

Committee of the Whole (Working Session) Report

DATE: Wednesday, November 23, 2022

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

FROM:

Nick Spensieri, City Manager

ACTION: FOR INFORMATION

Purpose

To provide a strategic review of the City of Vaughan's corporate performance in delivering service excellence and how high productivity continues as the workplace moves to a hybrid model and alternative work arrangements which attracts and retains top talent and engages staff to be high contributors in the success of the City of Vaughan.

Report Highlights

- Through innovation, responsible fiscal management and a genuine commitment to delivering quality public services, the City continues to deliver Service Excellence to the people and businesses of the community.
- Service excellence, advancing critical city-building projects and high performance and productivity was maintained despite the challenges presented by COVID-19 and continues now and into the future.
- Innovation, process improvements and omni-channel service delivery (in-person, by phone, by email and via online/virtual services) allows for a greater Citizen experience as well as high productivity and high levels of performance across the organization.
- The City is implementing an Alternative Work Arrangement (AWA) policy to leverage the opportunities of the hybrid workplace model and opportunities to attract and retain talented staff.
- The City is able to monitor and measure performance excellence and productivity through its governance structures, establishing goals and objectives, managing employee performance, the corporate performance measurement program, and project controls and oversight.

Recommendation

1. That the Performance Excellence and Accountability staff report be received.

Background

Throughout the emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic the City of Vaughan continued to provide service excellence to the residents and businesses in the community. The City was able to quickly adapt its services to online/virtual offerings where possible and over 160 process improvements and service innovations were implemented to ensure continued service delivery.

With the expedient and efficient response in technology and process improvements, Council and its Committees were able to continue on a remote basis, with enhanced opportunities for public engagement and input on a remote basis. Critical City building initiatives continued with minimal interruption.

With technology and process improvements, approximately 700 staff were able to work remotely and securely during the pandemic to continue to provide services and meet the City's strategic and operational objectives. With appropriate safety and protection protocols, approximately 1,000 staff continued to provide on-site / in-field services to meet critical operations and programs such as Vaughan Fire and Rescue Service, Public Works, Infrastructure Delivery, By-law and Compliance, Licensing and Permit Services, and Building Standards.

While we still remain ready, resilient, and resourceful to any changes that may ensue in the evolving COVID-19 situation, the City continues providing high levels of productivity and service excellence. Lessons learned from the response to the COVID-19 pandemic have shown our abilities to maintain high quality services, meet corporate performance objectives and targets, and ensure exceptional levels of productivity across all business areas.

Through this experience, the City will leverage changes to its workplace model to ensure a high performing staff culture and dedication to service and performance excellence. This includes the continued review and implementation of process improvements; ongoing performance and project controls, monitoring and reporting; the implementation of the hybrid workplace model and the Alternative Work Arrangements (AWA) policy; and a renewed approach to optimizing the use of City facilities.

Previous Reports/Authority

N/A

Analysis

During the emergency response to COVID-19, city-building effectively continued and excelled. Despite the unprecedented challenges, the City has maintained its commitment to service excellence, high levels of productivity, effective governance, and efficient processes and programs. The City is implementing its hybrid workplace model including the Alternative Work Arrangements (AWA) policy. It continues to optimize technology and digital services and improve the citizen service experience through the comprehensive Service Vaughan program. In addition, the 2018-2022 Service Excellence Strategic Plan continued to guide Vaughan's priorities and efforts. The vast majority of strategic initiatives and business planning goals are either complete or on target for 2022.

Throughout COVID-19 and currently, the City continues to provide high quality citizen services with high levels of staff performance and productivity.

1. Meeting Our Strategic and Operational Priorities

The 2018-2022 Term of Council Service Excellence Strategic Plan serves as a guide that identifies priorities for the term of Council. The Strategic Plan was developed to align the City's priorities, people, processes and technology so that the City can deliver on its commitments for the term of Council. It reinforces the City's mission, vision and values, representing the core of how staff and Council conduct its affairs, centered on a strong foundation of public engagement and equality in the operation and function of the municipality.

The 2018-2022 Strategic Plan is connected to the overall longer-term vision for the City of Vaughan and the Official Plan. It also works in conjunction with the yearly Business Planning and Budgeting processes. In addition, it cascades down into the operational activities and priorities of staff and is reflected in individual performance management plans. The strategic plan for 2018-2022 is made up of 9 key priority areas which include:

- Transportation and Mobility
- City Building
- Environmental Stewardship
- Active, Safe and Diverse Communities
- Economic Prosperity
- Good Governance
- Citizen Experience
- Operational Performance
- Staff Engagement.

As part of the Strategic Plan governance model, the Strategic Priority Oversight Teams (SPOTs) were developed with the goal to ensure that each strategic priority area has an oversight team that monitors the progress and ensures high performance of the key activities. Each SPOT is led by a member of the Senior Leadership Executive and includes a cross section of subject matter experts from management and staff who provide oversight and management of the key activities under that strategic priority area. They have effectively managed these key activities through the evolving situation

of the COVID-19 pandemic throughout 2020 and 2021 and continue to do so today as we near the completion of this current Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan also informs the department Business Plans and through the OKRs (Objectives, Key Activities and Results) program and the Corporate Performance Measures program.

- *As of Q3 2022, of 108 Key Strategic Activities within the strategic plan, approximately 90% are completed or proceeding as planned with multiple deliverables.*
- *As of Q3 2022, of 141 high level Business Plan Objectives approximately 97% of department objectives have been completed or are proceeding as planned with multiple deliverables.*

These are impressive indicators of a high level of performance both at the strategic and operational levels of the organization.

Staff are currently developing a framework for the 2022-2026 Term of Council Service Excellence Strategic Plan that will be presented to Council in early 2023 for discussion and approval.

2. Enhancing the Citizen Experience

A New In-Person City Hall Experience

City Hall has been transformed to provide improved citizen in-person services. Prior to the pandemic visitors had to access services from multiple locations in City Hall which often caused confusion. The new entry of City Hall has reimagined the citizen's in-person experience with a better utilization of space and consolidated counter services and meeting areas to serve a multiplicity of citizen in-person inquiries and services with easy access on the first floor.

Process Improvement and Digital Transformation

The City has expanded and enhanced its online offerings in order to provide high quality and efficient services. The City has experienced significant improvements in customer services due to the online and virtual service options.

During the pandemic and given public health orders, the City quickly transitioned many office-based positions to remote work arrangements while ensuring optimal customer service was maintained. This was an opportunity to expand how services can be provided by leveraging process improvements and technology to provide an omni-channel approach whereby no matter how service is provided (in-person, via phone, email, or online) a consistently high-quality service experience is provided.

In addition, process improvements and technology enhancements enabled continued service delivery through online and virtual service delivery. Service Vaughan was established as the City's online services tool, enabling citizens to submit service requests, report non-emergencies and track submissions 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The public was able to access various services, and this continues today with a single sign-on service login for all available services including:

- **animal services**, including getting a pet licence.
- **bids and tenders**, including application submissions.
- **by-law**, including parking permits and paying for tickets online.
- **litter, vandalism and graffiti**, including reporting instances across the city.
- **employment**, including available job postings and application submissions.
- **garbage and recycling**, including tag purchases, bin exchanges and purchases, missed garbage and recycling collections and more.
- **parks, trees and grass**, including maintenance requests and complaints.
- **recreation**, including activity registration.
- **roads and sidewalks**, including maintenance requests and complaints.
- **signs, signals and sidewalks**, including reporting an issue.
- **water, wastewater and stormwater**, including reporting issues, Bulk Water Program registration and more.

In addition, key city-building services are available through the platform, including the ability to conveniently apply for, submit, track and pay for permits. A variety of **building, grading and engineering permits** are available, including infrastructure engineering drawing requests, pool inspection requests, pool permit renewals, development permits, grading permits and more. Residents can also request a copy of their home survey, apply for a permit to construct a deck, shed, sunroom or pool, and use the online development charge estimator tool before signing a new lease.

And most recently, added capabilities to Service Vaughan include a paperless **Development Planning application process**. This new upgrade enables citizens and industry professionals to electronically submit development applications (including Pre-Application Consultation, Official Plan Amendment, Zoning By-law Amendment, Site Development, Part Lot Control, Interim Control, Draft Plan of Subdivision, Draft Plan of Standard Condominium, and Common Element/Vacant Land Condominium), application-related information and drawings virtually, with a secure login.

With these updates, a central repository for all applications is now offered. This includes the ability to easily view submissions, track progress and stay better informed on the status of applications, in real time. For planning staff, this feature enables a largely paperless process – applications can all be submitted, screened, reviewed and accepted, digitally. This approach results in significant process efficiencies, and increased productivity.

3. Delivering Service Excellence

City staff continue to deliver high quality programs and services to citizens and the business community. Our performance and productivity are evident across all lines of business. Throughout the entire corporation, there continue to be many examples of departments adapting and innovating to improve service and productivity. The following provides highlights of key initiatives and quality performance from across the organization.

