Section III – Items for the Information of the Board

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Directors
Meeting #6/20, Friday, September 25, 2020

FROM: Michael Tolensky, Chief Financial and Operating Officer

RE: **STANDARDIZED UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM**
Statement of Interest under the Strategic Business Planning Policy

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KEY ISSUE
To provide information to the Board of Directors regarding a planned initiative to implement a standardized unified communications system across Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's (TRCA) office locations, to better serve our stakeholders through improved access to staff, which directly supports TRCA's service standards.

RECOMMENDATION

WHEREAS TRCA staff have assessed the existing telecommunications systems across the organization, identifying ongoing issues in service continuity and complexity;

AND WHEREAS TRCA staff have identified a recommended approach to meeting the needs of the organization through the use of a unified communications solution that resolves these issues;

THEREFORE, IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT the report outlining the details and next steps to securing a unified communications system be received.

BACKGROUND
In accordance with Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's (TRCA) Strategic Business Planning (SBP) Policy, all potential new projects/programs or proposed modifications to existing initiatives must proceed through the SBPP Policy workflow, including reporting to the Board of Directors for informational purposes.

TRCA currently has telecommunication services at 23 office locations. The existing deployment is a non-standardized mixture of vendors and products that have been retrofitted over decades of evolving operations. This has resulted in significant operational difficulties due to end of life equipment, high product variability and system complexity. The variability in systems has provided an inconsistent end-user experience across the organization.

TRCA currently leverages an on-premise Mitel VoIP telecommunications system for voice communication services for a number of these office locations. At the time of purchase in April 2015, this system was the best available service for the needs of the organization, however, technology has evolved, impacting the way that TRCA operates. The existing system has limited integration with some of the more modern productivity solutions as TRCA's digital transformation has shifted toward hosted services driven by the new Head Office which will not have a data centre space. Through TRCA's modernization efforts such as Office 365, Cloud services and a mobile workforce, the Mitel system no longer provides the functionality required for current/future organizational requirements.

RATIONALE
Unified communications is the evolution of the traditional business telephone system, which integrates telecommunications and productivity suite (Office 365) features to provide a unified platform for functionality such as voice calls, instant messaging, video conferencing and extension mobility (ring on desk and cell phone simultaneously).

This project is intended to provide TRCA with a cloud-based unified communications solution that provides efficient and effective business communications to improve customer service excellence, while integrating with the recent modernization of the organization to the Office 365 platform. The objective is to rollout the system in conjunction with the construction of the new Head Office, creating an opportunity to showcase TRCA's modernization journey.

The UC solution improves customer service and relations by unifying service across devices and enable staff to work from anywhere. The solution will provide valuable call analytics and reporting features to help TRCA make informed business decisions. Leveraging a cloud hosted platform ensures continual system enhancements and maintenance resulting in reduced downtime and provides the ability for TRCA to leverage new features and capabilities upon release.

This project will take a holistic view of TRCA's business operations to develop the appropriate communications requirements that support all TRCA's locations, which will reduce existing complexity and increase functionality, reliability and service. As the overarching goal is to enable staff to achieve service excellence and support TRCA's Digital Transformation, this project is closely aligned to TRCA's Strategic Priority to accelerate innovation.

Relationship to Building the Living City, the TRCA 2013-2022 Strategic Plan
This report supports the following strategy set forth in the TRCA 2013-2022 Strategic Plan:
Strategy 10 – Accelerate innovation

FINANCIAL DETAILS
Based on a preliminary analysis, it is anticipated that the initial and one-time start-up cost of the new unified communications system would be approximately $85,000 which includes initiation, planning and execution. It is further estimated that additional annual costs would be approximately $110,000 for monitoring, licensing, and ongoing support, and maintenance.

A preliminary analysis of the existing IT budget has identified that the current annual telecommunication subscription cost of approximately $25,000 would be reallocated to the anticipated annual cost of the unified communications system once the existing system is decommissioned. Additional savings of approximately $35,000 in 2020 can be applied to the one-time capital cost of the new system. This leaves approximately $50,000 of one-time capital costs, and $85,000 of the annual monitoring costs to be evaluated and added to the unfunded priorities list.

DETAILS OF WORK TO BE DONE
In accordance with the SBPP Policy, staff will continue to progress through the policy workflow. Once approved, the next steps within the process include a more in-depth market assessment and the establishment of a project funding strategy. Once completed, staff will report back to the Board of Directors on the procurement of the preferred Unified Communications system.

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Date: September 25, 2020