

COUNCIL AND MUNICIPAL REPORT CARD

A Self-Assessment Tool

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COUNCIL and Municipal REPORT CARD

Part 1 - THE COUNCILLOR'S CHECKLIST

This checklist is intended to provide municipal councils and their administrators a quick snapshot of how well the municipal corporation and council is functioning. The checklist should be completed in the spirit of building a stronger municipal organization. The results of which will be confidential if that is the council's wish. The findings will only provide a general perception to council members regarding council's effectiveness. The completion of this checklist may help to inform a council and administration where additional attention is required in order to support a strong and stable environment for conducting the municipality's business.

Please note that this checklist is not designed to be a comprehensive assessment of your administration and council. It is simply a tool to get a general impression of how you are doing. If individuals are uncomfortable sharing their views through this checklist, consider having everyone involved in managing the municipality (council and senior staff) complete the checklist on their own time, and without putting their name on it leave completed checklists in a drop box for tabulation by administrative staff.

Step 1:

Council members (and/or) senior staff are to rate how they perceive that the council as a whole is performing in relation to each statement below.

Rating Scale: **Strongly Agree (5); Agree (4); Neutral 3); Disagree (2); Strongly Disagree (1); Don't Know (0)**

Statement	Rating 0 - 5
1. Council's orientation of newly elected councillors satisfactorily prepares them to understand their authority and to undertake their responsibilities.	
2. Council is actively involved in developing clear goals and action plans to pursue the direction and priorities of the corporation (e.g. resulting from items such as strategic plans or business plans).	
3. All council members understand the municipal corporation's mission and the programs and services it provides.	
4. Council members demonstrate commitment to the municipality's mission and goals.	
5. Council has an effective process for evaluating the performance, and supporting continuing professional development, of administrative staff.	
6. Council has approved detailed policies to guide the administration in addressing all matters related to municipal staff.	
7. Council members demonstrate a clear understanding of the role of the	

administrator versus the role of council members.	
8. The municipality's resources are used efficiently (good value for dollars spent).	
9. Council receives and fully understands regular reports on finances, program/service performance, staffing and other important matters.	
10. The council has credibility with ratepayers and other key stakeholders (e.g. staff, community, funders).	
11. The structure of the municipality's <i>committees</i> and <i>officer positions</i> (e.g. reeve/mayor, deputy, returning officer, signing authorities, etc.) is clear to all council members.	
12. Conducting the business of the municipality works well because it is not impaired by personal disagreements between council members.	
13. Council members have a respectful and positive working relationship with the administrative staff.	
14. Council is well prepared to manage any crisis that could reasonably be anticipated within the corporation's day-to-day business activity and the municipality as a whole.	
15. Council uses productive decision-making processes in meetings (e.g. time is used wisely, items are dealt with so that they don't keep coming up unresolved, council's decisions are effectively implemented, agenda items focus on council member responsibilities, factual information is available to the extent possible).	
Total of the 15 items	
Overall Score: (Total divided by 15)	

Step 2:

You may wish to have all councillors and your administrator complete the check-up as well. Then have all completed checkups compared to come up with the average score from all council members. This may assist council to focus on areas that may require attention, and clarify where individual perceptions differ.

Step 3:

Understanding the overall score:

5	Excellent. You may have the perfect municipal council.
4 - 5	A highly competent council. Good work.
4	Very well. Council is quite competent. Congratulations.
3 - 4	Fair. Council does many good things but may also be struggling in a few areas

	that may require attention.
3	Needs work. Develop an action plan to improve council's policies, procedures and business planning.
2 - 3	Help! Council may be doing a few things reasonably well and other things very poorly. Consider consulting with other councils and organizations to learn how to address specific areas of concern.
2	Serious challenges. Council may wish to consider a complete review of its operation and implement a process to make improvements.
1 - 2	Life support may be needed. This score means that most of the ratings strongly disagreed with the performance of council. Concerns may arise regarding potential liabilities of council not performing its legal responsibilities.
1 or less	Non-performance. Ratepayers and other key stakeholders are likely to be expressing concerns and in some instances seeking to intervene and receive attention to council responsibilities. A complete overhaul may be in order.

