rebuilding services while delivering services to actual customers is quite a challenge.

Many service-related technology projects either planned or underway require the same in-house expertise.

Project teams are working to ensure the City's corporate payment platform, tax platform, website, knowledge base/CRM, Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), data warehousing, AMANDA upgrades, water wastewater utility, etc. are planned and resourced to minimize service disruptions and support successful upgrades and integration over the next few years.

### **Financial Implications**

It is difficult to separate investments in customer service from other corporate technology improvements. There are several service-related projects either planned or underway in several departments.

The following describes the financial implications recently discussed as part of the 2024-2027 capital and operating multi-year budget plans. These include:

- Central Customer Contact Centre funded using reserves and efficiencies
- Improved technology and tools to support customer service:
  - Corporate payment platform \$636,000 approved in 2021
  - Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Platform \$250,000 in 2025, \$1,110,000 in 2026 \$750,000 in 2027

- A corporate customer service and experience planning and support team  
\$272,300 in 2027

## **Funding the City's central customer contact centre**

To encourage fiscal accountability and participation from service owners throughout the organization, the Customer Service and Experience team was directed to use existing resources to support the investment needed to operate a central customer contact centre as part of the 2024-2027 multi-year budget process.

Based on the data available, the City's earlier experiences consolidating existing teams within the organization, and lessons learned from other municipalities, the financing model most likely to deliver the most benefit most quickly is for Service Areas to share the investment according to the estimated customer interactions likely to be offered in the City's central customer contact centre.

This model is different from the City's typical approach to financing large-scale, multi-year, corporate strategic initiatives; the budget for the City's strategic objectives does not sit neatly in one department or service area.

This approach reinforces the importance of all service areas and departments sharing the responsibility and resources needed to improve customer service design and delivery throughout the organization.

## **Consultations**

This report was shared with the City's Customer and Digital Services Steering Committee, which includes representatives from ServiceGuelph, Strategic Communications and Community Engagement, Information Technology Services, Infrastructure Development and Enterprise Services, Public Services, and the Continuous Improvement Office.

This report was also shared with the teams working to centralize services delivered by Finance, Parking and Parks.

## **Attachments**

Attachment 1: Implementing Service Simplified Progress Report 2023 Presentation

Attachment 2: Service Simplified Graphic Summary

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