

**The Municipality of West Elgin
Organizational Review**

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1. Overview

1.1 Introduction

West Elgin is a rural municipality of 5000 residents that was incorporated in 1998 and lies within Elgin County. The two main population centres are Rodney and West Lorne and it includes a number of smaller communities spread out over its 322 square kilometres. The municipality is governed by a five-member Council that was elected in October 2018 to a four-year term.

The Council includes the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, and three Councillors. The Mayor has considerable municipal and county governance experience. The Deputy Mayor was re-elected to Council in 2018 having previously been a Councillor. Three Councillors, while quite knowledgeable, are new to municipal governance.

Sitting at the intersection of Council and administration has been the position of Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). In recent years it has taken the form of CAO/ Treasurer and in the most recent past has taken the form of CAO/Clerk. Following the 2019 departure of the CAO/Clerk, the incumbent Treasurer assumed interim CAO duties and is responsible for advising Council and managing municipal program and service delivery with an organization of 23 full-time employees. This number grows to approximately 26.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees, when part time, seasonal, and contracted services are included.

Departments operating at West Elgin include Public Works, Water Utilities, Parks and Recreation, Finance, the CAO and Clerk's office. Some departments are managed through the use of part time staff (such as Drainage and Bylaw Enforcement) or operate under a shared service agreement with other municipalities (such as Building). In some cases, West Elgin offers service to other municipalities through a shared service agreement (such as Planning). Other services are provided through agreements with and/or have oversight by the County of Elgin, community boards or provincial agencies (such as policing and land ambulance services). Finally, some services are provided on a volunteer basis (such as the Fire Department). West Elgin has incorporated a collaborative partnership with neighbouring municipalities and the County of Elgin to provide mandated and discretionary services to area residents.

1.2 Organizational Review Engagement

An organizational review is a process to obtain information about the performance of an organization and the various factors that affect its performance. Such reviews are intended to provide objective perspective on areas of organizational performance by examining organizational capacity to perform key business functions, organizational motivation or the prevailing culture, and the external environment.

Council determined an organizational review would be helpful in response to a broad range of questions and discussions regarding program and service delivery in West Elgin. Council sought independent perspective and options on organizational changes that would enable alignment for longer term organizational success.

West Elgin Council passed a resolution to engage the services of Robert J. Bryce to complete this review. This review included collecting information from a variety of sources including employee interviews as well as surveys, and a review of much documentation provided by West Elgin. Information included current organizational structure and design, and staffing. An analysis of organizational information collected was viewed against approved local comparators' structure and staffing.

The feedback obtained through the consultative process represents the opinions, experiences, and perspectives of those interviewed and surveyed. The information presented in this report represents observational themes collected over the course of this review.

Resource assessments were completed by reviewing the municipality's human resources, based in part through a review of job descriptions and information collected via interviews and surveys with employees.

The organizational review is intended to provide Council with observations and a list of recommendations to improve organizational performance and bottom line results given West Elgin's obligations to operate efficiently and effectively while being mindful of municipal goals for the current term of Council and beyond.

The observations and recommendations contained in this report accurately reflect the data gathered and analysis completed within the scope of the review to support realistic and incremental organizational changes that can be made. All recommendations are provided in the spirit of continuous improvement.

West Elgin Council should be commended for undertaking this review. The author is very appreciative of the time and commitment that the Mayor, Members of Council, staff, and community representatives dedicated to support this project. Staff actively participated in a candid and professional manner. The Acting CAO spent considerable time responding in a timely manner to requests for information and relevant documentation.

2. Scope of Review

2.1 Terms of Reference

It was determined by Council that the review would focus on a number of key priorities, including assessments of:

- The Municipality's organizational structure and design, management levels, and span of control;
- The Municipality's staffing levels, roles and responsibilities, and collaboration between and among departments;
- A comparison of structure and staffing to similarly sized area municipalities and best practice;
- The need for a senior administrative leader at West Elgin.

This review did not include an assessment of emergency services such as fire, policing, or land ambulance.

2.2 Consultation

The consultation process was given priority and included key observations and experiences of employees and other stakeholders. It also involved on-site reviews of facilities and other buildings and property owned and/or maintained by the Municipality. The objective of such consultation was to gain understanding and insight into the multifaceted municipal operations.

The benefits received through this consultative process include:

- A greater understanding of employee experiences and needs;
- Enhanced organizational reputation for proactively seeking employee input;
- Increased support and buy-in by all stakeholders for future action implementation;
- A greater depth of knowledge for informed decision making on investments and priorities

2.3 Work Plan

The work plan was developed in four phases:

Phase One – Project Planning and Initiation

This phase allowed for Council consideration and approval of the scope of review, key personnel for interview, and intended outcomes. Internal communications were developed in support of the rollout over two days with senior leaders and all staff. During those meetings all employees were asked to complete an anonymous engagement survey and a confidential employee profile for discussion in Phase Two.

Phase Two – Interviews and Information Gathering

Available data was collected on current operations including but not limited to organizational charts, job descriptions, strategic plans or related policy documents, and relevant corporate and human resources policies. Individual interviews were held with all employees and external stakeholders to better understand their interaction with municipal operations. Specific shared observations and experiences were treated as confidential. Information provided during interviews that is presented in this report is in aggregate form.

Phase Three - Analysis

- A comprehensive review of all information gathered and reviewed was undertaken. The objective of this phase is to identify themes for future action to enable organizational success. Such actionable themes pertain to issues and challenges as well as strengths and opportunities that become evident or emerge from the consultation and information review. At this phase, a gap analysis between current and future processes and practices can be completed. Similarly, an overlap analysis identifying duplication of effort and outcome can be completed as well.

Phase Four – Report Development and Presentation to Council

This phase includes documenting the findings of this review and make recommendations to assist Council in decision-making and implementation planning.

3. Interview and Survey Findings and Recommendations

A number of common themes emerged through the employee survey and interviews with employees. They are discussed in turn below:

3.1 Communication

Internal Communication

Using effective communication in an appropriate manner has been shown to positively impact the employee-organization and employee-supervisor relationship. Determining how to communicate, with whom, and when will vary on the message being communicated and the target audience. Different approaches may be taken when communicating to employees and that of public messaging or the use of social media for broad information sharing.

Communication between supervision and employees is routine and regularly occurs informally (such as verbal interactions) as well as formally (documented through email). Open communication between staff allows for two-way communication whereby discussions about work assignments, deadlines, and expected outcomes can take place between both parties. Such communication leads to more efficient workflow and confidence in the output of work.

Communication styles between different individuals vary but supervisors will better understand the capacity of their department and encourage positive performance if they can find the most appropriate communication style for each employee.

The majority of employees indicated they have clear direction on what to do at work and they know how their job fits into the big picture at West Elgin. However, almost half the workforce indicated they do not receive all of the information required in order to do their job well. The flow of information through email is not always possible. It appears that employees that work outside of the office area do not have a municipal email address assigned to them. In some instances, employees are part of a larger distribution group list allowing them access to a shared email address.

Communications *between* particular departments has improved recently with creation of Council Highlights distributed by the Clerk's office. This has been helpful yet there are additional opportunities to create timely updates between Council meetings in an effort to improve the overall effectiveness and morale of employees.

Communications *within* particular departments has also been identified as an opportunity for improvement. Certain departments are spread throughout the municipality and in some cases, have limited or no WIFI access and/or cellular reception. This can make effective and efficient communication challenging. Additionally, employees in both Public Works and Parks and Recreation departments start and end their work day at a designated area. At times, daily tasks are concluded earlier than anticipated or not enough time remains in a shift to start a new project in the field and employees return to the shop. This impacts time management. Communicating next day or ongoing job assignments through the use of visual aids such as job boards in their respective shops (such as regularly scheduled equipment preventative maintenance) will assist in this regard.

Public Messaging

Effective communication is critical to working with public stakeholders. Municipal governments have worked hard in recent years in areas of enhanced transparency. In this context, West Elgin continues to reinforce that it is operating in the best interests of the municipality. As a smaller municipality, West Elgin does not require a dedicated communications/public relations professional. It would, however, benefit the community by assessing the need for a public messaging strategy to ensure the timely and regular release of information to the public. Such a strategy would be beneficial to the municipality by ensuring clear information is shared across multiple and optimum mediums (website, traditional media, and social media). It would also help ensure that Members of Council and staff are sharing correct information while at the same time protecting necessary privacies and confidential information. Finally, such a public messaging strategy would enable rapid and direct response to the public on matters of heightened attention or of great importance to the municipality.