Part 2 - DOCUMENTS AND TOOLS

The following is a list of documents and materials which you may want to have close at hand to help you in your work as a municipal councillor. This is a guide and is not intended to be exhaustive. You may wish to add items. Some of the documents on this list may not be applicable to our municipality; if any are applicable but are not available, you may want to have some prepared by your municipal staff. Just ask.

Are you familiar with these documents? Do you know where you can find them?

Do You Have? Do you wish to have?

1. ___ A copy of the Municipal Act, 2001
2. ___ A copy of the Planning Act
3. ___ A copy of the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act
4. ___ A copy of your municipality's procedural bylaw
5. ___ A policy manual and/or list of important municipal bylaws
6. ___ A copy of your municipality's strategic plan
7. ___ A copy of your municipality's official plan
8. ___ A copy of your upper tier official plan (if applicable)
9. ___ A copy of your municipality's zoning bylaws
10. ___ A copy of the Provincial Policy Statement
11. ___ A chart or list of who does what in your area – lower tier and upper tier responsibilities
12. ___ A list of local boards and authorities in your area and the representatives
13. ___ A list of council committees and the representatives
14. ___ A copy of the current Ontario Municipal Directory (published by AMCTO)
15. ___ A list of local representatives on municipal associations
16. ___ A list of your property classes and tax rates
17. ___ A list of your tax relief and rebate programs
18. ___ A copy of the most recent financial statement of your municipality
19. ___ A copy of your previous and current year municipal budgets and schedule of budget reporting to council (monthly, quarterly)
20. ___ A copy of your municipality's most recent Municipal Performance Measurement Program (MPMP) report
21. ___ The procedures for putting an item on the council agenda

NOTE: Most statutes and associated regulations can be found on the e-laws website at Ontario.ca/e-laws.

Part 3 - GENERAL MUNICIPAL REPORT CARD

A. GOVERNANCE

In this context, governance refers to issues pertaining to the elected council. It includes elements from the initial election of council, the specific functioning of council, and the degree of support council receives from the community. This evaluation will indicate the level of commitment of the elected councillors, their compliance with legislated requirements, and the degree of community support being expressed for council.

ELECTIONS

A1. Did your council have a contested election for the last Municipal General Election?

Yes (contested)

No (acclaimed)

To some degree

A2. Was the voter turnout in the last Election (bi-election) satisfactory?

Yes (50%+)

No (<35%)

To some degree (35-49%)

A3. Are council vacancies filled within 60 days as per the *Municipal Act*?

Yes

No

To some degree

COUNCIL MEETINGS AND PROCEDURES

A4. Does your council hold at least one regular public council meeting per month?

Yes

No

To some degree

A5. Does each councillor regularly attend council meetings (e.g. rarely misses more than two consecutive meetings)?

Yes

No

To some degree

A6. Does your council make the dates and times of public meetings known to residents?

Yes

No

To some degree

A7. Has your council adopted 'Rules of Procedure' for council meetings? (e.g. Roberts Rules of Order, other)

Yes

No

To some degree

A8. Does your council have a Policy & Procedures Manual? (Including for example council travel policy, media communications, responding to citizens, contact with Government, etc)

Yes

No

To some degree

COMMITTEES OF COUNCIL

A9. Does your council have standing committees of Council in place?

Yes No To some degree

A10. Do your standing committees report to council on a regular basis either through their council liaison/representative(s) or other methods?

Yes No To some degree

A11. Does your council have any advisory committees that involve volunteers from outside council?

Yes No To some degree

TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS

A12. Does each of your councillors have a copy of the *Municipal Act*?

