

Report from Financial Management Services**Date of Report:** July 5, 2016**Date of Meeting:** July 18, 2016**Report Number:** FMS-B007-2016**File:** 68.44.99**Subject:** City of St. Catharines Existing Shared Services

Recommendation

That the Budget Standing Committee (BSC) receive this report for information purposes.

Background

BSC provided direction to Staff to provide information on the existing shared services for the City of St. Catharines.

Report

Shared services is a way of organizing administrative or operational functions to optimize the delivery of cost-effective, flexible and reliable services to all customers. They have become a topic of interest across the country as a means of potentially providing services at lower cost. Options include merging services with another public service provider, contracting for services (restrictions exist with union contracts), or forming an authority to provide service to many municipalities. The end objective is to provide taxpayers with better service and/or lower costs.

The following is a list of the existing shared services for the City of St. Catharines

- Fire Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) services with 10 Niagara municipalities and two counties
- Winter Control of Regional Roads in St. Catharines by the City for Niagara Region
- Niagara Public Purchasing Committee (NPPC) is a group co-operative purchasing program for Niagara based agencies whose primary funding is tax based
- Time and Attendance system provided for the City through the Niagara Region
- Brock's use of the Film Venue and Robertson Recital Hall at FOPAC for educational purposes
- Printing services provided by city to St. Catharines Transit Commission and St. Catharines Public Library
- Cost share by the City of two Crossing Guards on St. David's Road with the City of Thorold

- Combined Sewer Separation Program with City and Niagara Region
- Various Planning Studies cost-shared with City and Niagara Region

The following is a list of future potential shared services.

- City has the ability under its Administrative Monetary Penalties (AMPS) by-law to provide hearing space to other municipalities
- With Council's approval of the City's new payroll/HRIS system, Staff have been directed to pursue opportunities with other municipalities for the utilization of applications with the goal of providing capital and annual cost recovery.

City Staff are open to other shared service agreements with Niagara municipalities and other public sector organizations. Shared-services, when appropriately applied, may be one solution for providing core services in more efficient ways. They create opportunities for local government to provide improved services, reduce costs or both.

Financial Implications

Sharing services allows the City to recover a portion of operating costs, stretch our taxpayer's dollars further and provide improved services. The City of St. Catharines is similar to other Ontario municipalities with common financial pressures stemming from inflation, regulatory changes, infrastructure requirements and concerns over affordability. As the largest municipality in the Niagara Region the City of St. Catharines has the potential to add value to smaller municipalities through shared service arrangements. Although, the benefits to the City may be minimal, these arrangements contribute towards an overall enhancement of municipal services on a regional basis.

Relationship to Strategic Plan

By providing our services in a cost effective way through shared services, Economic Sustainability is enhanced by the attraction of public and private investment, support of local businesses and improved customer service which demonstrates we are open for business. Shared-services also allow the City to be an affordable place for young people, families and retired older adults as we work towards achieving a budgetary tax rate increase at or below the rate of inflation by 2018.

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