



CAO Succession Planning

25 April 2024 @ NOMA

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Navigating the Path to be a CAO

Traditionally there has not been a clear pathway to becoming a CAO

OMAA has developed educational resources and facilitates networking between Aspiring CAOs and mentoring by experienced CAOs





Saturday, June 24, 2023

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B.C. municipalities spending millions to get rid of their top bureaucrats



Two of Brampton's highest paid employees don't even work there

Brampton paid \$38M in severance pay 2010-2021, per city report



Saloni Bhugra · CBC · Posted: Apr 12, 2024 10:48 AM EDT | Last Updated: April 15



Why Councils should care

FINANCIAL AND OTHER COSTS OF NOT DOING IT WELL



Navigating the Path to be a CAO

Not a lot of research in this field, but

Watson and Hassett (2004) found 'four distinct career paths for city managers.

Thurmond (2010) found that serving as an assistant city manager in a large city is the prevalent route to become city manager of a large city. Small municipality management experience may have a negative influence.

AMO's Workforce Development Project – Municipal Employee Survey

What brought people to the municipal public service?

 **52%** Pension and benefits

 **45%** Job stability and security

 **40%** Living in or close to the hiring municipality

 **29%** Base salary or wage

 **27%** The opportunity to make a difference in the community


Entry point into the sector


11% of respondents entered the municipal government through student co-ops or internships.


51% joined via entry level positions.


60% who came through a co-op position have stayed in the sector for **11+ years.**


What do employees like most about their job?

 **43%** Pension and benefits

 **33%** Job stability and security

 **32%** It is close to where I live

 **32%** I find my work interesting

 **25%** The opportunity to make a difference in the community

4/5 of these factors are the same factors that attracted employees to their current municipality.

Work-life balance is an important factor for young employees. **26%** of those aged 18-29 listed it as one of the top 3 aspects they like most about their jobs.

Council Behaviour is very important


What could be improved?

 **43%** Base salary or wage

 **30%** Effective leadership

 **29%** Feeling that their work is recognized and valued

 **24%** Workplace culture and team dynamics

 **21%** Workplace flexibility (e.g., remote / hybrid work policies)

"In my opinion, Council behaviour makes or breaks a municipality."

-Survey respondent



16% of respondents selected "Council-staff relations" as an area requiring attention.

"The workload of municipal staff has significantly increased over the last few years, and a lot of us are feeling burnt out and overworked. An increase in staff is necessary to promote a healthy work-life balance and to help with staff mental health."

Council-staff relations are always a work-in-progress

Shifting legislative context provides a useful opportunity to review and update existing policies – including Codes of Conduct and Council-Staff Relations policies.

What keeps CAOs up at night?



CHALLENGES OF THE JOB

HR: Retention, recruitment and staff well-being
Municipal financial sustainability
Council-staff relations
Aspects of being a “good CAO”

CHALLENGES OF THE COMMUNITY

House and growth pressures
Mental health, addictions, and homelessness
Climate change

IRRITANTS

Provincial-municipal relations
Governance challenges
Decline in civility

Two Roads Diverged in a Yellow Wood

CONVENTIONAL APPROACHES

1. Replacement Hire
2. Council may choose one of the following options to fill the position on a temporary basis:
 - request that a member of the senior management team fulfill the duties of the CAO on acting basis.
 - request members of the senior management team to rotate into the acting CAO chair.
 - appoint an external interim CAO to perform the duties of the CAO on a full-time, temporary basis.

SUCCESSION PLANNING

Align workforce requirements directly to strategic and operational plans.

Improve recruitment and selection practices to “hire in” top talent.

Identify and implement gap closing/reduction strategies (e.g., training/learning, mentoring, etc.).

Implement a purposeful and practical approach to knowledge transfer.

Shape the workforce in response to emerging trends, shifting priorities, and technological progress.

