



City Council Report

REPORT NUMBER 046-2026-City Manager's Office-Customer Service Division

DATE

PREPARED December 18, 2025

FILE

CITY COUNCIL February 3, 2026

MEETING DATE

SUBJECT 311 Implementation Authorization

RECOMMENDATION TO CITY COUNCIL

WITH RESPECT to Report 046-2026-City Manager's Office-Customer Service Division, we authorize Administration to proceed with the implementation of a 311 service for the City of Thunder Bay in accordance with the Canadian N11 Notification & Implementation Guideline;

AND THAT any necessary by-laws be presented to City Council for ratification.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to seek City Council authorization to proceed with the implementation of 311 as the dedicated non-emergency telephone number for municipal services.

311 is a nationally recognized service, approved by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) under Telecom Decision 2004-71, that provides residents and businesses with a simple, easy-to-remember point of access to non-emergency municipal information and services. Implementation of 311 is governed by the Canadian N11 Notification & Implementation Guideline, which requires formal authorization by the municipal governing body prior to issuance of an implementation notice and coordination with Telecommunications Service Providers (TSPs).

The City's proposed 311 service will be delivered through the City's new centralized Customer Service Division, scheduled to launch in December 2026. The 311 service will provide centralized intake, triage, and resolution of non-emergency service requests, improve consistency of service delivery, enhance accountability, and support improved customer experience across telephone, in-person, and digital channels.

Subject to City Council approval, Administration will issue a 311 Implementation Notice and Plan to the Canadian Numbering Administrator and all TSPs operating in the proposed service area in accordance with national guidelines.

Council authorization at this stage is to permit the City to act as the N11 Service Provider for 311 within the City of Thunder Bay and to issue the required Implementation Notice.

DISCUSSION

Regulatory and Governance Requirements

Implementation of 311 is subject to the CRTC, its decisions and guidelines, including the Canadian N11 Notification & Implementation Guideline. The Guideline requires evidence of authorization from impacted regional governments, meaning jurisdictions that will receive 311 call routing or be operationally affected by the proposed service area or routing design.

The Guideline requires that the municipality, as the N11 Service Provider:

- obtain formal authorization from City Council;
- notify and consult with all TSPs operating in the proposed service area;
- provide an approved 311 Implementation Notice and supporting documentation to the Canadian Numbering Administrator; and
- develop a detailed 311 Implementation Plan in collaboration with participating TSPs.

Council approval is therefore a mandatory prerequisite to proceeding with implementation of 311.

Service Delivery Model

311 will function as the primary telephone 'front-door' for non-emergency municipal services and information. Calls will be handled by trained Customer Service Representatives within the City's centralized Customer Service Division using standardized service inventories, workflows, and escalation protocols. Emergency calls will continue to be handled through 911 and will not be replaced by 311.

Service Area and Call Routing

The proposed 311 service area is limited to the municipal boundary of the City of Thunder Bay. The City will act solely as the N11 Service Provider for services delivered within its jurisdiction.

Administration recognizes that telecommunications exchange boundaries and wireless service areas may extend beyond municipal boundaries. These overlaps do not constitute an

extension of 311 service into neighbouring municipalities and do not create a service obligation beyond the City's jurisdiction.

Consistent with Telecom Decision CRTC 2004-71, call routing will be based on existing exchange boundaries. Where misdirected calls originate outside the City's jurisdiction due to exchange boundary limitations, operational protocols will be applied to redirect callers appropriately without assuming service responsibility or cost liability.

Alignment with Corporate Initiatives

The implementation of 311 is a foundational component of the City's broader customer service modernization initiative and directly supports the launch of the Customer Service Division. It complements ongoing work related to service inventory development, service standards, customer relationship management (CRM) procurement, and multi-channel service delivery.

N11 Notification and Implementation Process

Subject to City Council approval, Administration will undertake the following consultation activities in accordance with the Canadian N11 Notification & Implementation Guideline:

- formal notification to the Canadian Numbering Administrator and all Telecommunications Service Providers operating in the proposed service area;
- participation in an initial implementation conference call with TSPs to establish an N11 Implementation Planning Committee; and
- ongoing coordination meetings to finalize the 311 Implementation Plan, testing, and launch activities.

Notice of the City's intention to implement 311 services will be provided to neighbouring municipalities (Shuniah, Neebing and Oliver Paipoonge) and Fort William First Nation.

Public communication and awareness activities will be developed and implemented closer to the public launch date to ensure residents understand the purpose and appropriate use of 311.

CONSULTATION

Report 45-2026-City Manager's Office-Customer Service was presented to the Standing Committee – Quality of Life on January 27, 2026. At Standing Committee, there was discussion relative to implementation costs, access and service delivery models.

All costs related to routing requirements of the telephone service providers shall be borne by those providers as per CRTC Telecom Decision 2004-71. Costs related to set-up within the

Division have been included in the 2026 operating budget. While 311 will be available by landline or mobile phone within city limits, a non-local number will be available for anyone requiring the service who are beyond city limits. Lastly, service delivery models for the centralized Customer Service Division are under development as part of the broader implementation work. Details will be brought forward to Council at the appropriate time once decisions have been finalized.

Standing Committee endorsed the recommendation as presented. The recommendation is now presented to City Council for approval.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATION

There are no immediate financial impacts associated with the issuance of the 311 Implementation Notice or the authorization requested through this report.

Under CRTC Telecom Decision 2004-71, Telecommunications Service Providers are responsible for the incremental costs associated with basic switch modifications and network changes required to implement 311. Any costs associated with special routing arrangements, should they be requested, would be subject to negotiation. None are planned at this time.

Operational costs related to staffing, systems, public awareness, and ongoing service delivery for 311 are being addressed through the Customer Service Division implementation and included in the 2026 and 2027 Operating Budgets for Council's consideration.

BACKGROUND

In November 2004, the CRTC approved 311 as the national non-emergency number for municipal government services. Since that time, municipalities across Canada, including several Ontario municipalities, have implemented 311 to improve access to services and streamline customer contact.

The City of Thunder Bay is establishing a centralized Customer Service Division to modernize how residents and businesses interact with municipal services. The introduction of 311 is a critical enabling component of this model and supports the City's objectives of improving accessibility, consistency, and service quality.

The Canadian N11 Notification & Implementation Guideline establishes a structured process for 311 implementation, including mandatory Council authorization, formal notification, and coordinated planning with TSPs. This report fulfills the governance requirement necessary to advance the City's 311 implementation in compliance with national standards.

REFERENCE MATERIAL ATTACHED

None.

REPORT PREPARED BY

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REPORT SIGNED AND VERIFIED BY

John Collin, City Manager

01/29/2026 (MM/DD/YEAR)