Overall, effective communication strategies help employees and the public know where to look for recent information/news releases and feel a sense of connection to their municipality.

Use of Social Media in Communication

As part of the messaging strategy, the effective use of social media can be an affordable marketing strategy for tourism and economic development as well as an employee and public engagement strategy.

Communication is a timely process and, outside of the regular Council business, rarely has a firm schedule. Social media however must be regularly updated in a timely manner to be useful and compete with the myriad of online content. As such, the municipality needs to enhance its social media strategy and plan for populating social media platforms in a way that does not strain existing resources and communicates operational information in a timely manner.

Recommendations:

Communication within West Elgin's organization is not unlike many other municipalities, particularly in smaller organizations. There are however a number of opportunities for improvement that if implemented would assist with inter- and intradepartmental communication and positively impact the organization.

These include:

1. Commence Regular Management Team Meetings

Collaboration and communication between departments is critical for an efficient and effective organization. Establishing a meeting cadence between Council meetings will enable development of the team as a cohesive unit and keep all informed on a timely basis of ongoing and future operational plans, planned Council reports, Council direction and Council meeting outcomes. These short and frequent meetings should allow for standing and ad hoc items on each agenda and are intended to help increase senior leader momentum.

2. Develop and Implement Internal Communication Strategy

Building on the existing Council Highlights memo, general communication is key in everyday operations. Employees need to have as much information as possible to do their job as well as they possibly can. Sharing key messages from the CAO with all employees will be a powerful tool to build and unite the team, keep employees informed so they are working on the right priorities, build relationships within and between departments, and highlight individual, group, departmental, and organizational success.

Key messages passed along to the organization may need to be tailored for wider audiences and members of the management team can play an appropriate role by taking the lead in such circumstances with their respective departments.

In addition, where there are hot-button or important issues for the community, it is important to have a formal communication strategy in place to help educate, prepare, and provide guidance to employees that are expected to respond on behalf of the municipality to the public.

As part of an internal communications strategy, it is also recommended that:

- All employees (hourly and salaried) are provided with work email addresses and access to a computer at work;
- Password-protected WIFI be implemented in remote work locations where appropriate to improve employee communication, where connectivity is possible;
- Explore implementation of inexpensive visual aids to communicate in an effort to assist with enhancing time management.

3. Develop and Implement an External Communications Strategy

Development and implementation of a public communications strategy should be considered by Council. Factors to be assessed should include consideration of who develops and approves the communication; which medium (website, traditional print, or social media) is used and under what circumstances.

Such a strategy should also consistently address matters involving proactive communications (such as a media release) or reactive communications (where radio or television stations have requested comment).

Finally, a communications strategy should also consider how populism and technological disruption have impacted local residents' relationship with media. Communications must continue to be clear, timely, and transparent.

4. Expand Social Media Presence and Promote Website as a Community Information Portal

West Elgin has an online presence with a website and is on Twitter. As timely communication of current and future events is important for connecting residents with their municipality, consideration should be given to utilizing other social media tools such as a Facebook page for West Elgin. Additionally, the website offers an opportunity for employees and the public to access general policies and documents as guidance and reference. A repository of non-restricted documents and forms would help educate interested parties and perhaps expedite some of the administrative tasks benefitting residents and staff.

3.2 Human Resources

Undoubtedly, employee success is critical to organizational success. Poor candidate selection results in large cost to the municipality, including financial cost, operational inefficiency, and morale to name a few. Hiring top talent must include the requirement of “fit” within the organization. Overall, it is becoming increasingly difficult across the province to attract top municipal talent, particularly in rural areas. West Elgin is tackling this challenge and has, for the most part, done a good job in attracting, developing, and retaining talented employees. With the exception of 2018, turnover rates are low in recent years and not out of line with other rural municipal employers.

Policies and Procedures

Employees are the key to operational effectiveness and efficiency. To ensure effective governance, the municipality has developed Human Resources policies and procedures which support people management practices through a clear understanding of what is permitted at the workplace and what is not. As is the case in most smaller municipalities, West Elgin does not have a sufficiently sized workforce to require a Human Resources (HR) department. With Council approval, the CAO and senior leaders have developed internal controls through HR policy and procedural documents and guidelines to ensure fairness and equity in the workplace. Policies can also signal to employees that the municipality cares about them (such as various Health and Safety policies, Civil Workplace Environment policy, and Employee Recognition policy).

Beyond HR policies, West Elgin has a number of other corporate policies that are both informative and directive policies and foster a climate of consistency. Employees have an increased level of comfort and are generally more satisfied when they fully understand what is expected of them and how to perform. People are creatures of habit and are generally inclined to establish routine. In the workplace, such routine and consistency applied to tasks performed reduces inefficiency by eliminating uncertainty and the time spent determining action to be taken. Past practice, policy and procedure, and best practice become ingrained and intuitive resulting in increased workplace productivity.

Having policies and procedures that are designed and communicated in a clear manner benefits the public as well. Access to policies and documented processes provides employees with guidance and reference when new tasks arise or as a reference to use when there is a change in practice. Policies and procedures guide consistent performance which leads to reduced ambiguity and misuse of time creating a knowledgeable and orderly organization that provides consistent and efficient service to the public.

Given its size and scope of municipal responsibility, West Elgin has created a sufficient number of relevant corporate policies that support the proper functioning of the organization.

Job Descriptions

Job descriptions assist employees and organizations be efficient and effective by providing a position summary and broadly defining principal duties and responsibilities within a role. Many detailed job descriptions will also include direct and indirect reporting relationships, and a list of skills, experience, and education required by an incumbent. Job descriptions are helpful in a wide range of activities including the identification of hiring needs, recruiting and selection, alignment of duties to the overall organizational mission, and as a performance management tool.

Clear and concise job descriptions provide terms of reference for individual success and organizational growth. There is clear communication of the responsibilities to be performed and with whom the incumbent shall typically interact. Job descriptions should be viewed as living documents; municipal organizations are continually managing change due to the presentation of ongoing challenges (be it fiscal, structural, societal, or technological). Therefore, it is important that job descriptions are reviewed no less than annually by both incumbent and supervisor/manager to ensure workload and expectations are realistic, any major changes in duties are noted, and positional responsibilities are aligned with departmental goals which in turn support organizational requirements.

While the majority of employees indicated they know what to do at work and how their job fits into the big picture at West Elgin, approximately half the workforce indicated they do not receive all of the information required in order to do their job well and information they seek is not readily available. Moreover, 55 to 60 percent of all employees indicated that processes followed in their respective departments are not effective and not efficient.

Circumstances which result in a review or update of job descriptions include:

- A new position is established;
- Significant changes in responsibilities;
- Re-organization of departments which involves the position;
- Changes in use of technology.

West Elgin has an inventory of job descriptions that have been completed in the last 2-5 years for each position. However, many employees indicated they have not reviewed their job description and in some cases, were not aware of its existence. It is believed that many job descriptions were likely updated as part of or following the compensation and pay equity review completed in 2014.

Onboarding of New Hires

Meaningful onboarding processes for new employees increase their likelihood of staying with an organization and rapidly developing a connection to their new workplace. Such introductions of new employees to the culture and norms within a workplace increases their self-confidence and the increases the likelihood of successful relationship building. This allows new employees to quickly and effectively integrate into the workforce and processes. In smaller municipal organizations without dedicated HR resources, the responsibility for onboarding is usually shared between the CAO, an employee's supervisor or manager, and if possible an experienced employee acting as mentor.

In some organizations, the process of onboarding is accomplished online and that can make sense in terms of short term cost and operational efficiency. However, the process can be markedly more effective if interpersonal contact is introduced to reduce normal and expected levels of stress and anxiety associated with a new job.

