



*Office of the Auditor General / Bureau du vérificateur général*

**AUDIT OF THE 3-1-1 CONTACT CENTRE**

**2007**

**Chapter 8**

**VÉRIFICATION DU CENTRE D'APPELS 3-1-1**

**2007**

**Chapitre 8**



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### APPENDIX A - IBM Report



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### ***Introduction***

The Audit of the 3-1-1 Contact Centre was added to the Auditor General's 2007 work plan as a result of the yearly risk assessment process.

The objectives of the audit were to determine:

1. The effectiveness of the Client Services and Public Information Branch's structure and overall management to deliver the 3-1-1 service;
2. The adequacy of the 3-1-1 quality assurance and performance measurement program;
3. How data gathered by the 3-1-1 Contact Centre is reported back to the City's departments and branches as management information to assess program and service effectiveness; and,
4. The extent to which outsourcing and insourcing options have been considered as a means to achieve efficiencies.

For the second audit objective listed above, a "mystery calling" program was conducted by IBM, whereby 100 test calls were made to the 3-1-1 Contact Centre over a period of time to assess for call quality and timeliness of service. The results of the IBM report on mystery calling are summarized in this audit report and the full IBM report is provided in Appendix A.

Also, for the fourth audit objective listed above related to outsourcing, a detailed review on the viability of outsourcing was conducted. The results are summarized in this report and the full report has been provided to 3-1-1 management.

### ***Background***

The 3-1-1 Contact Centre is a part of the Client Services and Public Information (CSPI) Branch within the Business Transformation Services Department of the City. The overall objectives of CSPI are to deliver responsive and efficient services to Ottawa residents and businesses through a consolidated, multi-channel service window.

The 3-1-1 program was launched at the City of Ottawa on September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2005 with principles endorsing:

- Enhanced customer service;
- Multiple channels to access City services;
- Increased self-service capability; and,

- A single point of contact for the public with improved feedback.

The 3-1-1 Contact Centre is a 24/7 operation. The regular business hours are Monday to Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. However, urgent calls from residents are accepted outside of regular business hours. Examples of urgent calls include citizen inquiries regarding broken water mains and traffic lights, missed garbage collection, by-law services such as noise complaints, parking enforcement and animal control services.

### **Summary of Key Findings**

Since amalgamation in 2001, and since the official launch of 3-1-1 in September 2005, the 3-1-1 Contact Centre has accomplished a lot. The key strengths and accomplishments of the 3-1-1 Contact Centre noted during the course of the audit include:

- Focus on training for 3-1-1 Contact Centre staff;
- Investment in technology, including the development of a knowledge-based tool that all Call agents have access to;
- Developed a framework for capturing statistics and reporting;
- Good resource planning and scheduling;
- Establishment of service level standards;
- Reviewed efficiencies to be achieved through insourcing; and,
- Developed positive working relationships internally.

Based on the criteria used in this audit, the 3-1-1 Contact Centre has satisfied many of the criteria but is not meeting several others. The key areas where there are opportunities for improvement are as follows:

#### **1. Organization and Leadership** – The four main areas were as follows:

- Clarify supervision of staff;
- Improve communications with staff;
- Review staffing model (balance of full-time, part-time, and casual staff); and,
- Resolve overpayment of shift premium payments.

#### **2. Service Delivery** – IBM was engaged as a part of this audit to conduct a “mystery calling” program to evaluate service delivery. The program was designed to evaluate the customer service levels of the 3-1-1 Contact Centre (e.g., response time, availability, appropriate language, courteousness) as well as the service outcomes (e.g., accuracy, did individuals obtain what they needed) across hours of service.

There is significant room for improvement in the accuracy of the answers being

provided. Only 39% of responses were considered “fully correct”, while another 31% of responses were “partially correct”, and 30% of the calls were answered incorrectly. The results indicate that management should:

- Implement a formal call monitoring program to better assess whether staff are following procedures and protocols;
- Review current training practices and address specific topics where accuracy has been identified as an issue; and,
- Use the results of the mystery calling study as a baseline for measuring performance and continue to perform similar assessments in the future.

The findings of the mystery calling program are summarized in the audit report and the full IBM report is included in Appendix A of the full audit report.

3. **Performance Measurement** – The audit found that 3-1-1 management has established a comprehensive reporting framework. The three key reports are as follows:

- Quarterly Performance Report to Council;
- Monthly 3-1-1 Service Request Report; and,
- Weekly activity reporting.

This reporting provides useful data, however, these reports focus on activities, call volumes and quantitative analysis rather than performance measures related to quality. The current reporting does not provide 3-1-1 management or other stakeholders with useful and relevant data on service quality. At present, 3-1-1 management relies on informal feedback from internal business clients and the public/external clients to gauge qualitative performance.

4. **Quality Assurance** – The audit found that there are no formal processes in place to monitor or evaluate the quality of the 3-1-1 services being delivered externally to clients. The biggest costs to the 3-1-1 Contact Centre of poor call quality are repeat callers, escalation of calls and complaints to higher management, negative reaction and publicity from angry clients, and staff rework caused by errors made during the call. Therefore, the emphasis should always be on handling each call correctly.

The two key quality indicators that the 3-1-1 Contact Centre currently does not measure or track are as follows:

- Errors and rework; and,
- Customer satisfaction.

The audit also found that there are no formal processes in place to assess the quality of the 3-1-1 service being delivered internally to the business clients and other parts of the organization. As with external business clients, there are no tracking or reporting mechanisms in place to monitor or assess the quality of internal service delivery.

5. **Alternate Service Delivery** – The audit found that 3-1-1 management has completed the preliminary work to assess potential insourcing opportunities. In late 2006, 3-1-1 management engaged a consultant to assess the feasibility of combining the operations of other City call centres under 3-1-1. The consultant found that, based on the cost per call minute (CPCM) methodology used, four out of the eight call centres included in the evaluation were “high potential 3-1-1 candidates”, as follows:

- Transit (OC Transpo);
- Tax – Customer Accounts;
- Utilities; and,
- RPAM.

This audit found that even though the consultants report is based on a sound CPCM analysis, there are other qualitative issues that were not factored into the CPCM analysis, and as a result, these impact the feasibility of consolidating operations. The audit found that consolidating operations of the four call centres listed above may not be appropriate at this point in time.

As well, until the staffing, service delivery and service quality issues raised in this report have been more fully resolved in the 3-1-1 Contact Centre, it would not be appropriate for the 3-1-1 Contact Centre to expand its operations and assume additional responsibility.

Finally, as a part of this audit, we conducted an independent review and assessment of the viability and practicality of outsourcing the provision of the 3-1-1 Contact Centre service (non-emergency calls to the City). The objective was to provide a high level assessment of the possible business case for outsourcing 3-1-1.

We concluded that outsourcing is a viable option for further consideration, based on the following findings:

- Outsourcing has been used, and is continuing to find favour in both the public and private sector, for complex and simple transactions.



- Outsourcers have a number of strategic advantages that may translate into lower costs to serve, while at the same time delivering enhanced customer service and service delivery.
- Outsourcing has been and continues to be used in at least one major 3-1-1 environment (New York), and is seen as a viable option to ensure flexibility and redundancy (emergency back-up) planning.

While labour relations considerations will impact on the ability to fully outsource, it was identified that the biggest savings would come from outsourcing a consolidated 3-1-1 operation.

## ***Recommendations and Management Responses***

### **Recommendation 1**

**That 3-1-1 management clarify the roles and responsibilities of the program manager, supervisors, and service level coordinator and communicate this to staff to ensure a common and consistent understanding.**

#### **Management Response**

Management agrees with this recommendation.

The introduction of contact centre industry standard practices lead to changes in some roles and functions, which may have resulted in confusion for staff.

Management will clarify the roles and responsibilities of the program manager, supervisors and service level coordinator for staff by the end of Q2 2008.

### **Recommendation 2**

**That 3-1-1 Contact Centre agents be accountable to only one supervisor for monitoring and assessing performance.**

#### **Management Response**

Management agrees with this recommendation.

While this has occurred in practice over the past year, management will formalize and communicate this approach by the end of Q2 2008.

### **Recommendation 3**

**That a process be implemented to regularly monitor, assess, and document staff performance.**

#### **Management Response**

Management agrees with this recommendation.

While this has occurred in practice over the past year during periodic one-on-one feedback sessions, management will conduct yearly performance reviews as part of Employee Services' new Performance Development Program for unionized

employees. Prior to the development of this program, no formal review process existed for CUPE members.

Employee Services is currently rolling out this program branch-by-branch in a controlled and coordinated fashion. Management expects to complete performance appraisals by Q4 2009.

#### **Recommendation 4**

**That 3-1-1 management review their communication approach with Contact Centre agents to ensure that the appropriate processes and tools are in place that result in relevant information being communicated in an efficient, effective, and consistent manner.**

#### **Management Response**

Management agrees with this recommendation.

With 3-1-1's scope of service spanning across the organization, the flow of information into the Contact Centre can be daunting, as the information comes from various sources and via many channels. Technology is being used to tag new and updated procedures. In-person briefings are used periodically for sensitive topics.

Management will establish a project that will review the communication approach with Contact Centre agents and establish new processes and tools, by the end of Q4 2008.

#### **Recommendation 5**

**That 3-1-1 management review the staffing model to determine the appropriate mix of full-time, part-time, and casual staff to support the Contact Centre's objective of delivering high quality, accessible and timely service at the lowest possible total cost.**

#### **Management Response**

Management agrees with this recommendation.

This recommendation is already in place. The current staffing model was developed in 2006 and management continues to fine-tune the appropriate mix of full-time, part-time, and casual staff depending upon our operational requirements. The implementation of a more flexible staffing model has enabled management to more effectively control costs, including the use of overtime, while positively impacting coverage in a fluctuating call demand operation.

Management reviews the staffing model on an ongoing basis to ensure that the Contact Centre is delivering high-quality, accessible and timely service at the lowest possible cost. The current staffing model has not significantly impacted staff turnover and is in-line with contact centre industry best practices.

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**Recommendation 6**

**That 3-1-1 management ensure accountability in enforcing all aspects of the Collective Agreement, including the shift premium payments.**

**Management Response**

Management agrees with this recommendation.

The December 2007 signing of the new CUPE 503 inside/outside Collective Agreement gave management the opportunity to move to the desired model of eliminating the payment of shift premiums to some employees.

Under the guidance of labour relations, management is committed to enforcing all aspects of the Collective Agreement by the end of Q2 2008.

**Recommendation 7**

**That the compensation budget for the 3-1-1 Contact Centre not be increased until management can demonstrate compliance with the Collective Agreement for shift premiums paid to staff.**

**Management Response**

Management disagrees with this recommendation.

Council reviewed the 3-1-1 Contact Centre service levels and budget in detail as part of the 2008 Administrative Review process. The budget, branch operations and service will continue to be reviewed in a manner prescribed by Council budget directions.

**Recommendation 8**

**That 3-1-1 management implement formal call monitoring technology to assess if agents are following the procedures and protocols in place and handling calls in a consistent manner.**

**Management Response**

Management agrees with this recommendation.

As part of the Point of Service Strategy, a Quality Assurance Program was developed and approved in 2007. Planned implementation was to take place in the fall and winter of 2007-2008 and is currently being rolled out as planned.

Recording technology has now been acquired using a low cost option to record adhoc calls, which are used to review with agents. Recording of all calls was an option at a higher cost, which would have been redundant pending the City's migration to Voice-over Internet Protocol (VoIP) technology. The technology to record all calls will be considered as part of the VoIP implementation by IT Services.

Management believes that this recommendation has been adequately fulfilled pending implementation of VoIP. Details regarding the rollout plan for VoIP are not yet available.

### **Recommendation 9**

**That 3-1-1 management review current training practices to ensure that ongoing agent training is offered frequently and on specific topics where accuracy has been identified as an issue.**

#### **Management Response**

Management agrees with this recommendation.

Management will target future training initiatives to address specific areas where completeness of answer has been identified as an issue. This will be done through ongoing discussions with staff and through the results of the Quality Assurance Program that will be fully implemented by Q2 2009.

With respect to the IBM Mystery Calling Program, management is concerned that the report is not a fair representation of the service delivered at 3-1-1.

The Auditor indicates that only 39% of responses were considered “fully correct”, while another 31% of responses were “partially correct”, and 30% of the calls were answered incorrectly. Currently, the 3-1-1 Call Centre is primarily focused on accuracy and timeliness. An assessment of the IBM Mystery Calling Program, although referencing accuracy, is focused on degree of completeness. Management believes that “fully complete” and “partially complete” should have been the words used to evaluate the responses and as such, the results should be interpreted as informative and pointing in the right direction as the 3-1-1 Call Centre strives for excellence.

The IBM Mystery Calling Program focussed on information-based questions and excluded service request questions. Service requests accounted for 34% of the over 500,000 calls serviced by 3-1-1 in 2007. A more relevant study to measure and evaluate the service levels and performance of 3-1-1 would have been a true customer service satisfaction survey of residents who had recently used the 3-1-1 service. Management conducted such a study in the fall of 2007 based on a sample size of 400 and has shared the findings with the Auditor. The survey revealed strong satisfaction ratings of over 80% (4.2/5) for both information and service requests.

In addition, in 2004, Council directed the reduction in service level at the Contact Centre from a full service 24/7 operation to a Contact Centre that has two service level periods (core hours and non-core hours). The evaluation of responses to questions posed through the IBM Mystery Calling Program reflected two very different service level periods, and as such, were not a fair assessment of the

customer service abilities of some of the agents, nor a clear representation of the service provision.

All of the questions asked by the mystery caller during non-core hours, were in fact out-of-scope for the “normal” non-core hours service. Had management been given an opportunity to review the questions for relevance in advance, a more appropriate set of questions reflective of non-core hours of operation would have been provided. Agents working after-hours are required to balance the responsibilities related to handling urgent, priority requests with that of helping callers with non-priority matters.

Any reference made to a “call not being answered by an agent at all (reached a recording asking them to call back during core hours),” is incorrect. This only happens if the caller dials “O” when waiting in the queue, as per the messaging.

### **Recommendation 10**

**That 3-1-1 management use the results of the “mystery calling” program as a baseline for measuring performance, and continue to perform similar assessments on an ongoing basis to track performance and provide feedback to agents.**

#### **Management Response**

Management disagrees with this recommendation.

Management will review the questions and responses in detail to determine if these are the appropriate questions to be asked. Changes to questions and responses where deemed appropriate will be made.

Management also intends to use a third party to conduct a customer satisfaction survey every six months. The first customer satisfaction survey was conducted in November 2007 and will be used as a baseline.

The results of both these programs will be used to track performance and provide feedback to agents.

The cost of implementing a regular customer satisfaction survey is \$20,000 per year. The cost of implementing a “Mystery Calling Program” is \$25,000 per year. Funding for these programs will be requested through the 2009 budget process.

### **Recommendation 11**

**That 3-1-1 management develop a comprehensive set of performance measures that adequately reflect its performance against strategic and operational objectives in order to provide adequate performance information to Council and manage more effectively.**

#### **Management Response**

Management agrees with this recommendation.

In addition to our comprehensive reporting framework, management will develop performance measures related to the quality of internal and external service delivery.

Management will communicate these performance metrics to Council once the second customer satisfaction study has been completed in Q3 2008.

### **Recommendation 12**

**That 3-1-1 management develop a quality assurance program for monitoring, assessing, and reporting on call quality and the quality of the services delivered to the public.**

#### **Management Response**

Management agrees with this recommendation.

Quality assurance is an integral part of any service organization. As part of its Point of Service Strategy, the Client Services and Public Information branch, has developed the various components required to increase the quality and consistency of service to its clients:

1. Knowledge Base: Since 2005, the 3-1-1 Contact Centre went through a comprehensive exercise with its internal clients to develop over 400 concise operating procedures, using the corporate software standard for enterprise content management.
2. Training Curriculum: The 3-1-1 training program has been redesigned for consistency and effectiveness, for both regular and after hours service.

The above were required to move to the final stage.

