

Succession Planning – Local Government Careers and Rural Youth

A Report to Municipal Council

For AMCTO – Executive Diploma in Municipal Management

11/30/2016

Research into the level of awareness of careers in local government or municipal administration in area youth through the education system. Outline and illustration of the process and development of a unique Succession Plan for the Municipality of the United Townships of Head, Clara & Maria. An introduction into the potential for a pilot project to work collectively with other area municipalities to develop a co-operative plan to increase awareness in youth and retain young professionals in rural Ontario with a focus on directing them to substantial careers in municipal government.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“At its simplest level, workforce development and succession planning is about identifying critical positions and future vacancies and preparing existing staff members to smoothly transition into more responsible positions. At its highest level, it represents an understanding that cities are defined by their people and that making an investment in the growth, development, and retention of those people is simply good government practice.” Mayor David Kelley, City of Colleyville, Texas is an early proponent of succession planning. (Cooper 2008, 13.)

Due to a skeleton workforce, small Ontario municipalities do not have an internal pool of staff from which to prepare to fill senior staff vacancies, a key component of succession planning.

This report describes the current employment climate, investigates the situation in Renfrew County and surrounding municipalities and has determined that there is a need for alternatives to traditional succession planning for municipalities who do not have the complement of staff from which to recruit.

Instead of following the traditional methods of independent succession planning; rural municipalities require a unique plan. Marketing to, attracting and engaging area youth to encourage their pursuit of careers in local government may be more successful.

Research has found that many area youth are not aware of careers in municipal government even after obtaining career counselling. At the same time they are significantly unemployed or underemployed.

The main players in the formulation of a unique succession planning program in rural Ontario are youth, municipalities and educational institutions. A coordinated effort by municipalities and educational institutions to inform area youth of career opportunities in local government, may succeed; in part alleviating the pressure on municipalities to hire and train on the job.

Taking advantage of existing tools and increasing participation by municipalities in Local Government Week, high school and college co-ops, work placements and job fairs will significantly increase awareness. Once awareness is increased and a process created, municipalities must be willing to then provide employment for these young workers.

Report research has provided evidence of a desire in municipal and educational administrators in this area to work together to raise awareness. A municipal working group formed to create a coordinated program or unique succession plan, focused on local youth and careers in local government will benefit many.

Municipal benefits include reduced costs for municipalities in improved performance and productivity, retention or transfer of organizational history and knowledge, consistent service levels, smooth transitions, stability and reduced stress levels for those who have been left behind. (Baker Tilly, 2011)

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SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The objective of this report is to determine, if as thought, a career in municipal government is below the radar of secondary and post-secondary students in rural Ontario and if so to create a unique succession plan to change that fact, to increase awareness and improve succession planning for area local governments.

Looming baby boomer retirements will leave a void in a professional pool of talent to fill job vacancies. From where then do we search for our successors? Are local area youth aware that there is a viable career opportunity in municipal government? And if not, how do we correct that?

It is hypothesized that local youth are not aware, that given the opportunity for guidance and hands on training through secondary and post-secondary years; working together small rural Ontario municipalities will be able to “grow” its own pool of young professionals to replace senior staff when they retire.

As the main focus of this paper was to determine specifics for the local area, Renfrew County and surrounding small rural municipalities, surveys were created and distributed to 5 groups:

- Secondary school students;
- Post-secondary school students;
- Secondary school administrators;
- Post-secondary school administrators; and
- Lower tier Municipal Chief Administrative Officers.

The surveys were delivered via social media, word of mouth, and email. They were completed on-line in general and on paper through one local high school.

Additionally reports from a wide variety of sources from Canadian ministries and associations, US governments, provincial governments and associations, and private magazines were reviewed.

CHAPTER 1 - GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

AGING WORKFORCE AND SUCCESSION PLANNING

North America's workforce is aging, retiring early and taking a wealth of valuable knowledge with it leaving many professions without experienced, educated professionals to fill the void; and those left behind with instability, service delivery challenges and increased levels of stress.

"According to the 2011 NHS (National Housing Survey), workers aged 55 and over accounted for 18.7% of total employment compared to 15.5% in the 2006 Census. In 2011, just over 3 million people aged 55 and over were employed. The employment rate for this age group was 34.9% compared to 32.2% in the 2006 Census." (Ministry of Industry, 2013) As they age and retire, a void may be created which requires long term planning to fill, if knowledge retention and transfer are to be a part of this process.

Recent studies and publications such as that entitled *"Will There Really Be a Labor Shortage?"* by Peter Cappelli, professor of Management and director of Wharton's Centre for Human Resources, dispute the effect the "baby bust" will have on the workplace in general; claiming that there will no shortage due in part to various other factors such as the changing world of work, increased number of college/university graduates and the desire/need of seniors to remain in the workforce after the "usual" retirement age of 65. (Knowledge@Wharton, 2003)

The counter argument is that the crisis is real due in a large part to the aging number of baby boomers and their desire to retire "early" prior to age 65, (although they often return to the workforce in other areas or on a contract basis).

As the crisis/no crisis debate is not the focus of this paper we will move on the majority assumption that many professions will in fact realize a shortage of skilled talent in the near future and will look at the reality in Renfrew County specifically.

Other levels of government have had this impending challenge on their radar from some time. Many programs have been developed to address succession planning. The Treasury Board of Canada, in 2002 completed a study dedicated to filling vacancies within the Federal government. It provides a framework to manage "knowledge transfer and organizational transition strategies". It also forms a valuable resource for other human resources departments to use to create their own plans. (Treasury Board of Canada, 2002)

Many organizations have been through the process of developing plans and strategies for filling future job vacancies; many others, especially rural Ontario municipalities, have not laid out a formal process for various reasons which will be discussed further.

Due to the aging workforce, most workplaces will face challenges attracting and retaining qualified employees simply due to external competition. Governments will face additional challenges with competition from the private sector which is often able to provide greater salary and incentives.