Common recommended practices include:

- Reaching out to new hires in advance of their start date;
- Planning for a memorable first day;
- Set a schedule for the first week or two to productively occupy the new hire;
- Introduce new hires to employees of other departments they will interact with;

- Introduce new hires to Council;
- Review in summary form any strategic plans, or forward thinking Council documents that would communicate the culture and norms of the municipal organization;
- Allow for feedback and questions on a frequent basis;
- Allow time for new hires to acclimate to their new work environment.

Many employees have indicated that they did not participate in any onboarding process; in some cases, employees started at work without an introduction to others or an overview of processes or established practice leading to above normal stress and anxiety and lost productivity in the short term.

Succession Planning

Succession planning is used to determine and plan for continued identification and development of talent within an organization. It involves proactive planning to train and develop qualified employees for movement within an organization. Such transition from one position to another may be lateral or advancement.

Given the size of West Elgin, it is not surprising that succession planning efforts have not been a key focus of senior administrative leaders. However, it would benefit the organization to provide a level of coaching and mentoring that supports employees across the organization. Currently, only half of employees indicated they have received good coaching and mentoring as needed.

Knowledge transfer from incumbents to others is critical for the seamless operation of an organization when transition occurs, regardless of who occupies a position. Such actions reduce strain on new employees and departments.

It is important to note that succession planning is not limited to those employees identified as high potential candidates for advancement or for lateral development opportunities. Best practice would suggest incorporating assessments of appropriately placed employees within an organization that have historic municipal knowledge available for mentoring and job shadowing opportunity.

Lateral developmental opportunities can also provide much needed cross training within a municipality. Cross training protects an organization from risk through intended and designed redundancy. Tasks deemed critical to the operation should have at least one other individual to perform key functions of the incumbent. Managed well, cross training can protect organizations from short term risk arising from intermittent absences as well as longer term risk arising from retirements in critical areas of the business.

Employees have indicated they have the knowledge, experience, skills, and abilities to do their jobs well and to deliver on the promise of good local government. Employees believe there is a good fit between them and their jobs and they strongly feel purpose in serving the residents of West Elgin. Employees take great pride in their jobs, their colleagues and the organization.

Recommendations:

5. Establish Regular and Timely Review of Corporate Policies and Processes

The Municipality would be well served to establish at minimum a bi-annual review of policies to ensure they remain applicable, current, and legally or statutorily compliant. Consistent with lean principles,

reviews of processes and work flow should involve those closest to the work – employees themselves. Such a review of policy does not need to take place at the same time but should be an ongoing activity that is fully integrated and aligned with corporate goals.

Candidate attraction and retention efforts of the Municipality may be enhanced with the development of paid pregnancy and parental leave. It is noted there is no such policy at West Elgin. Many municipal employers are providing employees on such job protected leave with “top-up” pay above federal employment insurance benefits.

6. Establish Regular and Timely Review of Job Descriptions

Job Descriptions should be reviewed by the position incumbent and supervisor/manager on an annual basis. It can be accomplished through the regular performance management process. It is not intended to detail how jobs are accomplished but rather ensure broadly defined principal duties and responsibilities within a role remain accurate and are aligned with departmental and organizational requirements. Best practice would suggest linking a review and acknowledgement or signoff of a job description with the annual performance management process.

7. Formalize an Onboarding Program for New Hires

A formal onboarding program will create a positive opportunity for newly hired employees to familiarize themselves with the Municipality, learn processes, quickly develop relationships, and feel confidently connected to the organization. Having a mentor will address inefficient use of time and typical stressors associated with newly joining an organization.

8. Create and Maintain an Employee Handbook

Development of a handbook or guide would assist with new hire onboarding as well as provide a useful and practical tool for other employees and perhaps be incorporated into Council orientation. It could include a brief summary of a number of important policies and information related to the Municipality.

9. Formalize Succession Planning and Enhance Cross-Training

Knowledge transfer is critical for the uninterrupted and successful municipal service delivery. While it does not happen often, the loss of talent in a small organization can be difficult to address without thoughtful planning.

Cross training should be completed for critical operations with the Municipality. Currently, some critical operations are known only to the incumbent and perhaps one senior staff member, rather than a peer of the incumbent. Given the very real challenges presented by the “grey tsunami” of employees exiting the municipal sector and the war for talent, it is important to engage staff in such lateral developmental opportunities. Such action will also have the effect of boosting morale and improving retention.

10. Review Provision of Group Health Care Benefits

While not specifically part of the scope of the organizational review, the provision of health care benefits was noted as the policy review was conducted.

For many years, Elgin County and all lower tier partners with the exception of West Elgin have formed a consortium in order to attract preferred premium rates for the provision of Group Health Care Benefits.

West Elgin elected many years ago to remain outside of this consortium for some reason and directly deal with the provider, Manulife Financial. While unknown at the present time, it is likely that the Municipality would benefit from more favourable premium rates by joining this larger county-wide block of business.

As the consortium uses Manulife as benefit provider as well, a decision to transition to the consortium should be seamless and have no impact on employees. West Elgin would retain control of the types and level of group benefits offered and would likely benefit from sharing the risk with a larger pool in area of long term disability and life insurance premiums.

3.3 Strategic Planning

Strategic Planning is foundational to longer term sustainability of any organization. It is an organizational activity that is used to set priorities for action, focus energy and appropriate resources, and measure and monitor progress against stated objectives to ensure employees and all stakeholders are working towards common goals. Strategic Planning documents are forward looking and articulate where the organization is going, actions needed to get there, and what success looks like.

The Municipality is certainly wise to engage in such a disciplined effort as it will undoubtedly serve its residents and employees well by producing fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what the Municipality does, who it serves, and why.

West Elgin has only recently commenced its strategic planning activities and as such, this report offers no recommendations.

3.4 Performance Management

Performance Management has changed.

In the past, performance management was erroneously equated with a static annual performance review resulting in a process that is perceived by many employees as time consuming, burdensome, and failing to deliver value. In the last few years, performance management has evolved from performance *appraisals* to a culture of ongoing *development and coaching*.

Performance Management examines the alignment of individual effort to support departmental and organizational priorities. It is a collection of ongoing and collaborative activities between an employee and their supervisor designed to maximize individual, and by extension, departmental and organizational performance. These activities include:

- setting and communicating expectations and defining work plans for individual performance;
- measuring employee outcomes and approach against those expectations;
- providing regular feedback and coaching;
- evaluating performance over time

Performance Management helps organizations manage employee results (*what* was accomplished) and behaviours (*how* results were achieved) by identifying both top performers for reward and struggling employees for coaching or other performance improvement actions and ultimately, helping drive organizational efficiency and effectiveness.

When feedback is integrated with corporate culture, it helps employees understand others' perception of their performance, adjust their focus and effort and elevate their performance, if required, and how they are impacting their colleagues.

The reality is performance management is as much an art as it is a science. While performance management is an evidence-informed activity, employees, supervisors, and their organizations are unique. In recent years, numerous high profile organizations (including Deloitte, Microsoft, and GE) have gone through performance management transformation.

To ensure alignment with organizational priorities, goals cascade from the top of the organization down resulting in establishment of objectives at the departmental and then employee level. Objectives should be SMART – an acronym for Specific, Measurable, Aligned, Realistic, and Timely.

Performance objectives are should be developed in a collaborative manner with employees, if possible. Care should be taken to ensure there is a clear connection between individual performance objectives and the incumbent's position and job description. Informal feedback is encouraged throughout the year so there should not be any "surprises" when conducting formal performance discussions at year-end.

Performance Management results provide valuable data for other talent decisions including compensation planning, allocation of training and career development budget, and succession planning. Finally, calibration sessions should be conducted with senior administrative leaders at management team meetings to ensure employee ratings are fair and objective across the organization.

A review of performance management practices at West Elgin suggests that formal performance management processes have not been established, with the small but important exception of probationary reviews. Employees confirmed in interviews as well as the survey that formal objective or goal setting is not in place and two-thirds of employees do not receive regular feedback about their performance. Employees indicated that when feedback is received, most view it as helpful in improving their performance.

Recommendation:

11. Implement a Performance Management Program that is Coaching-Focused

Goal setting and providing ongoing feedback are incredible and inexpensive tools for providing employees with direction and guidance and will accelerate success in any organization. With such awareness, employees can align their work with organizational priorities and direct their time and efforts appropriately. Management and all employees will require training on such a program once developed.