Succession Planning vs Replacement Hiring

Replacement Hiring	Succession Planning
Often a quick fix	Long-term commitment to municipality and to developing individuals within
Usually based on a job description	Allows time to include new directions, adjustments, and expanded responsibilities
Often uses only input from the incumbent	Enables feedback from multiple stakeholders and perspectives
A narrow approach usually focused on avoiding a crisis by quickly filling the position	Allows for more time to ensure decision aligns with municipality's strategic plan and other goals
Sometimes forces municipalities to select best person available in that moment	Allows you to focus on selecting the best candidate
May offer advancement as a reward or because of seniority	Focuses on abilities

Chief Administrative Officer

Employment
Guidelines

Succession Planning

Before the CAO position becomes vacant, Council should consider the following:

- Who will be involved in the recruitment process?
- Search -- regional, provincial or national?
- What are the desired qualifications and attributes of the next CAO?
- How strong is our bench? How will internal candidates be managed?
- Is the preference for a change agent CAO to be hired versus a status quo CAO?
- How modern is our approach to attracting, retaining, and developing our talent?

Succession Planning Steps 1-4

1. Identify future service needs
 - Add this to your long-range planning (similar to long-term capital planning)
2. Determine critical positions
 - CAO, and a few others (not everyone!)
3. Assess current practises and policies
 - Develop a performance baseline of current practices and policies
4. Conduct a gap analysis
 - The difference between the succession planning efforts you currently have and the succession planning efforts you need

Succession Planning Steps 5-8

5. Modernize your approach
 - Reward the meritorious and fosters a high-performance work culture (more than tenure)
6. Evaluate internal candidates
 - Use objective & job-relevant assessment data (anecdotes ≠ data)
7. Revise your training and development program
 - People skills are critical
8. Engage managers at all levels
 - Succession planning is organizational performance



Mentoring women should be a key part of succession planning

Gender disparities continue to exist due to the differences in socialization among men and women city managers (Webb Farley, Rauhaus, and Eskridge 2020).

Shattering the glass ceiling of city management remains a barrier to women, as they are mentored differently than men and tend to face a confidence gap (Voorhees and Earl 2017).

Treasurer Sean Nicholson to transition to CAO as part of municipal succession plan

Posted on February 27, 2024

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EDWARDSBURGH CARDINAL – Today, the Township of Edwardsburgh Cardinal announced that current Treasurer, Sean Nicholson, will transition into the role of Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) by July 1, 2024.

The announcement comes as the municipality prepares for the retirement of several key staff members, including Dave Grant, current CAO. Grant has been with the municipality for more than 30 years.

As part of the municipality's succession planning, Nicholson will transition slowly into the CAO role. He will become Deputy CAO/Treasurer on March 31, and Grant will transition into the role of CAO/Director of Operations. Current Director of Operations, Gord Shaw, retires late next month.

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Succession Planning Good Practice

Edwardsburgh Cardinal undertaking a 5-month (March-July) transition process whereby exiting CAO mentors incoming CAO



“But we’re a very flat organization and we don’t have someone waiting in the wings”

1. Have you clearly defined the skillset you are looking for?
2. Is there someone in the community running a NFP or local business that does have the skillset?
3. If yes, how can you start to involve that person in your succession plan?
4. If no, it may be best to work with recruitment experts on a replacement hire.

Some possible incentives to consider

THE CHALLENGE

- Higher pay in private sector or with FN
- Job instability
- Isolation
- Very competitive seller's market

POSSIBLE RESPONSE

- 4 day workweek
- Quality of life / impact of work
- Housing provided by municipality
- Hybrid work arrangements; focus on the community
- Focus on both ends - novices looking for a start, those close to retirement

Position Profile:

As the senior administrative role within the Municipality, the Chief Administrative Officer provides advice and guidance to Council, staff and the public regarding good governance practices and effective, efficient administration to achieve operational and strategic goals.

The CAO will provide effective leadership to the management and staff of the Municipality directing human, financial and physical resources, ensuring Council's directives are carried out.

Key Duties/Responsibilities/Activities:

1. Council / Governance Advisor

- Act as chief policy advisor to Council and provide advice based on professional standards and best practice to ensure that clear, comprehensive information and alternatives are provided on which to make informed policy decisions.
- Communicate, champion, and direct the implementation of Council decisions; provide day-to-day support to the mayor and members of Council in their governance roles.

