

TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS CORPORATE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING ON TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2013
FROM:	VERONICA McALEA MAJOR MANAGING DIRECTOR, CORPORATE SERVICES & CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER AND MARTIN HAYWARD MANAGING DIRECTOR, CORPORATE SERVICES, CITY TREASURER & CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
SUBJECT:	CITY OF LONDON WEBSITE MODERNIZATION PROJECT

RECOMMENDATION

That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director, Corporate Services and Chief Human Resources Officer and the Managing Director, Corporate Services, City Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer this Report **BE RECEIVED** for information purposes.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER

October 29, 2012, Report to Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee, regarding “Service London Implementation Plan”.

June 18, 2012, Report to the Finance and Administrative Services Committee, regarding “City of London Website Modernization Single Source”.

January 16, 2012, Report to Finance and Administrative Services Committee, regarding “City of London Information Technology”.

BACKGROUND

As reported previously to Council, the City of London’s website needed to be redesigned and rebuilt. The current City website was developed 17 years ago. FrontPage, the software supporting the site, is now an unstable technology that has not been supported by its manufacturer for a decade. Its unreliability posed many challenges such as accessibility, usability and security. Additionally, FrontPage does not support many features that we need to comply with international accessibility standards as required under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). Not having a reliable website also had the potential to impact the ability of our citizens to conduct business with the City online. Additionally, our web authors were challenged under the existing system to keep information current.

To address these challenges, to improve service to our citizens and to use the website as a strategic information and engagement tool for the City, the Communications Division and Information Technology Services (“ITS”) embarked on a project in 2012 to create a new, modern City of London website. The need for modernizing the website was identified in ITS’ strategy, which was presented to Council in January 2012, the Corporate Communications Division’s initiatives, and as one of the major milestones under “Service London”. “Service London” is a transformative initiative, previously approved by Council, which is already underway and is all about improving citizens’ experience regardless of the channel our citizens use to interact with the City.

The modernization project was also an opportunity to change the look and feel of the website to reflect the Corporation’s Vision as the City of Opportunity. The new website is intended to be a portal through which people see us and interact with us not just locally, but globally. It is

intended to be a critical tool that we can use to deliver services and information in an effective, timely and efficient manner. Users can expect to find up-to-date information quickly on the new site as well as an interactive medium with the capability to conduct business and receive quality customer service. Users should also experience transparency, accountability and a design that is consistent and visually welcoming.

Our website is not intended to be just a catalogue of information; but instead an opportunity to have a constant and critical conversation with our community.

The goals and objectives of the modernization project included:

- **Create a website with the user in mind.** The new website is designed from the user's perspective. It is organized by services, not by departments. We have improved the navigation and ease of use on the site as well as improved its search capabilities. City staff has spent significant time to make content as searchable as possible. Staff also edited thoroughly the content on our old site, updating and in some cases removing out of date information. Our old site had approximately 5,000 pages of information; our new site will have 2,500.
- **Replace outdated, unsupported technology with a modern technology platform.** Over the years, as technology has changed and improved, the City of London has acquired more than 150 different technology solutions. This has posed a huge challenge in terms of manageability and sustainability. This project saw the replacement of FrontPage with SharePoint. SharePoint will be used for building many future solutions including building an Enterprise Information Management (EIM) framework. The EIM project kick off took place on September 9, 2013.
- **Train Information Technology Staff in modern technology tools and practices.** Building ITS' staff skills in emerging technologies such as SharePoint and building the capabilities among ITS staff were identified as key objectives in ITS' strategy. This project presented an enormous opportunity to train ITS staff in SharePoint and other related technologies. The skill and knowledge gained in this project will be leveraged when we embark on other projects such as building an Enterprise Information Management (EIM) framework, Employee Collaboration Portal, and Business Intelligence Framework.
- **Distribute web authoring tasks and web content ownership throughout the Corporation.** As a part of this project, more than 140 web authors have been trained and been involved in adding content to the website. In addition, ownership of that content has been transferred to Service Areas where expertise resides; ensuring transparent, timely, and accurate information is being posted to the new website.
- **Make the website compliant with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).** The new website was designed to be simple yet visually appealing to enhance user experience and to accommodate AODA requirements. In terms of compliance, substantial progress has been made with the new website. Making the current website and future additions fully AODA compliant will be carried out as a separate project in the coming months.