Portfolio – Office of the City Manager

Vaughan Fire and Rescue Service:

The successful operation of Vaughan Fire and Rescue Service (VFRS) depends on its dedicated staff in the following divisions:

- **The Communications Division** processes and dispatches up to 11,000 calls per year including all calls for emergency and routine service.
- **The Operational Division** provides a full service, career emergency response for fire incidents, medical emergencies, technical rescues, hazardous material incidents, and chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents, as well as non-emergency responses and citizen requests for service.
- **The Mechanical Division** ensures all firefighting equipment and trucks are mechanically sound and ready at all times.
- **The Training Division** ensures firefighter skills are maintained and enhanced as well as ensuring compliance and accreditation with the provincial mandatory certification. *New in 2023.
- **The Fire Prevention Division** provides fire & life safety education to the public and businesses, fire investigation services, and ensures that buildings and properties are inspected and meet legislative requirements.
- **The Emergency Management Division** ensures City staff, as well as residents and businesses are prepared for an emergency.

Throughout the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the VFRS has maintained its response capability to the citizens and businesses of Vaughan while providing appropriate protections to safeguard staff. The fire prevention division was able to quickly adapt during the pandemic by providing virtual inspections and educational opportunities to help keep everyone safe. Throughout the pandemic, VFRS worked closely with the Emergency Management team to ensure continuity of service in all types of weather and conditions during the pandemic.

Key data from 2021 includes:

- 11,013 alarm calls & requests for service
- 3,057 public education events
- 1,472 inspections closed
- 1,122 plans examinations

Program Management Office:

As part of the July 2019 corporate structure refresh, the Program Management Office (PMO) was established to provide controls and oversight to capital infrastructure projects and was positioned within the Infrastructure Development portfolio.

In 2021, a consolidated delivery approach was developed to ensure effective and efficient capital infrastructure delivery. Following a rigorous review of the capital delivery approach (from project initiation to project completion), a delivery approach was developed to ensure that capital delivery was standardized. The Delivery Approach is guided by the Program Management Process (PMP), governance, and reporting, coupled with resources, procedures, tools and templates.

The PMO is responsible for overseeing the entire PMP. The PMO oversees selection of delivery approach, charter development and prioritization; facilitates monthly reporting and project change approvals; provides staff with the methodology, tools and systems needed to support the PMP; performs quality checks on project artifacts; and applies a gated approach to ensure compliance to the methodology.

The PMO provides the PMP, Governance and Oversight through the Program Management Committee. The committee is responsible for:

- Aligning projects with the 2018-2022 Term of Council Strategic Plan
- Prioritizing capital project funding submissions
- Approving project changes
- Providing oversight on all delivery projects and programs.

Communications for all projects were significantly enhanced in 2021 and continues today. In collaboration with City departments, consultants and partners in Corporate and Strategic Communications the PMO developed and executed comprehensive communications strategies for Infrastructure Development to promote awareness and support vital connections with clients, stakeholders, City Council, staff and the community.

The following is a summary of the communications through a variety of tactics.

- 55 Internal Project Updates/Memos
- 50 Newsletters and Notices
- 64 Public Service Announcements and News Releases

As part of the January 2022 organizational restructuring, the PMO was repositioned into the Office of the City Manager portfolio. In addition to controls and oversight of capital infrastructure projects, the PMO will be applying similar oversight to all significant projects throughout the organization.

Office of Transformation and Strategy:

The Office of Transformation and Strategy (OTS) with its current mandate was established in 2019. OTS leads the development of the Term of Council Strategic Plan, which outlines Vaughan's vision, mission and values. It identifies key strategic activities staff will focus on to enable the execution and implementation of projects and initiatives related to Council's priorities and its commitment to Vaughan's citizens and businesses. In June 2021, the 2018-2022 Service Excellence Strategic Plan received two prestigious awards on an international level from the International Association for Strategic Planning.

In conjunction with the strategic plan, OTS is also responsible for the City's business planning program and approach which is based on the OKR (Objectives, Key Activities and Results) methodology. The business planning process reflects key priorities at the department and functional level and works in conjunction with the budgeting and business prioritization process. All business plans, objectives and initiatives are monitored through a quarterly cycle of updates, risk assessment, and status reporting. This cycle is supported by the Corporate Performance Measurement (CPM) program which works across all departments to establish targets and key performance indicators. OTS also works across the organization in providing data analytics and performance dashboards within the CPM program. The organization is now using the Qlik Sense data tools to provide consistent dashboards and information to inform evidence-based decision making.

The OTS mandate also includes business transformation services to the organization. The business transformation team includes highly skilled project managers and business process improvement specialists who work with all departments providing strategic delivery and supports for enterprise-wide initiatives that focus on performance excellence; organizational design; service delivery enhancements; and improving operational efficiencies and effectiveness. This team also delivers and/or supports corporate-wide training in LEAN and business process improvement, project management, change management and digital literacy.

Throughout the response to the pandemic, OTS led the data and analytics COVID-19 team (which included staff from OTS, the Office of the Chief Information Officer, and researchers from Vaughan Public Libraries) in providing COVID-related data, operational city data, mapping, reports and analysis to the Emergency Management Team. OTS also provided extensive supports to the Manager of Emergency Planning and the EOC providing Lessons Learned/After Action surveys, consultations and recommendations through four phases of the pandemic response.

Internal Audit:

The Director of Internal Audit performs an entity-wide risk assessment every other year and identifies areas for auditing based on a process that combines financial, reputational, compliance and operational criteria. As internal auditing is a year-round

activity, it is to be expected that some projects starting in the latter half of the year will extend into the next calendar year. However, it is expected that all projects will commence in the year that they are scheduled. The department's objective is to successfully execute every assurance engagement in a given year based on the risk-based audit plan.

In addition to tracking productivity, the Director of Internal Audit is responsible for developing and maintaining a quality assurance and improvement program that covers all aspects of the internal audit activity. The program must include both internal and external assessments. In 2021, Internal Audit conducted a self-assessment with external validation. Internal Audit received the highest rating of Generally Conforms and was recognized for several performance achievements.

Internal Audit has worked well throughout the pandemic. Staff have been able to perform engagements virtually and foster interdepartmental relationships as seen through the positivity of the Audit Client Surveys. Since the reopening of City Hall to staff and the public, the hybrid working arrangement has enabled internal auditors to maintain a high level of productivity and enhance client relationships.

Office of Communications and Economic Development:

The Office of Communications and Economic Development (OCED) continues to fulfil its mandate – to overwhelm the public, businesses, stakeholders and Council with information that delivers extraordinary customer service, enhances the citizen experience and provides opportunities.

Based in the Office of the City Manager Portfolio, OCED consists of the departments of Corporate and Strategic Communications, Economic Development and Service Vaughan – formerly known as Access Vaughan. This new structure established in January 2022 presented a vital opportunity to remove silos and leverage existing budget, staff resources and institutional knowledge to build on existing collaboration and past success.

A new Economic Development-Communications Business Unit was implemented in the Corporate and Strategic Communications department, delivering on the [Advantage Vaughan](#) initiative and the mandate “to accelerate strategic communications, marketing and promotional efforts to Economic Development department clients about the advantages of doing business in Vaughan.” The unit also supports the Tourism Vaughan communications efforts.

Complementary to this, OCED is strategically positioned to deliver on the idea that public information is a public service by ensuring Service Vaughan Client Service Representatives (CSRs) receive the most updated information so that public inquiries, no matter how they are received, are resolved as soon as possible. As reinforced throughout the two-year declared state of emergency in response to COVID-19 and during anticipated and unexpected incidents, such as severe weather events,

guaranteeing accurate, effective, timely and responsive information remains a critical priority for Members of Council, staff, stakeholders and the community.

The COVID-19 pandemic did not stop the departments within OCED from experiencing growth and achievements. The following performance information exemplifies the cohesive transformation to date.

Corporate and Strategic Communications:

Since the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the Corporate and Strategic Communications (CSC) department has remained focused on providing Service Excellence by keeping citizens, businesses, stakeholders and staff well informed through various tactics and channels.

The CSC department has issued more than **5,232 communications products** from March 13, 2020 to October 2022. These products consist of Public Service Announcements, News Releases, keynote addresses and more.

Over **2,500 Council Communications Packages** were provided to the Mayor and Members of Council from March 13, 2020 to October 2022, ensuring relevant, accurate and up-to-date content and messaging is available to share with constituents.

The City's corporate channels continue to have an extensive reach. For example:

- on social media alone, we have almost **70,000 followers** across the City's four corporate social media platforms.
- our 2022 **Ad Value Equivalency is \$110 million** – this represents the dollar value of our organic external media efforts if we had had to pay for it.
- the potential reach of all our external communications efforts is **11.9 billion impressions**. Media impressions measure the number of times a piece of content – be it a newspaper article a billboard, a Facebook post, an ad, or a blog post – is consumed.
- our digital signs across the city garner more than **63,000 daily impressions** – more than **23 million impressions annually**.

