

Town of Fort Erie

Operational Review

Project Summary

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Agenda

- Project Overview
- Preliminary Review
- Summary of Findings
- Options to Proceed
- Findings

Project Overview (1)

Initial Objective:

Conduct an operational review of the Town of Fort Erie which includes an assessment of the day-to-day operations, operational structure, current staff and service levels within each department, identifying departmental strengths and area(s) where there may be opportunities for improvement.

Approach:

- Project planning
- Data gathering
- **Analysis
- Vet and validation
- Final presentation

**Decision point to address changes that impact this engagement, including objective, scope, and deliverables after preliminary review.

Project Overview (2)

In Scope:

- Office of CAO
- Community and Development Services
- Financial Services
- Fire Service
- Infrastructure Services
- Legal and Legislative Services
- Gaming

Out of Scope:

- Economic Development and Tourism Corporation
- Libraries

Preliminary Review

- Comprehensive review of background documents (200+ reports)
- Toured key facilities
- Facilitated project kick-off meetings with senior leadership team and Council
- Met with all Councillors and Mayor for one-on-one interviews
- Interviewed 31 staff, from CAO level to front line, across all departments
- Conducted informal interviews with members of the public
- Conducted web-based scan of blogs, websites, etc.
- Conducted high-level municipal benchmarking via discussions and review of resourcing

Summary of Findings

- Town of Fort Erie seems to compare favourably to similar towns benchmarked (Note: hard to validate at this level of detail whether apples-to-apples comparison)
- There is an opportunity to build stronger relationships between staff and Council, improving trust and in turn, staff morale
- Some additional capacity might exist within some departments, but the preliminary scan revealed no glaring inefficiencies
- Several potential cost savings and cost avoidance opportunities were discovered, as well as possible ways to improve efficiencies, customer service and build capacity
- Better governance appears to hold the greatest opportunity for improvement to Operations; it has the potential to increase the number of key operational decisions being made by the Town, and decrease the amount of time and effort to make them
- Based on the preliminary findings above, a revised approach to proceed was presented to Council

Options to Proceed

Options	Potential Benefit	Decision
<p>1. Further study into any combination of the identified opportunity areas (see summary of opportunities) – work could be done by consultants, by TOFE staff, or a combination.</p>	<p>Potential for FTE savings, cost avoidance, or added capacity to take on more work with the same resources. Save on consultant fees if done primarily by TOFE staff.</p>	<p>To be done by TOFE staff; consultants to provide guidance as required</p>
<p>2. Assist with Council governance.</p>	<p>Build Council cohesion</p>	<p>Approved</p>
<p>3. Finalize report by consultants; TOFE staff to implement relevant recommendations.</p>	<p>Save on consultant fees</p>	<p>Approved</p>
<p>4. Wrap up project while building consensus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debrief with staff and members of Council • CAO to review report details with each department head • Prepare summary report for TOFE website 	<p>Ensure stakeholders understand and are comfortable with conclusions</p>	<p>Approved</p>

Findings

Benchmarking other Municipalities (1)

- As part of the operational review process, conducted high-level municipal benchmarking with select, similar municipalities.

Comparison Criteria	Municipalities				
	Fort Erie	Aurora	Belleville	Georgina	Orillia
Population	29,925	47,629	48,821	42,346	30,259
Population density	179.9/km ²	960/km ²	197.8/km ²	136.5/km ²	1,057.8/km ²
Area	166.35 km ²	49.61 km ²	City: 246.76 km ² Metro: 740.61 km ²	287.72 km ²	28.60 km ²
Growth rate (from 2001 to 2006)	6.30%	18.60%	6.10%	7.90%	3.90%
Border town? (y/n)	Y	N	N	N	N
Cottage crowd? (y/n)	Y	N	N	Y	Y
History of amalgamation? (y/n)	Y	N?	Y	Y	N?
Gaming Industry? (y/n)	Y	Y	Y	N	Y

Note: Data above is based on publically available information and 2006 census.

