
HALDIMAND COUNTY

Report FDS-02-2021 Municipal Modernization Program Intake 2 – Funding Transfer Agreement



For Consideration by Council in Committee on August 24, 2021

OBJECTIVE:

To provide an update on the Municipal Modernization Program – Intake 2 funding application, to seek authorization from Council to execute the Funding Transfer Agreement, and authorization to revise the 2021 Tax Supported Operating Budget.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Report FDS-02-2021 Municipal Modernization Program – Intake 2 Funding Transfer Agreement be received;
2. AND THAT the revised budget as outlined in Report FDS-02-2021 be approved;
3. AND THAT the Mayor and Clerk be authorized to execute the Transfer Payment Agreement with Municipal Modernization Program, through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

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Reviewed by: Jerri Whiting, Project Manager, Continuous Improvement / Executive Assistant to the CAO

Respectfully submitted: Mark Merritt, CPA, CA, General Manager of Financial & Data Services

Approved: Craig Manley, MCIP, RPP, Chief Administrative Officer

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The County submitted an application for Ontario's second intake for the *Municipal Modernization Program* on March 11, 2021. On June 30, 2021 the County received correspondence from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH), indicating that the County has been approved for funding for the Haldimand County Virtual City Hall to allow more self service for customers as well as more electronic digital services.

Virtual City Hall is an online self-service portal which will provide residents and customers with the ability to view, pay, and elect to receive their tax bills, invoices, and other correspondence electronically – all at a single point of contact. Once implemented, the expected results are increased efficiency by reducing phone calls to Customer Service Representatives and Finance, specifically the Tax area; and reduced cost of printing and mailing tax bills, invoices, statements, reminder notices and recreation information. Residents will continue to have the current in-person and mailing services available however, many have indicated a desire for more enhanced on-line opportunities than currently exist. The addition of the Virtual City Hall portal will enhance digital services, allowing residents to access online services from their mobile device in the comfort of their home or at a MyHC self-service kiosk located at all Haldimand County Library branches.

BACKGROUND:

The second intake of *Municipal Modernization Program* is intended for municipalities to conduct an additional third party review **or** to implement projects identified under the first intake that would increase efficiency, effectiveness, and lower costs in the long term in the following areas:

- Digital Modernization
- Service integrations
- Streamlined development approvals
- Shared services/alternative delivery models

As part of the second intake, the County identified two recommendations from [FDS-04-2020 Municipal Modernization Final Report](#) to request funding for:

1. Moving to self-service for internal staff and external customers
2. Transitioning County residents from mailing to emailing or other digital communication channels.

These two recommendations would be implemented by an online customer self-service portal called Virtual City Hall (VCH). Haldimand County recognizes the increasing demand and value of additional online service and streamlining these services to allow for a complete online experience for the resident of Haldimand County, thus VCH was identified as one of the projects to be recommended for additional funding through the second intake.

ANALYSIS:

The first intake under the *Municipal Modernization Program* allowed for the County to complete a comprehensive review of our current processes. The review identified a number of process improvement opportunities to benefit the end users of the services, as well as a significant projected cost avoidance in managing these services.

A total of 15 processes were reviewed. Two processes in particular were identified for Intake 2 as they can be implemented to achieve the goal of self-service while realizing administrative efficiencies and substantial cost savings.

1. Moving to self-service for internal staff and external customers
2. Transitioning County residents from mailing to emailing or another digital communication channel.

Virtual City Hall would allow for the following benefits:

- Haldimand County to build on to the functionality of existing systems (Great Plains - GP), to send bills and correspondence electronically (entitled eSend) which would result in cost savings in both printing and mailing.
- Residents to receive reminders, tax bills, bulk water invoices, arrears notices, statements and receipts electronically.
- Enable residents to login and see their property tax, sundry receivable accounts details and then tender payment by either credit or debit card.
- Enable stakeholders to generate official Property Tax Certificates and obtain immediate delivery online including payment processing.
- Enable Citizens to purchase burn permits online through a permit and application portal.

The estimated costs to implement VCH include consulting, contracted marketing services, as well as project management. Under the Intake 2 conditions, the project must be completed by September 30, 2022.

In order to receive the funds and proceed with the implementation of the VCH, the County is required to enter into a Transfer Payment Agreement, as outlined in report FDS-01-2021 Municipal Modernization Program – Intake 2. While a copy of the agreement is not attached to this report, it will mirror the agreement provided under Intake 1 and include:

- A completion date of September 30, 2022.
- A commitment to provide a final report that forecasts annual savings and other efficiency and effectiveness outcomes for at least 3 years as a result of project complete.
- A commitment to reporting back one year post-project completion with actual savings over the course of the year and a revised forecast of annual savings and other efficiency and effectiveness outcomes for the following 2 years.

A final report to Council is required and will be presented upon completion of the project, the report will include forecast efficiencies and effectiveness outcomes for 3 years.

FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

The total costs for the implementation of the Virtual City Hall, have been estimated at \$145,000. Through the Municipal Modernization Program Intake 2, the County has been approved for 65% of the funding to a maximum of \$94,250 (Including non rebateable HST). Identified in the 2021 Tax Supported Operating budget was a Council Approved one time initiative to be funded from the Contingency Reserve, in the amount of \$50,000 (including non rebateable HST) to assist with the business process optimizations identified in FDS-04-2020, which included the Virtual City Hall. As a result of the approved funding announcement, the following budget revision will be required.

| Financing | Current Approved Budget | Proposed Revised Budget |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Ontario Operating Grant (65%) | 0 | \$94,200 |
| Contingency Reserve (35%) | \$50,000 | \$50,800 |
| Total Financing | \$50,000 | \$145,000 |
| Consulting Fees & Services | \$50,000 | \$145,000 |
| Total Expenditures | \$50,000 | \$145,000 |

In order to receive the funding the County is required to enter into a Transfer Payment Agreement, as per Report FDS-01-2021 Municipal Modernization Program – Intake 2.

STAKEHOLDER IMPACTS:

The implementation of the project will have an impact on various divisions and will require collaboration and staff resources from Finance, Innovation and Technology Services, and the CAO's office.

Once implemented the project will have a positive impact on efficiency by reducing the number of phone calls to Customer Service Representatives and Finance, specifically the Tax area. VCH self serve options will allow for tax bills and County communication to be received electronically by the residents.

It will also offer the reprints of bills and notices, and provide options for online payments. This will allow the administrative staff to focus on strategically pro-active communication efforts.

REPORT IMPACTS:

Agreement: Yes

By-law: No

Budget Amendment: Yes

Policy: No

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Correspondence from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing dated June 30, 2021 – Funding Approval.