The City's vaughan.ca website continues to be a key point of contact with citizens garnering almost **6 million website visits**, more than **17 million page views** and more than **3 million unique visits** from March 2020 to Oct. 15, 2022.

For comparison, the same period from March 2017 to Oct. 15, 2019, saw almost **800,000 website visits**, more than **1 million page views** and more than **400,000 unique visits**.

Since the pandemic, the data demonstrates vaughan.ca is a proven go-to citizen resource for City information, leading to tremendous growth in the City's website visits (**increase of 644 per cent**), page views (**increase of more than 1,000 per cent**) and

unique visits (**increase of 671 per cent**). These increases reflect March 2020 to Oct. 15, 2022, versus March 2017 to Oct. 15, 2019, and a number of factors contribute to this, including:

- the increase of page content quality and navigation.
- the increase of social media and media releases pointing back to the website.
- the increase of Council Communications Packages using their reach to link back to webpages.

The City's website also includes content driven by CSC's Public Affairs and Government Relations Business Unit and Stakeholder and Community Engagement team.

From April 2021 to October 2022, CSC's Public Affairs and Government Relations Business Unit prepared more than 300 communications products for the Mayor and Members of Council, including speeches, speaking notes, video scripts, Member's Resolutions, quotes, program messages and letters. In addition, more than 80 communication materials and updates were prepared for the Mayor, Members of Council and Senior Leadership, including briefings, memos and government updates.

While CSC's Public Affairs team works to foster intergovernmental relations, CSC's Stakeholder and Community Engagement team works to foster citizen involvement and support the development of internal engagement campaigns. The team launched the Have Your Say, Vaughan platform in February 2021, which has garnered more than **11,000 total views** and more than **8,300 unique views**. In addition, they have provided support to **47 project teams** to deliver **74 engagement campaigns**. They have also supported the delivery of **139 engagement activities** to collect ideas and feedback from the public, which included:

- **83 presentations to the public**, either virtual or in person, through open houses, public information sessions, workshops and focus groups.
- **56 online engagement** tactics, including surveys, forums, idea boards and interactive maps.

The team's activities have led to direct engagement with more than **9,200 people**. The Vaughan Engagement eNewsletter has **1,400 subscribers**, while their **staff training component** has delivered engagement training to **75 City staff**.

To support all streams of communication and the many different types of creative collateral required by internal partners, CSC's Marketing and Creative Services team generates a large amount of graphic design, photography and videography. From March 2020 to October 2022, more than **15,000 different marketing and creative pieces have been produced for the City and citizens**. These include special signage and displays, web graphics, social media graphics, advertising pieces and videos.

While all of CSC provides communication support corporate-wide, since March 2020, the team has worked with its colleagues in Economic Development to develop and issue almost **500 business-specific communications products**. One hundred and

thirty-one of those 500 products have been produced since January 2022, when the new Economic Development-Communications Business Unit was created. These products consist of Public Service Announcements, News Releases, Mayor's statements, Council Communication Packages and Vaughan News eNewsletters.

Economic Development:

Despite revolving public health measures, supply chain impacts, and increasing inflation, Vaughan's economy and employment exceeded pre-pandemic growth in 2021.

Vaughan remains a destination of choice for investment, and a major regional economic driver as the largest economy and employment centre in York Region, outpacing regional, provincial and national economic growth rates. Vaughan has maintained its status as the largest economy in York Region, contributing 37.5 per cent of all economic output in the Region. Additionally, Vaughan accounts for more than half of the Region's real GDP in good-producing industries and nearly one-third of its real GDP in service-producing industries.

With Vaughan's unemployment rate below regional and provincial rates in 2021 (7.8 per cent – 1.3 per cent decrease from previous year) and the labour-force participation rate¹ (74 per cent) sitting above national, provincial and regional rates in 2021, these rates indicate a labour force ready, willing and able to work.

The City's Economic Development (ED) team is the go-to source for insight into Vaughan's economy, acting as knowledge brokers and opportunity advisors who facilitate local economic capacity, resilience and opportunity. ED's services fall into three categories (Business Advisory, Business Intelligence, Economic Asset Development) and include:

- promoting Vaughan's economic advantages and critical projects in target markets.
- engaging businesses and regional partners.
- developing and implementing economic development strategies, programs and initiatives.
- counselling, mentoring and training business leaders and providing access to resources.
- collecting, analyzing and sharing economic, market, real estate, demographic and competitive business data with clients and partners.
- working in collaboration with other City departments to plan and curate public art spaces and installations.
- facilitating corporate partnerships and sponsorships for the City of Vaughan.
- providing customer relations support that exemplifies the City's dedication to Service Excellence.

¹ Labour-force participation rate measures the share of the working-age population who are working or looking for work.

- guiding businesses by understanding the overall landscape of Vaughan's business industry.

Economic Development delivered award-winning services, programs and initiatives to support small- and medium-sized entrepreneurs, local talent and the business community in 2020 and 2021. The ED team has been recognized for outstanding economic development efforts through various awards by the International Economic Development Council, Economic Development Association of Canada, the Economic Development Council of Ontario, and the Ontario Tourism Resiliency Award.

Business advisory

A core function of ED is to provide businesses with advisory services through direct business strategy consultations and corporate calls, seminars and events, and assistance to businesses expanding in Vaughan. Overall demand for services has increased since the COVID-19 pandemic, and a desire for more virtual services has driven the demand. Economic Development supports businesses through advisory support, programs and education.

The department helped 171 businesses start and expand through these services in 2021. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, demand for ED's advisory services greatly expanded. In 2022 (January to September), Economic Development assisted 153 businesses to start and grow, delivered 894 business consultations, answered 2,140 inquiries and provided 64 seminars to 1,853 participants.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, ED expanded various advisory services programs including:

- Starter Company Plus expanded from 23 provincially funded participants in 2019 to 27, 34 and 32 in 2020, 2021 and 2022 respectively.
- ED increased business stakeholder engagement through seven industry roundtables.
- ED pivoted consultation services during the pandemic to provide phone and virtual support to resolve 9,613 inquiries from 2020-2022.
- ED pivoted Activate!Vaughan to online delivery and expanded participation from 30 companies in 2018 to more than 160 by 2021.

In addition, new business advisory programs were launched including:

- The Talent City Vaughan program supports local talent. The program has supported six organizations that plan to train 165 residents in 2022.
- The My Main Street program supports 97 businesses in the VMC and Thornhill with business intelligence and a cumulative total of \$200,000 in direct federal grant funding.
- The Digital Boost Program helped more than 300 businesses adopt digital technology.

- The Better Your Business Program helps five businesses adopt Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and targets to help 27 tourism businesses launch innovative and inclusive services.

Business intelligence

ED also provides businesses with intelligence to understand the economic and business trends that can help them grow in Vaughan. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic significant expansion of intelligence provision for our local stakeholders occurred in:

- eNewsletter: The expansion of the City's business newsletters to three industry-specific newsletters for small businesses, tourism businesses and general economic updates. During the pandemic, ED sent out 622 newsletters.
- Seminar delivery: Both the number of seminars delivered and the number of participants in seminars expanded significantly since pre-pandemic. In 2019, 96 seminars were delivered with 1,283 participants. In 2020, when the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic started, ED delivered 207 seminars attracting 5,332 participants. As these levels return to a steadier state, demand continues to surpass pre-pandemic levels. In 2021, 78 seminars were delivered with 1,568 participants. In 2022 (up to September), 64 seminars were delivered with 1,853 participants.
- Council Task Forces: ED managed the Smart City Task Force, Economic Prosperity Task Force, and the Vaughan Healthcare Centre Precinct Task Force to completion from 2020 to 2022.
- Industry-focused editorials: ED published four from 2020 to 2022: [The Next Generation of Health Innovation Emerges in the City of Vaughan](#); [Social Enterprise and Purpose-driven Business Thrive in Vaughan](#); [How a Suburban Office can be a Win for Businesses and Employees](#); [Vaughan Emerges as an Epicentre of Health Care Excellence in Canada](#)

In addition, new intelligence delivery channels and products were launched since 2020 including:

- a new Business Insights page, featuring 20 posts with 672 web visits.
- new economic development, tourism and business networking websites have welcomed 663,858 page views.
- an online vacant employment land directory that has served five investors in 2022 and 26 since launch in late 2020.
- a monthly economic update to Council in 2022.
- a COVID-19 business resource page.
- key industry reports like the regional manufacturing and supply chain resilience report.