Major improvements to london.ca:

- **Search engine navigation:** The website is built as a powerful search engine that helps users find information quickly. The new website features the ability to use the "most popular" search terms area, search by specific filters or search through the entire website. Users can also search the website's most popular search items in drop-down menus categories of Residents, Business, City Hall, Online Services or About London. Overall, the entire site is better organized, more concise and simpler for the user.
- **Searchable calendar of city meeting and events:** Users can now search for organized or City- sponsored meetings and events by type, by date(s) or by Ward. On a go forward basis the online calendar will be reviewed by staff before a city organized event or meeting is booked with a view to avoiding duplication wherever possible. Further, a link to Tourism London on the Calendar page provides users with listings of community events.
- **Quicklinks page:** This one-page resource allows the public, staff and Councillors to quickly obtain information regarding common questions or concerns, such as: planning and building applications; the daily road construction/disruption report; tender and

bidding opportunities; public notices; the online calendar, service area frequently asked questions and frequently contacted numbers.

- **Mega drop-down menus:** Each homepage topic area (Residents, Business, City Hall, Online Services, About London) features drop down menus with the most popular search items in the respective areas. This improves site navigation and is more customer friendly.
- **“How do I ...”:** The drop down menus also contain innovative and popular “How do I ...” links that help to answer the most common user questions quickly and effectively.
- **Improved contact information:** Every web page with content now lists the web author, the date the content was last updated and contact information for the Service Area. This design is intended to be much more customer friendly and transparent and encourage user feedback. We no longer just push information to the community, we are there to provide service and be accountable.
- **Improved accessibility:** The new website is more accessible to users with disabilities. More documents are now accessible through ReadAloud software. Typography is easier to read and links to content are clearer. The website has a cleaner, less cluttered design, higher colour contrast and more white space. To assist users relying on screen readers, table usage was kept to a minimum and page titles accurately reflect the topic of every page. Accessibility improvements will continue as we make the website fully compliant with AODA requirements.
- **Improved city map:** A new City map has been created with Google-type functionality. Users can now find which Ward they live in with information provided on how to contact their Ward Councillor. Further updates to our City mapping system will continue.
- **Improved feedback mechanisms:** A website only gets better if it listens to the experiences and suggestions of its customers and users. The new website encourages feedback and interaction on every webpage.

Next Steps:

The new website will be presented to members of the Corporate Services Committee at its meeting on September 24, 2013. Website development and improvement will be an ongoing process and will, therefore, continue after the launch of the new website. We will continuously update the website to be relevant and to align with the ever changing needs and expectations of our users and to keep pace with emerging technologies.

Our new web authors will have regular content and website technology refresher courses to ensure the site remains relevant and up to date. As well, a corporate standard will be implemented which will ensure website content is reviewed and updated at least every 30 days.

A feedback system has been established to receive continuous feedback from users and stakeholders. This feedback will help us develop a road map to further improve the website.

Conclusion:

The benefits achieved and to be achieved by this project are many. The new website and associated technology will not only set the foundation for the introduction of new technology, they will also set the foundation for other future initiatives such as Enterprise Information Management (EIM) framework. It is to be noted that this project was fully funded through savings realized as a result of ITS' investment strategy which reduces operational cost through investing in strategic projects.

In many ways, our new website is the first step in the journey of leveraging web technology for strategic purpose such as for engaging citizens, improving transparency and openness in government, improving service and accessibility and innovation and economic growth.

Acknowledgments

Approximately 140 web authors from across the Corporation were involved in reviewing and updating the over 5000 pages of content on the old website. Staff from both the Communications and ITS Divisions was also involved in leading this initiative. A list of these employees is attached at Appendix "A" to this Report. Finally, we wish to recognize our community partners who provided valuable feedback and suggestions to improve the website functionality throughout this project.

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