3. A Quality Assurance program was approved in 2007 with planned implementation in 2008. This has been developed under advisement with the City's MFIPPA and Labour Relations representations for both privacy and labour concerns. This program identifies coaching and consistency of delivery opportunities, such as refinement of operating processes with our internal partners.

To ensure success of this program, management will request funding for a dedicated quality assurance specialist position in the 2009 budget process.

### **Recommendation 13**

**That 3-1-1 management work more closely with internal business clients to reduce the number of misdirected calls and service requests.**

#### **Management Response**

Management agrees with this recommendation.

While this exercise is performed periodically and as needed, a more consistent proactive approach should be adopted. This responsibility would rest with the

quality assurance specialist. Implementation will take place in Q3 2009, dependent on the approval of this position during the 2009 budget process. Should this position not be approved, management will continue to work with internal clients in an informal manner.

**Recommendation 14**

**That the appropriate tools and processes be implemented to track and report on misdirected calls and service requests.**

**Management Response**

Management agrees with this recommendation.

Management agrees that a formal mechanism is required to qualify, track and action complaints. Working with IT Services, a comprehensive complaint management process for internal clients will be identified by end of Q1 2009.

**Recommendation 15**

**That 3-1-1 management solicit input from internal business clients regarding the training of new hires to ensure the major issues and concerns of each client are addressed in the training program.**

**Management Response**

Management agrees with this recommendation.

Management will solicit input from internal business clients and will identify specific areas to focus on as part of this recommendation, by the end of Q3 2008.

**Recommendation 16**

**That there be no consolidation of other City call centres into 3-1-1 at this time, however, once the recommendations of this audit have been fully implemented, the insourcing analysis should be revisited to determine if there is a business case for consolidating the operations of some of the City call centres into 3-1-1.**

**Management Response**

Management agrees with this recommendation.

Management will investigate further consolidation of other City call centres once all agreed upon recommendations have been implemented, by Q4 2009.

**Recommendation 17**

**That 3-1-1 management follow through on Council's direction to investigate the possibility of outsourcing the 3-1-1 Contact Centre. This should be done in parallel with the other recommendations outlined in this report.**

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### **Management Response**

Management agrees with this recommendation.

Management agrees with this recommendation but believes that a more full investigation into the possibility of outsourcing the Contact Centre should not occur until all agreed upon recommendations have been implemented by Q4 2009 and management has had an opportunity to revisit the outsourcing analysis.

### **Conclusion**

3-1-1 management have made significant improvements to the overall operations and management of the 3-1-1 Contact Centre since amalgamation. However, the audit has identified that there are still many issues that need to be addressed.

Poor call quality and service delivery, including accuracy of information provided to the public and consistency in the way calls are handled, are major issues for the 3-1-1 Contact Centre and need to be addressed by management immediately. Management has focused on adherence to service level standards and call volumes, but has given little attention to tracking or monitoring call quality. Management needs to review the reporting of performance data and ensure that the reports include the measurement of performance quality, not just quantitative measures, to allow for more effective management and oversight.

3-1-1 management also needs to work more closely with internal business clients to develop a tracking process to monitor the accuracy and completeness of service requests and transferred calls.

In parallel, based on the findings in this audit, 3-1-1 management needs to follow through on Council's direction to more fully investigate the possibility of outsourcing the 3-1-1 Contact Centre to assess the potential cost savings to the City, and report back to Committee and Council.

We believe that by implementing the recommendations contained in this report, the 3-1-1 Contact Centre will be able to, in the short term, significantly improve call quality and in the longer term, more fully assess the potential cost savings to the City by evaluating insourcing and outsourcing options.

### ***Acknowledgement***

We wish to express our appreciation for the cooperation and assistance afforded the audit team by management.



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## RÉSUMÉ

### ***Introduction***

Une vérification du Centre d'appels 3-1-1 a été ajoutée au Plan de travail de 2007 dans le cadre du processus annuel d'évaluation des risques.

La vérification avait pour but d'évaluer :

1. l'efficacité de la structure organisationnelle et de la gestion d'ensemble de la Direction des services à la clientèle et de l'information au public pour la prestation du service 3-1-1;
2. la pertinence du programme de contrôle de la qualité et de mesure du rendement du Centre d'appels 3-1-1;
3. la façon dont les données recueillies par le Centre d'appels 3-1-1 sont communiquées aux services et aux directions de la Ville à titre d'information de gestion pour jauger l'efficacité des programmes et des services;
4. la mesure dans laquelle les possibilités de sous-traitance et d'internalisation ont été prises en considération comme moyens de réaliser des gains d'efficience.

En ce qui concerne le deuxième objectif de vérification, il est à noter que la société IBM a fait 100 appels mystères au service 3-1-1 au cours d'une période donnée afin de surveiller la qualité et la rapidité du traitement des appels. Le présent rapport de vérification résume les constatations qui se sont dégagées du rapport d'IBM (dont le version intégrale est jointe à l'annexe A du rapport de vérification intégrale).

En outre, pour ce qui est du quatrième objectif de vérification, une analyse approfondie de la viabilité de la sous-traitance a été effectuée. Les résultats de cette analyse sont résumés dans le présent document, et le rapport intégral a été transmis à la direction du Centre d'appels.

### ***Contexte***

Le Centre d'appels 3-1-1 fait partie de la Direction des services à la clientèle et de l'information au public (SCIP), qui relève de Services de transformation des activités de la Ville. SCIP a pour objectif général d'offrir aux résidents et aux entreprises d'Ottawa des services flexibles et efficaces par un guichet général à voies multiples.

Lancé le 19 septembre 2005 à Ottawa, le programme du Centre d'appels 3-1-1 repose sur les principes suivants :

- assurer à la clientèle le meilleur service possible;
- offrir aux clients de multiples voies d'accès aux services municipaux;

- maximiser le libre-service;
- mettre en place pour la population un point de contact unique doté de mécanismes de rétroaction améliorés.

Le Centre d'appels 3-1-1 est accessible 24 heures sur 24, sept jours sur sept, quoique ses heures normales d'ouverture soient de 7 h à 19 h, du lundi au vendredi. Les résidents peuvent toutefois appeler le service 3-1-1 en dehors des heures normales en cas d'urgence, par exemple pour signaler le bris d'une conduite principale ou de feux de circulation, la non-collecte de déchets et l'inobservation de règlements municipaux, particulièrement en ce qui touche les plaintes sur le bruit, le stationnement et le contrôle des animaux.

### **Sommaire des principales constatations**

Depuis la fusion en 2001 et le lancement officiel du service en septembre 2005, le Centre d'appels 3-1-1 a accompli beaucoup de choses. Les principales forces et réalisations suivantes ont été relevées au cours de la présente vérification :

- l'accent mis sur la formation du personnel du Centre d'appels 3-1-1;
- l'investissement dans la technologie, y compris la création d'un outil à base de connaissances auquel tous les agents ont accès;
- l'élaboration d'un cadre pour compiler des statistiques et en faire rapport;
- de bonnes méthodes de planification et d'établissement d'horaires de travail;
- l'adoption de normes de service;
- l'examen des gains d'efficacité pouvant découler de l'internalisation;
- l'établissement de bonnes relations de travail à l'interne.

Par ailleurs, il est à noter que, bien que le centre d'appels ait satisfait à bon nombre des critères sur lesquels repose la présente vérification, il n'en a pas respectés plusieurs autres. Les principaux domaines qui pourraient être améliorés sont présentés ci-dessous.

1. **Organisation et leadership** – Le Centre d'appels devrait accorder la priorité aux quatre points suivants :
  - préciser les méthodes de supervision du personnel;
  - améliorer la communication avec les employés;
  - revoir le modèle de dotation (assurer un équilibre entre les employés occasionnels, à temps plein et à temps partiel);
  - résoudre le problème des versements excédentaires de primes de quart de travail.
2. **Prestation de services** – Dans le cadre de la présente vérification, la Ville a demandé à la société IBM d'effectuer des appels mystères pour évaluer les services offerts,

tout particulièrement le niveau de service à la clientèle assuré par le Centre d'appels 3-1-1 (temps de réponse, disponibilité, langage, courtoisie, etc.) ainsi que les résultats obtenus (p. ex., l'exactitude et la pertinence des renseignements donnés aux appelants), et ce, à diverses heures d'ouverture.

L'exactitude de l'information transmise laisse fort à désirer. Seulement 39 p. 100 des réponses obtenues ont été jugées "tout à fait exactes", tandis que 31 p. 100 étaient "partiellement exactes" et 30 p. 100, "inexactes". D'après les résultats obtenus, la direction devrait :

- mettre en œuvre un programme bien défini de surveillance des appels afin d'établir jusqu'à quel point les employés respectent les procédures et les protocoles en vigueur;
- passer en revue les méthodes de formation actuelles et traiter de sujets précis lorsque le degré d'exactitude des renseignements donnés aux résidents est source de préoccupation;
- s'inspirer des résultats de l'enquête des appels mystères pour élaborer une stratégie de mesure du rendement, et mener des études semblables à l'avenir.

Le rapport de vérification intégrale résume les constatations du rapport de la société IBM (dont la version intégrale figure à l'annexe A).

3. **Mesure du rendement** – La vérification a révélé que la direction du Centre d'appels 3-1-1 a mis en place un cadre exhaustif de production de rapports. Les trois principaux outils à cet égard sont :

- le rapport trimestriel sur le rendement soumis au Conseil;
- le rapport mensuel des demandes de services 3-1-1;
- le rapport des activités hebdomadaires.

Bien qu'ils fournissent des données utiles, ces rapports sont axés sur les activités, le volume d'appels et les analyses quantitatives plutôt que sur les mesures de rendement liées à la qualité. De plus, ils ne présentent pas à la direction du Centre d'appels 3-1-1 ou à d'autres parties intéressées des renseignements utiles et pertinents sur la qualité du service. À l'heure actuelle, la direction 3-1-1 se fie aux commentaires informels des clients internes et externes et des résidents pour jauger la qualité du rendement.

4. **Contrôle de la qualité** – La vérification a révélé qu'il n'existe aucun processus officiel de contrôle ou de mesure de la qualité des services qu'offre le Centre d'appels 3-1-1 aux clients externes. Les dépenses les plus fortes que doit assumer le Centre d'appels 3-1-1 en raison de la piètre qualité du traitement des appels sont

occasionnées par les appels répétés, la multiplication des appels et des plaintes à la haute direction, les réactions négatives de clients insatisfaits et la publicité en résultant, ainsi que l'obligation pour le personnel de réparer des erreurs commises lors du traitement des appels. Par conséquent, l'accent devrait toujours être mis sur l'importance de répondre convenablement à tous les appels.

Les deux principaux indicateurs de qualité que le Centre d'appels 3-1-1 ne mesure ou ne surveille pas à l'heure actuelle sont :

- les erreurs et la réparation d'erreurs;
- la satisfaction de la clientèle.

La vérification a également indiqué qu'aucun processus officiel n'est en place pour évaluer la qualité des services 3-1-1 offerts aux services-clients et à d'autres services de la Ville. Comme c'est le cas pour les clients externes, il n'existe aucun mécanisme de suivi ou de production de rapports en place permettant de surveiller ou de mesurer la qualité des services offerts aux clients internes.

5. **Diversification des modes d'exécution (DME)** – La vérification a révélé que la direction du Centre d'appels 3-1-1 a achevé une évaluation préliminaire des possibilités d'internalisation. En effet, vers la fin de 2006, la direction a fait appel à une société d'experts-conseils pour étudier la faisabilité d'intégrer au service 3-1-1 les activités d'autres centres d'appels municipaux. Utilisant la méthode du coût par minute d'appel, la société d'experts-conseils a constaté que quatre des huit centres d'appels de la Ville qui ont fait l'objet de l'étude s'intégreraient bien au service 3-1-1, à savoir :

- Services de transport en commun (OC Transpo);
- Taxes – comptes clients;
- Services publics;
- Gestion des biens immobiliers (GBI).

La présente vérification a par ailleurs révélé que même si le rapport de la société d'experts-conseils repose sur une analyse rigoureuse du coût par minute d'appel, celle-ci ne tenait pas compte de certains autres aspects liés à la qualité du service, ce qui pourrait empêcher le regroupement des centres d'appels. De plus, d'après la vérification, l'intégration au service 3-1-1 des quatre centres d'appels susmentionnés pourrait s'avérer inopportune à ce stade-ci.

Par ailleurs, il n'est pas indiqué que le Centre d'appels 3-1-1 étende ses activités ou assume plus de responsabilités avant que les préoccupations liées à la dotation ainsi

qu'à la prestation et à la qualité des services du Centre aient été entièrement résolues.

Enfin, nous avons mené, au cours de la présente vérification, un examen et une évaluation distincts de la viabilité et de l'applicabilité de la sous-traitance des services (appels non urgents à la Ville) du Centre d'appels 3-1-1. L'objectif était de fournir une évaluation détaillée afin de déterminer s'il serait rentable de confier les services 3-1-1 à un sous-traitant.

Nous avons conclu que la sous-traitance constitue une solution viable qui mérite qu'on s'y attarde pour les motifs suivants :

- On a recours à la sous-traitance depuis nombre d'années pour des transactions simples et complexes, et cette pratique continue d'être accueillie favorablement par les secteurs public et privé.
- La sous-traitance comporte plusieurs avantages stratégiques qui peuvent se traduire par une réduction des coûts et l'amélioration de la prestation du service à la clientèle.
- La sous-traitance a été et demeure utilisée dans au moins un service d'envergure (New York) et est considérée comme une solution viable pour assurer des services flexibles et un système auxiliaire de planification d'urgence.

Des motifs liés aux relations de travail pourraient empêcher la Ville de recourir à la sous-traitance pour l'ensemble du Centre d'appels. Il n'en demeure pas moins que la sous-traitance d'un service 3-1-1 fusionné constituerait la solution la plus économique pour la Ville.

## ***Recommandations et réponses de la direction***

### **Recommandation 1**

**Que la direction du Centre d'appels 3-1-1 précise les rôles et les responsabilités du gestionnaire de programme, des superviseurs et du coordonnateur responsable du niveau de service, et qu'elle les communique à tous les membres du personnel pour s'assurer qu'ils comprennent bien le fonctionnement du service.**

### **Réponse de la direction**

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

La mise en place des pratiques qui caractérisent l'industrie des centres d'appels a entraîné la modification de quelques rôles et fonctions, ce qui a pu être source de confusion pour le personnel. D'ici la fin du deuxième trimestre de 2008, la direction clarifiera les rôles et les responsabilités du gestionnaire de programme, des superviseurs et du coordonnateur responsable du niveau de service.

### **Recommandation 2**

**Que les agents du Centre d'appels 3-1-1 relèvent d'un seul superviseur aux fins de la surveillance et de l'évaluation du rendement.**

#### **Réponse de la direction**

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

Même si cette recommandation est appliquée de façon informelle depuis l'an dernier, la direction instaurera une politique officielle à cet égard et en fera l'annonce d'ici la fin du deuxième trimestre de 2008.

### **Recommandation 3**

**Que soit mis en œuvre un processus de surveillance, d'évaluation et de justification régulières du rendement du personnel.**

#### **Réponse de la direction**

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

Même si cette recommandation est appliquée de façon informelle depuis l'an dernier par l'entremise de séances de rétroaction individuelles, la direction mènera chaque année des évaluations du rendement dans le cadre du nouveau programme d'amélioration du rendement de Services aux employés destiné au personnel syndiqué. Aucun processus officiel d'évaluation du rendement des membres du SCFP n'existait avant que ce programme ne soit créé.

Services aux employés procède actuellement à la mise en œuvre contrôlée et coordonnée du programme au sein des directions. La direction devrait achever les évaluations de rendement d'ici le quatrième trimestre de 2009.