Asset development

ED will continue undertaking key strategic projects to establish economic magnets that will attract business and talent to Vaughan. Since 2020, key strategic projects include:

- a ventureLAB innovation support footprint in Vaughan through establishing a provincially funded Hardware Catalyst Initiative announced in January 2022, and a business support space in partnership with the Vaughan Public Libraries opened in 2021. ED played a key role in brokering the relationships that led to these spaces.
- York University's Innovation York services in Vaughan through virtual Y-Space programs, including the ELLA Women's Entrepreneurship Accelerator program launch in 2020, the Food and Beverage Accelerator program launched in May 2020 and the Venture Catalyst IoT and Smart Cities cohort launched in September 2022.
- a Creative and Cultural Industries hub and spoke model for establishing of a cultural centre in Vaughan by gaining Council endorsement for the concept in June 2022.
- the achievement of ISO37122 Smart Cities standards in 2020.
- the City's Public Art program by opening the lenticular gateway feature called *Metropolis in Motion* in the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (VMC) in fall 2020 and Transit Square's PXL Gallery in 2022. Planning for more than 10 additional public art installations in partnership with local developers is underway.
- the mechanisms to reduce the burden on the tax base through the launch of a digital advertising billboard program that will generate a minimum of \$6,075,000 from 2022 to 2037; an enhanced grant support program that has awarded the City \$24,680,766 since 2020; and program monetization support that has helped generate \$115,800 for Grow with Vaughan, and more than \$80,000 in local community sponsorships for Canada Soccer's Toyota National Championships hosted in Vaughan in 2022.

Since 2020, ED has accelerated and expanded the scope of key projects to help build resilience in our economy through:

- an accelerated timeline for the establishment of the Vaughan Healthcare Centre Precinct, which has seen commitments from ventureLAB, York University and Mackenzie Health to expand and establish services for improved healthcare besides the Cortellucci Vaughan Hospital.
- an expanded international economic relations program that has included a virtual summit with Ramla, Israel, in 2021, and engagement through the international Collision Conference, WebSummit, and further work with international consulates.
- an approved Smart City framework and project prioritization in 2022.

The goal of the growth in the areas highlighted by the ED team's data is ultimately about delivering Service Excellence to the business community both during the pandemic and beyond. This theme continues in the data from the Service Vaughan team, as exceptional citizen service and an enhanced citizen experience underscores their work within OCED.

Service Vaughan:

Service Vaughan, as a strategy and a department, has undergone significant modernization since 2020. The Service Vaughan strategy was reviewed as part of the Counter Service Transformation Project and further progressed to being aligned with the Service Vaughan department as part of its refreshed mandate and objectives. In June 2022, [Council approved](#) the alignment of the Access Vaughan department with the Service Vaughan Strategy by rebranding Access Vaughan into Service Vaughan.

The progression of strategic initiatives and department changes shows agility, resourcefulness, commitment to continuous improvement and collective productivity of staff resources within the Service Vaughan department and Office of Communications and Economic Development.

The Counter Service Transformation Project began in Q2 2020 to create a positive, user-friendly, “citizen-first” experience through a centralized and integrated approach to counter-service delivery at the City of Vaughan. This objective was planned to be achieved through the following:

- Improving and enhancing service delivery by adopting a one-stop shop approach.
- Creating efficiencies through process improvements and innovations by leveraging the operational alignment and integration of services and resources.
- Ensuring the safety and security of all staff and citizens visiting City Hall by comprehensively serving the citizen at one counter, whether by phone, email or in person.
- The integration of the citizen-facing payment processing functions with the Service Vaughan Citizen Service Representative (CSR) responsibilities.
- A new facility service design developed after soliciting requirements and feedback from different stakeholder groups and service delivery departments.

As the Counter Service Transformation project progressed, Service Vaughan was identified as the business owner, as this department was operationally accountable for the progression and outcome of this project. In Q1 2022, the Office of Communications and Economic Development took on responsibility for the Counter Service Transformation Project and, by association, the public reopening of City Hall and delivering in-person services. Service Vaughan remains the lead department to oversee improvements for in-person service delivery.

The collaboration of departments in the Office of Communications and Economic Development enhances synergies between Service Vaughan and Corporate and Strategic Communications. As a result of the December 2021 Council-approved corporate restructuring, the two departments are working more closely to ensure the public receives timely and accurate information and service – whether it is by phone, email, in-person or social media. This partnership also guarantees that accurate,

effective, timely and responsive information is provided to Members of Council, staff, stakeholders and the community.

As part of this enhanced synergy within the Office of Communications and Economic Development, Corporate and Strategic Communications work with Service Vaughan to maintain a monthly *You Asked, We Answered* communications campaign. This series involves the City releasing popular questions and answers received and responded to by CSRs to enhance the citizen experience and continue providing timely, relevant and top-of-mind information.

In addition to inquiries received by telephone or email, Corporate and Strategic Communications responds to questions received over the City's official corporate social media accounts. There is always an attempt by communications staff to achieve first-point-of-contact resolution. However, when a social media inquiry needs escalation, the query is sent to Service Vaughan. A CSR then creates a service request to resolve the issue further. Communications staff respond to public inquiries over social media daily, including on evenings and weekends. The rise of social media to communicate with the City is further proof of the effectiveness of the December 2021 Council-approved reorganization to enhance synergies between Service Vaughan and Corporate and Strategic Communications.

Service Vaughan is a corporate initiative to implement corporate standards that enhance the citizen experience. The vaughan.ca/ServiceVaughan website is also the City's hub for residents and businesses to complete online services or report an issue with a City service 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It features over 65 services the public can undertake online – from requesting sidewalk repairs and purchasing garbage tags to registering for a recreation program and getting a pet license. Staff are working to make additional services available online.

Service Vaughan continues to see increases in volume across most service channels:

- A 134 per cent increase in talk time from 2019 to 2020 resulting from inquiries related to and/or affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Average call wait times are projected to have increased 10 per cent in 2022 compared to 2019, 2020 and 2021 due to increased call volumes and the complexity of citizens' inquiries. For example, Service Vaughan agents can respond to and resolve many citizen inquiries in any call interaction and respond to a property tax inquiry, a by-law complaint and a request for tree pruning in one exchange.
- Email volume is projected to increase by 11 per cent in 2022 when compared to 2021 volume.
- Since City Hall reopening to the public on Monday, May 2, 2022, there have been 7,538 in-person visits, with a weekly average of 243 visits.

Service Vaughan continues to monitor data to inform business decisions that ensure excellence in service delivery to the citizens of the City of Vaughan. Furthermore, Service Vaughan continues to leverage technology to increase inquiry handling

accuracy and efficiency, reduce waits, increase the percentage of first-point resolution and expand self-serve options for citizens via the Service Vaughan portal online.

Portfolio – Community Services

By-law and Compliance, Licensing and Permit Services:

As the community emerges from the last two years of the pandemic, calls for enforcement are returning to pre-pandemic growth rates and trends. In addition, By-law and Compliance, Licensing and Permit Services (BCLPS) staff have been working diligently on several initiatives to enhance efficiencies and service delivery to residents.

Support for businesses was enhanced to help support the local economy by developing a licensing portal, allowing the public to apply for many business licences and permits online, in addition to continuing to allow applications in person, by mail and email.

BCLPS also launched an online parking permit portal, allowing the residents to purchase visitor, construction and resident parking permits online, in addition to being able to purchase parking permits in person.

Service delivery to residents was also enhanced by developing an online penalty dispute system where dispute screenings for Administrative Monetary Penalties can be done online by a screening officer.

Efficiencies were enhanced for staff through behind-the-scenes upgrades of various department systems and technology to enable remote work and ensure continuity of operations during facility shutdowns, such as:

- Centralization of many licence and permit application files and systems into one system, enabling linkages between people, property and business data;
- Development of a staff intranet which can be accessed outside of the City network, containing training, standard operating procedures, and various tracking and reporting tools;
- Providing staff with in-field technological solutions.

BCLPS plays a pivotal role in active, safe and diverse communities and will continue its enhanced, innovative approach to service excellence.

Recreation Services:

Over the course of the pandemic, Recreation Services has worked diligently to keep community centres open when the regulations allowed, to safely provide recreational programs and services to the citizens of Vaughan, launching several new initiatives which included virtual programming, online fitness classes, virtual events, a fitness equipment loaner program, and a snowshoe loaner program.

During this time, the Events Division was able to provide virtual events for our residents. For the annual Toy Drive, a partnership was developed with a local toy company where our residents could select, purchase, and donate a toy online, as well a new option to donate funds using the Raisin Platform. In addition, the Events Division leveraged time and resources from within to lead and progress the development of the City's Event Strategy through professional consulting services of Urban Metrics Inc.; with the anticipated conclusion and consideration of Council expected by the end of Q1 2023.

Staff worked with the Older Adult Clubs to return them safely to the community centres for regular programming, assisting in Older Adult Club elections, and supporting the clubs where appropriate. Through the support and adoption of Council in April 2022, staff developed the *Age Friendly Community Action Plan* and implementation strategy, in addition to the City of Vaughan successfully being recognized provincially as an age friendly City.