CHAPTER 2 – SPECIFICS FOR SMALL RURAL ONTARIO

SUCCESSION PLANNING AND SMALL MUNICIPALITIES – DEFINITIONS AND CHALLENGES

The Ontario Municipal Human Resources Association defines succession planning and management as *“a deliberate and systematic effort by an organization to ensure the continued long-term effective performance of an organization, division, department or work group by:*

- *Identifying, developing, retaining and replacing talented individuals in key positions over time,*
- *Retaining and developing critical intellectual and knowledge capital for the future,*
- *Encouraging individual learning, growth and advancement.”* (Ball, 2016)

Traditionally, the focus on succession planning has been to recruit from inside an organization, and to mold existing staff and new hires to eventually replace retirees. But what if the numbers simply don't exist? Many small rural Ontario municipalities have a total complement of staff under 25 persons, some like Head, Clara & Maria with under 10 employees, many of whom are able to retire at or near the same time.

Generally, when it's time to replace staff rural Ontario municipalities hire from the local general worker pool and train for the position internally, or attempt to recruit qualified staff from larger centres.

In today's workplace, staffing includes much more than attracting, recruiting and retaining qualified staff. It includes motivating, mentoring, providing alternate work arrangements, succession planning, knowledge transfer and career development. For large and mid-sized organizations with Human Resources departments, this is a full time job. For small rural municipalities, this is just another group of tasks that an already over extended employee needs to take on.

Specific to succession planning, large and mid-sized organizations can recruit for successors from within their own workforce. Lower level managers move up as senior level managers retire; plans are created to groom successors within the workplace, to fill vacancies left by retirements. Internal studies are completed to determine the number of impending retirements; employees are surveyed to determine who might wish to or are capable of training to take on senior positions.

Additionally these workplaces recruit externally, “poach” from similar organizations and hire people with transferable skills and train to fit the position. With a larger pool of workers, the knowledge transfer process occurs over a longer period of time and with a larger group of people. Succession planning, although only one of the tools available to ensure workplace continuity and service delivery is much more manageable for large organizations simply due to the size of the internal workforce.

It has been documented that *“failure rates are high (40-50%) when executive talent is hired from outside”*. In addition to the high cost of rural municipalities attracting talent from other areas, a municipality has to defend the costs associated with recruiting, hiring and training qualified employees, when they face a nearly 50% chance of losing them. (Lewis, 2015)

In rural Ontario municipalities, often there are one or two people per department; each wearing many hats – having many job duties and descriptions in addition to their official title. Further, it must be considered that not everyone has the desire or aptitude necessary to become senior management. You can train for skills, not desire or potential.

For these municipalities acting alone, attracting candidates externally poses its own unique challenges. The inability to afford wages necessary to attract employees from larger centres is one problem. Small municipalities simply do not have the resources from their limited property tax base to increase salaries to levels required to compete with larger municipalities. There is also the will to do so. Often rural residents/taxpayers do not understand the level of competency required to staff municipal positions, feeling that “anyone can do that job” and question municipal staff salaries at even the lowest end of comparable labour market scales.

If advance notice of retirement is provided, the existing employee works in conjunction with their replacement for a pre-determined period to train on the job. The new hire, agrees to complete specific training programs on their own time, through association programs.

Conflicting priorities and demands on time, resources and abilities add to the challenges. Often Councils do not understand the complexities of the issue, focused on the short term, their own next term on council, and are not concerned with the long range staffing plan for the future.

They do not recognize the need to plan for the vacancy of their aging workforces and the accompanying knowledge drain. Municipal Councils must communicate to its constituency that succession planning benefits everyone by managing the transfer of knowledge and responsibilities at the least possible cost to the municipality. (Baker Tilly, 2011)

In some cases, staff is aware of the importance of succession planning but Councils do not agree with the importance of retaining the corporate memory instead focusing on passing a budget with a zero increase to satisfy ratepayers and get re-elected.

ALTERNATES TO TRADITIONAL SUCCESSION PLANNING AND EXTERNAL RECRUITING

One solution then might be to look to area youth to determine aptitude, desire and willingness to grow into a career in municipal government.

There is an aging population in rural Ontario. Unless they already have a career path, or have a job to grow into, many rural youth move to cities to find work. We’ve all heard the line of rural youth wanting “to get out of this place”. Often they move off to pursue post-secondary education and only return to visit on holidays and vacation.

And yet, youth unemployment is increasing. Steps need to be made to encourage area youth to consider careers in local government and seek gainful employment in their own backyards.

The Rural Ontario Institute in conjunction with a large number of contributors held a forum in 2014 and issued a report discussing youth unemployment in rural Ontario. In 2014 Ontario youth, described as being aged 15-24 faced an unemployment rate of over 16%.

“Youth, particularly those that are well educated, are leaving small urban and rural areas where employment opportunities are scarce. Those that remain often depend on lower skilled, part-time or contract work.” The report dismissed the millennial couch potato stereotype and indicates that there is a large pool of youth talent in our small rural communities along with a desire by these young people to be successful and contribute to their communities. (The Rural Ontario Institute, 2014)

This identifies a skilled workforce willing to work. Municipal administrators need to determine whether or not these youth have considered employment in municipal government and if so, provide them with an opportunity to learn and grow into a career. Traditionally, workplaces provided significant on-the-job training upon hire, something that is declining. Perhaps we need to reconsider this trend. Does the cost of on-the-job training balance out against the cost of lost knowledge when appropriate knowledge transfer does not occur prior to senior employee retirements?