3.5 Training and Development Strategy

Employee professional development is an important consideration as it impacts the overall success of the organization. In smaller municipalities, the reality is some employees will receive training and gain experience and then pursue external opportunities for additional growth with larger organizations. Smaller municipalities struggle with the challenge of allocating scarce funds on professional development where there is such flight risk.

To manage this, professional development can take the form of cross training whereby employees are trained on duties other than their own. Such actions will result in core coverage for key positions during employee absence and assist succession planning efforts. The provision of this type of training will both support the organization as well as provide developmental opportunities that are valued by employees.

Recommendation:

12. Plan for Employee Absences and Leaves

Assess the need for additional cross training within the organization to provide coverage for key responsibilities and activities during employee absences. If documented, such cross training would assist with organizational succession planning efforts.

3.6 Leadership and Culture

True leadership is not inherent in positions but rather in people. Leadership is shown through informal and formal influence and persuasion; it is shown through the development and assistance of others. Good leaders are able to positively change organizational culture by effectively articulating an organization's values and mission and subsequently achieving employees' buy in. Employees recognize the inspiration that effective leadership provides and will get behind these leaders in promoting positive culture change.

Culture plays a vital role in employee engagement, individual job satisfaction, and internal as well as external customer service delivery. While many organizational leaders recognize that creating a positive culture is critical to organizational success, far too often leaders stumble in not being mindful every day of the fragility of organizational culture and the direct impact they have in shaping it. Every organization will develop its own culture regardless of attempts to shape it in a particular direction; those authentic leaders that can proactively shape a positive culture – through purpose, ownership, community, communication and trust – will be most successful in fostering and maintaining positive culture and the advancement of organizational change.

West Elgin has experienced leadership changes in recent years and have experienced the impact of such change. West Elgin is fortunate to have a number of strong leaders in different departments and levels within the organization to help lead this resilient team. Many have stepped up and are helping build a stronger organization.

Recommendation:

13. Share Team Successes and Challenges

Effective communication flow between leadership members at regular management team meetings, departmental meetings, and Town Hall meetings with the organization will help build and maintain information flow and trust, and help develop mentorship and support appropriate collaboration and delegation of work.

3.7 Employee Morale

Employees represent the face of the Municipality and must feel motivated and engaged to provide the best service possible to residents. Employee morale affects motivation and is linked to how productively and efficiently duties are carried out on a daily basis. In addition to the likelihood of increased attrition, absenteeism, disengaged employees have a detrimental and costly effect on the rest of the organization.

Employees have shared that morale at West Elgin has improved dramatically in recent months. The departure of the former CAO resulted in a sharp reduction in turnover coupled with a strong increase in job satisfaction and engagement. Employee interviews and survey results provide evidentiary support that workforce morale is significantly improved in recent months and is now high.

West Elgin is well positioned to maintain such strong morale; there are high levels of employee contributions, mutual support, employee effort, and team cohesion. As noted earlier in the report, opportunities exist for greater communication and coordination between departments.

Recommendations:

14. Proactively Build Teamwork and Organizational Culture

The level of collaboration in an organization is directly correlated to performance output and the efficiency with which work is produced. To enhance current levels, the Municipality is encouraged to continually build the culture of the organization. Over time, the priorities of the organization and unique needs of employees may change but the basic employee needs – to feel valued, recognized, and affiliated with something bigger than oneself – to be part of a team, will not change. Senior leaders, with input from employees, should give consideration to appropriate staff/team building activities that include all employees. The number and nature of these events may change over time but each one should work to enable greater communication and coordination across the organization.

15. Soft Skills Training

Whether it is a deliberate effort related to retention, succession planning, or cross functional training and development, soft skills or people skills training can prove invaluable to employees, particularly with those whom are customer facing and those in or preparing for management roles. Regular investment should be made in developing soft skills of employees throughout the organization and budgeted accordingly.

4. Resource Review Findings

4.1 Organizational Structure

The organizational structure of West Elgin generally represents the structure that has been reviewed in other smaller municipalities. In its basic form, the most senior level of the administrative authority lies with a senior administrative leader whom is charged with implementing the will of Council. Each department is managed by a department head that acts in a manner that is aligned with and supports the senior leader's planning and actions for implementing the will of Council.

Organizational work responsibilities are, for the most part, well defined at West Elgin and appropriately integrated into the operation. Reporting relationships are clear. Staff repeatedly emphasized the team based approach to program and service delivery that is being utilized within the organization.

Three considerations have been assessed as part of a structural review:

Separation or Clustering of Work

Separation of works refers to the sensible clustering of similar activities to achieve organizational benefit. This clustering results in the creation of divisions, departments, or sections that are appropriately managed by trained resources, such as General Managers, Directors/Managers, or supervisors, respectively. West Elgin's municipal structure is representative of a normal separation of work expected in a small municipal organization (Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Fire, Finance and Clerk's departments, which includes general Administration) and is very similar to comparable municipalities in how work is divided organizationally.

Levels of Organizational Structure

Organizational structure is often referenced by the number of levels of organizational hierarchy. For small to medium sized municipalities, a flat hierarchical structure will typically have 3-6 levels. This type of organizational structure is often perceived to be more responsive and nimble in responding to residents' needs than organizations with seven or more levels.

West Elgin has an organizational structure that can reasonably be defined as flat. This is well suited to the Municipality's operations and is very similar to comparable municipalities.

Flat and small municipal organizations can present challenges to senior leaders and employees as career development (lateral, cross functional and promotional) can be limited but there are benefits as well. Communication tends to flow faster with greater accuracy as senior leaders are able to receive input directly from employees and vice versa. Flat organizations are usually more adaptable to determine approaches for managing and resolving residents' complaints. This results in elevated resident and employee satisfaction as matters can be dealt with expeditiously. Finally, flatter organizations tend empower employees more to make decisions. Exceptional or unusual circumstances can typically be dealt with more fluidly which helps reduce organizational cost by not requiring as much administrative oversight.

Supervisory Spans of Control

Span of control refers to the number of direct reports a supervisor has. Determining the most appropriate span of control is dependent on the type of work being performed with knowledge based environments having smaller spans of control (between 5 and 8:1) than repetitive processing environments (15:1). Generally, the span of control should be as broad as possible without negatively impacting operational efficiency while maintaining effective employee supervision. With some exceptions that will be noted later in this report, the supervisory spans of control are appropriate.

4.2 Organizational Size and Staffing

The Municipality's Full Time Equivalent (FTE) human resource base is generally aligned with similar sized municipal organizations. Although Council may make decisions about adding or reducing staff on the basis of ongoing municipal needs, there is no requirement for the Municipality to undertake a major change of multiple FTEs as a measure of increasing operational efficiency. Using the measure below (FTE per 1000 residents served), one can observe that West Elgin is appropriately sized for delivering similar municipal services.

Organizational Size ⁽¹⁾	FTE per 1000 Residents
West Elgin	5.3
West Elgin Comparators ⁽²⁾	5.4

(1) Municipal governments of similar population size and scope to West Elgin
(1) Excludes Fire Department and Students
(2) Includes Dutton-Dunwich, Southwold, and SW Middlesex

While the scope of the review did not allow for detailed analysis of municipal service levels or an in-depth review of business processes for every position, enough information was gathered to suggest the Municipal organization has sufficient capacity to fulfill its current mandate.

It is difficult to definitively compare West Elgin municipal headcount to other local municipalities of similar population size as each one may provide slightly different services and at varying service levels or may have different arrangements in place to provide similar services. That said, a comparison based on equivalent services to West Elgin shows West Elgin is appropriately staffed. To be clear, this review has determined there is neither a significant overstaffing nor understaffing issue at West Elgin but incremental reallocation of staff resources may prove helpful to improve operations.