### **Recommandation 4**

**Que la direction du Centre d'appels 3-1-1 passe en revue avec tous les agents les méthodes de communication en vigueur pour veiller à ce que les processus et les outils appropriés soient en place pour assurer la transmission efficiente, efficace et uniforme de renseignements pertinents.**

#### **Réponse de la direction**

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

Vu l'étendue des services qu'offre le Centre d'appels 3-1-1, la quantité de renseignements transmis à ce dernier à partir de sources et de voies de communication multiples peut être déconcertante. Le Centre d'appels a recours à des outils technologiques pour communiquer les procédures nouvelles et modifiées. De plus, il organise périodiquement des réunions individuelles pour discuter de sujets délicats avec les employés.

D'ici la fin du quatrième trimestre de 2008, la direction lancera un projet visant à passer en revue avec les agents du Centre d'appels les méthodes de communication en vigueur et appliquera de nouveaux processus et outils à cet égard.

### **Recommandation 5**

**Que la direction du Centre d'appels 3-1-1 examine le modèle de dotation pour déterminer la combinaison appropriée d'employés occasionnels, à temps plein et à temps partiel en vue d'aider le Centre à offrir des services accessibles et de haute qualité rapidement et aux plus bas coûts possible.**

#### **Réponse de la direction**

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

Cette recommandation est déjà appliquée. Le modèle de dotation actuel a été conçu en 2006, et la direction continue de mettre au point la combinaison appropriée d'employés occasionnels, à temps plein et à temps partiel en fonction des exigences opérationnelles du Centre d'appels. Grâce à la mise en œuvre d'un modèle de dotation plus souple, la direction est davantage en mesure de contrôler efficacement les coûts, y compris le recours aux heures supplémentaires, tout en assurant un soutien adéquat dans un contexte où la demande varie constamment.

La direction revoit périodiquement le modèle de dotation pour s'assurer que le Centre d'appels offre aux clients des services accessibles et de haute qualité, rapidement et au coût le plus bas possible. Le modèle de dotation actuel n'a pas eu d'incidence importante sur le roulement du personnel et est conforme aux pratiques exemplaires de l'industrie.

### **Recommandation 6**

**Que la direction du Centre d'appels 3-1-1 assure la reddition de comptes en veillant à faire appliquer toutes les clauses de la convention collective, y compris celles qui concernent le paiement de primes de quart.**

#### **Réponse de la direction**

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

La signature en décembre 2007 de la nouvelle convention collective de la section locale 503 du SCFP (employés d'intérieur et d'extérieur) a été pour la direction l'occasion de supprimer l'admissibilité de certains employés aux primes de quart, conformément au modèle de dotation visé.

Sous la supervision de la Direction des relations de travail, la direction s'engage à appliquer toutes les clauses de la convention collective d'ici la fin du deuxième trimestre de 2008.

### **Recommandation 7**

**Que le budget de la rémunération du Centre d'appels 3-1-1 ne soit pas augmenté tant que la direction ne pourra pas prouver que le Centre respecte la clause de la convention collective régissant le versement de primes de quart aux employés.**

#### **Réponse de la direction**

La direction n'est pas d'accord avec cette recommandation.

Au cours du processus d'examen des services administratifs de 2008, le Conseil municipal a examiné en profondeur les niveaux de service et le budget du Centre d'appels 3-1-1. Le budget, les activités et les services continueront d'être revus conformément aux orientations budgétaires du Conseil.

### **Recommandation 8**

**Que la direction du Centre d'appels 3-1-1 mette en œuvre un système officiel de surveillance des appels pour s'assurer que les agents respectent les procédures et les protocoles en vigueur et traitent les appels de manière uniforme.**

#### **Réponse de la direction**

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

Dans le cadre de la Stratégie des points de service, un programme de contrôle de la qualité a été élaboré et approuvé en 2007. Le programme devait être mis en œuvre à l'automne 2007 et à l'hiver 2008, et la direction travaille actuellement à la mise en place de l'initiative comme prévu.

Par ailleurs, le Centre d'appels a acquis, à faible coût, un système d'enregistrement ponctuel d'appels, lesquels sont passés en revue avec les agents. Plus coûteuse, l'option d'enregistrer tous les appels aurait été superflue jusqu'à ce que la Ville passe à un système de voix par IP (VoIP). La possibilité d'opter pour un système d'enregistrement de tous les appels sera examinée pendant la mise en œuvre par STI de la technologie VoIP.

La direction estime que cette recommandation est respectée, en attendant l'instauration du système VoIP. Les détails relatif au déploiement du projet ne sont pas encore disponibles.

### **Recommandation 9**

**Que la direction du Centre d'appels 3-1-1 passe en revue les méthodes de formation actuelles pour s'assurer que des cours sont fréquemment offerts aux agents sur des sujets précis lorsque le degré d'exactitude des renseignements donnés aux clients est source de préoccupation.**

#### **Réponse de la direction**

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.



La direction ciblera les futures initiatives de formation sur les points précis où il a été établi que l'exhaustivité de la réponse pose problème. Pour cela, elle poursuivra les discussions avec le personnel et analysera les résultats du programme d'assurance de la qualité, dont la mise en œuvre intégrale sera terminée pour le deuxième trimestre de 2009.

Pour ce qui est du programme d'appels mystères d'IBM, la direction craint que le rapport ne soit pas le reflet fidèle du service assuré au 3-1-1.

Le vérificateur indique que seulement 39 % des réponses ont été jugées « entièrement correctes », tandis que 31 % étaient « partiellement correctes » et que 30 % des appels ont donné lieu à une réponse incorrecte. À l'heure actuelle, le Centre d'appels 3-1-1 s'attache surtout à l'exactitude et à la rapidité. Bien qu'elle mentionne l'exactitude, une évaluation du programme d'appels mystères s'attache au degré d'exhaustivité. La direction croit qu'on aurait dû utiliser les mots « entièrement complet » et « partiellement complet » pour évaluer les réponses, si bien que les résultats devraient être interprétés à titre indicatif et comme allant dans le sens de la recherche de l'excellence au Centre d'appels 3-1-1.

Le programme d'appels mystères d'IBM a mis l'accent sur les questions d'information, à l'exclusion des demandes de service. Les demandes de service ont représenté 34 % des plus de 500 000 appels passés par le 3-1-1 en 2007. Une véritable enquête sur la satisfaction à l'égard du service à la clientèle auprès des utilisateurs récents du service 3-1-1 aurait constitué une étude plus pertinente pour mesurer et évaluer les niveaux de service et le rendement du 3-1-1. La direction a mené ce genre d'étude auprès d'un échantillon de 400 répondants à l'automne 2007, et en a communiqué les conclusions au vérificateur. Le sondage a fait ressortir d'excellentes cotes de satisfaction de plus de 80 % (4,2/5) pour les demandes d'information et de service.

En outre, en 2004, le Conseil a ordonné la réduction du niveau de service au Centre d'appels : il est passé d'un service intégral 24 heures sur 24, sept jours sur sept, à un Centre d'appels ayant deux périodes de niveau de service (heures normales et hors des heures normales). L'évaluation des réponses aux questions posées par le programme d'appels mystères d'IBM a reflété deux périodes très différentes de niveau de service et ne constitue donc pas une évaluation juste des capacités de service à la clientèle de certains des agents, ni une image claire de la prestation du service.

Toutes les questions posées lors des appels mystères en dehors des heures normales étaient en réalité hors portée pour le service « normal » en dehors des heures normales. Si elle avait eu la possibilité de vérifier d'avance la pertinence des questions, la direction aurait proposé un ensemble de questions plus appropriées reflétant les heures de service normales. Les agents travaillant après les heures

doivent équilibrer les responsabilités liées au traitement des demandes urgentes prioritaires avec celle d'aider les appelants pour les questions non prioritaires.

C'est une erreur de parler d'appels auxquels aucun agent ne répond (un enregistrement demande de rappeler pendant les heures normales). Cela ne se produit que si l'appelant fait le « 0 » pendant qu'il est en attente, suivant les indications du message.

### **Recommandation 10**

**Que la direction du Centre d'appels 3-1-1 s'inspire des résultats de l'enquête des appels mystères pour élaborer une stratégie de mesure du rendement, et qu'elle réalise des études semblables sur une base continue pour surveiller le rendement des agents et leur fournir de la rétroaction à cet égard.**

#### **Réponse de la direction**

La direction n'est pas d'accord avec cette recommandation.

La direction fera une revue détaillée des questions et réponses pour déterminer si ces questions sont celles qu'il faut poser. Elle apportera des changements aux questions et réponses là où elle le jugera utile.

La direction a aussi l'intention de recourir aux services d'un tiers pour mener une enquête semestrielle sur la satisfaction de la clientèle. La première enquête sur la satisfaction de la clientèle, qui a eu lieu en novembre 2007, servira de point de référence.

Les résultats de ces deux programmes serviront à suivre le rendement et à donner de la rétroaction aux agents.

Le coût de la mise en œuvre d'une enquête périodique sur la satisfaction de la clientèle est de 20 000 \$ par an. Le coût de la mise en œuvre d'un « programme d'appels mystères » est de 25 000 \$ par an. Le financement nécessaire à ces programmes sera demandé dans le cadre du processus budgétaire de 2009.

### **Recommandation 11**

**Que la direction du Centre d'appels 3-1-1 définisse un ensemble complet de mesures de rendement qui reflète adéquatement son rendement par rapport aux objectifs stratégiques et de fonctionnement afin de fournir au Conseil les renseignements dont il a besoin sur le rendement et de rendre ses méthodes de gestion plus efficaces.**

#### **Réponse de la direction**

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

Outre le cadre exhaustif de production de rapports, la direction élaborera des mesures de rendement relativement à la qualité des services offerts aux clients internes et externes.

La direction communiquera ces paramètres de rendement au Conseil une fois que le deuxième sondage sur la satisfaction des clients aura été réalisé, au troisième trimestre de 2008.

### **Recommandation 12**

**Que la direction du Centre d'appels 3-1-1 crée un programme de contrôle de la qualité en vue de la surveillance et de l'évaluation de la qualité du traitement des appels et des services offerts au public ainsi que la production de rapports à cet égard.**

#### **Réponse de la direction**

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

Le contrôle de la qualité fait partie intégrante de tout organisme de services. Dans le cadre de sa Stratégie des points de service, la Direction des services à la clientèle et de l'information au public a mis au point les composantes suivantes nécessaires à l'amélioration de la qualité et de l'uniformité des services offerts à ses clients :

1. Base de connaissances : Depuis 2005, le Centre d'appels 3-1-1 a réalisé, de concert avec ses clients internes, une étude exhaustive visant à élaborer plus de 400 procédures de fonctionnement concises, au moyen du logiciel municipal de gestion du contenu.
2. Programme de formation : Le programme de formation du Centre d'appels 3-1-1 a été modifié pour en améliorer l'uniformité et l'efficacité, tant pendant qu'après les heures normales d'ouverture.

Les composantes ci-dessus étaient nécessaires pour passer à la dernière étape.

3. Un programme de contrôle de la qualité a été approuvé en 2007 et sa mise en œuvre était prévue pour 2008. La Direction a élaboré ce programme avec des représentants de l'Unité de la *Loi sur l'accès à l'information municipale et la protection de la vie privée* et de la Division des relations de travail pour résoudre les questions liées au respect de la vie privée et aux relations de travail. Ce programme définit des occasions d'encadrement des employés et de prestation de services uniformes, comme l'amélioration des processus opérationnels utilisés pour répondre aux clients internes.

Afin d'assurer la réussite du programme, la direction sollicitera, au cours du processus budgétaire de 2009, des fonds pour la création d'un poste de spécialiste du contrôle de la qualité.

### **Recommandation 13**

**Que la direction du Centre d'appels 3-1-1 travaille de plus près avec les clients internes afin de réduire le nombre de demandes de services et d'appels mal dirigés.**

**Réponse de la direction**

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

Bien qu'il mette déjà cette recommandation en pratique de façon périodique et selon les besoins, le Centre d'appels devrait adopter une approche plus uniforme et proactive. Il incomberait au spécialiste du contrôle de la qualité d'appliquer cette approche. Cette recommandation sera mise en œuvre à compter du troisième trimestre de 2009, sous réserve de l'approbation du poste susmentionné au cours du processus budgétaire de 2009. Si ce poste n'est pas approuvé, la direction continuera à collaborer de manière informelle avec les clients internes à cet égard.

**Recommandation 14**

**Que soient mis en œuvre les outils et les processus appropriés pour le suivi des demandes de services et des appels mal dirigés et la production de rapports à cet égard.**

**Réponse de la direction**

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

La direction reconnaît qu'un mécanisme officiel doit être mis en place pour examiner les plaintes, en faire le suivi et les régler. En collaboration avec le personnel de Services de technologie de l'information, la Direction créera un processus exhaustif de gestion des plaintes de clients internes d'ici la fin du premier trimestre de 2009.

**Recommandation 15**

**Que la direction du Centre d'appels 3-1-1 demande l'avis des clients internes en ce qui touche le programme de formation des nouveaux employés afin que celui-ci tienne compte des grands besoins et des principales préoccupations de chaque client.**

**Réponse de la direction**

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

D'ici la fin du troisième trimestre de 2008, la direction demandera l'avis des clients internes et cernera les domaines qui mériteraient une attention particulière dans le cadre de l'application de cette recommandation.

**Recommandation 16**

**Qu'aucun autre centre d'appels municipal ne soit intégré au service 3-1-1 pour le moment; cependant, une fois que les recommandations de la présente vérification auront été entièrement mises en œuvre, que l'analyse de l'internalisation soit revue pour déterminer dans quelle mesure l'intégration de certains centres d'appels municipaux au service 3-1-1 serait rentable.**

**Réponse de la direction**

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

La direction examinera la possibilité d'intégrer au service 3-1-1 d'autres centres d'appels municipaux une fois que toutes les recommandations approuvées auront été mises en œuvre d'ici le quatrième trimestre de 2009.

### **Recommandation 17**

**Que la direction du Centre d'appels 3-1-1 respecte l'orientation du Conseil voulant qu'elle étudie la possibilité de confier en sous-traitance l'exploitation du Centre d'appels 3-1-1, et ce, parallèlement aux autres recommandations formulées dans le présent rapport.**

#### **Réponse de la direction**

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

La direction appuie cette recommandation, mais est d'avis qu'une étude exhaustive sur la possibilité de confier le Centre d'appels à un sous-traitant devrait être réalisée une fois seulement que toutes les recommandations approuvées auront été mises en œuvre d'ici le quatrième trimestre de 2009 et que la direction aura eu l'occasion de revoir l'analyse de rentabilisation de la sous-traitance.

### **Conclusion**

Depuis la fusion municipale, la direction du Centre d'appels a apporté des améliorations notables aux processus opérationnels et aux méthodes de gestion du service 3-1-1. Cependant, la vérification a révélé que de nombreuses préoccupations demeurent qui doivent être réglées.

La piètre qualité du traitement des appels et des services offerts au public, ce qui comprend l'exactitude des renseignements fournis à la population et le traitement uniforme des appels, constitue une préoccupation majeure pour le Centre d'appels 3-1-1, et la direction doit prendre immédiatement des mesures pour y remédier. La direction accorde beaucoup d'importance au respect des normes de service et au volume d'appels, mais ne prête qu'une attention modeste au suivi et à la surveillance de la qualité du traitement des appels. La direction doit revoir ses méthodes de production de rapports sur le rendement et s'assurer que ceux-ci portent sur l'évaluation de la qualité du rendement et non seulement sur la productivité, afin d'accroître l'efficacité des mesures de gestion et de surveillance.

En outre, il faudrait que la direction du Centre d'appels 3-1-1 collabore plus étroitement avec les clients internes afin d'élaborer un système de suivi visant à surveiller l'exactitude et l'exhaustivité des renseignements fournis en réponse à des demandes et à des appels acheminés du Centre.

De même, à la lumière des constatations découlant de la présente vérification, il importe que la direction du Centre d'appels 3-1-1 se conforme à l'orientation du Conseil

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municipal voulant qu'elle examine plus en profondeur la possibilité de confier le Centre d'appels 3-1-1 à un sous-traitant afin de cerner les économies potentielles que la Ville pourrait ainsi réaliser, et que la direction fasse rapport au Comité et au Conseil à cet égard.