Yes No To some degree (if only some do)

A13. Is your council aware of the legislative requirements of the Municipal Act and other pertinent legislation? (For example: conflict of interest, disclosure statements)

Yes No To some degree

A14. Does your council regularly update their knowledge of municipal government through participation in Ministry of Municipal Affairs (MMAH) or other association training opportunities?

Yes No To some degree

A15. Does your council provide any professional development funding for Councillors (e.g. training, travel to conferences, etc...)

Yes No To some degree

PLANNING

A16. Does your municipality have a land use/zoning (municipal) plan that is less than ten years old?

Yes No To some degree

A17. Does your municipality have a capital works plan for the next five or more years?

Yes No To some degree

A18. Does your municipality have an economic development plan?

Yes No To some degree

A19. Does your municipality have a comprehensive sustainability plan?

Yes No To some degree

A20. Did your council play a key role in creating these plans?

Yes

No

To some degree

A21. Does your municipality have a formal process to monitor the sustainability of your community and progress in implementing development plans (e.g. Quality of Life, State of the Economy/ Environment reports)

Yes

No

To some degree

A22. Does your municipality have an emergency preparedness plan (EPP)?

Yes

No

A23. If yes is your Emergency Preparedness Plan updated regularly?

Yes

No

To some degree

N/A

A24. Have you identified your Community Emergency Management Coordinator?

Yes

No

A25. Is your council familiar with the content of existing community plans (municipal plans, land use plans, community or economic development and emergency management plans)?

Yes

No

To some degree

A26. Are there formal avenues for active citizen involvement in local planning and decision-making?

Yes

No

To some degree

B. ADMINISTRATION

Employees of council carry a significant responsibility for the delivery of local municipal services. They have daily contact with the public and advise council on the development of policy. They are also responsible for implementation of the adopted policies, plans, regulations, and directions of council. They also submit to council proposals, recommendations and plans, including long range plans, for the efficient and orderly running and development of the municipality, provide an enforcement and regulatory service, financial accounting of assets and liabilities as well as engineering, planning, public works, recreation, emergency measures and fire protection programs in accordance with the goals and objectives of council. This section evaluates the abilities and performance of the administrative employees of council.

B1. Does your council employ qualified administrative staff?

Yes No To some degree

B2. Has your senior administrative staff member supplemented their education with a post-secondary level diploma or certificate in Business and/or Municipal Administration?

Yes No To some degree

B3. Does your municipality take minutes for each council meeting?

Yes No To some degree

B4. Does your municipality take minutes for committees of council?

Yes No To some degree

B5. Does your council have a records management Policy? (i.e. that specifies how long various records are kept)

Yes No To some degree

B6. Has your council identified its "head" for Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy purposes?

Yes No To some degree

B7. Do administrative staff (clerks and/or managers) regularly update their knowledge of municipal government through participation in Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) or other association training opportunities?

Yes No To some degree

B8. Does your council provide any professional development funding for staff? (e.g. training, travel to conferences, etc...)

Yes No To some degree

B9. Is the senior staff familiar with the content of existing community plans? (municipal, land use, community, economic development or emergency preparedness plans)

Yes No To some degree

B10. Within the past year has your council met deadlines for submitting financial and other reports to the provincial government?

Yes No To some degree

B11. Does your council have job descriptions for all positions in your municipality?

Yes No To some degree

B12. Is your council office computerized?

Yes No To some degree

B13. Are office staff members adequately trained to use all software programs required for their jobs?

Yes No To some degree

B14. Does your council office have Internet access?

Yes No To some degree

B15. Does your municipality have a contact email address?

Yes No To some degree

B16. Are your council office hours sufficient to administer the municipality's business?

Yes No To some degree

B17. Are your council office hours sufficient to provide public access?

Yes No To some degree

C. FINANCE AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The long-term viability of a municipal government is dependent on sound financial management, the ability to raise sufficient revenue to meet the legislative obligations of a municipality as well as citizen expectations for service delivery. Infrastructure provision may also require the ability to acquire debt financing and effectively manage the resulting debt load. The following section examines issues of financial management, borrowing and revenue.