Recreation Services also partnered with York Region Public Health in March 2021 to establish the Maple Community Centre as one of York Region's COVID-19 mass and static vaccination clinics. Other temporary and pop-up clinics were also established in 2021, continuing in 2022.

Recreation Services launched a new registration software system that provided residents an enhanced online registration experience and self-serve opportunities (ad hoc permits, membership sales, etc.).

To increase outdoor opportunities during the pandemic, Recreation Services worked with Facility Management to open and program two natural ice surfaces at Maple Community Centre and North Thornhill Community Centre. In addition, opened and programmed the Promenade Fitness Centre, a temporary facility located behind Promenade Mall, to service the community for the duration of the Garnet A. Williams Community Centre renovation. In addition, Recreation Services worked with our partners in Facility Management on the Maple Community Centre Revitalization and Feasibility Study that included the re-opening of the Maple Bowling Alley, a full fitness changeroom renovation and construction and opening of new program spaces adjacent to the newly renovated library.

Recreation Services continues to demonstrate leadership and service excellence within the recreation and fitness space, through a citizen-centric focus supporting culture, equity, diversity, inclusion, social well-being and health.

Portfolio – Corporate Services, Chief Financial Officer & City Treasurer

Financial Planning and Development Finance:

Financial Planning and Development Finance (FPDF) is responsible for development of the tax-supported budget, long-range fiscal planning and policies, development charge administration and providing financial advice to Departments and Council.

At the onset of COVID-19, FPDF was quick to leverage the available technology and collaboration tools to move its workforce to a hybrid model, which has proven highly successful.

Throughout COVID-19, FPDF continued to deliver on its mandate, while maintaining high productivity and providing excellent service to internal and external customers alike.

Some key performance/productivity highlights include:

- **Digitized financial process flows and approvals** - ensured all FPDF approvals could be executed remotely (e.g. Capital budget transfers, Development charge remittances).
- **Developed the initial Long Range Fiscal Planning (LRFP) model** in 2022, which will be updated regularly and used to complement the annual budget process by providing a long-term financial outlook to anticipate fiscal pressures before they occur and provide context for near-term prioritization and decision-making.
- **Delivered annual Capital and Operating Budgets**, in alignment with Council strategic priorities and respecting taxpayer dollars.
 - Vaughan continues to maintain one of the lowest property tax rates in Ontario by keeping annual tax rate increases low. Over the past five years, increases in property tax rates have been 2.0% (2022), 0.0% (2021), 2.85% (2020), 3.0% (2019), 2.89% (2018).
 - Vaughan has received the prestigious Distinguished Budget Presentation Award from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) for the last 13 consecutive years.
- Updated the City-wide and area-specific **Development Charge (DC)** background studies, by-laws and rates.
 - This is vital towards ensuring long-term financial sustainability, by ensuring that growth-related revenue collections are in line with anticipated growth pressures to be experienced by the City.
 - Updated rates were approved by Council in June 2022, with ASDC rates going into effect immediately (July 1, 2022) and City-wide DC rates going into effect in Jun 2023, to allow a transitional period for the development industry.
- Developed the inaugural **Community Benefits Charge (CBC)** study and associated by-law, which was approved by Council in Sept 2022.
 - This is a new funding mechanism for growth related capital outside of the Development Charge and Parkland Acquisition programs (applicable to all

residential developments that are 5 or more storey's, with 10 or more residential units).

- Consulted with the development industry and Council (in Dec 2021) to update and the **Black Creek Financial Strategy**, inclusive of the updated Area-Specific Development Charge (ASDC) background study and rates.

Financial Services:

In late 2019, Financial Services transitioned Payroll in house from our joint service provider, Alectra. This enabled us to react quickly to all the human resources and payroll issues resulting from COVID-19.

In June 2022, Employee Self Service was introduced allowing staff to retrieve pay stubs and T4's from JD Edwards. Work continues with the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer, the Office of the Chief Information Officer and service departments on system and process design for time and labour with expected implementation in Q1 2023.

Financial Services continues to work with Financial Planning and Development Finance, the Office of the Chief Communications Officer, Infrastructure Planning and Corporate Asset Management and service departments on system and process design to develop a more efficient and timely tangible capital asset process, to transfer tangible capital assets inventory from an external web-based software to JD Edwards and to set up a tangible capital asset subledger to allow future asset management.

In 2021, Financial Services implemented a new tax system, TXM, with minimal service disruption. Throughout COVID-19, the Financial Services department provided support as a subject matter expert for the Amanda portal online receipting program allowing departments to accept payments digitally. Throughout the pandemic, our tax department worked at City Hall providing the same service levels. Most of the other staff worked successfully in a hybrid model pivoting and adjusting our programs without jeopardizing internal controls or internal service levels.

Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer:

The Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer (OCHRO) provides employee relations, labour relations, health, safety and wellness, learning and organizational development, and diversity, equity and inclusion services and supports to ensure the City of Vaughan is an employer of choice.

- The OCHRO team has been named winner of the Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion award category and an excellence awardee of Best HR Communication Strategy and Canadian HR Team of the Year (500 Employees or More) award categories for the 2022 Canadian HR Awards. This recognition reflects the

innovative and leading best practices the City employs to foster a dynamic workplace that is diverse, inclusive and welcoming.

- The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan 2022 - 2026 was approved by Council on April 26. This strategy and action plan aims to identify and address systemic discrimination and inequities in access to services, community participation and civic engagement.
- The City of Vaughan is proud to work with the York Catholic District School Board and Community Living York South to bring Project SEARCH to Vaughan. This program is one of the many ways the City is working to create an accommodating and inclusive community for all.
- The OCHRO continued to implement a strategy aimed to improve employee Health, Safety and Wellness by focusing on mental health and work life balance as well as continued to provide a total well-being web and mobile platform – LifeWorks.
- Successfully launched the Emerging Leaders Program, a leadership succession and development program targeting emerging to senior-level managers on topics foundational to leadership success.

Office of the Chief Information Officer:

Digital technologies are an integral part of service delivery and organizational productivity. Residents and businesses expect access to services 24/7 while staff are expected to increase productivity to meet regulatory demands. Municipalities are first and foremost service providers, and it is therefore incumbent on the City to plan for, implement and maintain information and technologies that enable the delivery of services, both internal and external, in the most efficient and effective manner possible.

The Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) partners with all departments to deliver sustainable technology and data solutions while consistently applying current information technology security standards and best practice. Some of the ways in which OCIO continues to support innovation, productivity and security include:

Innovation:

- Implemented MSTeams Softphones (physical phones are no longer required allowing calls to be made any from device)
- Increased the number of online services through the Service Vaughan Portal (such as Renew a Business License and Permit, get a Pet License, request Tree Pruning, Planting and Removal, request an Infrastructure Engineering Drawing).

High Productivity:

- Migrated email, MSTeams, One Drive and other productivity tools to the Cloud giving access from anywhere, anytime on any device
- Enabled Digital Signatures and workflows to allow for paperless processes
- Advanced Employee Self Service capabilities (such as self service password reset, IT Service Catalogue, Digital Forms and Approvals)

Security:

- Reduced the number of datacenter vulnerabilities by 92%, since 2019
- Commenced Yearly IT Security Awareness Training and Monthly Simulated Phishing Campaigns
- Improved resilience to phishing by 84%, since 2020 (Phishing - is an attack that attempts to steal your money, or your identity, by getting you to reveal personal information)

Portfolio – Infrastructure Development

Following a corporate re-organization in July 2019, the Infrastructure Development Portfolio was created by consolidating all of the City's capital delivery departments with the mandate to more efficiently deliver on Vaughan's approved and planned capital program. The portfolio oversees the majority of the City's Infrastructure planning and delivery, asset management, facility management and real estate functions. Key results were immediately realized as evident in the 2021 delivery achievements:

- 311 projects were undertaken in 2021 with an overall expenditure (inclusive of accruals) of more than \$64 million.
- The Portfolio achieved a 92% "Cash Flow Rate", the percentage of actual versus forecasted cash flow.
- The Development Engineering department joined the Portfolio in January 2022, allowing for further standardization of City-wide Capital Delivery.
- Program delivery is expected to increase with the further refinement of processes and leveraging available technology.

The Infrastructure Development is responsible for the delivery of key initiatives:

- In 2021, the City invested \$29.8 million in State of Good Repair projects and \$34.8 million in Growth-Related projects, for a total of \$64.6 million in expenditures.
- In 2021, an investment of \$29.1 million in 80 projects was made to the City's road network.

