

For information

DATE: September 27, 2011

REPORT TITLE: **INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY UPDATE**

FROM: R. Kent Gillespie, Commissioner of Employee and Business Services

OBJECTIVE

To provide Regional Council with an update on the status of a significant transformation program regarding the provision of Information & Technology services at the Region of Peel.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- In 2007 Internal Audit carried out a review of the Information and Technology (IT) function at the Region of Peel.
- In 2008 a business transformation project called inTransIT was developed to implement improvements in the IT function. inTransIT identified the functions, competencies and skills that will be needed to better position the IT function to meet current needs and in the future.
- Some significant improvements included a better planning function and decision making process about IT investments, clarifying roles and responsibilities and working relationships among the central and departmental IT functions and the restructuring of the Information Systems and Technology Services (ISTS) Division.
- A significant amount of work remains to be done to establish improved processes and performance measures.
- At the same time, ongoing business needs will require investments to maintain productivity and performance of Regional programs and services.

DISCUSSION**1. Background**

Members of Council will be aware of the ever increasing reliance on electronic technology for the delivery of municipal services. Technology has transformed not only financial systems and the administrative office environment but also the delivery of major services including: water plants; mains; reservoirs and the valves and pumps that operate them; billing and payment systems; patient and resident care in long term care homes and paramedic services; the delivery of income and employment supports and social housing to name a few. Technology has also transformed the way residents, clients and customers get information and services and interact with municipalities.

September 27, 2011

INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

For many years the Region of Peel has invested various technology solutions that have allowed Peel to automate processes and deliver services more efficiently and effectively and thereby avoid costs that otherwise would have been incurred. Technology has also created greater expectations of residents and the public for faster and easier access to services and information. Another business driver is the increased regulatory environment in many of our Regional services requiring more data gathering and reporting that relies on technology.

In 2007 Internal Audit carried out an assessment of the IT function at the Region of Peel using the Control Objectives for Information and Related Technologies (COBIT) framework that is considered a best practice. The assessment provided guidance with developing specific recommendations for the following six objectives:

- Define Information Architecture (improve decision making by ensuring integrity and consistency of information)
- Enable Operation and Use (transfer knowledge necessary for successful system and operation)
- Manage Change (control changes to IT infrastructure, applications and technical environment)
- Define and Manage Service Levels (attain service levels offered by IT to meet business demand)
- Ensure Continuous Service (address the organizational requirements for continuous service in case of any and all interruptions)
- Monitor and Evaluate IT Performance (establish performance metrics that measure and improve IT performance).

2. inTransIT

In 2008 an IT transformation program called in TransIT was developed to address the recommendations of the audit review and to address further business improvements.

A key objective of inTransIT was to insure that investments in technology are well planned and that there is a rigorous process to examine whether the investment is necessary, achieves program goals, will work in the Region's technical environment, is an optimal solution given the alternatives and will deliver a measurable return on the investment.

A review was done to identify the IT functions, competencies and skills that could be improved or would be needed in future. The area of technology planning was a focus for improvement. This ensures that there is a coherent overall set of standards and criteria for planning and that investments in IT are not duplicated and do not drive unnecessary operating and maintenance costs. To provide some oversight for this function, a staff committee of three Director level members was established call the Information Technology Board (ITB). The role of this board is to review and approve IT plans and IT projects. This process ensures that the appropriate degree of planning has been done and there is a solid business case for any IT project or initiative.

September 27, 2011

INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

The delivery of information and technology services at the Region of Peel is not completely centralized. Historically, departments have developed an IT function or an information management function within the department to meet the specific needs of the services being delivered. A centralized IT Division has provided enterprise wide business needs such as the common employee desk top environment, the fiber network for connectivity, the data centres that house the core switches and servers to run all applications and store data as well as providing for some program specific IT needs. One of the significant elements of inTransIT was to ensure that the roles and responsibilities among these IT functions were clear and aligned and that collaborative working arrangements across departmental boundaries would follow. A specialized client relationship management function within the centralized IT Division was established to ensure good working relations and services with various IT functions within other departments.