BUDGETING

C1. Does the council adopt an annual budget?

Yes No

C2. Does your council follow its annual budget?

Yes No To some degree

C3. Do you monitor your actual vs. budgeted revenues and expenditures on a minimum of a quarterly basis?

Yes No To some degree

C4. Did you balance your annual revenues and expenditures (i.e. avoid an operating deficit) in at least two of the last three years?

Yes No To some degree

BORROWING AND DEBT

C5. Is your debt servicing level within the provincial benchmark?

Yes (less than 30%) No (30% or greater) To some degree

C6. Is your municipality currently able to meet its debt payments without special government assistance?

Yes No To some degree

C7. Does your municipality have the fiscal capacity to take on debt?

Yes No To some degree

TAXATION

C8. Does your existing revenue finance your municipal services to meet the needs of residents?

Yes No To some degree

C9. Have your local revenue sources been stable or increasing?

Yes (increasing) No (stable) To some degree

C10. Is the percentage of your taxes in arrears at year-end less than 10%?

Yes

No

C11. Has the percent of taxes in arrears in your municipality been decreasing over the past five years?

Yes (decreasing)

No (increasing)

To some degree

ACCOUNTING AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT – OTHER

C12. Was your municipality's 2011 audit complete and adopted (as reflected in council minutes) by June 1, 2012?

Yes

No

To some degree

C13. Is your municipality able to establish and maintain a capital works reserve fund that adequately addresses your future infrastructure needs?

Yes

No

To some degree

C14. Are accounts payable paid within the discount or interest-free period?

Yes

No

To some degree

D. SERVICE DELIVERY

The following section reviews the major areas of municipal service delivery.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

D1. Does your municipality provide waste collection on a minimum of a weekly basis?

Yes No To some degree

D2. Is your community (or waste provider's) waste disposal site in full compliance with your Ministry of the Environment (MOE) Certificate of Approval?

Yes No To some degree (unsure) N/A

D3. Does your municipality have a non-deposit recycling program?

Yes No To some degree

D4. Does your municipality encourage composting?

Yes No To some degree

D5. Does your municipality have education programs in place to encourage waste reduction and diversion?

Yes No To some degree

D6. Does your municipality have a program for collecting, handling and safely disposing of hazardous waste? (e.g. used batteries, used oil, road salt, light bulbs)

Yes No To some degree

RECREATION

D7. Does your council run a recreation program?

Yes No To some degree

D8. Do your recreation programs provide activities for residents of all ages?

Yes No To some degree

D9. Are your recreation staff and volunteers appropriately trained (e.g. first aid, safety)?

Yes No To some degree

COMMUNICATIONS

D10. Does your municipality employ mechanisms for informing and communicating with residents about council decisions and priorities on an ongoing basis?

Yes No To some degree

D11. Does your municipality make council documents and budget information publicly available? (e.g. audit, minutes, budget as per the *Municipal Act*)

Yes No To some degree

E. EQUIPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The magnitude and condition of a municipality's infrastructure has direct impact on the level and quality of services provided. Much of the water and sewer infrastructure in the province is nearing the end of its expected useful life span and may need to be replaced in the near future. Ability to meet infrastructure requirements is determined in part by fiscal capacity to service debt, reviewed above. This segment is intended to assist municipalities to determine their infrastructure needs.

E1. Does your council follow a preventative maintenance schedule for its public facilities and infrastructure?

Yes No To some degree N/A

E2. Are the sewage disposal methods your council provides acceptable to MOE standards?

Yes No To some degree

E3. Is your water system less than 20 years old?

Yes No To some degree N/A

E4. Is your sewer system less than 20 years old?

Yes No To some degree N/A

E5. Is your council able to maintain your roads to an acceptable standard?

Yes No To some degree

E6. Has the number of complaints about local infrastructure been stable or decreasing?

Yes No (increasing)

E7. Does your municipality have existing greenspace, parks or walking trails?