Nous croyons qu'en mettant en œuvre les recommandations formulées dans le présent rapport, le Centre d'appels 3-1-1 pourra améliorer considérablement la qualité du traitement des appels, à court terme, et mesurer pleinement les économies que la Ville pourrait réaliser en ayant recours à l'internalisation ou à la sous-traitance, à long terme.

### ***Remerciements***

Nous tenons à remercier la direction de sa bienveillante collaboration et de l'aide qu'elle a apportée à l'équipe de vérification.

## 1 BACKGROUND

The Audit of the 3-1-1 Contact Centre was added to the Auditor General's 2007 work plan as a result of the yearly risk assessment process.

### **1.1 Objectives and Programs of the 3-1-1 Contact Centre**

The 3-1-1 Contact Centre is a part of the Client Services and Public Information (CSPI) Branch within the Business Transformation Services Department of the City. The overall objectives of CSPI are to deliver responsive and efficient services to Ottawa residents and businesses through a consolidated, multi-channel service window, which includes:

- Delivering services to residents and businesses through 3-1-1, ottawa.ca, 311@ottawa.ca and seven client service centres;
- Developing content for all communications channels, including Web, media, and print material;
- Gathering feedback and intelligence through interaction with residents to improve service;
- Reporting on the performance of services delivered to residents and businesses; and,
- Creating and administering the Corporate Publishing Plan.

The 3-1-1 program was launched at the City of Ottawa on September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2005 with principles endorsing:

- Enhanced customer service;
- Multiple channels to access City services;
- Increased self service capability; and,
- A single point of contact for the public with improved feedback.

The 3-1-1 Contact Centre is a 24/7 operation. The regular business hours are Monday to Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. However, urgent calls from residents are accepted outside of regular business hours. Examples of urgent calls include citizen inquiries regarding broken water mains and traffic lights, missed garbage collection, by-law services such as noise complaints, parking enforcement and animal control services.

At this time not all public inquiries are being directed to 3-1-1 as many areas of the City have a call centre operation to support programs and services, including OC Transpo, Public Health, Utilities, Taxation, Police non-emergency, and Ontario Works.

The 3-1-1 Contact Centre also provides direct (backdoor) access to internal partners (Police, Fire, Paramedics and various road crews) who require City services in support of their regular duties as well as TTY services to most City departments.

## **1.2 Organizational Structure**

At the time of this audit, CSPI was one of six branches under the responsibility of the Executive Director, Business Transformation Services and was organized into three divisions:

### **1. Public Information Division**

- Integrated communications planning;
- Strategic advice on public consultations corporate special events;
- Corporate visual identity;
- Writing and editing of news releases, media advisories, public service announcements, backgrounders on City services, programs, events, and initiatives;
- Advertising;
- Content management for all public communication channels, including Web, media, and print material;
- Graphic design services;
- Management of the top level pages of ottawa.ca; and,
- Communications evaluation and effectiveness measurement.

### **2. Service Integration and Performance Division**

- Report on performance of 3-1-1 Contact Centre, counter services, 311@ottawa.ca (email), and ottawa.ca; and,
- Provide information to support service integration and improvement initiatives (gather and analyze client feedback, Web statistics, and intelligence from client interactions with front line agents to support initiatives to improve and integrate the 4 service channels – Contact Centre, Client Service Centres, ottawa.ca, and email services).

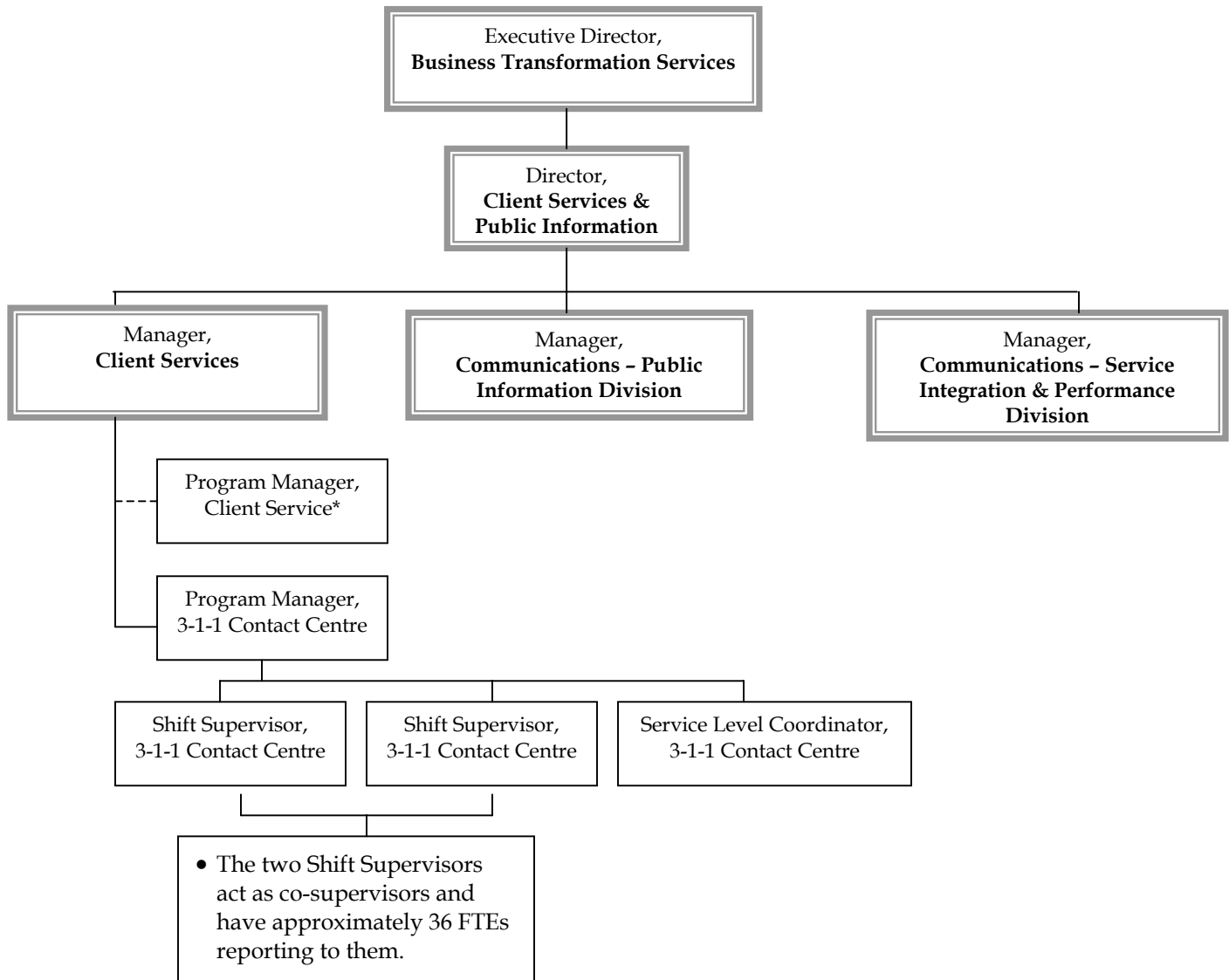
### **3. Client Services Division (including 3-1-1 Contact Centre)**

- Provide “front-line” counter and application processing service at City Hall and six satellite offices;
- Accept payments from the public;
- Sell goods to the public;



- Registrations, enrolment, applications and booking for members of the public;
- Display pamphlets and reference materials;
- Administer the Vital Statistics program on behalf of the City Clerk;
- Administer Livestock Valuation program;
- Operate, in partnership with the Provincial and Federal Governments, the Government Services Centre in Ottawa;
- Responsible for responding to emails received through 311@ottawa.ca;
- Specifically, for the 3-1-1 Contact Centre:
  - Provide “first point of contact” in both official languages, and access to City services through telephone contact 24 hours a day, 7 days a week;
  - Provide callers with general information regarding a vast array of municipal services;
  - Primary in-take of requests for service, information provision, call transfers/referrals, and program registration;
  - Provide 2-way radio dispatch/communication and field support for enforcement staff and municipal operations personnel, during regular and after hours;
  - Provide in-person after-hours burial permit issuance and intake of associated fees;
  - In conjunction with Emergency Measures Unit (EMU), act as a central point of contact in the event of an emergency for the reporting of incidents and the provision of directional information back out to clients;
  - Implement policy and procedures with respect to standardized voice recordings for municipal telephone systems, including automated attendant recording for large-scale operations;
  - Provide TTY services for the hearing impaired;
  - Provide Web and IVR support as it pertains to the use of existing services, and in conjunction with the expansion of alternative service methods;
  - Gather and report on statistical information related to call volume, call answer times, and service request topics; and,
  - Part of a team responsible for responding to emails received through 311@ottawa.ca.

The overall structure of the Branch is presented below.



\* Not in the audit scope

### 1.3 Resources and Budgets

CSPI Branch employs approximately 123 FTEs, of which approximately 36 FTEs are dedicated to the 3-1-1 Contact Centre. Overall in 2007, the 3-1-1 Contact Centre represents 26% of the CSPI Branch's total gross expenditures, and 27% of the Branch's FTEs.

The 2005-2007 budgets for the CSPI Branch are presented below:

**Table 1: Client Services & Public Information Branch 2005-2007**

By Program	2005		2006		2007	
	Actual (\$000)	Budget (\$000)	Actual (\$000)	Budget (\$000)	Adopted (\$000)	%
Director's Office	339	331	392	315	322	3.4
Public Information	2,143	2,264	2,650	2,412	2,448	25.7
Service Integration & Perf.	809	799	1,073	1,015	1,168	12.2
Client Services	5,441	5,265	5,786	5,459	5,608	58.7
<i>3-1-1 Contact Centre</i>	2,423	2,265	2,438	2,402	2,483	26.0
<b>Total Gross Expenditures</b>	<b>8,732</b>	<b>8,641</b>	<b>9,901</b>	<b>9,201</b>	<b>9,546</b>	<b>100</b>
Client Recoveries	(516)	(475)	(1,204)	(475)	(375)	
<b>Total Net Expenditures</b>	<b>8,216</b>	<b>8,166</b>	<b>8,697</b>	<b>8,726</b>	<b>9,171</b>	
<b>Revenues</b>						
City Reserves	-	-	(160)	(160)	(290)	95.1
General/Fees/Charges	(88)	(15)	(27)	(15)	(15)	4.9
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>(88)</b>	<b>(15)</b>	<b>(187)</b>	<b>(175)</b>	<b>(305)</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Net Requirement</b>	<b>8,128</b>	<b>8,151</b>	<b>8,510</b>	<b>8,551</b>	<b>8,866</b>	
<b>By Expenditure Type for 3-1-1 Contact Centre</b>						
Comp. and Benefits	2,496	2,216	2,569	2,354	2,435	98.1
Material and Services	56	45	15	43	43	1.7
Transfers/Grants/Fin.	(130)	-	-	-	-	-
Fleet Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-
Program Facility Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Internal Costs	1	5	3	5	5	0.2
Reallocated Labour	-	-	(148)	-	-	-
<b>Total Gross Expenditures</b>	<b>2,423</b>	<b>2,266</b>	<b>2,439</b>	<b>2,402</b>	<b>2,483</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>3-1-1 Contact Centre FTEs</b>	<b>43.98</b>	<b>34.4</b>	<b>37.37</b>	<b>33.4</b>	<b>33.4</b>	<b>27.3</b>
<b>Branch FTEs</b>	<b>144.21</b>	<b>119.9</b>	<b>142.27</b>	<b>122.23</b>	<b>122.23</b>	

An analysis of budget variances is presented below.

**Table 2: 3-1-1 Contact Centre Budget Variances 2005-2006**

Budget to Actual	2005 Gross Expenditures (\$000)	2006 Gross Expenditures (\$000)
Budget	2,265	2,402
Actual	2,423	2,438
Surplus/(Deficit)	(158)	(36)

## 1.4 Performance Data

The following figures present the performance data collected on the 3-1-1 Contact Centre from the performance management group for the second quarter in 2007.

**Figure 1: 3-1-1 Contact Centre Total Calls Answered**

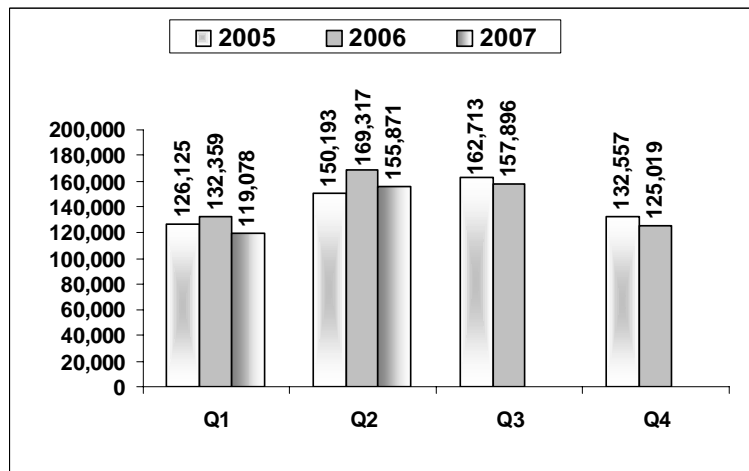


Figure 1 shows that the overall calls answered at 3-1-1 for Q2 2007 were in line with anticipated volumes. Q2 2006 volumes were heavily impacted by Solid Waste related calls in June 2006 due to significant changes to the garbage and recycling collection schedule.

**Figure 2: Percentage of Calls Answered Within 120 Seconds (target 80%)**

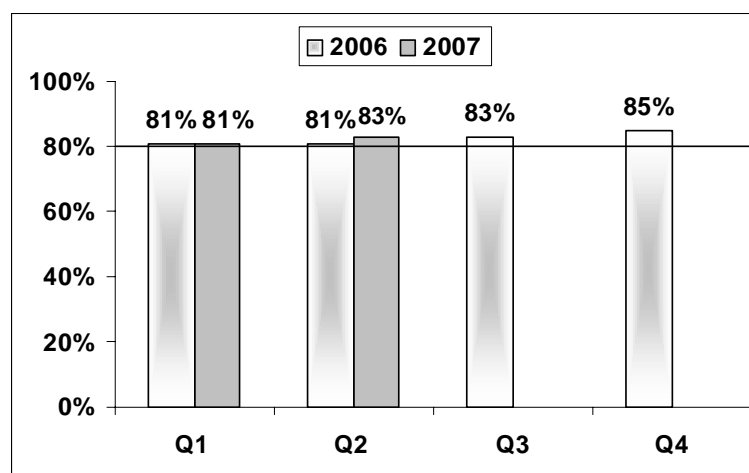


Figure 2 shows that the 3-1-1 Contact Centre achieved its target service level for Q2 2007, with 83% of calls answered within 120 seconds.

**Figure 3: 3-1-1 Top 5 Service Requests**

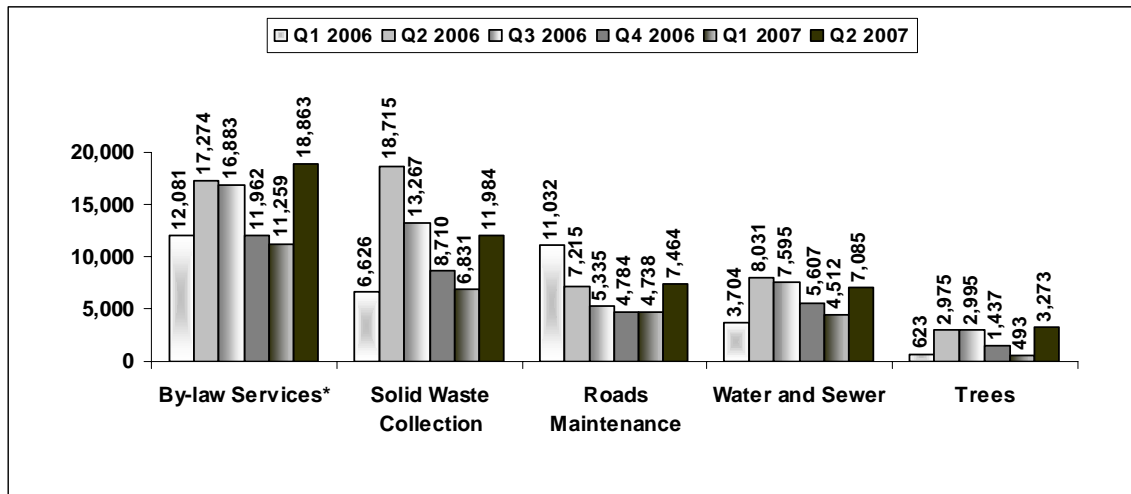


Figure 3 shows the top 5 service requests for Q2 2007. Solid Waste Collection service requests were down significantly from Q2 2006 levels, which were significantly higher than normal as a result of widespread changes to garbage and recycling collection schedules throughout the City of Ottawa in June 2006.