Groups such as The Ontario Rural Council have spent considerable time and resources working with youth to create programs to encourage rural youth to either stay or return home after they have pursued post-secondary education. In a report created in 2007, youth identified as their number one priority in a list of 10 priority issue areas, gainful youth employment. (The Ontario Rural Council. 2007)

THE DESIRED SITUATION

Ideally, local municipalities would benefit from having trained and /or educated persons available to fill vacancies, from retirements or other, without the need for the expense of training after hire. The development of a coordinated approach to improved community consciousness, improved public administration education and an increased awareness of available career opportunities will be beneficial to all participants - students, schools, municipalities and communities alike.

For the short term, schools will have placement positions, students will have paid and unpaid on the job training and municipalities will have increased productivity. Long term, with increased awareness, students will be better equipped to determine whether or not a career in municipal government is for them and municipalities will have benefited from increased exposure to potential employees. Colleges will have an improved graduate employment record.

Municipal administrators who have expressed an interest will begin to work together to form a coordinated approach to youth engagement and awareness of careers in local government.

If buy in from enough partners to make this program viable is not obtained, it is important for Head, Clara & Maria to develop a plan and begin implementing it for our own purposes.

CHAPTER 3 – FIELD RESEARCH RESULTS - AREA YOUTH AND CAREERS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

STUDENT RESPONSES

Renfrew County secondary school students and Algonquin College, Pembroke Campus post-secondary students were asked about their awareness of careers in municipal government.

Combined, 62 responses were received from surveys distributed through secondary school guidance teachers, word of mouth and Facebook postings (43). Post-secondary responses (19) were gained through awareness created via posters distributed throughout the Algonquin College Pembroke Campus.

Of the college students, it was found that nearly 60% of students who responded were not aware of the opportunities for employment in local government within Renfrew County. For those who were aware, knowledge was gained equally through various sources including family, school, volunteer work and “other” even though 47% of those students also indicated that they had completed career related instruction prior to making their decision to attend post-secondary education. This would lead us to conclude that careers in local government are not being marketed by those responsible for providing career advice to area students.

Of note, the majority of the high school student responses received was from one school; administered by the teacher. This may skew the results in that direction provided to these grades 9 and 10 students would be similar. It is thought that if the responses were from a more diverse sample, the answers would be much more diverse as well. Reflective of the age of these children, and of the 34 responses received to the question of whether or not the individual would consider local government as a career, 70% said no, stating “because I don’t want to” as their reason. 10% of respondents were worried that they would not find work close to home, 14% were concerned with salary/pay, and 17% cited difficulty in obtaining specific post-secondary training.

Ideally, more responses would have been received from grade 11/12 students however; the sample does show that with only 37% of respondents indicating that they learned about careers in local government through high school counsellor or teachers, there is an opportunity to work with schools to increase awareness.

Responses from both educational and municipal administration indicated a receptiveness towards working together to improve that situation.

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR RESPONSES

The second set of surveys was provided to Administrators at both the secondary and post-secondary levels, again within Renfrew County. The focus was on the use of “Local Government Week” tools such as those provided by the Association of Municipal Managers Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO) and the willingness to work with municipalities on both paid work placements and unpaid co-op positions.

One hundred percent of responses received were positive however; it must be noted that due to secondary school board policy, the response rate from secondary administrators was minimal. Of the 9 requests only 3 or 33% responded.

Of those, the responses were positive in that administrators appear quite willing to work with municipalities to coordinate Local Government Week programming and to set up unpaid co-op positions with the high schools and/or paid summer work placements.

From the post-secondary programs offered, there is opportunity for quality paid work placements within local government for students from their Business, Environmental Technician, Outdoor Adventure, Motive Power Technician and Computer Systems Technician programs.

This looks promising for potential to work together to provide area youth with relevant workplace experience as well as increase their awareness of a variety of careers in local government. As Algonquin College's Placement Coordinator Cathy Yantha states *"I am always struggling to find paid placements."*

Confirming that there is a gap in the level of knowledge by county secondary and post-secondary students in relation to careers in local government, and in determining that both secondary and post-secondary administrators are interested in working towards improving that situation, the next step was to determine whether there was an interest from municipal administrators to cooperate.

MUNICIPAL RESPONSES

The final set of surveys were sent via email to lower tier Senior Administrators within the County and area municipalities to determine their level of participation in "Local Government Week", the barriers to their participation in this program, their desire to participate if a coordinated effort was made, and finally, their efforts in relation to succession planning and desire to pursue a coordinated approach to a cooperative plan.

Preliminary data suggests that municipalities do not participate in Local Government Week due to conflicting work demands and time constraints; they wish to but have not had the time, resources or internal labour pool to adequately form comprehensive succession plans and would consider working on a coordinated plan.

Of the 12 responses received, approximately 75% of respondents do not participate in Local Government Week citing mainly time/conflicting workloads and/or a lack of interest from local schools to participate.

Of those who do participate, the focus is on council and community participation/involvement and not careers.

Although debate may occur on whether or not the looming labour shortage is real, specifically, within the municipalities which responded to my survey, 80% of staff positions in each

municipality require some sort of specialized training, education, knowledge or experience; and between 29 and 53 of those positions will require replacement within the next 5 – 10 years.

Since 60% of respondents stated that they did not have a succession plan in place citing lack of time/conflicting demands with 50% of those claiming that they do not have an internal pool of staff from which to hire; there is a serious issue which needs to be addressed.

Of further concern for staff, is the fact that in some instances, succession planning is not on council radar. Councils are simply not interested, focusing on more immediate issues which are more visible to ratepayers and voters.

Of those who provided input in respect to current recruiting practices, 33% state training and promoting from within, and 44% recruiting from other municipalities. This is a challenge in the fact that it creates a revolving pattern of vacancies resulting in increased salaries, lost workplace knowledge and often hard feelings.

CHAPTER FOUR - FIELD RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

DETERMINING A NEED AND FIRST STEPS

Of those Chief Administrative Officers who responded to the survey (12 out of 27) or 44%, nearly 55% believe that their council's do not understand the seriousness of the problem of not having an internal pool of employees to promote to fill retirements. 81% of respondents feel that they would consider investigating and potentially working towards an area wide solution to meeting succession planning needs. A full 91% or 11 of the 12 respondents think that there might be an interest within their municipality to work jointly with other municipalities to educate youth to increase awareness of careers in local government so we can keep our professional youth employed and in the area.