Benchmarking other Municipalities (2)

Below are the general findings for the benchmarked areas

Resourcing levels are **below** those of benchmarked municipalities in:

- HR, IT, Building Inspections and Permits, and Fire Services

Resourcing levels **match the lowest** of benchmarked municipalities in:

- Community Development Services, Museums, and Clerks Office

Resourcing levels are **within the range** of other municipalities in:

- Financial Services, Law Enforcement, Engineering, Fleet Services, Roads and Drainage, Water and Wastewater, Facilities, and Parks and Cemetery

The resourcing levels used to conduct the business of the Town appear to be as efficient or better when compared to the benchmarked municipalities.

Disclaimer: it is hard to validate whether this has been an 'apples to apples' comparison and information should be used for directional purposes only.

Benchmarking other Municipalities (3)

Benchmarking considerations for other areas are as follows:

Office of CAO

- A full-time CAO is common amongst benchmarked municipalities

Community Gaming Corporation and Community Health and Wellness

- Fort Erie has a unique combination of services under this department that seems to work well; benchmarked municipalities have different structures

Customer Service Unit

- Assessed as part of Financial Services since no similar structure was observed in benchmarked municipalities

Legal Services

- Use of internal legal services can avoid cost escalation due to excessive external legal charges. However, no Ontario municipality provides full-service in-house legal.

Summary of Opportunities (1)

#	Opportunity description	Expected benefit
1	Currently, TOFE has 1.5 FTE's to oversee all HR functions. Given the current work injury rates, there is a high risk of being audited by the Ministry of Labour (MOL) and placed on a “watch list” status, which can lead to a very costly process. The recommendation is to acquire a dedicated resource to oversee Health and Safety duties at TOFE.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- A decreased risk of negative exposure with the MOL, potentially preventing an MOL audit- Possible reduction in worker injuries- Expected cost avoidance of \$133,000 per year, for 5 years.
2	Currently TOFE has 1.5 FTE's to oversee HR functions. This results in some HR duties being downloaded to individual departments (eg., recruitment) while others not being done proactively. Recommendation: use the additional capacity in hiring an H&S resource (see opportunity #1 above) and be more proactive with HR services as per detailed recommendations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Improved and more proactive HR services provided to internal client groups due to increased service offerings.- Better trained and higher performing workforce

Summary of Opportunities (2)

#	Opportunity description	Expected benefit
3	<p>Number of development approval key deliverables seems to have decreased by ~30% from 2005-2010. As a result, there is potential for excess capacity within development approvals; however, this may be offset by increased demand for customer service from the Development Team. Recommendation: to investigate further the future demand for services from this division and to determine impact on workload, if any.</p>	<p>Potential for an FTE savings/expanded capacity of 0-0.5 FTEs. Note: FTE savings can only be realized if a full FTE is freed up.</p>
4	<p>There is an opportunity to improve the customer service process for all types of development clients including homeowners. Recommendation: to seek feedback from past development clients in order to identify specific areas of concern with the current process and work on designing, testing, and implementing related improvements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A development application process that is easier to navigate for various client groups, increasing level of customer service and taxpayer satisfaction with TOFE services. - Potential freeing of capacity if citizens become more self-sufficient. - Greater compliance with bylaws and potentially less workload for inspectors that enforce them.

Summary of Opportunities (3)

#	Opportunity description	Expected benefit
5	<p>Currently, no formal employee policy exists which stipulates what is acceptable for employees to do when offered a gift by a member of the public while delivering a service.</p> <p>Recommendation: to have a clear, formal, written gift policy in place as part of staff policies and procedures, consistent with the informal corporate policy and by-law No. 2-10, section 7.</p>	<p>A clear and a formal policy which stipulates the standards for employee behaviour when it comes to the receipt of gifts, as well as consequences if not followed.</p>
6	<p>3 FTE's currently work at the CSU, with several other individuals trained to backfill their roles when coverage is required. Recommendation: to consider the workload balance of the CSU staff through a more detailed assessment of resourcing requirements. Also need to consider scripting key processes / inquiries in order to reduce learning curve and to standardize the responses to customer inquiries/service requests.</p>	<p>As this pilot program was recently finalized, continue striving for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More effective CSU opns which is appropriately resourced & trained to deliver on its mandate. - Possibly freeing of up to 1 FTE to be used for additional CSU functions during slow periods. This was the original purpose of establishing a CSU (i.e. one stop shop for customer service). - Workload balance between upstairs and downstairs including efforts such as relocating computer currently used by real estate agents.