- An investment of \$7.6 million in 38 projects was made to the City's water, wastewater, and stormwater network
- An investment of \$15.6 million in 86 projects was made to the City's facilities assets
- An investment of \$10.5 million in 89 projects was made to the City's Parks and Open Spaces Assets
- An investment of \$1.8 million in 18 projects was made to the City's Active Transportation network

The Infrastructure Development portfolio continues to work closely with the Planning and Growth Management portfolio to develop long-range infrastructure planning studies to support future growth within the City. Infrastructure Development oversees a number of long-range master plans, strategies and studies, which integrate infrastructure requirements with environmental assessments and planning principles.

The Real Estate Department continues to support the Growth-Related Projects, ensuring the timely delivery of infrastructure. The Real Estate team supports city-wide initiatives by securing property rights such as Permissions to Enter, Temporary Easements and, where required, securing and/or disposing of land. In 2021, non-tax revenue of more than \$37.2 million was generated from the sale of surplus City lands and/or easements. More than 120 Development applications were reviewed and commented on, resulting in more than \$32.8 million cash-in-lieu of parkland revenue. In 2021, real estate services contributed to the advancement of the following:

- Black Creek Channel
- Kirby Road Extension (from Dufferin Street to Bathurst Street)
- Metrolinx Initiatives
- Portage Parkway
- Block 59 District Park land dedication and acquisition
- Vaughan Metropolitan Centre Initiatives.

Development Engineering joined the Infrastructure Development portfolio in January 2022, further standardizing City-wide Capital Delivery. The team is responsible for the expeditious review, approval, inspection and processing of municipal services for land development. The addition of the department to the Infrastructure Development portfolio will help ensure that the vast majority of infrastructure is delivered in a standardized manner.

2021 Intake Summary

- 729 pool permits processed
- 1,213 grading permits processed
- 8,302 inspections performed

2021 Development Services

- 36 agreements prepared
- 300 Committee of Adjustment
- 18 fully executed agreements processed

2021 Assumption Summary

Municipal infrastructure delivered through the development approval process and 13 growth-related land development projects with a value of \$35.8M that were assumed by the City of Vaughan:

- 13 lane kilometres of road
- 10.4 kilometres of watermain
- 6.2 kilometres of sanitary sewer
- 4.8 kilometres of sidewalk
- 4.0 kilometres of storm sewers
- 248 streetlights
- 4 stormwater management ponds
- 1 wastewater pumping station.

The department has made various improvements to support productivity and high performance:

- Implementation and testing of the CRM (Citizen Relationship Management System).
- Adding the fill permit process as an online application option to further digitize our online permitting processes.
- Completing the fill permit process.
- Improving review times by working with ES to implement the CLI-ECA process.
- Working on the development agreement modernization process to improve the turnaround time required to execute agreements.

Synergies between the infrastructure planning and delivery groups will allow for a coordinated and efficient approach to growth-related infrastructure projects.

Portfolio – Legal and Administrative Services

The Legal and Administrative Services portfolio was established in the July 2019 corporate restructuring and has grown and evolved significantly throughout the last few years. In addition to the Legal Services department and the City Clerk's Office, the portfolio now also includes the Procurement Services department as a result of the January 2022 reorganization. The portfolio continues to build its structures and processes and while effectively delivering services supporting Council and the Administration despite the challenges of Covid-19. The portfolio has:

- Successfully transitioned Council, Committee, Task Force, Ad Hoc and Statutory Committee meetings to hybrid meetings, or online meetings. Efficiency and accessibility have increased for participants, the public and staff.
- Developed new online submission tools to bring upon efficiencies: Committee of Adjustment applications can now be made online through a staff developed tool. Similarly, marriage licence applicants can book appointments online, resulting in less waiting for the applicants for a better experience and allowing staff to manage workloads. Freedom of Information requests and insurance claims can also be done online. In addition, speaking requests for Committee meetings are now managed through an online form.
- Re-established a new Legal Services. 100% of the Management Action Plan was completed. In recognition of this major accomplishment, City of Vaughan Legal Services was one of the Excellence Awardees for the Legal Department of the Year Award by the Canadian Law Awards in 2021.
- Resolved a number of civil litigation and Ontario Land Tribunal matters and continued to support Planning and Growth Management on planning applications and appeals in the midst of evolving legislation.
- Decreased procurement cycle times through process automation notwithstanding complement vacancies. The department has effectively leveraged technology resources to transition manual bidding and procurement process from 30% in 2019 to 100% automation in 2020.

Portfolio – Planning and Growth Management

The Planning and Growth Management (PGM) portfolio continues to enhance the citizen experience and create efficiencies by offering more online services.

In Q2 2022, the **Building Standards Department** started the Building Permit digital intake process enhancement by streamlining multiple Amanda & Online Permitting Portal processes. Citizens are now able to enter application information directly onto a web form rather than downloading and uploading permit related information between the old and new applications. The digital permitting portal offers citizens and building industry professionals 24/7 access to apply, track and pay for permits online. In Q3 2022, the Conditional Building Permit was the 14th Building Standards service to be added to the Online Permitting Portal since its implementation in May 2020.

The Building Standards Department has also developed dashboards, based on the Qlik Business Intelligence corporate platform, that allow for the review of live departmental data to facilitate data-driven decision making.

Additionally, the Building Standards department implemented a new Cloud-based document management system for staff to view department procedures. This new process eliminates paper waste and improves the process by delivering up-to-date procedures 24-7, 365 days a year on any digital device.

The **Development Planning** and the **Policy Planning & Special Programs** departments are also leveraging the recent permitting portal advancements across the organization to implement electronic/digital development application intake processes. Using the AMANDA Citizen Portal and Backoffice solution, new processes will eliminate paper waste, reduce submission errors, and optimize application screening and review efforts.

The AMANDA solution aims to modernize and improve operational efficiencies and reduce the administrative burden while improving the citizen experience by allowing applicants 24/7 access to submit and track the progress of their development applications. New screening processes will require applicants to collect and submit necessary information and supporting material before staff screen and circulate the files for review thereby optimizing the review period and timelines.

The solution also enables communications and memos to be sent to applicants facilitating a central repository for both application data, information and material as well as tracked communications. With electronic/digital submissions and integrated workflows, applicants will have the ability to log into their portal account to easily view submissions, track progress and stay better informed on the status of applications, in real time.

Portfolio – Public Works

Business Excellence and Operational Performance:

The portfolio has focused efforts on the better use of data and information to support programming decisions. Several new technological tools and dashboards have been implemented to improve the citizen experience and strengthen business operations. A new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) technological solution was implemented in 2022 and interactive data visualizations allow departments across the portfolio to view and analyze service request summaries and trends. CRM reinforces the City's commitment to the citizen experience and operational performance and will lead to data-informed programming decisions in the future.

To effectively pursue service excellence in governance and fiscal responsibility, the Public Works Portfolio also implemented a new budget tool to help make data driven decisions and ensure that the portfolio remain fiscally responsible. This tool enables departments to meet financial targets and perform ad-hoc queries instantaneously. The dashboard allows for greater financial control, improves the portfolio's ability to meet commitments, and the ability to identify budget shortfalls/surpluses. Over the past year,

the portfolio has worked collaboratively to review budgets and make strategic human and financial resource decisions.

The portfolio's health and safety program continues to set targets for performing monthly observations in the workplace and on work sites through crew site inspections which identifies safe and at-risk behaviours and has met its target of 1500 inspections for the year. A new crew site inspection dashboard was developed this year and makes it possible to visually determine operational performance and develop better safety measures and targets in the workplace. The portfolio's Good Catch Program continues to be implemented and has reported 83 near misses across the portfolio.

The portfolio is also continuing to implement its Quality Improvement Program by documenting, standardizing, and improving business and operational processes to achieve consistent and uniform results for Public Works internal and external services performed across the City. This enables the Public Works teams to build strong foundational processes that support operations and service delivery. The process and customer focused approach taken helps drive conversations and align practices so that business and operational processes implemented, ensure services consistently meet requirements and produce a quality result. The Quality Improvement Program began in 2021 and is revamping 200+ documents (Policies, Manuals, Standard Operating Procedures, Work Instructions, and Forms) across Public Works.

Over the past few years, the portfolio has continued to centralize its contract management and administration services which include implementing multiyear contracts that receive better value, consolidating multiple contracts similar in nature across the portfolio, creating more bulk ordering contracts to remove excess waste and better understanding purchase value, removing of Low Dollar Modules (LDMs) to ensure greater rigor around purchasing and leveraging opportunities, such as governments Vendor of Records (VOR), to streamline the procurement process. Through a process improvement analysis, the portfolio has determined that 87% of waste was removed from the bulk ordering contract ensuring that there is accountability for taxpayer dollars. The program has resulted in significant process improvements by eliminating waste through the process which increases the citizen experience by either providing the service quicker, or better and will continue to provide our citizens with a great experience. A new contract administration dashboard now allows a greater view into the portfolio's 400+ contracts worth over \$50M.