It is reasoned, that with these numbers, there is a need and an interest in pursuing a coordinated unique succession plan for area municipalities focused on area youth. The goal will be to keep professional youth in the area and cooperatively plan for filling future job vacancies.

Positive responses from college and high school administration, as well as municipal administration seem to indicate collective buy-in. It is my recommendation that steps continue towards making a coordinated program a component of a long-term solution for member municipalities.

The ultimate benefit is that an educated workforce will reduce costs for individual municipalities, assist in succession planning, and reduce "poaching" from other municipalities, overall reducing staffing costs.

First steps would be to form a committee or working group to set guidelines and goals, divide workloads, set deadlines, report, re-evaluate and move forward. Initial questions to determine would include:

- What do we have in common?
- What are our differences?

- How do we develop a plan to meet objectives of the group and of each individual municipality at the same time?
- How do we fund the program?
- Who are the players?
- How do we obtain council buy-in?

CHAPTER FIVE - OPTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR PLAN COMPONENTS TO INCREASE AWARENESS IN AREA YOUTH

LOCAL GOVERNMENT WEEK

The most time and cost effective thing for this group to do would be to resist the urge to reinvent the wheel and instead build on existing products, programs and take a coordinated effort to market what currently exists to area youth.

AMCTO, has completed a significant amount of work in preparing and making available products and programs to increase awareness of municipal government in Ontario schools through the Local Government Week each October. Additionally, there are resources available through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities in their *Municipal Youth Engagement Handbook*.

Ideally, and initially the group would work with the schools at both the secondary and post-secondary levels to increase municipal and school participation in Local Government Week, county wide, taking a more active part in the annual program.

In conjunction with school administrators, teachers and with youth representation, a presentation with a local flavour could be created by the working group, focused on recruiting youth, which would be easily modified and used over a multi-year period during Local Government Week.

The focus must be on showcasing the benefits of working for local governments as well as the benefits of working in rural Ontario. The group will need to create a comprehensive plan, targeted to the appropriate age group, extolling the virtues of local government as a career choice.

CO-OP AND WORK PLACEMENT

The second most obvious option would be for member municipalities to participate with county high schools and college programming in their co-op, work placement programs and job fairs.

Unpaid high school co-ops could be created for area students within local municipalities; and paid summer job placements developed for high school and college students.

PROGRAM OPTIONS FOR YOUTH ATTRACTION, SUCCESSION MANAGEMENT AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

In addition to simple succession planning, municipalities are taking other steps to manage employee succession and knowledge transfer. Many organizations across Canada have worked together to develop solutions to various employment challenges. Variations of these programs might be modified for inclusion in what is to become an area wide succession plan.

For example, the School of Public Administration at Dalhousie University and various Nova Scotia municipal organizations created an agreement whereby the university would incorporate courses on municipal administration into their current programming while the municipalities contracted to fund various components of the program. A chair in local government was funded, internships created and a cooperative approach to educating, hiring and employing youth was born. (Government of Saskatchewan. 2014)

The Beneficial Practice Summary Report, Water and Wastewater from Ontario Municipal Knowledge Network provides evidence of similar programs being used specifically for water and waste water operators. York Region has an arrangement with local community colleges to provide co-op placements for their water treatment technicians.

“As part of York’s succession planning and in order to ensure and establish a supply of new operators, the Region has developed partnerships with Durham College and Georgian College for recruitment of co-op and graduating students, which are also accompanied by support at college career days.” (Ontario Municipal Knowledge Network, 2013)

Many Ontario municipalities have implemented retirement programs to retain senior staff in order to assist in knowledge transfer. In their retirement transition programs, employees choose to participate in a graduated reduction of work hours/days program in the years leading up to their retirement. This reduces overall employee wage costs but allows for the transfer of knowledge to junior staff, on the job.

The City of Colleyville in Texas has created an internal “college” where identified leaders participate in a ½ day leadership training segment each month. Many Ontario municipal associations and organizations offer quality webinars which would qualify for this type of in-house training for youth participating in our regional program.

Municipal administrators in Quinte, Napanee and Prince Edward County worked with Loyalist College Training and Development Centre to create a Leadership program to fill a need for qualified management as identified in their area. Perhaps details from that program may be borrowed from Loyalist to implement locally at Algonquin College. (O’Malley, Moore, 2006)

The succession planning document for the province of Nova Scotia discusses the potential for a regional or provincial program creating an “acceleration pool” of talent to be shared as required across a large area. Research conducted did not determine if this proposal has been pursued or if so, the results but this would certainly be an avenue to pursue should a working group be created.

“Such an acceleration pool of talent can be developed so that all municipal units may have access to skilled or trained employees. How complex a program such as this might become would be entirely up to those municipalities who choose to participate.” (Service Nova Scotia. 2004)

INITIAL PLANNING COMPONENTS

There are many changes local municipalities can make to attract and retain area youth. Member communities will have to work together to determine a schedule of impending vacancies, required competencies then recruit and train local students to be able to seamlessly slide into vacancies as they arise. New graduates from administration or technology programs would require specialized education in municipal administration in addition to any on the job training. Some mechanism would need to be created to have new graduates complete courses such as AMCTO’s Municipal Administration Program or other Leadership programs upon graduation.

A policy would be required to deal with enforcement capabilities to ensure that if any bonuses or benefits were paid to a student, and they then left the area or the field, they would have to refund the group.

With the focus on high school and college co-op placements, there is a significant chance that not all candidates who displayed initial interest will qualify for specific positions based on a number of factors including personal interest, skill set, aptitude and temperament once they are exposed to the workplace.