2. Corporate Administration

- Responsible for strategic leadership and implementation of strategic objectives and short/long term goals as adopted by Council.
- Act as the administrative head of the Municipality and exercise general control and management of the affairs of the municipality in accordance with the Municipal Act, approved policies and programs, and by-laws.
- Oversee human resources and talent management strategy including organizational structure changes, staff development, performance management, coaching and discipline, compensation, labour and employee relations, recruitment and selection, and compliance with all provincial and federal employment laws.
- Lead the Senior Team on corporate planning and strategic initiatives, items for Council consideration, major policies, and service levels.
- Direct the preparation of the annual operating and capital budgets, including long range financial forecasts for the Municipality.

- Direct and work with the Senior Team to monitor activities and agreements with local partners to promote and protect the Municipality's financial and other interests; apprise Council of pertinent issues and strategies to address.
- Monitor the overall delivery of services to ensure practices are coordinated, contemporary, meet the needs of the Municipality and reflect customer service excellence. Ensure appropriate stakeholder consultation occurs and prepare periodic reports to Council on changes and enhancements.
- Oversee, monitor, and provide direction for legal matters. Keep Council apprised of status and progress.
- Respond to inquiries and liaise with elected officials, internal departments, other governments, residents, citizens, special interest groups, the media, etc. Carefully monitor and follow-up on sensitive issues or complaints, taking corrective action where necessary.
- Act as a signing officer for the Corporation; sign on behalf of Council all agreements and other negotiable instruments approved or delegated by Council, and to ensure all such documents are co-signed by a designated officer when required.
- Responsible for the purchase and sale of Municipal land process; oversee research efforts, present, and receive direction from Council, work closely with solicitor and Clerk to ensure all legal requirements are met.

Work Relationships:

- Provides Direct authority over all departments.
- Liaise with other Municipal Staff, Members of Council, federal/provincial government representatives, local Municipal Staff, and the general public.

Work Demands/Stresses:

- Operates in an environment that demands accuracy, attention to detail with concentration on continuous deadlines with the ability to set priorities and multi-task.
- Must maintain a thorough knowledge of all legislation and policies affecting the Municipality.
- The ability to maintain confidentiality is essential.

Working Conditions:

- Work is conducted in an office environment, with exposure to the public and media.
- Work requires ability to quickly transition from one issue to another, make decisions effectively and in consideration of qualitative, quantitative information and often with competing priorities or interest groups.

- Requirement to attend evening meetings, public municipal events on weekends as needed. Availability to respond to emergency issues throughout the year.

Education/Experience/Aptitudes:

- University Degree in Commerce, Public Administration or equivalent
- Minimum ten (10) years municipal experience.
- Minimum five (5) years at the senior management level.
- Demonstrated experience developing effective relationships including with staff, elected officials, boards, committees and associations of varying stakeholders, often with competing interests.
- Highly developed communication, leadership, and inter-personal skills.
- High degree of political and business acumen.

Note: This job description is meant to describe the general nature and level of the work being performed; it is not intended to be construed as an exhaustive list of the responsibilities, duties and skills required for the position.

A word on recruitment—job ads

BAD EXAMPLE: IS A BORING JOB DESCRIPTION

Chief Administrative Officer/Clerk

The Township of Billings is formed from Billings Township and the Eastern half of adjacent Allan Township, and occupies the north central portion of Manitoulin Island. It contains part of Lake Kagawong, Lake Manitou, Otter Lake and Lake Mindemoya, and its northern boundary is Lake Huron.

The extensive lake frontage explains the residence distribution, and the large portion of seasonal residences. The Kagawong River drains Lake Kagawong, flows over Bridal Veil Falls, and reaches Lake Huron in the Hamlet of Kagawong. The Harbour at Kagawong is directly south of the Benjamin Islands cruising grounds on the North Channel, and between the harbour towns of Little Current to the east, and Gore Bay to the west. The M'Chigeeng First Nation reserve is within the boundaries of Billings, with Mindemoya directly to the south.

The economy of Billings is driven more by tourism and service industries than by agriculture or logging as in the past. Thousands of tourists annually visit the township and take in the natural beauty of the area as well as visiting one of Manitoulin's premier sites, Bridal Veil Falls.