Any consideration of adjusting staffing levels should take the following into account:

- Within the general office area, there are several municipal functions being fulfilled by single employees. The municipality has minimal administrative support staff and limited subordinate resources for delegation. This serves to concentrate responsibility and accountability;

- Within the general office area, there are several employees that fulfill multiple responsibilities on an ongoing basis. That is certainly appropriate within smaller municipalities but is cost effective only when the type of work performed is matched correctly to the pay grade of the employee performing the work;
- The largest budget item is Public Works. Maintaining and modernizing existing roads infrastructure will remain a priority and place additional demands on Public Works staff;
- Parks and Recreation represents the second largest budget item each year. Monitoring, inspection, and maintenance of parks and recreation equipment and facilities will require focus of resources;
- Asset Management will place new demands on staff. The importance of such planning will support informed and strategic decision making in relation to capital asset spending;
- Small and rural municipalities like West Elgin are often challenged to attract professional and technical staff with the required expertise and qualifications to manage water and wastewater, land use planning, and building. West Elgin has tackled such challenges by collaborating with local municipal partners to develop mutually beneficial job sharing arrangements as well as contracting with appropriate provincial agencies to deliver such important functions.

4.3 Workload

Although not an explicit part of this review, some observations have been noted. Employees have indicated that working for the Municipality provides them with a good balance of work and life outside of work. With the exception of two senior leader positions, the review has not determined that workloads are excessive. While demands of providing municipal services are significant, most employees are able to manage their workloads well.

5. Departmental Observations and Recommendations

5.1 Administration – CAO and Clerk

- The Acting CAO/Treasurer has current responsibility for the overall administration of the Municipality. Previously, the senior organizational leader was the CAO/Clerk, a set up identical to two of the three comparator organizations. One of the comparators eliminated this senior role approximately one year ago and all department heads report to Council. Further discussion on the need for a senior leader will be provided later in this report.
- The Acting CAO/Treasurer has fifteen (15) direct reports which exceeds the spans of control at comparator municipalities. This results in this senior leader being involved too heavily in the daily administration of the organization resulting in the inability of this senior position to focus on high level strategic initiatives in support of Council's vision.
- The Acting CAO/ Treasurer has also continued the role of Office Manager – a responsibility that were held as Treasurer. Again, this activity would often result in setting aside higher level priorities to manage overall administration in the office area.
- The current number of staff reporting to the current Acting CAO/Treasurer along with the current number of contracts this position is required to oversee requires this senior leader to work more hours than is considered standard for such position in a small municipality.
- The Acting CAO/Treasurer, along with staff in Finance and Clerk's office have been working diligently to focus on creating efficiencies through improvements in IT hardware, software, and records management with goals completing a number of improvements throughout 2020.
- The statutorily mandated role of Clerk, assumed by the prior CAO, is now being performed by the Deputy Clerk in an interim role as Clerk. In addition to performing Clerking duties for Council and committees, the interim Clerk provides administrative oversight to a diverse number of customer facing services and records management.
- The Interim Clerk is assisted by the interim Deputy Clerk. This deputy clerk has assumed clerking duties for a small number of committees and assists the Clerk with preparing Council agenda and minutes. Additionally, this role is responsible for implementation of an update Records Management system for the Municipality. There are also a number of miscellaneous duties that have been assigned to the Deputy Clerk over time. This includes preparing and distributing annual community calendars as well as coordinating Hazardous Waste Day for the Municipality.
- Most of the customer facing administrative support is provided by the Administrative Assistant who greets people as they enter the Municipal building. This position is exceptionally large in scope and includes a number of roles one would normally assume are with other departments, such as Finance (a myriad of Accounts Receivable duties) and Parks and Recreation (Facility bookings). Although it is typical in small municipalities to have flexibility between roles, there appears to be a need for greater definition of assigned roles at that level of the organization.

Recommendations:

16. Reduce CAO Span of Control

A review of current organizational structure with the main office suggests that the CAO's span of control must be reduced to so as to allow for increased high level strategic planning and appropriate administrative oversight of municipal operations. Should Council determine a senior organizational leader is required, this action is necessary whether Council proceeds with either a) a stand-alone position; or b) a position combined with a statutory role such as Clerk or Treasurer.

17. Assess Work for Appropriate Match

A review of main office staffing suggests there is a need for additional evaluation of task assignments to ensure that work performed is appropriately matched to the pay level of the person performing the work. In some cases, it has been observed that there is work being performed by senior leaders that can and should be assigned to lower levels within office administration. Similarly, some tasks are not matched to the appropriate department.

18. Expand Use of Technology with Existing Software

As mentioned earlier, much work has been done and a number of efficiencies have been created with the use of technology. The use of e-Scribe for online Council agendas and e-Solutions for the municipal website are but two examples. Additional work is required to update paper forms and records and store documents electronically with use of SharePoint (a web-based document management and collaborative platform that integrates with Microsoft Office 365). Use of summer students to perform these types of tasks is encouraged. The Municipality is also encouraged to maximize use of an existing accounting/financial software system (Keystone) that was adopted by West Elgin in January 2018. It has the ability to assist in areas of customer service management (requests for service) and facility scheduling and more. The Ontario Municipal Records Management System (TOMRMS) is currently used at West Elgin and provides opportunity for use beyond the Clerk's office.

5.2 Administration - Utilities

- The Manager of Utilities reports to the Acting CAO/ Treasurer. The Manager of Utilities is responsible for utility service locates, water meter and related infrastructure repairs and changes, and dealing with customer complaints. The Manager also acts as maintenance person for a number of facilities including the Municipal offices, Rodney Library, Rodney Town Hall (now vacant), the Recreation Complex, and West Lorne library.
- The focus of the Manager of Utilities is now on replacing current water meters with new SMART meters for all 1700- plus water customer accounts over the next 5-6 years. Meter reading is done bi-monthly by a part time contracted employee; a task that takes 5-6 days each time. With SMART meters, readings will be captured remotely by a passing vehicle through radio frequency identification technology. The Manager has one direct report, a Utility Services Operator who performs some of the same tasks as the Manager as well as operating heavy equipment. The Utility Services operator works in Public Works in the Roads Department operating heavy equipment in the winter season.

- The Municipal water operations are overseen by a Tri-County Water Board. The Ontario Clean Water Agency (OCWA) is responsible for the supply of safe and clean water and the water treatment plant operations as well as water sampling, flushing of lines, and tapping into water lines.
- The contract with OCWA is managed by the CAOs office. While OCWA is providing satisfactory service, there is a concern that personnel at OCWA are often spread too thin and on occasion, not properly prepared and equipped with the correct tools and equipment at job sites. Additionally, there is a perception that the Municipality is a training ground for OCWA operators whom often learn and develop their skills and experience only to quickly move on to larger assignments elsewhere. This results in constant orientation and training for new OCWA staff that negatively impacts the efficiency of utility operations.

Recommendations:

19. Assess Need for Additional Resources for SMART Meter Installation

The Municipality may wish to assess whether or not it would be cost effective to support the SMART meter replacement project with deployment of additional resources to accelerate an already aggressive implementation timeline.

Accurate account billing is largely dependent on the quality of the meter reads as well as condition of meters. On average there are 35-50 issues identified each read cycle due to equipment mis-reads and meter issues. The recent purchase of a new reader is expected to reduce the error rate to below 15 or 0.88%. Installation of SMART readers will reduce errors even further, freeing up additional capacity within both the Utilities and Finance departments.

20. Formally Address OCWA Personnel and Equipment Concerns upon Renewal of Agreement

Interim efforts to discuss and address concerns can be made through the scheduling of meetings with OCWA management. Any helpful understandings and takeaways could be formalized in future negotiations with the agency when negotiating renewal agreements with this provincial agency.

5.3 Administration – Bylaw Enforcement, Drainage Superintendent, Planning, and Building

- Reporting to the CAO, By-law Enforcement is managed by a part-time employee who works on average, 8-10 hours per week. Bylaw is a complaint driven process whereby the enforcement officer reacts when complaints are made by residents. These may involve property standards matters and parking issues. In many cases, the enforcement officer is able to resolve matters through persuasion and influence and effect a successful outcome without the need for more formal actions.
- Reporting to the CAO, the Drainage Superintendent is a part-time employee who works 16 hours per week. On average, there are some 40 drain repairs and culvert washouts per year. The

Drainage Superintendent also generates approximately 20 engineering reports per year which represents approximately 13% of the total number submitted to the Province – quite a large number for small rural municipality.