**Figure 4: 3-1-1 Top 5 Information Requests**

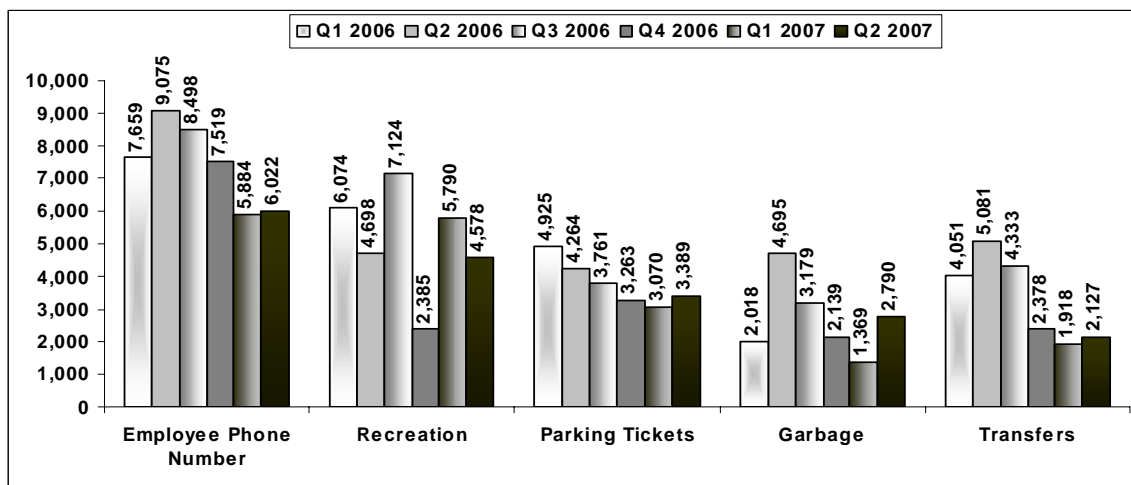


Figure 4 shows the top 5 information requests for Q2 2007. As with Solid Waste service requests, garbage related information requests were down significantly from Q2 2006 levels, which were also significantly higher than normal as a result of widespread changes to garbage and recycling collection schedules throughout the City of Ottawa in

June 2006. Speak@ease has helped to significantly reduce the number of Transfers and Employee Phone Number calls being handled at 3-1-1 compared to Q2 2006.

### **Cost Per Call Minute (CPCM)**

CPCM is the primary metric used in the call and contact centre industry to measure operational efficiency. The CPCM is calculated as the cost of handling one minute of call plus the after call activities directly related to the call. As noted in a consultant report done for the 3-1-1 Contact Centre in January 2007, the best practice industry range for CPCM is between \$0.40 and \$0.60 for direct staffing costs (as reported by Purdue University). This represents approximately 60% of the CPCM with management and administrative costs representing 10%, and other operating costs (i.e., training, accommodation, IT, and telephony) representing approximately 30%.

The City of Ottawa 3-1-1 Contact Centre was assessed in the consultant report as having an average CPCM for direct staffing costs of \$0.59 for regular weekdays, \$0.70 for Saturdays, and \$1.04 for Sundays and holidays. The blended (weighted) CPCM for the 3-1-1 Contact Centre is \$0.61 across all hours of operation, which is slightly higher than the industry best practice cost of \$0.40 - \$0.60 per call minute.

## **2 AUDIT OBJECTIVES, SCOPE AND APPROACH**

### **2.1 Audit Objectives**

The objectives of the audit were to determine:

1. The effectiveness of the Branch's structure and overall management to deliver the 3-1-1 service;
2. The adequacy of the 3-1-1 quality assurance and performance measurement program;
3. How data gathered by the 3-1-1 Contact Centre is reported back to the City's departments and branches as management information to assess program and service effectiveness; and,
4. The extent to which outsourcing and insourcing options have been considered as a means to achieve efficiencies.

For the second audit objective listed above, a "mystery calling" program was conducted by IBM whereby 100 test calls were made to the 3-1-1 Contact Centre over a period of time to assess for call quality and timeliness of service. The results of the IBM report on mystery calling are summarized in this audit report and the full IBM report has been provided in Appendix A.

Also, for the fourth audit objective listed above related to outsourcing, a detailed review on the viability of outsourcing was conducted. The results are summarized in this report and the full report has been provided to 3-1-1 management.

## **2.2 Audit Scope**

The scope of the audit focussed on the management controls that are in place to manage the 3-1-1 Contact Centre and provide effective and efficient service to the public. The scope of the audit included a review of:

- The Branch's structure and overall management to deliver the 3-1-1 service;
- Quality assurance and performance measurement of 3-1-1 services;
- How data gathered by the 3-1-1 Contact Centre is reported back to the City's departments and branches as management information to assess service and program effectiveness; and,
- Outsourcing and insourcing options.

The scope of the audit did not include:

- The Client Service Centres;
- [www.ottawa.ca](http://www.ottawa.ca); and,
- [311@ottawa.ca](mailto:311@ottawa.ca).

The audit was conducted from June to December 2007.

## **2.3 Approach**

Our approach to this audit included the following key activities:

1. Interviews were conducted with the following:
  - 3-1-1 management;
  - Eight 3-1-1 Contact Centre agents; and,
  - Seven business unit clients;
2. Interviews and discussions with other City staff, as required;
3. Detailed review of the insourcing work completed to date by 3-1-1 management;
4. Conducted "mystery calling" program whereby 100 test calls to the 3-1-1 Contact Centre were made to verify quality and timeliness of service; and,
5. A review of documentation, including:

- 2003 Point of Service Strategy;
- 3-1-1 Training Manual;
- Competitive Service Delivery Review (CSDR) Manual;
- 3-1-1 Monthly Service Request Reports;
- Weekly Contact Centre Reports and Statistics;
- 3-1-1 Contact Centre agent shift schedules;
- Performance measurement reports (OMBI and quarterly reporting to Council);
- Consultant report titled “An Evaluation of Large Client Facing Points of Contact in the City of Ottawa”;
- Draft staff report titled “Opportunity Log Item – Competitive Service Delivery Options for the Call Centre”; and,
- Client Services & Public Information Branch 2004-2007 budgets and expenditures.

### **3 AUDIT CRITERIA**

#### **3.1 Audit Objective #1:**

Determine the effectiveness of the Branch’s structure and overall management to deliver the 3-1-1 service.

- Has the authority, responsibility and accountability for 3-1-1 service been well defined and communicated?
- Are the reporting relationships adequate?
- Are the right people, skills, tools and resources in place?
- Is the training of new staff adequate?
- Is there a consistent and adequate approach in delivering the 3-1-1 services?
- Is there a consistent and adequate approach in collecting information from the client departments?
- Does the provision of service in French comply with the City’s bilingualism policy?
- Is the management reporting comprehensive and adequate – e.g., financial reporting, performance reporting, incident reporting, etc.?

#### **3.2 Audit Objective #2:**

Determine the adequacy of the 3-1-1 quality assurance and performance measurement program.

- Are performance measures established and monitored?



- Are there adequate processes in place for assessing if the 3-1-1 service is meeting the needs and expectations of the community?
- Is there a comprehensive quality assurance program in place?
- Is performance data reported in an appropriate format at the appropriate level in the Corporation?
- Is appropriate action taken to respond to performance data?

### **3.3 Audit Objective #3:**

Determine how data gathered by the 3-1-1 Contact Centre is reported back to the City's departments and branches as management information to assess program and service effectiveness.

- Is the data gathered on programs and services adequately documented?
- Are there adequate processes in place for reporting the data gathered back to City departments and branches?
- Is the frequency of reporting adequate?
- Is appropriate action taken to respond to the data gathered?

### **3.4 Audit Objective #4:**

Determine the extent to which outsourcing and insourcing options have been considered as a means to achieve efficiencies.

- Since establishing the 3-1-1 Contact Centre, have outsourcing options been considered?
- Since establishing the 3-1-1 Contact Centre, have insourcing options been considered?
- Has the Branch conducted an analysis to determine the full cost of the 3-1-1 Contact Centre?

## **4 OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Since amalgamation in 2001, and since the official launch of 3-1-1 in September 2005, the 3-1-1 Contact Centre has accomplished much. The key strengths and accomplishments of the 3-1-1 Contact Centre noted during the course of the audit include:

### **4.1 Focus on training for 3-1-1 Contact Centre staff**

At the time of amalgamation, there was no formal training for new or existing staff. Training consisted mainly of staff assisting each other and maintaining their own binders of information. The 3-1-1 Contact Centre has since developed a formal training plan for new hires that consists of a one-week classroom session followed by side-by-

side partnering with existing staff for a period of time until the new hire is skilled enough to work independently. At the time of the audit, 3-1-1 staff were also in the process of developing a modified self-study training plan which replaces the one week formal training session. This training approach will be used when there is not a large enough group of new hires at one time to justify the classroom training approach. 3-1-1 staff also indicated that they were considering developing an additional training module specifically for weekend staff, as the workload and knowledge requirements are different from the core business hours. Almost all 3-1-1 staff interviewed indicated that the training currently provided to staff is adequate.

#### ***4.2 Investment in technology***

The 3-1-1 Contact Centre has made significant investments in the technology it uses to support its operation. Specifically, there have been improvements in the telephony and the knowledge-based tools used by staff. As well, speak@ease has been implemented to allow callers who want to speak with City staff to identify by voice the person they wish to speak to. The system automatically transfers the caller eliminating the need to speak with a 3-1-1 agent. Since implementation, the call volumes for staff transfers have been significantly reduced.

#### ***4.3 Developed a framework for capturing statistics and reporting***

There has been a corporate City-wide focus on measuring and reporting on performance. 3-1-1 has started to develop a reporting framework for reporting the information they capture through information requests and service requests. The three primary reporting mechanisms for performance related data are (1) the Quarterly Performance Report to Council, (2) the weekly 3-1-1 Contact Centre Report which is distributed internally, and (3) the monthly 3-1-1 Service Request Report that is distributed to all Councillors and senior management. The reports contain detailed data on call volumes, talk times, speed to answer, as well as a break down of the types of information requests and service requests. However, the audit found that the reporting focused on “quantity” (e.g., number of calls) versus “quality” (e.g., number of calls handled correctly). The need to expand the data capturing and reporting to more qualitative performance measures is discussed in Section 4.10 of the report.

#### ***4.4 Good resource planning and scheduling***

3-1-1 management has implemented the necessary tools to track daily call volumes and use the data to forecast resource requirements and staffing schedules which target 80% of the calls to be answered in less than 120 seconds. 3-1-1 management has also been effective in managing its budget over the last 3 years.

#### **4.5 Establishment of service level standards**

With the implementation of more sophisticated tools for capturing and reporting on performance related data, 3-1-1 management has been able to identify clear service level standards and measure against those standards. All of the 3-1-1 staff interviewed during the audit were aware of the service level standards established and indicated that there is regular communication internally providing feedback to staff as to how the Contact Centre is performing as a whole and how staff are performing individually. However, the focus by management to date has been on establishing and meeting quantitative service level standards (e.g., number of calls answered, average talk times, etc.) and not qualitative performance standards to more adequately assess performance (e.g., call quality, client satisfaction, accuracy of information provided, etc.).

#### **4.6 Reviewed efficiencies to be achieved through insourcing**

3-1-1 management undertook a review of potential insourcing opportunities in late 2006. The review was an assessment of the feasibility of consolidating the operations of other City call centres under 3-1-1. A consultant report was presented to 3-1-1 management in early 2007, which identified some potential efficiencies. This is discussed in more detail later in this report.

#### **4.7 Developed positive working relationships internally**

Several internal business unit clients were interviewed as a part of the audit. They all indicated that they have positive working relationships with 3-1-1 management and staff. Most stated that management and staff are accessible, willing to work together to resolve issues, and open and receptive to ideas and feedback from business unit clients. All the business unit clients interviewed acknowledged that there have been significant improvements to the operations of the 3-1-1 Contact Centre since amalgamation. However, many interviewees identified the two areas for improvement as being the accuracy of service requests entered into the system and caller transfers. These are both discussed in later sections of this report.

Based on the criteria used in this audit, the 3-1-1 Contact Centre has satisfied many of the criteria but is not meeting several others. The table below presents each of the audit criteria used to conduct the audit of the 3-1-1 Contact Centre and summarizes the results of the audit for each. Detailed observations in areas where there are opportunities for improvement are discussed in the sections following the table.

**Table 3 – Summary of Audit Results by Criterion**

<b>Audit Criteria</b>	<b>Audit Results</b>
<b><i>Audit Objective #1: Determine the effectiveness of the Branch's structure and overall management to deliver the 3-1-1 service.</i></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has the authority, responsibility and accountability for 3-1-1 service been well defined and communicated?</li> </ul>	Achieved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the reporting relationships adequate?</li> </ul>	See section 4.8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the right people, skills, tools and resources in place?</li> </ul>	See section 4.8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the training of new staff adequate?</li> </ul>	Achieved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a consistent and adequate approach in delivering the 3-1-1 services?</li> </ul>	See section 4.9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a consistent and adequate approach in collecting information from the client departments?</li> </ul>	Achieved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the provision of service in French comply with the City's bilingualism policy?</li> </ul>	See section 4.9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the management reporting comprehensive and adequate – e.g., financial reporting, performance reporting, incident reporting, etc.?</li> </ul>	See section 4.10
<b><i>Audit Objective #2: Determine the adequacy of the 3-1-1 quality assurance and performance measurement program.</i></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are performance measures established and monitored?</li> </ul>	Achieved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there adequate processes in place for assessing if the 3-1-1 service is meeting the needs and expectations of the community?</li> </ul>	See section 4.11
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a comprehensive quality assurance program in place?</li> </ul>	See section 4.11
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is performance data reported in an appropriate format at the appropriate level in the Corporation?</li> </ul>	See section 4.10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is appropriate action taken to respond to performance data?</li> </ul>	See section 4.11 & 4.12
<b><i>Audit Objective #3: Determine how data gathered by the 3-1-1 Contact Centre is reported back to the City's departments and branches as management information to assess program and service effectiveness.</i></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the data gathered on programs and services adequately documented?</li> </ul>	Achieved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there adequate processes in place for reporting the data gathered back to City Departments and Branches?</li> </ul>	Achieved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the frequency of reporting adequate?</li> </ul>	Achieved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is appropriate action taken to respond to the data gathered?</li> </ul>	Achieved
<b><i>Audit Objective #4: Determine the extent to which outsourcing and insourcing options have been considered as a means to achieve efficiencies.</i></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since establishing the 3-1-1 Contact Centre, have outsourcing options been</li> </ul>	See section 4.12

Audit Criteria	Audit Results
considered?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Since establishing the 3-1-1 Contact Centre, have insourcing options been considered?</li> </ul>	Achieved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has the Branch conducted an analysis to determine the full cost of the 3-1-1 Contact Centre?</li> </ul>	See section 4.12

## 4.8 Organization and Leadership

### 4.8.1 Supervision of Staff

There is one program manager and two supervisors tasked with the day-to-day operation of the Contact Centre and supervision of staff. The supervisors “co-supervise” the staff as they do not report to only one supervisor. When asked during the interviews who they reported to, the responses from agents varied between the supervisors and the program manager. Most could not clearly articulate who their “boss” was.