An individual needs to want to work in municipal government, to have a passion for helping others to succeed there. A person also has to have the ability to operate in the fishbowl, accountable to nearly everyone from his/her immediate supervisor to Council and the public. Co-op and work placements will provide an opportunity for candidates to self-select, to determine if this is a career for them, without the municipality having to go through a lengthy hiring process. Ultimately, those candidates who remain will show an aptitude and interest in careers in local government.

As has been practised in Head, Clara & Maria, it is important to hire for attitude, aptitude and cultural fit and if required to train for lacking skills later. By participating in various workplaces during an internship or through co-op placements, the candidate and member employers might better determine where each specific candidate would best fit.

Components of a successful program might include using options tried in large centers but geared specifically to our local needs such as:

- job exchanges amongst municipalities and departments,
- acting or interim assignments,
- internship programming at a local level;
- scholarship programs;
- mentorship programs;
- transitional positions,

- tuition reimbursements or subsidies,
- secondments and special projects across municipalities, and
- job sharing.

OUTSIDE THE BOX OPTIONS FOR RENFREW COUNTY MUNICIPALITIES

There are many tools which could be adopted or created to help achieve success with this program, so long as member organizations are willing to work together towards the common goal. For example:

- A “year book” of reviews/interviews by retired and current senior municipal employees from throughout the area could be created to honestly and candidly explain/describe their work experiences, what they liked, what they didn’t etc.
- To address the fact that many municipalities already have a full complement of employees, or are not in a position to simply create a job, perhaps positions could be created on a seasonal part time, permanent part time, contract or casual part time basis depending on the needs of the individual municipality. Taking advantage of government programs directed an engaging and employing rural youth might offset individual municipal costs to fund these positions.
- A coordinated youth volunteer program might be created to allow secondary school students to meet their volunteer graduation requirements while introducing them, in a constructed and formal way to careers in municipal government.
- For summer students, a component of orientation could include a summary of job opportunities within county municipalities with sample job descriptions, salary and benefit expectations and educational requirements. It is certain that students volunteer and/or employees are hired on an annual basis for various positions within rural Ontario municipalities but are never given additional information on what steps are required to obtain a full time job.
- Detailed exit interviews for short term positions could be developed to further inform our succession plan. Adaptations of that information, and that created to share during Local Government Week might also be displayed during Job Fairs.
- The extreme may be to work with Algonquin College to modify some of their current courses to more specifically address local needs.

The goal is that a successful candidate would be identified to fill a specific impending vacancy for whichever municipality is most in need, and on a pre-determined schedule. Perhaps existing staff might move to a more senior position in another municipality and a junior employee moves up, allowing us to then hire a new “trainee”. The ideal is that every

participant municipality will ultimately benefit from this experience and that no one municipality will be 100% responsible for hiring and training unqualified employees only to lose them to others.

CHAPTER SIX - MARKETING TO YOUTH

The responses received seem to indicate an opportunity for the development of a unique program to encourage home grown talent to meet future employment needs. There are many considerations and options to be deliberated in marketing to and attracting area youth. Of significance is the disparity between what matters at work to youth and to older workers.

Municipalities need to, and are able to offer jobs that meet the values and criteria coveted by today's workers including:

- stimulating work,
- ongoing skill-building and education,
- diverse duties and responsibilities,
- an environment that promotes creativity and innovation,
- flexible work arrangements and schedules,
- diversity in the work team,
- opportunities for cross-training and special project teams,
- independent and team work,
- rapid career advancement and work-life balance.

It is also of utmost importance for them to like and fit with the workplace culture.

We need to sell a career in local government.

Research has proved that a beneficial way to market to youth is to involve youth in your planning. When the working group is created, we will have to ensure that youth are included.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has created a detailed document focused on recruiting females to participation on local councils. Some of the tools outlined in their Protégé program might be adapted and utilized to attract youth to our program.

BARRIERS TO ACHIEVING THE DESIRED SITUATION?

Even though it seems that there is a desire to work together towards this goal of a coordinated succession plan/youth awareness program, there are still many obstacles to overcome. Barriers may include:

- a willingness of councils to work together towards a common goal;
- resources of time, money and abilities;
- difficulty in obtaining staff and council buy-in most specifically as it relates to “why should I contribute to someone else's goal achievement?”

The group membership will need to encourage councils to incorporate this type of programming into their long term Strategic Plan. One of the first goals of the group must be to determine how to sell to council, the benefits of working together even if it will be some years

before there is visible benefit in our own municipality. Managing a culture shift of these proportions in small rural Ontario will take some significant change management skills. Locating a champion in lower tier leadership would be beneficial. Having one or a group of mayors on board and willing to assist in attaining buy-in from the others would certainly be advantageous.

As council members quite rightly think with the municipal budget front of mind, we need to be careful to communicate the costs of liability if there is no trained staff member available to step in when senior vacancies occur. The ever increasing legislation and regulations imposed by the province are accompanied by quite large sticks in monetary fines and potential jail time for employees and members of Council. We do have tools at our disposal; we need to effectively use them.

CHAPTER SEVEN – PROGRAM COMPONENTS

REINVENTING THE WHEEL

As mentioned before, there is no need to reinvent the wheel if you want to adopt a basic succession plan. Many plans have been created and circulated for use, adoption, or modification to specific organizations. Our challenge however is in developing a unique plan to offset our internal lack of a “pool” of employees, be they trained or not.

There is considerable evidence of existing programs in other areas which may be modified for our unique needs. Samples include:

- The County of Renfrew’s succession plan. Would they be a participant?
- The Canadian Government’s Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat website has a complete succession plan program available for use.
- Oxford County has published a complete program with associated forms and documents which may be adapted to local use.