- The Chief Building Official (CBO) is a Dutton-Dunwich employee. The CBO provides building service to West Elgin through a shared services agreement with Dutton-Dunwich. This agreement is managed by CAO. Under this agreement, costs related to the provision of such services in West Elgin are billed to the Municipality.
- As with the Bylaw Enforcement and Drainage positions, most of the time spent is out of office. Employees use personal vehicles and receive a mileage allowance.
- Reporting to the CAO, the Planner is a full-time employee. The Planner also provides planning service to the municipality of Southwold through a shared services agreement. Under this arrangement, costs related to the provision of such services in Southwold are billed to that municipality. One area of opportunity exists with GIS mapping in West Elgin which appears to be outdated.
- The Planner, Bylaw Enforcement Officer, and CBO share a small office space with three desks. The Drainage Superintendent and Enforcement Officer typically do not work on the same days. As such, they share one of the three desks.
- The Bylaw Enforcement Officer will accompany the CBO to attend work sites where there is risk for personal safety when dealing with property owners.

Recommendations:

21. Develop Succession Plan for Bylaw Enforcement Officer Position

West Elgin may wish to explore an opportunity for the provision of a shared enforcement service with other municipalities. Alternatively, the Municipality may wish to pursue with the County if there is any appetite for full-time by-law enforcement at the County of Elgin, under the supervision of the legal department.

22. Assess Opportunities to Expand Software Applications to Building Department

The Municipality would be well served to leverage cost effective and industry leading software applications that are cloud-based systems.

Software such as Bluebeam would enhance operational efficiency by converting Microsoft documents and CAD drawings into PDF format. More than simply a PDF viewer, or annotation, this type of software provides opportunity for efficiency and collaboration for staff, contractors, architects, and developers working with technical files.

Companies like EVOLTA, for example, offer a process that allows for electronic submission of building permit applications, forms, and drawings. Once plans are reviewed and approved, plans can be uploaded back to the applicant with a building permit.

Benefits of expanded use of innovative technology include environmental sustainability with a reduction in paper, ink, and travel; financial savings in time and mileage expense; enhanced tracking and faster application processing – all of which improves customer satisfaction.

23. Update Geographic Information System (GIS) Mapping

West Elgin mapping is not current. Geographic information is the key to better decision-making. Just about everything a local municipality does, whether in day-to-day operations or long-term planning, is tied to a location and rely on geographic information to achieve its goal. Examples of this include land-use planning, subdivision review, parcel/tax mapping, engineering design, road and utility maintenance, emergency management, and infrastructure assessment and development.

GIS provides real time digitally accessible information that is important to efficient municipal operation; IT reduces a municipalities reliance on institutional memory by the constant capturing and curating of both old and new information; and GIS encourages meaningful transparency by making complex information more accessible and easier to understand.

5.4 Administration - Port Glasgow Trailer Park

- The municipally owned Port Glasgow Trailer Park (PGTP) is a seasonally operated 20-acre park consisting of the annually leased space for travel trailers as well as picnic and other day use including camping and playground. It is managed by a seasonal full-time supervisor and one employee. The park has 155 seasonal lots and a handful of overnight or transient lots. There is a waiting list for seasonal lots.
- The trailer park is intended to run on a break even basis. It was projecting a small deficit at the end of 2019. In 2019, repairs were made to steps leading down to the beach and \$60,000 was set aside for capital improvements to the bingo hall and war memorial and decorative gates. A large capital investment in the near future will be required for proper functioning of the septic system.
- The main points of contact for the PGTP are the Clerk's office (for administrative matters) and the Public Works Department (for works related matters). The Parks and Recreation department has provided occasional assistance in the past with grass cutting but most duties are carried out by the onsite team. General oversight is provided by the PGTP Committee which meets seasonally.

Recommendation:

24. Assess Feasibility of Current PGTP Business Model

It is recommended that the Municipality assess the feasibility of the current business model. As the municipality owns the land and each leasee responsible for their own trailer, the park should break even if not make money. Enquiries should be made of the market to ensure it is leasing seasonal lots at appropriate rates. The Municipality may also wish to consider opportunities to make more

transient/overnight spots available as seasonal lot holders do not renew, such that greater revenues can be generated and reinvested in the trailer park. At the present time, the existing limited number of highly profitable transient spots drives business to other trailer parks along the north shore of Lake Erie.

5.5 Administration – Finance

- The Treasurer has responsibility for the overall management of the Municipality's financial affairs and provides financial leadership to Council and the Corporation to provide for long-term financial sustainability. Unlike the position of CAO, this position is required under the Ontario Municipal Act and as such, each of the comparator municipalities maintains such a position. At West Elgin, the Treasurer also acts as Office Manager ensuring oversight to day to day operations.
- The position of Treasurer four (4) direct reports, including one full time employee that provides a number of provincial administrative services to the public under contract to Service Ontario. The number of direct reports slightly exceeds the span of control at comparator municipalities and capacity within the department does exist.
- The Tax Collector performs a number of duties associated with the billing and collection of taxes for the Municipality. Other duties include a number of accounting related functions related to tasks of the Treasurer, Accounts Receivable Clerk, and office administrative support.
- The Accounts Payable Clerk carries out a number of AP duties such as receiving invoices, processing payments, dealing with vendors and contractors to resolve invoicing issues, maintaining vendor files and maintaining the AP system. The Accounts Payable Clerk also provides assistance to the Fire Department by generating quartering FIREPRO reports for the provincial fire authorities. This position is evolving and has started to take on more financial responsibility and asset management responsibility which is appropriate given available capacity.
- The Water and Payroll Clerk currently manages 1) water billings for 1700-plus water customer accounts; and 2) processes the direct deposit of bi-weekly payroll for 26.5 FTE employees using EASYPAY automated payroll software. Paystubs are generated and delivered to employees.
- Service Ontario is located in the municipal office. Historically, Service Ontario is operated throughout the province by independent service providers under contract with the provincial Ministry of Government Services. For many years, Service Ontario's office in West Elgin was operated at the former Rodney Town Hall. The office was relocated to its present location at the municipal office in 2016. It is the only Service Ontario location within West Elgin although there are other locations nearby in Dutton and a recently opened office in Newbury. Coverage during periods of absence is provided by the Service Ontario clerk in Dutton and on occasion by the Accounts Payable Clerk.

Recommendations:

25. Assess Work for Appropriate Match

There is a need for a more thorough assessment of task assignments within Finance to ensure that work responsibilities and flow are appropriately integrated and aligned with duties performed by main office staff.

26. Assess Opportunities to Expand Utilization of Existing and New Software Applications

The Municipality would be well served to leverage existing and new cost effective and industry leading software applications. There is a myriad of opportunities for technological improvements within Finance that, if adopted, would improve efficiency and reduce cost. For example, move from a punch card time-clock system for hourly payroll to a card swipe system that is integrated with existing EASYPAY software. Eliminate cost and time associated with manual distribution of paystubs by providing online. Modernize water billing processes to eliminate non-value added work.

27. Assess Feasibility of Current Service Ontario Business Model

Offering the public (West Elgin residents and others) access to provincial services within a municipal office is an efficient way to deliver public services. In its present form, the provision of Service Ontario is not cost effective as the total cost to the Municipality for the provision of this provincial service is not sufficiently covered through revenues generated in accordance with the existing contract with the Ministry of Government Services. In recent years, costs have increased and revenues have decreased, the latter being likely due, in part, to the opening of a nearby office in Newbury and the public's increasing familiarity and use of online government services.

It is also recommended that agreements be developed to have other qualified Service Ontario vendors provide absence coverage rather than using existing municipal staff whom, with ongoing sporadic exposure to Service Ontario systems and procedures, can only provide basic and limited service to the public.

5.6 Parks and Recreation

- West Elgin's Parks and Recreation department has been established by Council in a balanced approach that considers the community needs, the capacity to deliver programs and the capacity of residents to support programs and services. The Parks and Recreation department is comprised of one (1) Parks and Recreation Superintendent, whom reports to the CAO and has overall responsibility for the Parks and Recreation Department; three (3) full-time Parks and Recreation Operators, one (1) seasonal Arena Operator, three (3) seasonal Parks Operators, and seven (7) Pool Lifeguards. The span of control is appropriate for the department.
- West Elgin maintains and operates a large number of parks, trails, and facilities with most being concentrated in Rodney and West Lorne. Notably, there is a 15- acre park, recreation centre, and pool in Rodney and a 20-acre sports park and arena in West Lorne.
- The Recreation Centre is divided into three areas – a large gym like space and two meeting areas. Programming at Recreation Centre occurs based on community interest, expressed by individuals or groups. There are current activities for persons interested in shuffleboard, pickle

ball, ball hockey, a walking group, playing cards, and yoga. Some programming is free; others are charged a nominal fee; others at market rate. Use of the Sports Field is charged in a similar fashion with organized sports such as baseball and soccer paying the highest share.