There is also a service level coordinator in the Contact Centre who is responsible for forecasting resource requirements, establishing shift schedules, and coordinating reporting. However, the audit found the responsibilities of this position need to be clarified and reinforced as the service level coordinator is, at times, supervising and directing the work of agents even though the position does not include supervision of agents.

The audit also found that no formal performance evaluations have been done on Contact Centre agents. Most Contact Centre agents stated that feedback was informal and most agreed that performance was mostly managed by tracking call volumes and related statistics, although they also indicated that there was little follow up by supervisors when staff are not meeting service level standards.

#### **Recommendation 1**

**That 3-1-1 management clarify the roles and responsibilities of the program manager, supervisors, and service level coordinator and communicate this to staff to ensure a common and consistent understanding.**

#### **Management Response**

Management agrees with this recommendation.

The introduction of contact centre industry standard practices lead to changes in some roles and functions, which may have resulted in confusion for staff.

Management will clarify the roles and responsibilities of the program manager, supervisors and service level coordinator for staff by the end of Q2 2008.

**Recommendation 2**

**That 3-1-1 Contact Centre agents be accountable to only one supervisor for monitoring and assessing performance.**

**Management Response**

Management agrees with this recommendation.

While this has occurred in practice over the past year, management will formalize and communicate this approach by the end of Q2 2008.

**Recommendation 3**

**That a process be implemented to regularly monitor, assess, and document staff performance.**

**Management Response**

Management agrees with this recommendation.

While this has occurred in practice over the past year during periodic one-on-one feedback sessions, management will conduct yearly performance reviews as part of Employee Services' new Performance Development Program for unionized employees. Prior to the development of this program, no formal review process existed for CUPE members.

Employee Services is currently rolling out this program branch-by-branch in a controlled and coordinated fashion. Management expects to complete performance appraisals by Q4 2009.

**4.8.2 Communications with Staff**

The audit found that communications from management to staff were not adequate. The majority of Contact Centre agents interviewed acknowledged that the supervisors were accessible and approachable, but the most used form of communication was email to disseminate information. The limitations of email communication is that not all staff read the email and not all staff interpret the information in the same way. This has a direct impact on information that is being provided to the public as some agents may not have read and/or understood the information being communicated. As well, agents indicated that email from internal business clients is often forwarded directly by the supervisors when it would be more useful if the information was summarized, prioritized, and the main message more clear and concise. The result is that relevant information is lost in a lengthy email and the information is difficult to retrieve in a timely manner.

It is recognized that in a call centre environment with 24/7 service, it is not possible to schedule group staff meetings as a form of communication. However, most interviewees stated that the briefing sessions that were once used with smaller groups

of staff were more effective and resulted in a higher likelihood of everyone receiving the same information and having a consistent interpretation.

There is the additional challenge of communicating with weekend staff, as the majority of weekend staff do not work during the regular workweek. As it stands now, the supervisors have very limited contact with weekend staff, and communication is primarily through email. The weekend team lead has recently started working Mondays in order to improve communications.

#### **Recommendation 4**

**That 3-1-1 management review their communication approach with Contact Centre agents to ensure that the appropriate processes and tools are in place that result in relevant information being communicated in an efficient, effective, and consistent manner.**

#### **Management Response**

Management agrees with this recommendation.

With 3-1-1's scope of service spanning across the organization, the flow of information into the Contact Centre can be daunting, as the information comes from various sources and via many channels. Technology is being used to tag new and updated procedures. In-person briefings are used periodically for sensitive topics.

Management will establish a project that will review the communication approach with Contact Centre agents and establish new processes and tools, by the end of Q4 2008.

#### **4.8.3 Staffing Model**

At the time of amalgamation, there were approximately 30 full-time staff in the Contact Centre. Since amalgamation, 15 full-time staff have left the Contact Centre and their positions have been replaced with either part-time or casual positions. Currently, there are 15 full-time agents out of a total of 36 FTEs, or 41.6%. The reduction of full-time positions has allowed management to manage compensation costs and has increased flexibility over staffing for peak call times. However, the loss of full-time positions has also meant a loss in experienced and knowledgeable staff, which is difficult to replace with part-time and casual positions.

Since the move to the increased number of part-time and casual positions, there has been a significantly higher turnover in staff. Over time, this results in higher staffing costs, higher training costs, call quality issues, and morale issues.

Management needs to review its staffing model and clearly determine the right mix of full-time, part-time, and casual staff to support the Contact Centre's objective of delivering high quality, accessible and timely service at the lowest possible total cost.

### **Recommendation 5**

**That 3-1-1 management review the staffing model to determine the appropriate mix of full-time, part-time, and casual staff to support the Contact Centre's objective of delivering high quality, accessible and timely service at the lowest possible total cost.**

#### **Management Response**

Management agrees with this recommendation.

This recommendation is already in place. The current staffing model was developed in 2006 and management continues to fine-tune the appropriate mix of full-time, part-time, and casual staff depending upon our operational requirements. The implementation of a more flexible staffing model has enabled management to more effectively control costs, including the use of overtime, while positively impacting coverage in a fluctuating call demand operation.

Management reviews the staffing model on an ongoing basis to ensure that the Contact Centre is delivering high-quality, accessible and timely service at the lowest possible cost. The current staffing model has not significantly impacted staff turnover and is in-line with contact centre industry best practices.

#### **4.8.4 Shift Premiums Payments**

There are 13 full-time permanent Contact Centre agents who are designated to work a rotating shift schedule. The CUPE 503 Collective Agreement provides for a 7% shift premium to be paid to any staff working on a rotating shift. However, the audit identified that three of these staff were not actually scheduled to work a rotating shift but were still collecting the 7% shift premium. Two of the Contact Centre agents are working in the "Tier 2" function that is a fixed shift, Monday to Friday function. The other staff receiving the shift premium is on an Accommodations Plan, which only allows them to work fixed shift during the regular work week.

The remaining full-time permanent Contact Centre agents who are designated to work a rotating a shift schedule collect the 7% shift premium. However, many of them do not rotate through the three shifts as they regularly trade off shifts with other agents.

This issue was brought to the attention of management during the audit, who acknowledged that they were not in compliance with the Agreement. The City is awaiting a new Collective Agreement that is expected to be awarded by the end of 2007. 3-1-1 management will have an opportunity to make the necessary changes to the shift premium payments at the time when the new Collective Agreement is awarded. If they do not change their practice and continue to pay the shift premium to staff that are not eligible under the Collective Agreement, it will be difficult to change the practice at a later date, especially once bargaining has begun on the next Collective Agreement. 3-1-1 management is aware of this and has indicated that they are actively working on a plan to reduce the number of rotating shift staff and the shift premiums paid to staff.



It estimated that compensation costs could be reduced by \$30,000 - \$40,000 annually by complying with the rules of the Collective Agreement.

### **Recommendation 6**

**That 3-1-1 management ensure accountability in enforcing all aspects of the Collective Agreement, including the shift premium payments.**

#### **Management Response**

Management agrees with this recommendation.

The December 2007 signing of the new CUPE 503 inside/outside Collective Agreement gave management the opportunity to move to the desired model of eliminating the payment of shift premiums to some employees.

Under the guidance of labour relations, management is committed to enforcing all aspects of the Collective Agreement by the end of Q2 2008.

### **Recommendation 7**

**That the compensation budget for the 3-1-1 Contact Centre not be increased until management can demonstrate compliance with the Collective Agreement for shift premiums paid to staff.**

#### **Management Response**

Management disagrees with this recommendation.

Council reviewed the 3-1-1 Contact Centre service levels and budget in detail as part of the 2008 Administrative Review process. The budget, branch operations and service will continue to be reviewed in a manner prescribed by Council budget directions.

## **4.9 Service Delivery**

IBM was engaged as a part of this audit to conduct a “mystery calling” program to evaluate service delivery. The program was designed to evaluate the customer service levels of the 3-1-1 Contact Centre (e.g., response time, availability, appropriate language, courteousness) as well as the service outcomes (e.g., accuracy, did individuals obtain what they needed) across hours of service.

A total of 100 calls were made to the 3-1-1 Contact Centre (25 different questions asked 4 times each) over a period of four weeks from late October to late November 2007. The calls were spread out over the Centre’s hours of operation, with the majority of calls made during core hours of operation.

The results of the mystery calling program identified some significant service delivery issues, specifically around accuracy, consistency, hours of operation, and staffing.

These findings are summarized in this section of the report, and the full IBM report is included in Appendix A.

#### 4.9.1 Accuracy of the Services/Information Provided

There is significant room for improvement in the accuracy of the answers being provided. Only 39% of responses were considered “fully correct”, while another 31% of responses were “partially correct”, and 30% of the calls were answered incorrectly.

There were some notable differences in accuracy depending on the type of question being asked. For example, there were no “fully correct” answers provided by agents in 7 of the 25 questions tested.

The following table shows the rate of accuracy for each of the 25 questions tested.

**Table 4: Accuracy by Question**

<b>Accuracy by Question</b>	
<b>100% Accuracy rate (Fully correct answer each time question was asked)</b>	<b>75% Accuracy rate (Fully correct answer three times out of four)</b>
<b>Q4:</b> How much is a marriage license and how do I get one? <b>Q16:</b> I have a freezer to throw out. Can I just put it on the curb on garbage day? <b>Q24:</b> I am on assistance and want to sign my daughter up for some recreation programs. Is there additional assistance to help me do this?	<b>Q9:</b> I want to take my young niece swimming. Where is the nearest public swim? <b>Q11:</b> I am due to have a baby and I know I have to get a birth certificate. What do I have to do?
<b>67% Accuracy rate (Fully correct answer two times out of three)</b>	<b>50% Accuracy rate (Fully correct answer two times out of four)</b>
<b>Q17:</b> I am new to Ottawa. Is there a composting program here? <b>Q21:</b> What types of plastics are acceptable for recycling and which ones are not?	<b>Q6:</b> I want to do something in honour of my grandfather who passed away last year, perhaps plant a tree in his memory. Can I buy a tree or donate money for the City to plant a tree in his honour in a local park? <b>Q10:</b> Where can I cross-country ski without going to Gatineau? <b>Q14:</b> I am a small business owner and want to organize a flu vaccine clinic for my employees. Can I do that? <b>Q18:</b> My son cut his leg on broken glass at a City park. How do I file a complaint against the City? <b>Q22:</b> I am selling my house privately. Is there anything I need to do with the City?

<b>Accuracy by Question</b>	
33% Accuracy rate (Fully correct answer one time out of three)	25% Accuracy rate (Fully correct answer one time out of four)
<b>Q1:</b> I just bought a house and want to put a pool in our yard next year. How tall does my fence need to be? <b>Q8:</b> I am organizing a hockey game, can I rent ice?	<b>Q2:</b> Hi, do I need to register my cat? <b>Q3:</b> I have a big Christmas party at my house every year and there have been some complaints about noise in the past. Someone told me I could get a permit for a night that would make it okay. Do you know anything about this? <b>Q5:</b> Can you tell me when and where can I take my kids to a public skate? <b>Q20:</b> I want to rent a facility for my son's birthday party. What are the facility option and rates? I live in Westboro.
0% Accuracy rate (Never obtained a fully correct answer)	
<b>Q7:</b> Can I walk my dog in the park after dark off leash? <b>Q12:</b> I am going back to work in a few months after the birth of my child. What are my childcare options? <b>Q13:</b> I think I may need to put my Dad in an assisted living facility as he is too old to take care of himself. Can you tell me about any facilities or programs the City has?	<b>Q15:</b> When is the next Baby Wellness clinic? <b>Q19:</b> I want to take my 2-year old daughter to a playgroup but I don't want to spend a lot of money. Can you tell me the cheapest playgroups in my area? <b>Q23:</b> Could I speak to building permits please? <b>Q25:</b> I am in the process of getting a community group together in my neighbourhood and want to run a soccer program for kids aged 4-8 next summer on City fields. Who do I talk to about this?

#### 4.9.2 Consistency of the Services/Information Provided

Service quality is measured by what is commonly referred to as the “caller experience”. Caller experience can be defined by a number of elements that together create a positive, negative or simply unremarkable experience for the caller. According to the City's 3-1-1 training manual, there are procedures in place to govern many of the “caller experience” elements. It was found that in some cases, procedures and protocols are being followed, while in others, the procedures are being applied less consistently.

There were a number of inconsistencies in the overall service quality and in call handling, as follows:

**Greetings** - While the overwhelming majority of calls were answered using the standard greeting (91%), 9% were not.

**Call Closures** - There was even more inconsistency in how call closures were handled with only 35% of calls ending with the standard call closing.

**Agent Identification** - In 20 of the 100 calls, agents did not initially provide their name or did not provide their correct first name.

**Call Transfers** – Transfers were also often made without giving callers the appropriate context (“I am transferring you to XYZ for...”), and 34% of the transferred calls were considered incorrect transfers (transferred to the wrong place or transferred when the call subject matter was considered to be within the expected knowledge domain of the 3-1-1 agent).

**Required Call Backs** – For calls where the agents could have transferred callers during core hours, they often did not and rather just gave the number with instructions to call it directly. This finding is supported by the way in which 3-1-1 management reports on transfer rates. The assumption is that a higher transfer rates indicates a lower number of resolved calls. Therefore, some agents choose not to transfer a call, as they want their individual statistics to reflect a higher number of resolved calls, even though transferring the call may result in a higher level of customer service.

**Language** – Most calls (93%) were immediately answered in the language originally specified by the client (French or English). However, 7% did not answer in the specified language, even though callers are prompted to choose their preferred language before the call is answered by an agent.

Despite the inconsistencies, the agents were seen as being professional, with only 5% of calls being assessed as lacking professionalism.

#### 4.9.3 Hours of Operation (Core Hours vs. Non-Core Hours)

Eight of the twenty-five questions were used to evaluate Contact Centre agents responses to the same question across hours of service. Each question was asked 4 times (2 times during core hours and 2 times during non-core hours) for a total of 32 calls (24 English and 8 French). A large number of non-core calls were not answered (callers either reached a recording asking them to call back during core hours, or were asked by the answering agent to call back during core hours).

While the small response rate for calls made in non-core hours makes it difficult to draw any strong statistical conclusions, it should be noted that the non-core calls were not responded to in a consistent manner by agents. The response types ranged from (1) call being answered by an agent providing a detailed response, (2) the call not being answered by an agent at all (reached a recording asking them to call back during core hours), or (3) the call being answered by an agent and being asked to call back during core hours (some agents provided partial answers before asking the caller to call back). This results in an inconsistent and negative service experience for the caller.