The working group will have to assess each of these programs, discuss specific needs and create a unique composite plan. It will not be simply succession planning but also marketing, recruiting, attracting and retaining, on a multi-municipal or regional basis. (Treasury Board of Canada. 2002)

SUCCESSION PLANNING IN HEAD, CLARA & MARIA

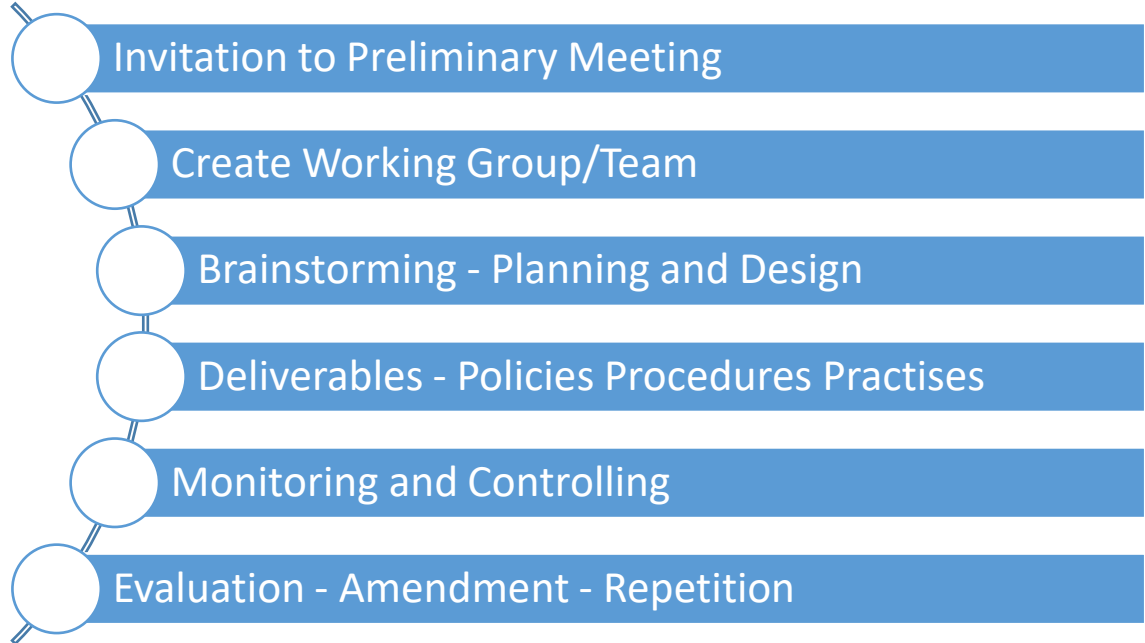
If after further consultation it is determined that this working group is not viable; Head, Clara & Maria (HCM) still needs a plan that does not simply follow normal succession planning practices for its own use. In completing research many proposals were reviewed but none consider the fact that there is simply no available internal staff from which to recruit.

If it is not possible to work with other municipalities in a coordinated fashion, the least that HCM staff will do is attempt to develop a working relationship with local high schools and Algonquin College to form co-op and job placement positions and participate in job fairs.

Although initially labour intensive, over the long term there will be ultimate benefit of taking these small steps, if not to HCM itself, at least to the sector as a whole in raising the awareness of careers in municipal government in area youth. Ideally however; we will work together towards a larger program.

NEXT STEPS EXTERNALLY

Now that it has been determined that there is a lack of awareness in careers in municipal government amongst area youth, that there is a willingness on the part of some educational administrators to work to improve this situation and that there is a willingness on the part of area municipal CAOs to work towards a coordinated resolution the real work begins.



The first step will be to develop a formal proposal and invitation to a preliminary meeting addressed to municipal administrators to discuss a desire to move forward.

A team will need to be created to form a program action plan and initially determine whether this is something that might be managed internally, or whether there is value in hiring a consultant.

A number of brainstorming sessions to discuss various options and form a cooperative succession plan will follow. After a working program is created, detailed policies and procedures will need to be created and adopted for each member of the group.

The plan will need to be communicated to councils to obtain multi-council and multi-term commitment.

Once approved, each municipality will have to train their current staff on the program making them aware of the implications and opportunities that the program will have on them personally.

A hiring or selection committee would be created to select candidates for any program that is formulated. It is important that the program plan is easily applied and duplicated.

Above all else, once established, reviewing the program and amending it to correct weaknesses, and build on successes is of utmost importance. Evaluation criteria will be required. A timeline for formal review created and followed.

This will be a daunting task due to the revolving nature of some local councils, as well as staff. Those people we obtained support from during one term, may no longer be participants. Newcomers may not support the program. For this reason, it will be paramount to document costs and benefits, for each municipal partner as well as the program as a whole.

Much is required before we get there however; *“The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.”* Lao Tzu

CHAPTER EIGHT – CONCLUSION

Traditional succession planning practises and techniques, implemented individually, simply will not work for small rural municipalities due to the lack of number of employees from which to draw.

Area youth might provide an untapped pool of talent, if they are made aware of the potential for significant, fulfilling careers in local government.

Administrators within Renfrew County and small neighbouring municipalities seem to welcome the opportunity to work together and with school administration to formulate a plan unique to Renfrew County lower tier municipalities to raise awareness of these careers in local youth.

First steps should involve using tools at our disposal to participate on a county wide basis in Local Government Week. Next should be the development of a program of participation from local municipalities in both secondary and post-secondary co-op terms and work placements; both paid and unpaid.

Additionally, a working group of interested municipalities might borrow from tools and strategies used in other areas, to create a modified plan to apply across municipalities to create our own pool of talented, trained individuals who will gradually be qualified to fill impending vacancies caused by retirements of the aging population.

The added benefits might include increased awareness in what local governments do, increased voluntarism, attraction of youth to positions on local council, short term increased productivity and youth engagement.

Administrators will need to attain long-term buy-in and financial commitment from municipal councils to allow enough time for a program of this type to work.

