



## **The Corporation of the Town of LaSalle**

**To:** Mayor and Members of Council

**Prepared by:** Dale Langlois, Director of Finance

**Department:** Finance

**Date of Report:** February 19, 2021

**Report Number:** FIN-05-2021

**Subject:** Virtual Services Provided by the Town of LaSalle

### **Recommendation**

That the report of the Director of Finance dated February 19, 2021 (FIN-05-2021) regarding Virtual Services provided by the Town of LaSalle BE RECEIVED.

### **Report**

As Council may recall, at the December 8, 2020 Council meeting, Councillor Renaud inquired if administration could provide access for residents to tax billing information through an online portal. In addition to this virtual service, there are many other virtual services that have been implemented over the past couple of years, are in the process of being implemented and are currently being investigated and will be rolled out within the next year or two.

Although the COVID-19 virus has put limitations on many of the services that the Town provides, it has given administration the capacity to work on and implement many virtual services which have benefitted our residents throughout the pandemic and will enhance the services that the Town provides moving forward. There are also many internal electronic processes that have been implemented or will be rolled out in the near future. Although they are considered internal, they will save costs and create many efficiencies that will create capacity for staff time to be utilized on other projects and services.

Below is a list and description of all the virtual customer services and internal electronic processes that have been implemented, are in the process of being implemented, or are currently being investigate and will be implemented in the near future:

**Virtual Customer Services Completed:**

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**Online Property tax and utility bills**

There is an online portal for both tax accounts and utility bill accounts that residents can access through the Town of LaSalle website (under online services). The utility bill portal has been live since 2017 and the new tax portal went live February 2021. Both the tax and utility bill online portals operate the same way. Customers need their roll or account number and pin numbers to gain access to the online account (pin numbers are located on tax and utility bills). The portal provides the ability for residents to view bills online, register to receive bills by email and view transaction history. It is important to note that information is only available from the time the resident signs up for this service in the portal. No history of information will be provided prior to the sign-up date.

This service will reduce paper, postage and counter traffic as customers sign up to receive bills electronically.

**Municipal Ticketing Online Payments**

The municipal ticketing module went live in the fall of 2020. This system allows individuals who have received a ticket to pay their ticket online through the municipal ticketing module rather than make a trip to Town Hall.

**Council Meetings over Zoom**

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, Council meetings have been held over zoom and streamed on the Town's youtube channel. Delegates have been able to register and present / speak at the Council meetings over zoom as well. This service will continue into the future until the pandemic is complete.

**Programming over Zoom**

Since the spring of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions have prevented the Town from holding live programming sessions. As a result, various programs have been held over zoom, which include exercise classes, childrens arts and craft classes and seniors programming. This initiative has been popular with the residents of the Town and great feedback has been received.

**Virtual Work from Home**

In November 2020, the COVID pandemic took a turn for the worse, which resulted in the requirement for staff to work from home. Within weeks, the division of IT obtained the necessary hardware and software to allow applicable staff the ability to work from their home. They installed microsoft 365 software on the office staff computers, which has

allowed staff to access their email, meet face to face through the teams app and access files through one drive and VPN. In addition, through Micollab software staff are able to answer calls from the public from their homes as well.

### Other Services

Pre-authorized payment registration forms, and ownership change forms can now be completed online rather than physically at Town Hall. All completed forms are automatically sent by email to the revenue division. These accessible forms are created using “form builder” software. Other uses for this software are currently being investigated.

### Playspeak Software

In January 2021, playspeak software has been utilized to share future waterfront plans with the public and receive feedback through surveys and public comments. This software, will be utilized in the future to present various projects to the public and receive public feedback.

### **Virtual Customer Services In Progress:**

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#### Pet Licencing Module

This project is currently in progress and is scheduled to go live in the second quarter of 2021. Similar to the Municipal ticketing module, the pet licencing module will allow residents to purchase dog tags online rather than make a trip to Town Hall. The physical dog tag will be mailed out to residents once payment is confirmed.

#### New Recreation Software

Administration is currently in the process of replacing the existing recreation software with an enhanced Activnet software, which will go live in March 2021. There are several benefits of the new software, which includes a user friendly portal that is easy to navigate through. Refunds can now be processed online for payments that occurred online. Private swimming lessons can be booked online with a particular instructor of choice. There is the ability to send mass messages through the system rather than call users individually (ie. If the pool has to close or if programs are cancelled). There is a secure QR code for parents picking their children up from day camps for enhanced security. Users can now scan in for day camps, programs and fitness classes with a card or with a QR code on their phones. Debit terminals are now connected to the system, which will prevent dual entry into the debit machine and software when a registration is made. This will reduce the risk of manual input errors.

### Customers Water Consumption Patterns

Administration is currently on the process of implementing sensus analytics software. This software will allow customers to sign-up and gain access to a system that will allow them to view their water consumption history and receive alerts for abnormal water usage patterns.