**Table 5: “Core/Non-Core” Calls Made vs. Calls Answered**

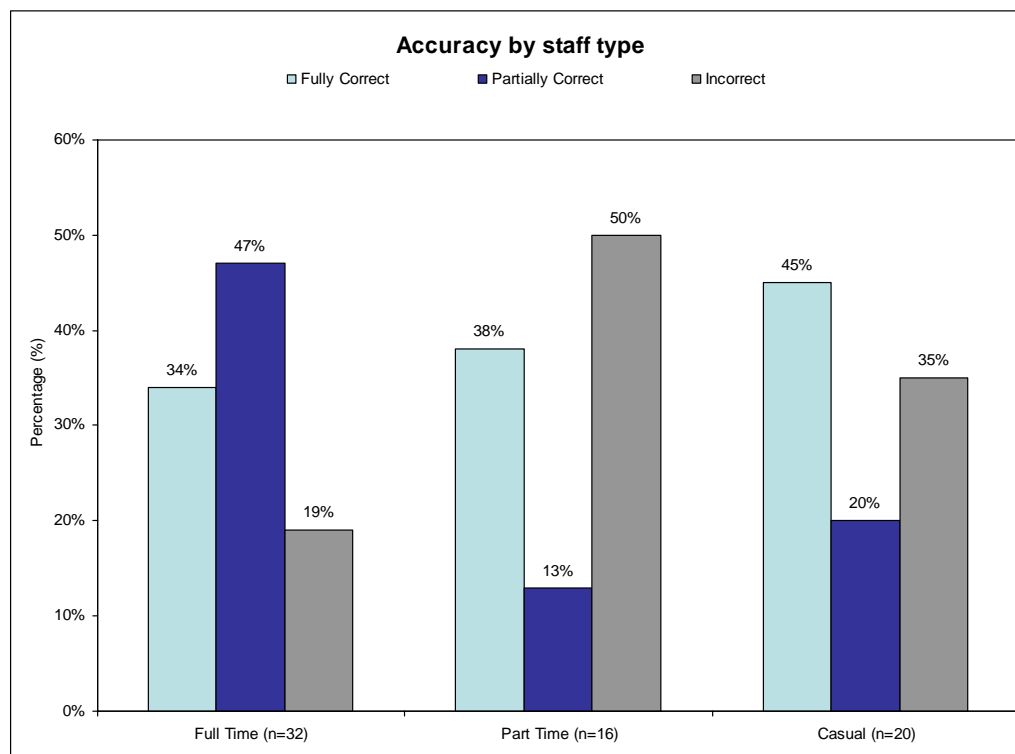
	Total	Core hours	Non-core hours
Calls made	32	16	16
Calls answered	20	16	4

#### 4.9.4 Staffing Type

Where possible, agent names were tracked during the mystery calling program to enable responses to be aggregated according to staff type (part-time, full-time and casual staff). The goal was not to identify individual agents or their performance, but rather to understand possible training implications or operational requirements for different staff categories.

Staff type does appear to make a difference in call accuracy, although there were no consistent patterns. When fully correct and partially correct responses were combined, full-time staff was the most accurate group with 81% accuracy. At 50%, part-time staff had the highest number of incorrect responses, as shown in the figure below.

**Figure 5: Accuracy by Staff Type**



The full IBM report on the “3-1-1 Mystery Calling Program” is included in Appendix A of this report.

#### **Recommendation 8**

**That 3-1-1 management implement formal call monitoring technology to assess if agents are following the procedures and protocols in place and handling calls in a consistent manner.**

### **Management Response**

Management agrees with this recommendation.

As part of the Point of Service Strategy, a Quality Assurance Program was developed and approved in 2007. Planned implementation was to take place in the fall and winter of 2007-2008 and is currently being rolled out as planned.

Recording technology has now been acquired using a low cost option to record adhoc calls, which are used to review with agents. Recording of all calls was an option at a higher cost, which would have been redundant pending the City's migration to Voice-over Internet Protocol (VoIP) technology. The technology to record all calls will be considered as part of the VoIP implementation by IT Services.

Management believes that this recommendation has been adequately fulfilled pending implementation of VoIP. Details regarding the rollout plan for VoIP are not yet available.

### **Recommendation 9**

**That 3-1-1 management review current training practices to ensure that ongoing agent training is offered frequently and on specific topics where accuracy has been identified as an issue.**

### **Management Response**

Management agrees with this recommendation.

Management will target future training initiatives to address specific areas where completeness of answer has been identified as an issue. This will be done through ongoing discussions with staff and through the results of the Quality Assurance Program that will be fully implemented by Q2 2009.

With respect to the IBM Mystery Calling Program, management is concerned that the report is not a fair representation of the service delivered at 3-1-1.

The Auditor indicates that only 39% of responses were considered "fully correct", while another 31% of responses were "partially correct", and 30% of the calls were answered incorrectly. Currently, the 3-1-1 Call Centre is primarily focused on accuracy and timeliness. An assessment of the IBM Mystery Calling Program, although referencing accuracy, is focused on degree of completeness. Management believes that "fully complete" and "partially complete" should have been the words used to evaluate the responses and as such, the results should be interpreted as informative and pointing in the right direction as the 3-1-1 Call Centre strives for excellence.

The IBM Mystery Calling Program focussed on information-based questions and excluded service request questions. Service requests accounted for 34% of the over 500,000 calls serviced by 3-1-1 in 2007. A more relevant study to measure and evaluate the service levels and performance of 3-1-1 would have been a true

customer service satisfaction survey of residents who had recently used the 3-1-1 service. Management conducted such a study in the fall of 2007 based on a sample size of 400 and has shared the findings with the Auditor. The survey revealed strong satisfaction ratings of over 80% (4.2/5) for both information and service requests.

In addition, in 2004, Council directed the reduction in service level at the Contact Centre from a full service 24/7 operation to a Contact Centre that has two service level periods (core hours and non-core hours). The evaluation of responses to questions posed through the IBM Mystery Calling Program reflected two very different service level periods, and as such, were not a fair assessment of the customer service abilities of some of the agents, nor a clear representation of the service provision.

All of the questions asked by the mystery caller during non-core hours, were in fact out-of-scope for the “normal” non-core hours service. Had management been given an opportunity to review the questions for relevance in advance, a more appropriate set of questions reflective of non-core hours of operation would have been provided. Agents working after-hours are required to balance the responsibilities related to handling urgent, priority requests with that of helping callers with non-priority matters.

Any reference made to a “call not being answered by an agent at all (reached a recording asking them to call back during core hours),” is incorrect. This only happens if the caller dials “O” when waiting in the queue, as per the messaging.

### **Recommendation 10**

**That 3-1-1 management use the results of the “mystery calling” program as a baseline for measuring performance, and continue to perform similar assessments on an ongoing basis to track performance and provide feedback to agents.**

### **Management Response**

Management disagrees with this recommendation.

Management will review the questions and responses in detail to determine if these are the appropriate questions to be asked. Changes to questions and responses where deemed appropriate will be made.

Management also intends to use a third party to conduct a customer satisfaction survey every six months. The first customer satisfaction survey was conducted in November 2007 and will be used as a baseline.

The results of both these programs will be used to track performance and provide feedback to agents.

The cost of implementing a regular customer satisfaction survey is \$20,000 per year. The cost of implementing a “Mystery Calling Program” is \$25,000 per year. Funding for these programs will be requested through the 2009 budget process.

## **4.10 Performance Measurement**

### **4.10.1 Reporting**

The audit found that 3-1-1 management has established a comprehensive reporting framework. The three key reports and a summary of what they include are as follows:

- Quarterly Performance Report to Council
  - Total 3-1-1 calls answered;
  - Percentage of calls answered within 120 seconds;
  - Listing of the top five information requests; and,
  - Listing of the top five service requests.
  
- Monthly 3-1-1 Service Request Report
  - Summary of the number of service requests across nine different categories (e.g., by-law services, graffiti, park maintenance, etc.)
  - A more detailed breakdown of service requests for each of the nine categories (e.g., within by-law services, the number of service requests for noise: music, animals: dog barking, etc.)
  - A detailed breakdown of service requests for each of the nine categories by Ward.
  
- Weekly
  - Number of calls answered;
  - Average speed to answer;
  - Average talk time;
  - Abandoned calls;
  - Percentage of calls answered within 120 seconds; and,
  - After hours calls answered.

This reporting provides useful data, however, as previously mentioned, these reports focus on activities, call volumes and quantitative analysis rather than performance measures related to quality. The current reporting does not provide 3-1-1 management or other stakeholders with useful and relevant data on service quality. At present, 3-1-1 management relies on informal feedback from internal business clients and the public/external clients to gauge qualitative performance. At the time of this audit, 3-1-1 management had not conducted any formal client satisfaction surveys and relied on exception reporting (i.e., if there are no complaints they assume they are doing a good job) to assess client satisfaction and service quality. However, even when client



complaints are received they are not formally recorded or tracked. They are typically dealt with by a supervisor to resolve the specific issue with the client directly. This process of resolution does not always provide feedback to the agent who made the initial error.

Overall, 3-1-1 management and staff indicated that they were confident that the quality of the service delivery both internally and externally was very high overall, even though they did not have data to substantiate it. In section 4.9 of this report on service delivery, the results of the mystery calling exercise clearly identify that there are significant issues with the quality, consistency, and accuracy of the 3-1-1 services being delivered.

The following section of this report discusses quality assurance issues in more detail.

### **Recommendation 11**

**That 3-1-1 management develop a comprehensive set of performance measures that adequately reflect its performance against strategic and operational objectives in order to provide adequate performance information to Council and manage more effectively.**

#### **Management Response**

Management agrees with this recommendation.

In addition to our comprehensive reporting framework, management will develop performance measures related to the quality of internal and external service delivery.

Management will communicate these performance metrics to Council once the second customer satisfaction study has been completed in Q3 2008.

## **4.11 Quality Assurance**

### **4.11.1 External/Public Clients**

Quality assurance can be defined as a program for the systematic monitoring and evaluation of performance in the delivery of services or products provided to clients. The audit found that there are no formal processes in place to monitor or evaluate the quality of the 3-1-1 services being delivered externally to clients.

During the interviews, Contact Centre agents indicated that call quality is emphasized during the new hire orientation and training phase, however, the majority of agents indicated that the day-to-day operations emphasize achieving call volumes and meeting the service level standard of 80% of calls answered in less than 120 seconds. They indicated that management has put more of an emphasis on achieving these statistics, and less of an emphasis on call quality. Examples of this include:

- The daily email report that staff receive on their call volumes statistics, including average talk time, wait times, etc.;
- A queue management software tool (Prairie Fire) that allows all agents to view each other's real-time work status;
- A ticker screen in the office displaying real-time call statistics, including calls in the queue; and,
- The weekly 3-1-1 Contact Centre report providing details on number of calls answered, average speed to answer, average talk time, etc.

All of these reports and tracking mechanisms are important for managing the adherence to service level standards, as well as shift scheduling. However, management must reinforce the need for both achieving service level standards and call quality.

The biggest costs to the 3-1-1 Contact Centre of poor call quality are repeat callers, escalation of calls and complaints to higher management, negative reaction and publicity from angry clients, and staff rework caused by errors made during the call. Therefore, the emphasis should always be on handling each call correctly.

The two key quality indicators that the 3-1-1 Contact Centre currently does not measure or track are as follows:

- Errors and rework; and,
- Customer satisfaction.

The following table shows some of the components that contribute to a quality phone call, whether or not it is currently measured by the 3-1-1 Contact Centre, and the monitoring mechanisms that could be implemented to more accurately measure call quality.

**Table 6: Call Quality Indicators**

<b>Quality Indicator<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Measured by 3-1-1? Yes/No</b>	<b>Possible Monitoring Mechanisms</b>
Caller is satisfied	No	Client satisfaction survey
All data entry is correct	No	Formal internal client feedback Tracking function in MAP
Call is necessary in the first place	No	
Agent provided correct response	No	Client satisfaction survey
Caller received correct information	No	Client satisfaction survey
Agent captures all needed/useful information	No	Formal internal client feedback Tracking function in MAP
Caller not transferred around	No	Client satisfaction survey
Caller does not get rushed	No	Client satisfaction survey
Caller has confidence call was effective	No	Client satisfaction survey
Unsolicited feedback is detected and documented	No	Tracking and reporting tool
Caller does not feel it is necessary to check-up, verify or repeat	No	Client satisfaction survey
People “down the line” can correctly interpret the request	No	Formal internal client feedback Tracking function in MAP
Agent has pride in workmanship	No	Staff supervision Performance assessment Remote call monitoring
Caller did not get a busy signal	Yes	
Caller was not placed on hold for too long	Yes	

It is interesting to note that the majority of Contact Centre agents interviewed indicated that even without a call monitoring or formal quality assurance program in place, they believed they were providing high quality, accurate, consistent, and professional service to external clients 100% of the time. The findings from our analysis of call

<sup>1</sup> Call Center Management of Fast Forward by Brad Cleveland and Julia Mayben (Call Center Press, 1997)

quality and service delivery as a part of this audit does not support this, as discussed in section 4.9 (Service Delivery) of this report.

It should be noted that the 3-1-1 Contact Centre has implemented a knowledge-based tool which provides agents with access to over 300 documented procedures. The tool has accomplished much in terms of building a central repository to house information. However, many agents stated that even though the information in the tool is comprehensive and up-to-date, there are still significant challenges with the search capabilities of the tool and accessing information efficiently is an issue.

### **Recommendation 12**

**That 3-1-1 management develop a quality assurance program for monitoring, assessing, and reporting on call quality and the quality of the services delivered to the public.**

#### **Management Response**

Management agrees with this recommendation.

Quality assurance is an integral part of any service organization. As part of its Point of Service Strategy, the Client Services and Public Information branch, has developed the various components required to increase the quality and consistency of service to its clients:

1. Knowledge Base: Since 2005, the 3-1-1 Contact Centre went through a comprehensive exercise with its internal clients to develop over 400 concise operating procedures, using the corporate software standard for enterprise content management.
2. Training Curriculum: The 3-1-1 training program has been redesigned for consistency and effectiveness, for both regular and after hours service.

The above were required to move to the final stage.

3. A Quality Assurance program was approved in 2007 with planned implementation in 2008. This has been developed under advisement with the City's MFIPPA and Labour Relations representations for both privacy and labour concerns. This program identifies coaching and consistency of delivery opportunities, such as refinement of operating processes with our internal partners.

To ensure success of this program, management will request funding for a dedicated quality assurance specialist position in the 2009 budget process.

#### **4.11.2 Internal Business Clients**

As previously stated the audit found that there are no formal processes in place to assess the quality of the 3-1-1 service being delivered internally to the business clients and other parts of the organization.

The relationship that the 3-1-1 Contact Centre has with internal business clients includes providing information on their behalf to external clients, capturing information in the MAP system from the caller to create a service request, and providing after hours service for many parts of the City (e.g., traffic management, sewers, water, by-law services, etc.).

Like external business clients, there are no tracking or reporting mechanisms in place to monitor or assess the quality of internal service delivery. During the interviews, 3-1-1 management and Contact Centre agents were asked about the quality of service they delivered to internal clients. The majority of interviewees indicated that they felt they were providing a very high quality of service to internal clients, with most scoring their quality of service an 8 out of 10, or higher (on a scale on 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest). However, the interviews with internal business clients revealed some significant service quality issues. Following are examples of some of the service quality issues that were identified:

- **Former Utility Services (now Water and Wastewater Services and Solid Waste)** – Overall, the former Utility Services indicated that 3-1-1 is very good to deal with, and are willing to work together to resolve issues. However, the former Utility Services indicate that they do receive a significant number of service requests and transferred calls that need to be re-directed to other areas of the City as they were incorrectly sent by 3-1-1 to the former Utility Services. The estimate provided was that 40% of calls and services requests need to be redirected (there is no tracking mechanism to confirm this estimate, but staff indicated they are routinely re-directing calls and service requests). The main complaint is that customers are transferred between Drinking Water Services and Wastewater and Drainage Services. The former Utility Services has provided 3-1-1 staff with a question sheet to probe callers to assist in more accurately identifying the problem and ensuring the calls and service requests are forward to the right place. The former Utility Services indicated that they saw an improvement when this was first implemented but the error rate is up again, which they attribute to the high turnover in 3-1-1 Contact Centre agents.
- **Building Code Services** – 3-1-1 Contact Centre agents provide limited information to callers on building services as calls related to Building Code are transferred to technical clerks in Building Services, due to liability issues of providing the wrong information. Building Code Services indicated that they work well with 3-1-1 staff and that the process to share and update information works well. However, Building Code Services stated that the technical clerks do receive a significant amount of misdirected calls. For example, they receive many permit related calls that have nothing to do with building services – e.g., dog permits, event permits, etc. Building Code Services indicated the impression they have of 3-1-1 is that high call

volumes and the desire for shorter talk times are the main drivers in the Contact Centre, as opposed to resolving calls accurately.