Next steps will involve overcoming the existing barriers to the success of any project of conflicting work priorities, time, funding and scheduling amongst a number of municipalities. The will of education and municipal administration exists. The possibilities are endless.

The answer to succession planning challenges for small rural Ontario, may be in our own backyard; area youth.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT SURVEY

High School Student Questionnaire

AMCTO – EXECUTIVE DIPLOMA IN MUNICIPAL MANAGEMENT RESEARCH PROJECT

Personal Introduction

I am the Clerk and Chief Administrative Officer in a Renfrew County municipality working on a research paper and plan for attracting and retaining staff in small rural municipalities. I would appreciate your responses to the following brief survey to assist my research. Thank you for your time.

Local Government Week and a Career in Local Government

There are a wide variety of job opportunities in municipal government requiring varying levels of skill and education. “ *Municipal governments need employees who are skilled in such diverse areas as engineering, planning, recreational programming, libraries, by-law enforcement, accounting, computers... to name a few. Management and administration skills are needed to head up various departments, to coordinate municipal operations, to provide support to council, and to organize and supervise staff in their day to day responsibilities in the delivery of municipal services.*”

AMCTO, Primer on Local Government, August 2008

In 2016 Local Government Week was October 16-22.

Local Government Week aims to increase youth and public awareness about the important role local government plays in our communities. A range of activities and opportunities are presented across Ontario, aimed to educate Grade 5 and 10 students on the “operation and importance of local civic institutions”.

Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What grade are you in?
 - a. 9 or 10
 - b. 11 or 12

2. Do you plan to pursue post-secondary (college or university) education?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

3. Did you participate in any career related class or instruction prior to making your decision on post-secondary education or career path?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

4. Before reading the above introduction, did you know what local government or public administration was?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

5. If yes, where did you learn about careers in local government or public administration?
 - a. Personal/family employees.
 - b. Volunteer experience.
 - c. Co-op Placement.
 - d. High School/College counsellor/teacher.
 - e. Other (Please specify _____)

6. If yes, have you considered employment/study in local government or public administration?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

7. If you answered no to #6, why not?
 - a. Salary/Pay.
 - b. Opportunity to find work close to home.
 - c. Opportunity for advancement.
 - d. Difficulty in obtaining specific post-secondary training.
 - e. Other (Please specify _____)

The Survey may also be completed by finding “Head Clara Maria Municipality” on Facebook and completing it there. Thank you.

APPENDIX B – POST-SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT SURVEY

Algonquin College, Pembroke Campus – Executive Office Administration Program, Business (Co-Op Option) Program, General Arts And Science Program Students

Personal Introduction

I am clerk and senior administrative officer in a Renfrew County municipality working on a research paper and plan for attracting and retaining senior staff in small rural municipalities. I would appreciate your responses to the following brief survey to assist my research. My deadline is November 18, 2016. Please complete by that date for your chance to win one of two \$25 Tim Horton Gift Cards. Thank you.

Local Government Week and a Career in Local Government

There are a wide variety of job opportunities in municipal government requiring varying levels of skill and education. “ *Municipal governments need employees who are skilled in such diverse areas as engineering, planning, recreational programming, libraries, by-law enforcement, accounting, computers... to name a few. Management and administration skills are needed to head up various departments, to coordinate municipal operations, to provide support to council, and to organize and supervise staff in their day to day responsibilities in the delivery of municipal services.*”

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Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs

1. Before this introduction, did you know that there were viable career opportunities in municipal government within Renfrew County?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

2. If yes, how did you learn about these jobs?
 - a. Personal/family employees.
 - b. Volunteer experience.
 - c. Co-op or Field Placement.
 - d. High School/College counsellor/teacher.
 - e. Other

3. Did you participate in any career related class or instruction prior to making your decision on your post-secondary education or career path?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

4. Have you considered employment/study in local government or public administration?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
5. If no, why not?
- a. It was not identified to me as an alternative.
 - b. Salary/Pay too low.
 - c. Opportunity to find work close to home.
 - d. Opportunity for advancement.
 - e. Difficulty in obtaining specific post-secondary training.
6. If you had an opportunity for a paid internship within municipal administration either through or after college would you consider participation?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
7. If you had an opportunity for an unpaid internship within municipal administration either through or after college to gain experience and workplace awareness would you consider participation?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
8. Email address if you wish to be entered in the draw. _____

This survey may also be located by searching “Head Clara Maria Municipality” on Facebook and clicking the survey link there.

Thank you for your participation. Please provide your email address if you would like your name to be entered into a draw to win one of two \$25 Tim Horton’s gift cards. Surveys must be completed and submitted by November 18, 2016 to qualify. _____

Email address is only required to notify prize winners. No other contact will be made.

High School Vice Principal And/Or Guidance Counsellor Questionnaire

Local Government Week and a Career in Local Government

There are a wide variety of job opportunities in municipal government requiring varying levels of skill and education. “ *Municipal governments need employees who are skilled in such diverse areas as engineering, planning, recreational programming, libraries, by-law enforcement, accounting, computers... to name a few. Management and administration skills are needed to head up various departments, to coordinate municipal operations, to provide support to council, and to organize and supervise staff in their day to day responsibilities in the delivery of municipal services.*”

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Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs

Questionnaire

1. Do you offer co-op placement for students in your school? ____ Yes ____ No

2. If yes...
 - a. In which areas?
 - i. ____ Business
 - ii. ____ Food Service
 - iii. ____ Labour
 - iv. ____ Customer Service
 - v. ____ Retail
 - vi. ____ Other (Please specify _____)

 - b. For which grades? ____ 12 ____ 11 ____ 10 ____ 9
 - c. For both streams? ____ Yes ____ No

3. Do you have an arrangement with local municipalities for placement? ____ Yes ____ No
 - i. If yes, in which areas:
 1. ____ administration
 2. ____ labourers/outside work
 3. ____ planning and engineering
 4. ____ accounting and finance
 5. ____ other (please specify _____)

4. Are you looking for employers willing to participate in your co-op placement program?
____ Yes ____ No
 - i. If yes, please provide contact information. _____

Local Government Week – (definition below).