With the adoption of LEAN and process improvement training, Public Works has shown its commitment to providing cost effective programs and operations. The outcome allows us to engage every level of our Portfolio to make informed decisions on resource allocations, programming availability and improve service delivery to ensure we are providing an excellent citizen experience. Public Works invested in over 80+ staff members to be lean trained. In 2022, 29 small improvements have been brought forward by front line staff. These small "just do it" improvements demonstrate the dedication to continuous improvement and being fiscally responsible.

Transportation and Fleet Management Services:

The portfolio continues to implement the Maintenance Decision Support System (MDSS) smart technology, an artificial intelligence (AI) tool to deliver on its winter maintenance service commitments in the most efficient, effective, and environmentally sustainable way. The AI tool provides more accurate weather forecasts, exact road conditions and established rules of practices to recommend maintenance treatments. This is further informed by real-time observations to drive the best treatment decisions. In just three winter seasons, the City has seen a dramatic impact, including reduced salt usage per operation by 30 per cent and an annual savings of approximately \$400,000.

Road operations have enhanced their litter collection program by introducing a new mechanical litter collection unit. By leveraging the mobile capability of these new units, we have increased the frequency of litter collection and it allows operators to move through areas more quickly and efficiently, while protecting staff from any potential injury.

IrisGo is a new technological solution implemented over the past year that uses artificial intelligence to detect road deficiencies. There has been an increase of road deficiencies detected by 90% and the solution has also assisted the department in ensuring legislative compliance. Early detection allows the department to ensure a proactive maintenance plan is in place.

Parks, Forestry and Horticulture Operations:

Smart Parks is a pilot project launched in 2022 that aimed to easily connect residents with City services and assist staff in efficiently managing services in select parks through QR codes. Phase 3 of Smart Parks will be looking at sensors installed in baseball fields to manage playability and optimize growing mediums for the city's sports turf.

4. The New Workplace

The Future Workplace

The COVID-19 pandemic induced work from home (WFH) experiment has altered perspectives on work, flexibility and the office. Many studies and research papers have been conducted by various organizations and institutions which speak to the future of the workplace given the lessons learned during the pandemic and the evolution of work and the utilization of workplace environments. Many organizations are looking at space, accommodations, and staff movement within facilities from a very different perspective.

These studies are indicating a hybrid model for the future of work and new and creative opportunities to utilize space. Studies conducted by Cushman & Wakefield, McKinsey Co, the Becker Friedman Institute for Economics, Conference Board of Canada,

Human Resources Director Magazine, Vocon, Robert Half, Deloitte, etc. provide various insights on the benefits and challenges of a hybrid workplace model:

Benefits:

- The pandemic has shown that WFH and alternate work arrangements are viable options for productivity and efficiency (especially for “head down” tasks – emails, report writing, research, operational tasks, administration, project update meetings, etc). In many cases there are significant increases in performance.
- Productivity has remained strong. Much of daily office work can be done remotely, and technology tools are more capable to support daily tasks.
- Productivity also increases as a result of not having to allow for travel time between meetings which results in a positive environmental impact and reduced carbon footprint.
- Organizations can critically re-examine investment and costs of acquiring additional space to accommodate more staff in the traditional workplace.
- Flexible work arrangements can have a positive impact on productivity, innovation, creativity, employee satisfaction and retention.
- Better work-life balance and the increased ability to balance family/personal life commitments.
- A mix of in-office and remote work options are likely to maximize employee and organizational performance.
- Older workers or more seasoned workers are more comfortable in taking advantage of the benefits of WFH / remote work situations.
- Employees want choice and freedom in where they work, but few want to work outside the office exclusively.

Challenges:

- Office workers can feel disconnected from corporate culture, and in some cases personal well-being can suffer, and employees feel that they’ve had fewer opportunities to learn, especially through informal mentoring.
- Lack of in-office work has a disproportionately negative impact on certain workers (e.g., young employees and new employees).
- In the long run, the need for humans to be social and connect with each other will be a strong influence on a migration back to office environments.
- Too much remote work can negatively impact culture. Many organizations have been able to build cultural capital over the past few years through interpersonal relationships, trust, shared history, vision buy-in and more. Organizations have leveraged this reservoir of cultural capital to help manage through change and crisis during the pandemic. Leaders fear, however, that capital will erode over time if people do not return to face-to-face interactions, at least to some extent.
- The creative process is often more ephemeral, organic and less scheduled.
- Asking people to be innovative on a conference call doesn’t always work, and the spontaneous social interaction that sparks an idea often happens in a fleeting interaction with a colleague a desk or two away.

It is evident that the future of work has changed and there is no one approach that provides a solution for every organization. Given the benefits and challenges, there is a true balancing act and a need for flexibility and each organization needs to assess its best options. On that basis, the City is adopting a hybrid model which includes alternative work arrangements of work from home, remote work, on-site work, staggered shifts, flex-time, compressed workweeks and varying start and end times.

Mental Health and Employee Wellness

Mental health and employee wellness have become a top priority for the City of Vaughan. The City has launched a Wellness program with a focus on how a hybrid workplace model can contribute to mental health and wellness.

As part of the City of Vaughan's commitment to supporting employee well-being, the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer (OCHRO) has created a customized wellness strategy focusing on improving employees' total well-being. This strategy incorporates the four pillars of health: physical, mental, social and financial. These pillars explore how to lead an active and healthy lifestyle, how to become more emotionally and psychologically healthy, how to build and maintain relationships with others, and how to feel more in control of financial decisions. Through Wellness@Vaughan employees will find resources, tools and programs that can help make a real difference in their well-being.

In addition to launching the Wellness@Vaughan Program, the City introduced a new Employee Assistance Program provided by the City's wellness partner and EAP provider Morneau Shepell platform called LifeWorks – a well-being solution platform that offers expert advice, recommendations and referrals with confidential and convenient access to online resources and tools. LifeWorks is an integrated and innovative well-being platform available by browser and mobile app. The platform offers tips, resources and ways to manage health risks and inspire positive change through user-friendly communication and recognition tools to boost utilization.

A Diverse and Inclusive Workplace

A hybrid workplace model with alternative work arrangements provides staff with flexibility and convenience especially for parents, caregivers and persons with disabilities. The optimization of digital services also allows for convenient and readily available services to the public without having to leave their homes, incur travel, transportation issues and facilitate ease of access.

Adopting a hybrid model provides the opportunity to expand the talent pool area of search, which can help access in-demand skills that may be in short supply. The flexibility of alternative work arrangements can make jobs more attractive, increase applicant pools and opportunities to diversify the City's talent.

As an employer of choice, the City can provide an accessible workplace, whether on-site or remotely. The implementation of alternative work arrangements can make

employment opportunities more accessible for all staff with a focus on their performance and deliverables rather than how they need to fit within a traditional workplace.

The City is committed to being an inclusive and equitable employer. The OCHRO in collaboration with senior leaders and the Diversity and Inclusion Officer will be working actively to identify barriers and take steps to address individual, systemic and institutional barriers to ensure that Indigenous and equity-deserving groups have equal opportunities to gain and retain meaningful employment.

Use of Office Space

With the implementation of a hybrid work model and alternative work arrangements, organizations can revisit the layout of their office and potentially reduce the need for additional office space. Savings or cost avoidance could be seen in real estate, leasing, maintenance, and operations.

Prior to the pandemic the use of traditional office space including private offices, workstations and meeting rooms was a challenge. At City Hall space limitations were impacting staff and extensive renovations were underway to create smaller workspaces to fit more staff. Work benching had staff working very close to each other with limited privacy, increased noise volumes and smaller workspaces. There was also a high demand for meeting rooms for training sessions, interviews and a high volume of meetings which all had to take place in-person. Meetings and training sessions were often delayed due to a lack of meeting space.

Through the remote experience and the effectiveness of online meetings and training sessions, staff can still meet face to face virtually without the need of a physical space. The challenge and vying for physical meeting space is no longer an issue for city staff.

In a hybrid workplace model, the City can re-imagine its limited space and redesign traditional office space to be effectively shared, used for collaboration sessions where interactions are better suited for truly face-to-face meetings.

Hybrid Workplace and Alternative Work Arrangements

Throughout the pandemic, many organizations have realized that alternative work arrangements and flexibility, where operationally feasible, equates to better staff satisfaction, staff engagement, retention, cost savings, as well as better operational performance and service delivery.

In an October 2021 study “*A Playbook for Municipal Leaders on Exploring Remote, Hybrid, and On-Site Models*” conducted by The Conference Board of Canada for York Region and the local municipalities, various benefits as well as challenges were identified. The study interviewed all York Region officials on their post-pandemic workplace plans and found that as a result of the pandemic:

- all York Region municipalities now offer some form of flexible work arrangement, and these are common throughout the public sector.

- digitized processes allowed for greater accessibility, convenience and optimization of the customer experience.
- leveraging technology, such as Microsoft Teams, enhanced the remote work experience.
- flexible work arrangements are critical in recruiting and retaining top talent.
- organizations are better able to proactively address infrastructure capacity concerns without compromising staff complements.