- The Arena is utilized by both West Elgin and Dutton-Dunwich residents under a cost sharing arrangement between the two municipalities. The Arena's largest customers are the Skating Club and the Minor Hockey Association.
- The Arena Board provides general oversight of the Arena operation and is comprised of elected officials from each municipality, a member of the public, and one local representative from each of Minor Hockey and a local figure skating organizations.
- The Parks and Recreation Department is also charged with winter maintenance of 12 KM of sidewalks in Rodney and West Lorne, along with parking lots at the recreation centre, the fire hall in West Lorne and the arena.
- The highest cost revenue generating facilities (the recreation centre in Rodney and arena in West Lorne) are underutilized and not being used efficiently. There are a number of causal factors for this including 1) a general lack of record keeping, including visitor/usage counts; 2) the lack of programming offered to the public coupled with a historical reliance on outside parties to initiate use; 3) poor scheduling practices of existing programming that increases cost by having staff present in underutilized facilities; 4) and inconsistent application of user fees for staff service and/or facility usage.

Recommendations:

28. Assess Opportunities to Implement Technology

Effort should be made to explore the use of technology and mobile platforms for daily application in the department. There are a number of "apps" that are available to remotely record and maintain important data. Remote use of technology and software is encouraged.

Documented policies, procedures, and record keeping are wholly lacking within the Parks and Recreation department. These must be developed and documented and should be appropriately distributed and stored electronically. Training procedures and records should also be handled in a similar manner. Playground and field inspection records, deficiency reports, pool testing records, maintenance logs at all facilities and other health and safety reporting deemed necessary is a required part of due diligence should all be readily accessible through electronic format. Record keeping systems must be developed and maintained.

29. Establish Proactive Programming to Drive Increased Utilization of Recreation Facilities

Consider surveying the public regarding its needs and work with key stakeholders, local expertise and volunteers within the Municipality to ensure that programs and services are adapting to the needs of the residents in an efficient and effective manner.

Reach out to private health and fitness and/or recreation providers at early stages for partnering and planning of any programs that could benefit the wider community.

Develop a communications strategy including use of mobile technology that provides a high level of awareness as to what services and programs are available and develop outreach efforts to secure paying and stable customers for the arena beyond West Elgin and Dutton.

30. Revisit Recreation Centre Fee Schedule

Charging fees for use of the parks and recreation space and facilities can be a challenging topic for municipal officials. Municipalities provide a public good and are not in business like the private sector. However, a review and/or development of an appropriate fee schedule would help ensure the users (individuals and groups) are treated in a fair and consistent manner for use of the facilities. As part of that effort, care and control of the recreation centre could be enhanced with the use of a swipe card system for controlled access outside of regular hours.

31. Establish and Efficiently Manage Hours of Operation for Arena

While no formal hours of operation have been established, the arena is open and staffed 7 days, afternoons, and evenings per week in the winter time and is underutilized every day but Sunday. Minor scheduling changes can be made without impact to current paying customers. With the exception of the Skating Club and Minor Hockey, scheduling times for other private rentals should be amended and consolidated to better utilize the arena. Once that is done and until such time as the asset is better utilized throughout the week, a reduction of operating hours should be considered.

32. Consider Partnerships and Other Revenue Sources

Explore opportunities for sponsorship or naming facilities under agreements with local residents or companies. Consider provincial and federal grants, foundation grants, fundraising, bequests, and private sector paid advertising at sports field and arena, including on the Zamboni.

5.7 Public Works

- The Public Work department has a number of operational responsibilities including all municipal public infrastructure such as municipal roads and bridges, County road maintenance (through agreement), street lights, sidewalks, municipal landfill operations, administration of garbage and recycling contracts, gravel pit operations, building maintenance, and assorted maintenance responsibilities at the Port Glasgow Trailer Park.
- The Public Works department is comprised of one (1) Public Works Superintendent, whom reports to the CAO and has overall responsibility for the Public Works department; one (1) Public Works Foreman; seven (7) full-time Public Works Operators; three (3) winter season contracts for road patrol; and one (1) part-time Land Fill attendant. The Utilities Operator will supplement the workforce for winter operations. As is normal practice in municipal operations, public works projects may be contracted out, in whole or in part, due to the size and scope of work required. The span of control is appropriate for the department and the department is staffed similarly to market comparators.
- Public Works has the requisite heavy machinery and equipment for their jobs and employees have the skills and abilities to operate the equipment. Not all operators are completely proficient in all pieces of equipment and like any organization, employees have preferences for particular equipment based on skills, experience, interest and ability.

Recommendations:

33. Assess Opportunities to Expand Utilization of Existing and New Software Applications

Leverage existing and new cost effective and industry leading software applications. There is a myriad of opportunities for technological improvements within Public Works that, if adopted, would improve efficiency and reduce cost. As recommended earlier in the report, move from a punch card time-clock system for hourly payroll to a card swipe system that is integrated with existing Keystone software.

Effort should be made to explore the use of technology and mobile platforms for daily application in the department. From basic formulated excel spreadsheets that track health and safety training to annual licensing extracts to more elaborate software and apps that track equipment maintenance or plot most efficient plowing routes, the department is encouraged to assess efficiency opportunities through expanded use of technology.

34. Consider Development of Sense of Ownership by Assigning Equipment to Individual Operators

Consider assigning primary and back up operators to each piece of heavy equipment. Informally, Operators tend to gravitate to particular pieces of equipment based on familiarity, skill, and experience. By formalizing such practice, each assigned operators would likely take greater ownership and ultimately greater care of such capital assets. Overall cleanliness and maintenance would be enhanced and the need for new or refresher training would be highlighted.

35. Establish Use of Visual Aids

Employees in Public Works start and end their work day at the Public Works shop co-located with the Municipal office. At times, daily tasks are concluded earlier than anticipated or not enough time remains in a shift to start a new project in the field and employees return to the shop. Communicating next day or ongoing job assignments through the use of visual aids such as job boards in the shop will enhance productivity.

6. The Case for a Senior Administrative Leader

Introduction:

As part of this organizational review, Council requested comment regarding the need for a senior administrative leader at West Elgin.

A number of academics and public service professionals have written about the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) model. Professor Andrew Sancton (Western) and Professor David Siegel (Brock) as well as Michael Fenn (former Ontario Deputy Minister and experienced municipal and provincial organizational leader) are three such experts that provide great insight on this topic. Their works provide the basis for much of what is written below.

While the position of CAO is not required under Ontario's Municipal Act, most municipalities in Ontario have adopted the CAO model whereby this senior administrative leader has managerial authority for the daily operations of the municipal government and for managing its staff, including the development and implementation of policy and budgets, as approved by Council. The principle underlying the CAO model is the separation of policy making (by Council) from policy development and implementation (by CAO and staff). While never completely compartmentalized, Council and staff do have different roles that have evolved over time.

Discussion:

In the early to mid-20th century, important municipal functions and policy decisions were largely limited to roads and piped infrastructure. Over time, when the Province wished to implement new policies and programs, it would often bypass municipal Councils in favour of the use of special purpose bodies such as health units, hydro commissions, and conservation authorities (often with politically appointed chairs).

Post war economic and population growth created a need for housing, infrastructure, long-term financing, and public services of all kinds. The 1960s and early 70s saw a revamping of municipal boundaries and responsibilities, matched with new fiscal resources and an activist role of the Province that recognized the need for professional municipal management. By 1971, the position of CAO was firmly established in provincial legislation with its role defined in relatively few lines in the Municipal Act. By the mid-70s, about 12 percent of Ontario's municipalities used some variant of the CAO model. At the beginning of the 21st century, the CAO model had evolved whereby almost every municipality in Ontario had some variant of the CAO model in place.