Summary of Opportunities (4)

#	Opportunity description	Expected benefit
7	There is a need to consider the roles and responsibilities of individuals performing clerical duties, to ensure there is an appropriate distribution of labour. Recommendation: consider current clerical processes and brainstorm ideas for improvements.	Potential for an FTE savings/expanded capacity of 0-0.5 FTEs and improved process efficiencies. Note: FTE savings can only be realized if a full FTE is freed up.
8	There is a need to consider the bylaw enforcement workload in more detail. Recommendation: to determine if an FTE adjustment to bylaw enforcement duties is desired, keeping in mind the behaviour TOFE wants to encourage (i.e. residents resolving their own issues), and level of service TOFE wants to deliver (i.e. the 24-hour maximum response time).	An opportunity to take on more duties for the same 2 FTE's. At the same time, there might be an increase in response time during some peak months.
9	There is an opportunity to study further the GPS data by comparing GPS vehicle movement records to assigned work orders. Recommendation: use data to identify potential productivity improvements.	Companies in various industries have found that there is a potential improvement in workforce productivity of 10-30% by monitoring GPS for truck-based field workers.

Summary of Opportunities (5)

#	Opportunity description	Expected benefit
10	<p>Currently, not all facilities maintenance work is recorded and tracked using Lotus Notes. Recommendation: to investigate purchase of CMMS software for improved recording and reporting on work order management, preventative maintenance, and analysis.</p>	<p>An availability of historic work order and maintenance data which can be used to improve decision making.</p>
11	<p>TOFE allows reserve funds to be created for departments and even areas within a department. Recommendation: review and confirm the strategy in place for long term financial needs of the Town.</p>	<p>Better understanding of how reserve funds work in relation to long term financial strategies .</p>
12	<p>Currently, water bills are sent out every month. Some other benchmarked municipalities had a lower frequency of water bill distribution. Recommendation: to explore water billing frequency including an option to have online monthly billing instead of or in addition to less frequent hardcopy bills (i.e. every other month or quarterly). Need to consider customer service impact.</p>	<p>A potential reduction in billing-related workload and costs if the savings of FTE's are diverted towards other duties.</p>

Summary of Opportunities (6)

#	Opportunity description	Expected benefit
13	Currently the TOFE recruiting process is very time consuming for the limited HR resources available. Recommendation: to explore technology solutions including an option to leverage the system that Region of Niagara is using.	Freed capacity of current HR resources to focus on other HR duties and to offload HR-related work from internal client groups.
14	There exists an opportunity for IT to be engaged more often at the onset of major capital projects. Recommendation: involve IT early in projects to ensure that appropriate IT infrastructure investments are anticipated.	Designing the most appropriate IT infrastructure solutions at the onset of projects, potentially saving money in the long term and increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of operations overall.
15	From an operational perspective, there appears to be a desire for more consistent & effective branding of TOFE in order to increase alignment on what the TOFE brand is between Council, staff and the public. Recommendation: to engage appropriate resources to review & agree on a brand for TOFE, and develop an action plan and guidelines for consistently communicating and managing this brand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consistent brand messaging means greater citizen awareness and management of expectations around what TOFE is about. - Reduces confusion in the marketplace. - Can be less costly to administer when collateral is consistent due to economies of scale

Summary of Opportunities (7)