### New Website

Administration is in the process of revamping the Town's website design. The new website will satisfy the latest accessibility requirements, adapt to various devices of all sizes, and provide an easier user experience. The website will be adjusted to ensure that links to the most highly viewed pages are on the main page and easy to navigate to.

### **Internal Electronic Processes Completed:**

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#### eBids and Tenders

Over the past few years, the Town has been utilizing the ebids and tenders software to post RFP, RFQ and RFTs, which has allowed the Town to receive the most competitive prices. Over the past year, administration has begun rolling out additional modules, which include creating RFP, RFQ and RFT templates within the system, receiving bids through the system and evaluating bids through the system.

#### Kronos time and attendance software

Kronos time and attendance software went live January 1, 2020. This software provides virtual scheduling, hours tracking, vacation tracking, overtime tracking, sick time tracking, vacation requests, etc. It is also fully integrated with the payroll system. This initiative has created a significant amount of efficiencies as it has drastically reduced the time and effort that it previously took to schedule and track everything manually. It has also reduced any risk associated with manual input error. Moving forward, there are various modules that are currently being investigated such as a performance management module and onboarding and recruitment modules.

#### Systems 24/7 training system

Systems 24/7 provides all Town staff with required training and policies that pertain to their individual position. The Town has been utilizing this software since 2015. It ensures that all legislative training (such as health and safety training) has been performed and all requirements have been met.

### Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT)

Rather than cut cheques each time an invoice is received, administration has put a focus on promoting electronic funds transfer with our vendors. This promotion began in December and in January, 50% of payments were by EFT. This initiative will reduce postage costs and reduce the potential for late payment charges.

### Automation of Offer Letters through Laserfiche

The Culture and recreation department in collaboration with the Records Management Clerk have created an electronic form through the Town's Laserfiche system, which automatically generates offer letters for new part-time staff and emails copies to the appropriate staff (HR, payroll, IT, supervisor) to ensure that new employees are properly set up in the Town's various systems before they start employment.

### **Internal Electronic Processes In Progress:**

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#### Electronic Invoice Approval System

Administration is currently working on an electronic invoice approval system, which is expected to go live in spring of 2021. This system will enhance and virtualize the invoice approval process through the Town's Laserfiche system. This will create significant efficiencies as invoices will be provided to the accounts payable clerk electronically, preventing the need for special trips to Town Hall to drop off invoices. This will also speed up the payment process and automatically ensure that proper signoffs are in place before invoices are paid (without the need for physical review as is currently performed).

#### New Budget Software

Administration is currently investigating new budget software and will implement a solution for the 2022 budget. The various software packages that are being investigated will provide a fresh look and virtualize the approval process for various budget requests within the operating and capital budgets, which will save significant staff time. New software will also provide a user friendly version of the budget on the Town website, with the ability for users to drill down into various categories of the budget to obtain in-depth information and details within the various categories of the budget.

#### Building Permit Software

The Town of LaSalle is currently investigating building permit software, which will allow the building division to receive and process building permits electronically. This software

will also automatically generate invoices and allocate costs specific to the details included in the building permit application. This software will be fully integrated with the Town's accounting software and create many efficiencies.

In 2020, due to the COVID pandemic, the Building division began accepting building permit applications electronically through email and in limited instances has been able to inspect certain components virtually through video and pictures.

#### New Intranet

The division of IT is currently in the process of refreshing the Town of LaSalle's intranet, which be more user friendly and easy to navigate within.

#### Integration of Software

Administration is currently in the process of applying for a grant to fund an initiative to fully integrate the various modules of Public Sector digest software with various other related software that the Town uses such as Vadim financial software. This will create efficiencies as it will eliminate duplication of entries into various softwares and eliminate the risk of manual input errors.

Should Council have any questions regarding the above initiatives, please feel free to contact myself or the applicable departments for further information.

### **Consultations**

All Departments within the Town of LaSalle

### **Financial Implications**

Not applicable

### **Prepared By:**



Director of Finance/Treasurer

Dale Langlois, CPA, CA

**Link to Strategic Goals**

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1. Enhancing organizational excellence - Yes
2. Strengthen the community's engagement with the Town - Yes
3. Grow and diversify the local economy - Not Applicable
4. Build on our high-quality of life - Yes
5. Sustaining strong public services and infrastructure - Yes

**Communications**

Not applicable.

**Notifications**

Not applicable.

**Report Approval Details**

|                      |                                   |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Document Title:      | FIN-05-2021 Virtual Services.docx |
| Attachments:         |                                   |
| Final Approval Date: | Mar 2, 2021                       |

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:



Director of Finance/Treasurer

Dale Langlois



Chief Administrative Officer

Joe Milicia