Yes No To some degree

E8. Does your municipality provide residents with access to recreation facilities that meet your community's needs? (e.g. arena, ballpark, playground, pool or other)

Yes No To some degree

E9. Are your town hall facilities adequate for public access and meeting standards for public facilities?

Yes No To some degree

E10. Are your town hall facilities adequate for conducting council business?

Yes No To some degree

F. COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

Municipalities in this province have been revealing an alarming change in demographics. Many rural municipalities are experiencing a dramatic decline in population and resulting in erosion of the local tax base. Youth out-migration and low birth rates have also resulted in an increase in the average age of residents. All these factors have an impact on a municipality's fiscal and human resource capacity. Citizen commitment to volunteerism and environmental stewardship, engagement in social and cultural activities, and council's involvement and/or support of these activities also contribute significantly to community sustainability. The following section examines the sustainability of the community as a whole because ultimately a municipality cannot be sustainable unless they are part of an economically, environmentally, socially and culturally vibrant and sustainable community.

DEMOGRAPHICS

F1. Has the total population remained stable or grown over the past ten years (2001-2011 census period)?

Yes

No (declining >5%)

F2. Has the share of the population over the age of 60 remained stable or decreased (2001-2011)?

Yes

No (declining >5%)

F3. Has the school age population been stable or growing over the past decade (2001-2011)?

Yes

No (declining >5%)

ECONOMICS

F4. Is the unemployment rate in your community equal to or below the provincial average (7.8% in 2011)?

Yes

No

F5. Has the trend of building permits been stable or growing over the past five years (2006-2011)?

Yes

No

To some degree

F6. Is there a range of businesses operating in your municipality? (i.e. variety in size and sectors)

Yes

No

To some degree

F7. Do you expect that these businesses will be providing the same or greater employment in the community in 10 years?

Yes

No

F8. Is the municipality's business tax assessment base stable or growing?

Yes

No

F9. Is the municipality's residential tax assessment base stable or growing (2006-2011)?

Yes

No

F10. Are residents able to participate in subsistence activities such as wood cutting, gardening, hunting, and fishing and berry picking?

Yes

No

To some degree

SOCIAL CAPITAL, VITALITY AND INCLUSION

F11. Can residents count on support provided by friends and relatives to help meet their needs? (e.g. child or elder care, household duties)

Yes

No

To some degree

F12. Is there a strong sense of pride in the community?

Yes

No

To some degree

F13. Does your council actively lead or support activities to foster community pride and celebrate community?

Yes

No

To some degree

F14. Are there local volunteer organizations that support and/or provide complementary services to the municipality?

Yes

No

To some degree

F15. Is the membership of these volunteer organizations either stable or growing?

Yes

No

To some degree

F16. In general is volunteerism in the municipality stable or growing?

Yes

No

To some degree

F17. Is your council actively involved in, communicating regularly with and/or actively supporting these organizations?

Yes

No

To some degree

F18. Does the municipality have a program established to recognize community volunteers? (e.g. annual dinner, awards, letters of appreciation)

Yes

No

To some degree

F19. Are there public facilities in the community for community meetings and social gatherings?

Yes

No

To some degree

ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES

F20. Do you have sewage treatment in your community?

Yes (secondary, tertiary)

No (primary)

To some degree (septic)

N/A

F21. Is your council involved in taking steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in your municipality? (e.g. reducing automobile use through carpooling policies, encouraging transportation alternatives, providing trails/lanes/paths for travel by foot and bike, switching to renewable energy sources)

Yes

No

To some degree

F22. Has your municipality introduced policies or programs to reduce energy consumption within your municipal operations? (e.g. retrofitting street lights and municipal buildings with energy-efficient light bulbs, energy audits and building retrofits, green building design for new municipal buildings)

Yes

No

To some degree

F23. Has your council introduced policies or programs to encourage reduced energy consumption within the community?

Yes

No

To some degree

F24. Has your council introduced policies or programs to encourage reduced water consumption within the community?