The above changes were part of a larger restructuring of the IT Division that was accomplished within the existing approved staff complement levels. The process took approximately one year and required existing staff to apply for a position in the new structure. Every effort was made to assist staff to be successful through the application and interview process. Approximately 90 per cent of staff were successful based on their particular skills and experience in obtaining a position in the new organization. To mark the end of this restructuring the Division was renamed as of January 1, 2011 as the Information, Systems and Technology Services Division (ISTS).

There is still a great amount of work to do in ISTS to implement new processes and standards that will improve service delivery under the new model. This work will include improved performance measurement. At the same time there are ongoing business needs that must be addressed which means that there is a significant level of demand for service on ISTS. Some of these needs are outlined below.

3. Ongoing Business Requirements

a) miDesk

miDesk is the project name for the replacement of the existing computers and related devices used by employees. For many years the Region has met the need for employee computers through a capital program geared to the purchase and replacement of computers every four years. Capital contributions are made annually in the form of a per computer charge so that funds are available for replacement. The replacement program formerly targeted for 2010 was deferred to allow a review of this program.

miDesk will introduce a different solution that will reduce the cost of the capital investment and the resources required to maintain the hardware and software. It will also allow greater flexibility for remote access for employees. In essence the current computers will be replaced with devices that do not contain hard drives and do not need to be individually configured to access the network. All software and data will reside in the data centre which can be accessed through Peel's fibre network, through a wireless network or through the internet. This ensures greater security of data and access from remote locations as well. The change is scheduled for 2012.

September 27, 2011

INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

b) Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery

In 2010 a review was undertaken to determine the business continuity requirements for technology that supports Regional services. This study identified which systems were critical and must have little or no risk of failure or outage and which were less critical. Many of Peel's IT systems are critical and must have a very low risk of failure. Others that are not as critical are essential for staff productivity. The risks in this regard are largely related to the robustness and integrity of Peel's data centres. A basic standard is that there should be two data centres, one to provide some redundancy for the other. Peel's current data centres are no longer sufficient to provide the level of service required today for security and redundancy and will not be able to sustain the organization in the future. A strategy has been developed to replace the data centres in stages over the next few years to a reasonable standard. This work will be done in collaboration with Peel Regional Police as they also have this requirement.

c) Internet Services

The Region's internet and intranet websites are not well positioned to enable lower cost access to services and information. Many services that are accessed through more expensive channels such as in person at counters or by telephone can be successfully delivered through the lower cost internet channel. Before any new investments are made with regard to Peel's internet presence, a strategy will be developed and a range of options will be considered as to how best to obtain the best return on this investment through overall lower cost service delivery.

d) Technology Integration

In most cases, computer technology needs have been designed, acquired and implemented in relation to specific service areas to meet specific business requirements. This has resulted in numerous computer applications. In many cases, these computer applications performed similar functions but are not able to share information. This results in greater operating costs to maintain and operate these applications.

Where this occurs, one solution is to connect or "integrate" computer systems so that they can share information as much as possible. This avoids the cost of maintaining duplicate sets of data and can shorten service delivery times as one system can initiate the operation of another system which can then report back on the status of the service request to the first system. The technology required to do this integration is called an Enterprise Service Bus (ESB). This is now a common solution and is being used by other municipalities including the Cities of Mississauga and Brampton.

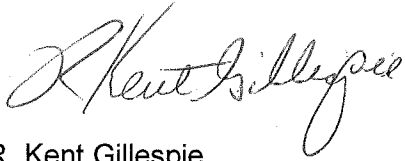
CONCLUSION

In 2007 Internal Audit carried out a review of the Information and Technology function at the Region of Peel. In 2008 a business transformation project called inTransIT was developed to implement improvements in the IT function. inTransIT identified the functions, competencies and skills that will be needed to better position the IT function to meet current needs and in the future. Some significant improvements included a better planning function and decision making process about IT investments, clarifying roles and responsibilities and working relationships among the central and departmental IT functions and the restructuring of the ISTS Division. A significant amount of work remains to be done to establish improved processes and

September 27, 2011

INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

performance measures. At the same time, ongoing business needs will require investments to maintain productivity and performance of Regional programs and services.



R. Kent Gillespie
Commissioner of Employee
and Business Services

Approved for Submission:



D. Szwarc, Chief Administrative Officer

For further information regarding this report, please contact Geovanni Mosquera at extension 4762 or via email at Geovanni.mosquera@peelregion.ca

c. Legislative Services