Before COVID-19, City staff had already developed an Alternative Work Arrangement (AWA) program which includes policy and procedures to enable a flexible, progressive work environment. During the pandemic, the City enhanced remote access capabilities to help employees establish remote offices, collaborate with colleagues and complete work to ensure high levels of productivity. Every department has a business continuity plan that is periodically reviewed, updated and implemented.

The AWA program recognizes that the City of Vaughan supports a flexible work culture and encourages alternative work arrangements, when practicable without compromising operational requirements and effective service delivery to its citizens and business partners. Alternative work arrangements are an employee's privilege and not a guarantee, or entitlement. All AWA's require the approval of an employee's Manager.

The COVID-19 pandemic has allowed the City (as well as many other employers) to re-examine the workplace and how services are provided. Many organizations, including the City of Vaughan, have taken the opportunity to provide staff with greater flexibility, increase work/life balance and enhanced opportunities for employee engagement to attract and retain top talent in a very competitive employment market. A commitment to a hybrid workplace and alternative work arrangements will continue to position the City of Vaughan as an employer of choice.

As a key and recurring theme identified in past Employee Engagement surveys, staff are seeking out organizations that offer greater flexibility when it comes to work arrangements. AWAs will address this feedback and promote engagement and morale as employees have a greater sense of control over their work environment.

Within the study conducted by The Conference Board of Canada it was found that strong candidates have started to ask for flexible work arrangements before accepting an employment offer, with most declining offers that did not provide flexibility.

As the City has now reintegrated back into the workplace, the AWA Policy has been updated to reflect the new workplace approach. Due to the unique circumstances experienced during the pandemic, the AWA Policy has since been enhanced to better address the needs of our staff, adapt to the COVID-19 landscape and align with the "new normal" following business reintegration.

Under the policy, the City offers the following options:

- **Telework:** work is performed at an alternate location using remote access connectivity. Employees who participate in telework will be required to work up to 50% on average at their City location. DCM approval will be required for those requesting less than 50% on average at their designated City of Vaughan location.
- **Flextime/Staggered Hours:** start and end times fluctuate while the employee still works the required number of hours per day/week.
- **Compressed Work Week:** longer days/shifts in exchange for a reduced number of working days in the defined work cycle.

As of June 2020, all People Leaders had been trained on the AWA Policy and processes and have now received refresher training in fall 2022. During this time, People Leaders have also been asked to assess positions within their teams for the suitability of each AWA option, ensuring the City continues to provide high levels of productivity and Service Excellence to its citizens and business partners. Once assessments have been completed, the AWA program will then be communicated via email to all staff, and they can enroll in eLearning training to learn more about the policy, guidelines and processes.

As an organization that is committed to being a top employer of choice, and continuously strives to deliver Service Excellence to both citizens and staff, the AWA program will better enable the City to reach its strategic goals and objectives.

The City supports a flexible work environment when feasible and subject to operational requirements, and is committed to balancing the diverse needs of its staff with the needs of the organization, recognizing the positive benefits that AWAs can have on both. AWAs promote a positive work environment and are critical as we navigate through the impacts of COVID-19, as well as proactively address infrastructure capacity.

With AWAs, the City provides staff with the opportunity to manage a work environment that is mutually beneficial to all parties; whether it is flextime, telework or a compressed work week arrangement.

5. Performance Excellence and Productivity

In adopting the hybrid workplace model and AWA arrangements, the City is dedicated to maintaining high levels of performance, productivity and accountability through the use of performance management, oversight and reporting tools.

A hybrid workplace with alternative work arrangements has proven (during the COVID-19 pandemic and currently) to provide for an effective working environment with elevated levels of performance and productivity.

Office-based staff who can work remotely, field-based staff who can utilize compressed work weeks and flex-time provides staff with the ability to be more efficient and engaged. Time otherwise spent commuting, juggling child-care or elder care arrangements, and absenteeism are mitigated with a renewed approach to the workplace.

However, regardless of on-site, off-site or varying work hours, accountability and productivity are paramount to service excellence and value for tax-payers' dollars. The City employs a number of controls and measures to ensure ongoing staff accountability and performance.

Assessing Corporate Performance and Staff Productivity

For business areas where remote work arrangements continue to be feasible, and under the AWA policy, management will continue to assess processes, procedures and service approaches to leverage staff flexibility while continuing to provide high productivity and service excellence to the citizens and businesses community.

Throughout the response to COVID-19, the City took a disciplined, responsible and measured approach and all departments have worked diligently to ensure service and program deliverables are met.

Essential and critical services remained intact and continue uninterrupted, including fire and emergency response, waste collection, water/wastewater services, by-law and enforcement services, facility services and the Service Vaughan contact centre.

For staff working remotely, management has ensured that staff productivity and efficiency in delivery of functions and services continues to meet expectations at the highest quality of standards. Management has assessed productivity and service impacts and has successfully reconciled service delivery for work from home approaches where operationally feasible. Management's ongoing assessment of productivity will be used to make the critical decisions on scheduling staff in the workplace.

Ensuring Ongoing High Performance and Productivity

Throughout the City's response to the pandemic approximately 700 staff were working from home (either partially or 100% of the time). Currently under our Business Reintegration Plan, all office-based staff have returned to the workplace with an expectation of approximately 50% of office-based staff in the workplace at any given.

Management has effectively managed staff productivity by employing a number of processes, procedures and oversights to guide and support staff and ensure expected outputs and outcomes. These oversights and processes will continue in the new hybrid workplace model and for staff with alternative work arrangements which are approved by their people leaders. Processes and procedures include:

- Outlining service expectations and performance targets.
- Goal setting and regular performance management discussions and review of work outputs and outcomes.
- Continued management of strategic initiatives and department OKRs (objectives, key activities and results).
- Standing daily, weekly, and monthly meetings depending on type of service requirements.
- Regular all department or all team specific in-person meetings to ensure face-to-face contact, collaboration and team building.
- Utilizing collaboration and communications tools such as MS Teams and other online applications/tools.
- Formal/informal virtual check-ins.
- Use of time logs, timesheets, docketing systems, work trackers; time processing, ticketing, work orders.
- Case/file management systems to assign and track work.
- Continued training using virtual on-line tools.
- Shared documents and project management tools to provide monitoring, tracking and regular reporting on project status and deliverables; real-time updates on work completed or ongoing.

Corporate Performance Measurement - Key Productivity Indicators

Every department, program, service and function provided by the City includes performance measures and key performance indicators (KPIs). These measures and indicators include data, metrics, outputs, outcomes or results the department uses to determine it is achieving its objectives. These can be quantitative and/or qualitative.

Based on the measures and indicators, management is able to assess productivity and the achievement of desired results. The Department Head can provide information that compares year over year indicators, or levels of satisfaction, or targets met. The vast majority of departments are reporting higher than “normal” productivity and higher levels of outputs.

City staff have successfully managed the day-to-day objectives of the work of the City as well as the added pressures of the COVID-19 emergency environment. Many have noted that work from home arrangements have actually enabled higher levels of productivity given the benefits of work-life balance, flexible working environments, and immediate collaboration and meetings via on-line technologies. In many departments, when comparing productivity indicators of 2020, 2021 and 2022, to those in 2019, the remote work environment has created the necessary conditions to increase productivity in various key indicator measurements.

Financial Impact

N/A

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

N/A

Conclusion

The City of Vaughan has been a leader across the corporation in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic providing high quality service throughout the emergency. This high-quality service and productivity continues today.

Through innovation, responsible fiscal management and a genuine commitment to delivering quality public services, the City continues to deliver Service Excellence to the people and businesses of the community.

Service excellence, advancing critical city-building projects and high performance and productivity was maintained despite the challenges presented by COVID-19 and continues now and into the future.

Innovation, process improvements and omni-channel service delivery (in-person, by phone, by email and via online / virtual services) allows for a greater Citizen experience as well as high productivity and high levels of performance across the organization.

The City is implementing an Alternative Work Arrangement (AWA) policy to leverage the opportunities of the hybrid workplace model and opportunities to attract and retain talented staff.

The City is able to monitor and measure performance excellence and productivity through its governance structures, establishing goals and objectives, managing employee performance, the corporate performance measurement program, and project controls and oversight.

For more information, please contact:

- Nick Spensieri, City Manager
- Michael Coroneos, Deputy City Manager, Corporate Services, Chief Financial Officer and City Treasurer
- Wendy Law, Deputy City Manager, Legal and Administrative Services and City Solicitor
- Gus Michaels, Deputy City Manager, Community Services
- Vince Musacchio, Deputy City Manager, Infrastructure Development
- Zoran Postic, Deputy City Manager, Public Works
- Haiqing Xu, Deputy City Manager, Planning and Growth Management
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Attachments

N/A

Prepared by

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Approved by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Spensieri', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Nick Spensieri, City Manager