To live in the Township, is a truly captivating experience. We are a rural community that values genuine human connection. Tourists, farmers, artists, small business entrepreneurs, professionals, retirees, and all-around nature lovers call the Township of Billings home. We come from all walks of life and no matter our differences or lived experiences, our strength lies in the shared connections we establish with each other, knowing that we don't need to go far to find good folks ready to lend a helping hand.

With a combined operational and capital budget of \$7M and a highly dedicated team of over 10 employees, Billings is committed to meeting needs of the residents and business community by delivering efficient and effective services.

Inspire our Future

As the ideal candidate you are an inspiring, principled, and collaborative leader with a proven track record of results and accomplishments for a public or private sector organization. You have exceptional communication skills and the political acumen to interact with an engaged council, and community members, foster the development of partnerships, and inspire our employees, while ensuring customer service excellence. Lastly, you will have an exceptional understanding of forward-thinking strategies as it relates to managing effective municipal operations in a fiscally accountable fashion and possess the ability to guide our organization into the future while preserving the beauty of our community and the lifestyle we enjoy.

Reporting to the Mayor and Council, the **Chief Administrative Officer/Clerk** is responsible for the strategic leadership and efficient delivery of all the municipality's administrative and operational services. As the key advisor to Council, you have the vision to develop and implement operational plans and ensure the coordination of services which align to and support our strategic priorities. In addition, the CAO/Clerk will be responsible for the statutory duties of the Clerk. You will recommend policies, plans, and programs that benefit our residents by being innovative, accountable and fiscally sound. You will work to enhance the meaningful development of our community that is consistent with our vision and values while ensuring the effective utilization of resources through the priorities as identified by Council.

Leading a small, talented team, this hands-on leadership role, guides and inspires a dedicated workforce while fostering a workplace culture focused on service excellence, innovation and teamwork.

Benefits of working for the Township of Billings

If you enjoy nature and rural living and wish to live in the north- this is a unique opportunity to experience nature and rural living at its best. Benefits include:

- **Affordable housing** – house prices range from 400k to 500K. This includes an opportunity for waterfront ownership. At this price point many can live mortgage free if moving from an urban area.
- **Healthcare** – Two excellent hospitals located close to the community where you live.
- **Education** – An exceptional educational system at both the elementary and secondary levels.
- **Outdoor Lifestyle** – Access to a range of outdoor activities. If you like exploring, gardening, boating, fishing, hiking, golf, x-country skiing, snowmobiling, this is the place to be.
- **Location** – we located in a beautiful island setting in the heart of Manitoulin Island, Sudbury is a short two - hour scenic drive away.
- **Quality of Life** – If you like a slower pace, fresh air, and attainable housing then Township of Billings is the place to be for an unmatched quality of life.

How to Apply

A word on recruitment—job ads

GOOD EXAMPLE: COMMUNITY PROFILE AND BENEFITS OF LIVING THERE.

A shortlist of CAO recruiters

Heather Phelps, Phelps Group, phelpsgroup@phelpsgroup.ca

Kartik Kumar, Legacy Executive Search Partners, Kartik.kumar@lesp.ca

Patrick Rowan, Feldman Daxon Partners, prowan@feldmandaxon.com

Jon Stungevicius, Waterhouse Search, jon@waterhousesearch.net

Tony Haddad, StrategyCorp, thaddad@mnsi.net

Nigel Bellchamber, N.G. Bellchamber & Associates [Bellchamber@sympatico.ca](mailto:bellchamber@sympatico.ca)

OMAA is the
association for
CAOs and
Aspiring CAOs



THIS IS
THE SIGN
YOU'VE BEEN
LOOKING FOR

First of its kind, CAO-specific executive education certificate

- 5-day program, virtual or in-person
- Top-rated Schulich instructors + guest CAOs.
- #1 business school in Canada.
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Level up for the future.

CAO Leadership Program

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ONTARIO MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATORS' ASSOCIATION

The CAO Profile Workbook & Supports

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and experienced CAOs / City Managers



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