5. Does your school participate in Local Government Week? ____ yes ____ no
- a. If no, why not?
 - i. ____ lack of interest
 - ii. ____ existing conflicting workload for teachers
 - iii. ____ lesson preparation time is a deterrent
 - iv. ____ other (please specify _____)
 - b. If yes, does your school focus on:
 - i. ____ council and community participation/service;
 - ii. ____ employment/career opportunities;
 - iii. ____ both.
 - c. If no, and if county municipalities were to assist, would you be interested in participating in the future?
 - 1. ____ Yes
 - 2. ____ No
 - 3. ____ We would require additional information.
6. Does your school incorporate local government into your curriculum other than during Local Governance week?
- a. ____ Yes
 - b. ____ No
 - c. ____ Unsure
7. Do your teachers and guidance counsellors discuss careers in local government or municipal administration as a choice for students when considering post-secondary education?
- a. ____ Yes
 - b. ____ No
 - c. ____ Unsure
8. Do your teachers and guidance counsellors discuss careers in local government or municipal administration as a choice for students when considering employment not requiring post-secondary education?
- i. ____ Yes
 - ii. ____ No
 - iii. ____ Unsure

APPENDIX D – POST-SECONDARY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR SURVEY

Algonquin College, Pembroke Campus – Executive Office Administration Program, Business (Co-Op Option) Program, General Arts And Science Program – College Administrator – Questionnaire

Name _____

Contact Info

1. Do you have any municipalities participating in the field placement component of the above programs at your Pembroke Campus within Renfrew County?

- a. ____ Yes
- b. ____ No

2. If yes, how many:

- a. ____ 1-3
- b. ____ 4-6
- c. ____ Over 7

3. If no, can you provide an explanation?

- a. ____ Opportunity hasn't been investigated.
- b. ____ Municipalities not willing to participate.
- c. ____ We have as many placement opportunities as we require.
- d. ____ No interest from students.
- e. ____ Other (Please specify _____)

4. Would you consider partnering with municipalities within Renfrew County for work/field placement opportunities?

- a. ____ Yes
- b. ____ No

5. If yes, please provide contact information and briefly describe next steps

_____.

6. If no, why not?

- a. ____ Expense and time to initiate new participants is a deterrent.
- b. ____ We have as many placement opportunities as we require.
- c. ____ No interest from students.
- d. ____ Placement doesn't meet skills of students.
- e. ____ Other (Please specify _____)

7. If a municipal co-op education/training program were to be created to increase awareness of careers in municipal government within Renfrew County for youth, would the college be interested in participating?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

Would you be able to facilitate sharing information about my surveys to your students in these programs? Yes No

APPENDIX E – CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR OFFICER SURVEY

Municipal Survey

Local Government Week and a Career in Local Government

There are a wide variety of job opportunities in municipal government requiring varying levels of skill and education. “ *Municipal governments need employees who are skilled in such diverse areas as engineering, planning, recreational programming, libraries, by-law enforcement, accounting, computers... to name a few. Management and administration skills are needed to head up various departments, to coordinate municipal operations, to provide support to council, and to organize and supervise staff in their day to day responsibilities in the delivery of municipal services.*”

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Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs

Municipal Clerk/CAO Questionnaire – Part 1

1. Total number of employees. Full time and part time.
 - a. _____ 1-3
 - b. _____ 4-7
 - c. _____ 8-12
 - d. _____ Over 12

2. Number of staff requiring specialized knowledge/experience/training/education such as municipal clerk/CAO/Treasurer/Planner/CBO.
 - a. _____ 1-3
 - b. _____ 4-7
 - c. _____ Over 8

3. What do you understand to be the number of senior staff within your municipality with specialized knowledge expected to retire in the next 5 - 10 years?
 - a. _____ 1-3
 - b. _____ 4-7
 - c. _____ 8-10
 - d. _____ Over 11

4. Do you have a succession plan or policy in place?
 - a. _____ Yes (If yes skip to question # 11)
 - b. _____ No

5. If no to question 4, why not?
 - a. _____ lack of need
 - b. _____ lack of time/conflicting demands

- c. Council not interested
 - d. no internal staff pool to hire from
6. If no to question 4, is creating a succession plan on staff radar?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
7. How are you currently recruiting senior staff replacements?
- a. within our own municipality
 - b. train and promote from within,
 - c. hire and train on the job,
 - d. recruit from other municipalities,
 - e. recruit from other professions or industries,
 - f. County or other government level staff,
 - g. Ontario wide – using associations, head hunters etc..

Municipal Clerk/CAO Questionnaire – Part 2

1. Does your municipality participate in Local Government Week in any manner?
- a. Yes (go to question 2)
 - b. No (go to question 3)
2. What is your focus?
- a. Employment awareness, opportunities and recruitment or
 - b. resident/council participation in your community?
3. If no why not?
- a. time – existing conflicting workload for staff
 - b. lack of interest
 - c. no benefit
 - d. no interest from local schools
 - e. no buy in from council
 - f. other (please specify _____)
4. Has your council/staff prepared for the costs (budget/reserves) of recruiting, hiring and training new employees to meet looming retirement vacancies?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
5. If applicable, do you think that your council understands the seriousness of the problem of not having an internal experienced pool of employees to promote from within to fill retirement positions?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
6. Would your staff and council consider investigating and potentially working towards an area wide solution to meeting succession planning needs?

- a. Yes
- b. No

7. Do you think there might be an interest within your municipality to work jointly with other municipalities to educate youth to increase awareness of careers in local government so we can keep our professional youth employed and in the area?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If you are interested in receiving the results of this survey or participating further, please provide your contact information below.

Name: _____

Position: _____

Municipality : _____

Email: _____