

Report stresses efficiencies that could save city millions

Natalie Alcoba Jul 19, 2011 – 6:01 AM ET | Last Updated: Jul 19, 2011 8:13 AM ET

Comments Email Twitter inShare.1.It may not be a headline grabber, but there is more than pocket change to be saved with “back room” reorganizations such as centralizing finance and administrative functions at the city of Toronto, according to the latest report by KPMG consultants obtained exclusively by the National Post.

Outsourcing some of the work done by the city’s 3-1-1 call-centre service, which provides information and support to residents on non-emergency services, was among the suggestions.

Consolidating dispatch centres and merging 3-1-1’s operations with those of 2-1-1, which provides information on non-profit and public sector services, were also cited as potential sources of savings.

Allowing residents to pay their property taxes or their utility bills online — thereby reducing manual labour associated with payment processing — could also cut costs, KPMG suggests. It all adds up to about \$25-million in potential savings over four years, government management chair Paul Ainslie has calculated, or just over \$6-million a year.

“It’s not exactly the sexiest of stuff, but \$25-million is \$25-million,” he said. Mr. Ainslie says many of the recommendations speak to value for tax dollars. “You have different departments doing the same thing. We get the proper software there, it saves some money.”

KPMG says that 98% of government management services are mandatory or essential.

A raft of other cost-cutting measures were proposed in the licensing and standards budgets, released on Monday. KPMG proposes scrapping the money-making cat and dog and licensing program, suggests outsourcing animal care services, lengthening the amount of time it takes to respond to rescues and ceasing to pick up pets placed for adoption.

It also proposes thinning out the ranks of businesses that have to get a city license, but does not offer suggestions.

Business licensing and enforcement nets nearly \$6-million a year, while pet licensing brings in \$660,000 a year. Still, just 30% of dogs and 10% of cats are licensed, KPMG says, and, as a result, “the value of the program is not evident.”

It also says the city can save money by enforcing property standards on a city-wide basis, instead of by district as it does now.

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