#	Opportunity description	Expected benefit
16	<p>Currently, Museum staff experience inconsistencies in the software tools they have available, and in the telephone reception and service levels.</p> <p>Recommendation: Obtain 2 more appropriate versions of MS Word. The digital telephone system should be repaired or replaced to avoid frequent disruption of service and poor reception..</p>	<p>Reduction in time spent on reformatting when sharing information and service improvement for communicating with clients and between sites.</p>
17	<p>Currently, TOFE does not charge residents when they request a zoning compliance letter, which take approximately 2 hrs to generate, with about 1 complex request per day. Other municipalities typically charge for this service anywhere between \$20 (as an add-on to another paid service) to \$300. Recommendation: to consider charging for zoning compliance letters.</p>	<p>Potential to generate extra revenue from the zoning letter requests of anywhere between \$5,000 - \$75,000 per year.</p>
18	<p>Currently, there are some reported issues with the usability of the current Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, based on user interviews. Recommendation: to form a committee to identify these issues and suggest actionable improvements.</p>	<p>Greater staff satisfaction with the CRM system, continuous improvement of technology and potential improvements in staff productivity.</p>

Summary of Opportunities (8)

#	Opportunity description	Expected benefit
19	Other municipalities have one consolidated department for planning and building inspections. Recommendation: to determine advantages and disadvantages of the change, as well as risk factors, and then decide whether consolidation at a manager level makes sense for TOFE.	A potential for a more effective organizational structure.
20	Concerns were expressed as to whether or not building inspections are done to an appropriate and expected level of service. Recommendation: to ensure that all inspections are perceived as thorough, consistent, unbiased, and according to standard practice. Need to 1. examine the standards, and 2. ensure that all inspectors are properly and consistently upholding the standards.	Better customer service and fewer complaints with regards to inspections.

Summary of Opportunities (9)

#	Opportunity description	Expected benefit
21	<p>The name of the 'Community Gaming and Development and Community Health & Wellness' can be misleading to members of the public. There also seems to be a lack of public understanding as to what this group now does, and how workload has been affected by a decrease in gaming revenue. Recommendation: to consider renaming this division and/or better communicate the services it provides to the public.</p>	<p>Increased clarity when it comes to the services that this department delivers.</p>
22	<p>The recommendations from the 2011 report titled “Review of Maintenance Service Levels for Municipal Parks & Cemetery Properties” have not yet been fully implemented. Recommendation: Continue implementation of report to fully realize the service levels anticipated. Also, the demand for Parks & Cemetery services is not as high in the winter months, and therefore, staff may have some further capacity to aid other departments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improvement of the overall quality and maintenance of parks. - Better resource balancing within TOFE throughout the year.

Summary of Opportunities (10)

#	Opportunity description	Expected benefit
23	<p>There is a need to create a communication strategy for the preliminary review study findings and associated public inquiries. Recommendation: develop a communications plan, including an FAQ for public distribution.</p>	<p>Proactive approach to how best to communicate, including target audience(s), message(s) to be communicated, means of communication and by whom, frequency, and so on.</p>
24	<p>Council cohesion and code of conduct are identified as an opportunity for improvement. Recommendation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WMC to attend and debrief council meeting, including governance training - For Council to have a working session to rewrite the code of conduct. - Ensure proper preparation and management of expectations of Councillors and staff prior to Council meetings (ie, no surprises) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An opportunity for Councillors to discuss code of conduct issues and work through them going forward. - Improved working relationship between staff and Council. - Improvements to public perception of Council and staff. - Greater productivity of meetings with greater preparation & communications.

Summary of Opportunities (11)

#	Opportunity description	Expected benefit
25	<p>Currently, it appears as though Councillors and staff are experiencing some challenges in their working relationship. Recommendation :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- For staff to give more notice before meetings i.e. send council package out on Wednesday- For staff to provide Councillors with more information, alternatives, detail- More open channels of communication amongst Directors and Council- Pro-active involvement as opposed to defensive posturing for both staff and Council- All parties maintain professional composure and protocol- Councillors to keep Mayor and CAO informed of relevant meetings and investigations- Minimize emotional reaction to content, and focus on proper protocols and processes in light of good governance	<p>An improved working relationship between staff and Council, resulting in a more productive working environment overall, removal of Operational bottlenecks, and improved decision-making.</p>