Today, councils across the provinces rely on staff to provide advice on policy matters. The CAO acts as the conduit through which this advice flows to and from Council. In some cases, depending on the number and expertise of staff involved in policy matters, Council may only receive partial or even conflicting advice. The CAO can sort through those issues to provide the best professional advice to Council. Once decisions are made by Council, the CAO must interpret the intentions of Council, which are not always clear, and provide sound direction to staff regarding development and implementation of

Council's policy decisions. The CAO is best positioned to synthesize these policy outcomes and provide clear direction to staff and be held accountable by Council for such actions.

As experienced Mayors, Wardens, and Councillors know, CAOs holds an important position in the corporation such that they can make Council's job easier or tougher; make Council look good or bad; motivate and engage staff for peak performance and service or quickly deflate an entire organization; build relationships between the municipality with community organizations, partners, and stakeholders, or knock them down. Choosing the right CAO at the right time is challenging for any Council and critical for the success of the organization.

Beyond the typical job description of a CAO, the most impactful contributions made by the best CAOs are often intangible and indirect. These include:

Establish and Foster the Right Organizational Culture

CAOs set the tone for the organization and play a major role in creating and sustaining the culture of an organization. CAOs can set a professional tone for an organization and can foster an empowered workforce or can limit such participatory style with the administration.

Good leaders will have an impact on the organization through informal influence. When a leader treats everyone in the organization with respect regardless of position and models appropriate workplace behaviours, employees will understand that all people matter. Similarly, when leaders work collaboratively with others and trust employees to do the right thing, employees will be inspired to get behind the leader's vision in promoting positive change and act accordingly.

Build High Performing Teams

An important part of a CAO's job is to assemble the best talent around them. Next, a CAO must support and nurture the team to ensure high levels of effort and contribution, mutual support, and team cohesion. Department heads have to be allowed to manage their functional area and be responsible and accountable for their functional area's performance; yet all team members must function as a single unit and first act in the broad interests of the municipality and not in the interests of their own unit or department.

Decades ago and before the CAO model was widely adopted, municipal Councils typically struck committees in order to manage policies and hold department heads accountable. Over time, this practice became unworkable as policies became more complex and required the coordination and collaboration of multiple departments. In some cases, committee chairs developed cozy relationships with department heads that shut out the full Council in decision making. It also violated the principle that staff works for Council, not individual Councillors, and constrained Council's ability to fully integrate policy decisions affecting several departments. An effective CAO would ensure that employees act on the wishes of Council; not on the wishes of any one member of that deliberative body.

Demonstrate Vision

Visioning or the act of looking ahead to where a municipality is going remains one of the roles of Council. The best CAOs understand that and can actively assist Council by ensuring members are aware of current and future matters that may impact outcomes of such visioning and assist accordingly. Such

matters may include status of municipal infrastructure or finance, legal matters impacting the municipality, or looking for relevant changes across the legislative landscape.

CAOs also develop their own vision of how and where they wish to guide the municipal administration. The best forward thinking is consistent with the visioning of Council and achieves their support.

Manage Organizational Performance

CAOs play an invaluable role in monitoring performance to ensure an organization is performing as required. It can be a difficult challenge, particularly in smaller organizations, where a CAO may have a dual operational role as Treasurer or Clerk. As department head, one is deeply involved in managing departmental affairs and individual performance. As CAO, one is acting in a strategic capacity and not directly managing services. In a dual role where a CAO has operational responsibility, one must balance their system of monitoring municipal activities. That balance recognizes the importance of having sufficient interest in activities to retain appropriate control but not being too intrusive to signal a lack of trust or confidence in others.

Manage Money and People

Involvement in the management of these two resources is critical to any municipal organization.

Financial literacy and business acumen is important to providing broad oversight for the financial affairs of the municipality; while the Treasurer has responsibility for overall management of finances, the CAO will provide the necessary insight and application to matters before Council with a broad perspective that goes beyond the data.

Effectively managing people can be challenging - managing up with Council; managing down with employees; and managing out with residents. Communicating well, building trust, engaging others, and cultivating support requires full time effort, skill, and sometimes good timing and luck. It requires a keen sense to monitor and assess but don't micro-manage with staff; to provide good advice and counsel but don't prescribe or direct Council; and to build close ties in community but maintain a professional distance and keep in one's (administrative) lane.

Analysis:

Given the ongoing challenges facing municipal councils in Ontario, it may be tempting for some Councils, particularly smaller rural ones, to eliminate this senior role and allocate the savings elsewhere in the operation. As this section has attempted to point out, there are a number of intangible and indirect contributions a CAO makes, often behind the scenes, that are invaluable to an organization.

As evidenced under the old committee systems, in the absence of a senior administrative leader, the cohesive organizational team may, over time, break into department silos with individual department heads working in their own narrow interests without fully integrating policy decisions that affect several departments. Holding people accountable for deteriorating or failed performance will be made more difficult as authority and responsibility is shared across an organization.

In the absence of a senior administrative leader, Council will not benefit from receiving the best advice on policy matters but rather receive partial or even conflicting advice from staff. Department heads may

interpret the intentions of Council differently from each other and in a manner that was unintended leading to policy development and implementation issues.

Council's workload will likely increase as members take on tasks of fostering a positive organizational culture, building high performing teams, and more closely monitoring the daily operation of the corporation and its alignment with goals set by Council.

At times decisions made by Councils may include considerations of re-election and/or represent short term compromise. This is every Council's prerogative. However, consideration of professional principles over a longer term horizon afforded by the expertise and experience of a senior administrative leader may produce a preferred outcome.

Summary:

The way in which elected officials are attuned to the concerns of local residents is the major contribution they make to policy making and service delivery. CAOs have a different perspective developed through professional training and municipal career experience. This dynamic between people who see an issue from different perspectives can produce desirable results. Municipal experts suggest the best public policy comes about when a policy resides at that intersection of these two interests – the political interest that wishes to see decisions of Council reflect the prevailing local culture and the staff interest that wishes to see decisions of Council reflect rational professional values.

There is academic support for the role of a senior administrative leader in municipal government. Most of Ontario's 444 municipalities employ the CAO model because it works effectively and efficiently, particularly for part-time Councils. In many cases, this senior role is combined with a statutory position such as Treasurer or Clerk which is appropriate in smaller rural municipalities.

Finally, during the organizational review a number of staff commented that the right senior administrative leader who can make the intangible and indirect contributions would benefit the organization and the municipality. Employees see value in the role.

7. Conclusion

Municipal revenue sources are narrowly based and often inadequate to meet the service demands of residents. Add in aging infrastructure, a lack of accessible and reliable internet, and decreasing populations due to outmigration of people to urban areas, and it becomes clear that rural municipalities across Ontario face numerous challenges.

In response, many municipalities have acted responsibly by engaging services from private contractors and by sharing the provision of services with other municipalities. West Elgin has done both as well as actively engaged in inter-municipal revenue sharing. West Elgin Council should be commended for its ongoing consideration of funding options to assist with its annual operating budget needs.

Council should also be commended for undertaking this organizational review in its efforts to seek greater organizational efficiency and effectiveness. In that regard, the recommendations made in this report represent reasonable opportunities for continuous improvement to enable West Elgin to meet its current and near term organizational mandates. The implementation of such recommendations will have a positive impact on the efficiency of operations and human resources considerations within the corporation.

The recommendations are considered fair and within the capability of the Municipality to implement. Implementation of recommendations, if approved by Council, could be implemented over an eighteen (18) month period so as not to exceed the reasonable use of existing human resources, enable the growth of support for such change, and not negatively impact existing departmental budgets.

It is understood that the Municipality has, in some cases, commenced implementation of such recommended initiatives in the normal course of business. This can be found in certain initiatives already underway in Finance and Clerk's offices. Where those efforts are aligned with the recommendations contained in this report, it is suggested that West Elgin continue with implementation of those actions and any planning be adjusted accordingly, if required.

The Municipality of West Elgin is appropriately resourced and managed for a municipality of its size. It is unlikely that significant cost savings could be achieved through wholesale change in organizational structure, management, staffing, or practice. Staff continues the hard work of improving the delivery of municipal programs and services; respond to ever increasing resident demands; meet legislative and regulatory requirements; and address important issues affecting the future of the Municipality.