Yes

No

To some degree

F25. Does your municipality or waste service provider have a program in place for monitoring leachate and groundwater contamination from your landfill site, or in the case of incinerators airborne emissions and impacts on nearby communities?

Yes

No

To some degree

F26. Would you rate the status of your natural resources and local ecosystems as healthy or in good condition? (e.g. fish stocks, forests, air and water quality)

Yes

No

To some degree

F27. Is your council actively involved in or supporting organizations or programs that encourage habitat and natural resource stewardship efforts in the community and surrounding area? (e.g. watershed management, marine protected areas)

Yes

No

To some degree

F28. Do your residents have access to outdoor recreation opportunities, not provided by council, in your community or within a distance your council considers reasonable?

Yes

No

To some degree

F29. Does your council have an integrated environmental management plan in place?

Yes

No

To some degree

HEALTH AND EDUCATION SERVICES

F30. Are there adequate health care facilities in your community or within a distance your council considers reasonable?

Yes

No

To some degree

F31. Is there a K-12 school in your community or within a distance your council considers reasonable?

Yes

No

To some degree

F32. Are there post-secondary education facilities in your community or within a distance your council considers reasonable?

Yes

No

To some degree

ARTS AND CULTURE

F33. Are there cultural facilities in your community or within a distance your council considers reasonable? (e.g. art galleries, museums, etc.)

Yes

No

To some degree

F34. Does your municipality have programs or policies to support arts, culture and heritage in your community (e.g. percentage of building costs set aside for public art, incorporation of local art into public facilities)?

Yes

No

To some degree

G. REGIONAL COOPERATION

The most common form of municipal regionalization in the province today is regional cooperation in service delivery, information sharing, and advocacy and to a lesser extent planning through a wide variety of locally-driven arrangements. The vast majority of these partnerships are between neighbouring communities but service sharing partnerships also exist with provincial agencies, local businesses and others. Together municipalities report they have a bigger political voice, improved access to funding and natural resources, the ability to attract speakers and resource people and enjoy mutual support and interaction. Challenges include community rivalries and differences, leadership/participation and balancing local and regional issues. The final section of the self-assessment reviews history with and willingness and potential for regional /area cooperation in the future.

G1. Does your council have the ability to share services with one or more adjacent communities? (Considering geography and other factors you feel are relevant)

Yes

No

To some degree

G2. Does the municipality presently participate in a service sharing arrangement with an adjacent municipality?

Yes

No

To some degree

G3. Do neighbouring communities in your region meet periodically to discuss issues of common interest?

Yes

No

To some degree

G4. Is your council willing to collaborate more in service delivery in the future?

Yes

No

To some degree

G5. Is there a history of cooperation among communities in your region? (not necessarily municipal)

Yes

No

To some degree

G6. Does your municipality currently share any infrastructure with another municipality?

Yes

No

To some degree

G7. Does your municipality currently share any equipment with another municipality?

Yes

No

To some degree

G8. Is your council officially and actively involved with a regional governance body? (Rural Economic Development Board, Tourism Development Association, Physician Recruitment)

Yes

No

To some degree

SPECIAL SECTION: FUTURE GOVERNANCE OPTIONS

Given the current demographic trends in Ontario and in Canada larger and more regional forms of local government may be necessary to ensure the sustainability of the rural areas of the province. This section is designed to gauge the general opinion of council on the issues of regional/county governments and amalgamation and is **not** considered in the sustainability evaluation.

SP1. Would your council consider becoming part of a larger regional local government? (e.g. a city or regional municipality)

Yes

No

To some degree

SP2. Would your council consider amalgamation or merger with nearby municipalities and/or communities?

Yes

No

To some degree

The above documents have been copied and adapted from various forms and formats located at: <http://www.municipal.gov.sk.ca/publications/councillors-checklist>; <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page8394.aspx#Checklist>; and <http://www.municipalitiesnl.com/userfiles/files/SATK%20low%20res.pdf>.