- **By-Law and Regulatory Services** – By-Law and Regulatory Services indicated that they do not receive a significant number of misdirected service requests or transferred calls. However, they did state that there needs to be better data input to create a service request. There are often spelling mistakes, grammar mistakes, and poor descriptions of the incident in the “description field” of the software. This is a legal document for the City and more attention needs to be given to capturing data correctly.
- **Traffic Management** – Traffic Management indicated that they need to redirect an estimated 20% of service requests, mostly to Surface Operations. They also stated that they receive a significant number of calls from other areas of the City to do work on a service request that was sent by 3-1-1 to the wrong place when it should have been sent to Traffic Management. If the original service request is not forwarded, this results in work being done with no work order or resource tracking in SAP. Another major concern noted by Traffic Management is that in approximately 20% of the cases, 3-1-1 is not contacting Traffic Management during after-hours in emergency situations, even though they are a part of the incident response call list. The major role that Traffic Management plays during emergencies is setting up detours. When they are not called to respond to the incident, the Ottawa Police are often left directing traffic when blockades and detours could have been set up to alter the flow of traffic. In the week that the interview was conducted for the audit, there were four major incidents that occurred which Traffic Management was not informed of until after the incidents.

The development of the knowledge-based tool, which provides agents with access to over 300 documented procedures, has significantly improved the sharing of information with internal business clients. As previously mentioned, the tool has accomplished much in terms of building a central repository to house information, however, there are significant challenges with the search capabilities of the tool that still need to be addressed.

### **Recommendation 13**

**That 3-1-1 management work more closely with internal business clients to reduce the number of misdirected calls and service requests.**

#### **Management Response**

Management agrees with this recommendation.

While this exercise is performed periodically and as needed, a more consistent proactive approach should be adopted. This responsibility would rest with the quality assurance specialist. Implementation will take place in Q3 2009, dependent on the approval of this position during the 2009 budget process. Should this position

not be approved, management will continue to work with internal clients in an informal manner.

#### **Recommendation 14**

**That the appropriate tools and processes be implemented to track and report on misdirected calls and service requests.**

#### **Management Response**

Management agrees with this recommendation.

Management agrees that a formal mechanism is required to qualify, track and action complaints. Working with IT Services, a comprehensive complaint management process for internal clients will be identified by end of Q1 2009.

#### **Recommendation 15**

**That 3-1-1 management solicit input from internal business clients regarding the training of new hires to ensure the major issues and concerns of each client are addressed in the training program.**

#### **Management Response**

Management agrees with this recommendation.

Management will solicit input from internal business clients and will identify specific areas to focus on as part of this recommendation, by the end of Q3 2008.

### ***4.12 Alternate Service Delivery***

#### **4.12.1 Insourcing/Consolidation of the City's Call Centres**

The audit found that 3-1-1 management has completed the preliminary work to assess potential insourcing opportunities. In late 2006, 3-1-1 management engaged a consultant to assess the feasibility of combining the operations of other City call centres under 3-1-1. The consultant's final report in early 2007 identified some potential efficiencies. Specifically, the consultant evaluated the feasibility of consolidating eight call centre operations that currently exist in the City, but are outside of 3-1-1. This included the following call centres:

- Transit (OC Transpo);
- Tax – Customer Accounts;
- Tax – Accounts Receivable;
- Utilities;
- Real Property and Asset Management (RPAM);
- Police Non-Emergency;

- Employment and Financial Assistance (EFA); and,
- Public Health.

The consultants report looked at the percentage of work that is currently being done by other call centres that could be efficiently and effectively done through the 3-1-1 Contact Centre. Overall, the analysis focussed on what is seen in the call centre industry as the most critical measure of operational efficiency - the Cost Per Call Minute (CPCM). The CPCM is calculated as the cost of handling one minute of call plus the after call activities directly related to the call. The best practice industry range for CPCM is between \$0.40 and \$0.60 for direct staffing costs (as reported by Purdue University). This represents approximately 60% of the CPCM with management and administrative costs representing 10%, and other operating costs (i.e., training, accommodation, IT, and telephony) representing approximately 30%.

As stated previously in this report, the City of Ottawa 3-1-1 Contact Centre was assessed as having an average CPCM for direct staffing costs of \$0.59 for regular weekdays, \$0.70 for Saturdays, and \$1.04 for Sundays and holidays. The blended (weighted) CPCM for the 3-1-1 Contact Centre is \$0.61 across all hours of operation, which is slightly higher than the industry best practice cost of \$0.40 - \$0.60 per call minute.

Using this methodology, the consultant report found that, based on the CPCM of current operations, four out of the eight call centres included in the evaluation were “high potential 3-1-1 candidates”, as follows:

- Transit (OC Transpo);
- Tax - Customer Accounts;
- Utilities; and,
- RPAM.

Public Health and EFA were not recommended for consolidation as they were not evaluated in detail and further evaluation would be required to determine the feasibility of insourcing. Tax (Accounts Receivable) and Police Non-Emergency were not recommended for consolidation, as it was determined that they would be difficult to consolidate into 3-1-1 and there was no real benefit in doing so.

As a part of this audit, we followed up with the key contacts from each of the call centres that were identified in the report as candidates for consolidating with 3-1-1 operations. The audit found that even though the consultants report is based on a



sound CPCM analysis, there are other qualitative issues that were not factored into the CPCM analysis, and as a result, impact the feasibility of consolidating operations.

The audit found that consolidating operations of the four call centres listed above may not be appropriate at this point in time for the following reasons:

- Transit (OC Transpo) – OC Transpo’s call centre is integrated with its customer service group, which deals with customer complaints, call-backs to customers, security, and the provision of information. Through staff training and development, OC Transpo has positioned the public information call centre not just a service providing information on bus schedules and trip planning, but as a part of the organization’s overall sales and marketing strategy. Call centre staff are being trained to actively market OC Transpo services and treat every call as an opportunity to expand and generate revenue. Based on the CPCM analysis, the potential savings is \$34,500 - \$264,500 per year from consolidating this function with 3-1-1. However, given that the mandate of the OC Transpo call centre is more than just providing information to customers, changing the current processes may impact negatively on customer service and revenue generation opportunities.
- Tax Customer Accounts – The Customer Accounts group receives all the calls related to property tax and water billing. For calls related to property tax billing, Customer Accounts stated that having property tax billing calls handled by 3-1-1 would be a violation of the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) agreement which states that only call agents trained in property tax assessment and billing can access customer accounts. There is also concern about violating the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)* as the call taker needs to verify that the caller is the actual property owner, and as such must have access to personal information of the caller. Finally, Customer Accounts raised concern over the potential impact of billing adjustments (and associated lost revenue) due to 3-1-1 agents providing wrong information. As for calls related to water billing, the current billing process is very complex due to the aging technology used by the City to read meter and generate bills. However, the call volume for water billing is expected to be significantly reduced as the new radio frequency technology for water meter reading and billing is rolled out in early 2008. Customer Accounts acknowledged that there may be a business case to transfer the water billing calls to 3-1-1 once the technology is fully implemented. Once the roll-out is complete, Customer Accounts should revisit the CPCM analysis to assess to potential cost savings of transferring water billing calls to 3-1-1.
- Former Utility Services (now Water and Wastewater Services) – It was estimated that approximately 75% of calls to the former Utility Services come from 3-1-1. The remaining 25% are direct calls to the former Utility Services staff through a main number. The 3-1-1 insourcing study looked at taking over the former Utility

Services main number and forcing all calls for information and/or service to go through 3-1-1. Based on the CPCM analysis, the potential savings is \$21,000 - \$51,000 per year. Given that the majority of the calls that currently come to the former Utility Services main number are critical to the business in terms of scheduling and customer service (e.g., meter appointments, lead pipe replacement program scheduling, etc.), changing the current processes would not lead to significant cost savings and may have a negative impact on customer service and the former Utility Services staff productivity. The former Utility Services is in the process of implementing call tracking software which will enable them to more accurately determine call volumes, talk times, abandoned calls, etc. Once this is fully implemented and data has been collected, the former Utility Services should revisit the CPCM analysis to assess to potential cost savings of pushing as many “non-business critical” calls as possible to 3-1-1.

- RPAM - RPAM currently uses 3-1-1 to capture service requests, which average approximately 28 calls per day. The service request data is forwarded to RPAM using MAP. An RPAM staff is then required to input additional service request data into SAP to create the work order which is then dispatched to RPAM field staff. The 3-1-1 insourcing study looked at taking over the entire service request function from RPAM and dispatching to field staff directly. The limitations of this not addressed in the report are that (1) the currently technology does not allow 3-1-1 to capture all the service request data to create the work order, and (2) RPAM currently has a service request strategy in place which is looking to increase the incidents of service requests captured at source (i.e., staff requiring RPAM service inputting data directly into SAP thereby eliminating the need to call 3-1-1 altogether). Based on the CPCM analysis, the potential saving is \$25,900 - \$28,500 per year. Given that the current call volume to 3-1-1 is likely to decrease over time due to the RPAM service request strategy and that technology modifications would be required, changing the current processes would not lead to significant cost savings.

Finally, until the staffing, service delivery and service quality issues raised in this report have been more fully resolved in the 3-1-1 Contact Centre, it would not be appropriate for the Contact Centre to expand its operations and assume additional responsibility.

### **Recommendation 16**

**That there be no consolidation of other City call centres into 3-1-1 at this time, however, once the recommendations of this audit have been fully implemented, the insourcing analysis should be revisited to determine if there is a business case for consolidating the operations of some of the City call centres into 3-1-1.**

### **Management Response**

Management agrees with this recommendation.

Management will investigate further consolidation of other City call centres once all agreed upon recommendations have been implemented, by Q4 2009.

#### **4.12.2 Outsourcing**

The audit found that there has not been a comprehensive assessment of the feasibility of outsourcing the City's 3-1-1 Contact Centre, even though it was identified in 2004 as a potential cost saving opportunity through the Universal Program Review (UPR) process. Subsequent to UPR, a motion (Motion No. 27/103) approved during the 2005 budget deliberations directed staff to investigate the possibility of contracting out the Contact Centre using a private sector comparator, and report back to Corporate Services and Economic Development Committee no later than September 2005. 3-1-1 management drafted a staff report for the Corporate Services and Economic Development Committee (CSEDC) dated 21 November 2005, however, the report was never submitted to the Committee. The subject of the draft report was an "Opportunity Log Item - Competitive Service Delivery Options for the Call Centre".

The staff evaluation of outsourced service delivery options in the draft report was based on the City's competitive service delivery review (CSDR) methodology. The main conclusion of the draft report was that the review "did not support an alternate service delivery method, but did reinforce the need for some internal re-engineering". As stated in the draft report, the significant risks and costs associated with pursuing an outsourced solution for the Contact Centre include:

- Minimal cost savings;
- Potential for negative public response;
- Potential loss of knowledgeable and efficient service;
- Reduced ability to respond to emerging issues;
- Loss of services provided to other parts of the organization; and,
- Collective bargaining and labour relations issues.

We conducted an independent review and assessment of the viability and practicality of outsourcing the provision of 3-1-1 Contact Centre service (non-emergency calls to the City). The objective was to provide a high level assessment of the possible business case for outsourcing 3-1-1.

We concluded that outsourcing is a viable option for further consideration, based on the following findings:

- Outsourcing has been used, and is continuing to find favour in both the public and private sector, for complex and simple transactions.

- Outsourcers have a number of strategic advantages that may translate into lower costs to serve, while at the same time delivering enhanced customer service and service delivery.
- Outsourcing has been and continues to be used in at least one major 3-1-1 environment (New York), and is seen as a viable option to ensure flexibility and redundancy (emergency back-up) planning. New York City 3-1-1 has outsourced a portion of its 3-1-1 calls. It has two call centres (and three staffing models); one call centre is on City premises, one at an outsourcer location. Both centres act as a single call centre, with a portion of calls redirected to the outsourced centre based on service level requirements (call time in queue). New York City has about 270 full-time staff, and about 150 part-time staff. The outsourcer has about 200 staff and must also provide the call taking, supervisory, and management staff necessary to handle the anticipated call volume and to meet the prescribed service levels on a 24/7/365 basis.

The following should be considered in terms of next steps:

- Make a definite decision to explore outsourcing including gaining the support of Council, prior to moving forward;
- Establish assessment criteria regarding what will drive the decision to outsource;
- Undertake a process that would consist of the following:
  - Step One: Set the Direction and Scope;
  - Step Two: Conduct Site Visits;
  - Step Three: Develop Best 'Base' Case (internal);
  - Step Four: Issue and Evaluate Request for Proposal (RFP); and,
  - Step Five: Prepare to Implement.

It was identified that the biggest savings would come from outsourcing a consolidated 3-1-1 operation.

It is recognized that the largest obstacle the City faces with outsourcing the 3-1-1 Contact Centre are the CUPE 503 collective bargaining and labour relations issues, which may limit the ability to fully outsource 3-1-1 and realize all of the potential savings. Article 22 of the Collective Agreement states that the Employer will not contract out work usually performed by members of the bargaining unit if, as a result of any contracting out of services, a lay-off or reduction of hours of work of any employee follows. A contracting out scenario would need to involve an employer who is party to a collective agreement and who will employ the employees of the bargaining unit. However, this should not prevent the City from further investigating and analyzing

outsourcing. The City of Winnipeg is an example where analyzing outsourcing as an option for 3-1-1 has led to savings.

The City of Winnipeg considered a fully outsourced 3-1-1 Contact Centre as one of its service delivery options when implementing the 3-1-1 function. The business case analysis for the outsourced model was found to be the most cost effective option. However, the CUPE Union for the City of Winnipeg signed a Letter of Understanding (LOU) with changes that reduced the cost of the internally operated model by approximately \$4.1 million dollars over the first five years of the program, and provided for the ability to:

- Operate the consolidated 3-1-1 Contact Centre 24/7 (this was not possible in the original consolidated internal model costing);
- Allow for the inclusion of up to 60% of staffing as part-time, new hires (this was not possible in the original consolidated internal model costing); and,
- Allow for a change in job classification that reduced the overall salary of a significant number of future FTE CSRs (this was not possible in the original consolidated internal model costing);

As a result of the LOU, and its impact on the business case, the City of Winnipeg management recommended to Council not to outsource its 3-1-1 function. The City of Winnipeg indicated that they would have recommended outsourcing 3-1-1 if the Union did not sign the LOU, as the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process demonstrated that an outsourcer could provide 3-1-1 services, at an equal level of service as the City.

A complete summary of the outsourcing report has been made available to 3-1-1 management.

### **Recommendation 17**

**That 3-1-1 management follow through on Council's direction to investigate the possibility of outsourcing the 3-1-1 Contact Centre. This should be done in parallel with the other recommendations outlined in this report.**

### **Management Response**

Management agrees with this recommendation.

Management agrees with this recommendation but believes that a more full investigation into the possibility of outsourcing the Contact Centre should not occur until all agreed upon recommendations have been implemented by Q4 2009 and management has had an opportunity to revisit the outsourcing analysis.

## 5 CONCLUSION

3-1-1 management have made significant improvements to the overall operations and management of the 3-1-1 Contact Centre since amalgamation. However, the audit has identified that there are still many issues that need to be addressed.

Poor call quality and service delivery, including accuracy of information provided to the public and consistency in the way calls are handled, are major issues for the 3-1-1 Contact Centre and need to be addressed by management immediately. Management has focused on adherence to service level standards and call volumes, but has given little attention to tracking or monitoring call quality. Management needs to review the reporting of performance data and ensure that the reports include the measurement of performance quality, not just quantitative measures, to allow for more effective management and oversight.

3-1-1 management also needs to work more closely with internal business clients to develop a tracking process to monitor the accuracy and completeness of service requests and transferred calls.

In parallel, based on the findings of this audit, 3-1-1 management needs to follow through on Council's direction to more fully investigate the possibility of outsourcing the 3-1-1 Contact Centre to assess the potential cost savings to the City, and report back to Committee and Council.

We believe that by implementing the recommendations contained in this report, the 3-1-1 Contact Centre will be able to, in the short term, significantly improve call quality and in the longer term, more fully assess the potential cost savings to the City by evaluating insourcing and outsourcing options.

## 6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We wish to express our appreciation for the cooperation and assistance afforded the audit team by management and staff.