



**Meeting Date:** January 24, 2024

**Prepared By:** James Hutson, Manager of Legislative Services/Municipal Clerk

**Submitted by:** James Hutson, Manager of Legislative Services/Municipal Clerk

**Report No:** CLK-01-2024

**Subject:** Municipal Clerk Services Activity Report for 2023

**Recommendation:**

THAT THAT Report CLK-01-2024, re: Municipal Clerk Services Activity Report for 2023 be received for information.

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this report is to provide Council and members of the public with an overview of service level activity as it relates to core services offered via the Municipal Clerk or designates through the 2023 calendar year

**Background:**

The Municipal Clerk is responsible for the oversight of the following services accessed by members of the public:

- Marriage Licensing and Civil Marriage Ceremonies
- Commissioner of Oath Services
- Lottery Licensing
- The Ontario Wildlife Damage Compensation Program
- Records Access (Freedom of Information)

The delivery of these services is done in conjunction with the support of Middlesex Centre staff, particularly those within the Corporate Services department.

The *Municipal Act, 2001* and related legislation, such as the *Marriage Act, 1990* provide the authority for Ontario municipalities to offer the above noted services and to collect fees in accordance with Middlesex Centre by-laws.

Lottery licensing, commissioner of oaths and marriage related services are available to the public by contacting the Municipal Clerk or visiting the municipal website/offices. Each of these services are detailed on the municipal website where individuals can learn more about what is offered and how to obtain assistance.

In 2020, all services were reviewed for efficiency, and at that time, several enhancements were made as well as new services introduced. In the interim years, staff have been working diligently to promote available services and refine associated processes and publicly-available information. These efforts have resulted in significant increases to the frequency and use all services – establishing a new ‘base line’ against which performance can be measured against. The 2023 activity numbers show a similar level to 2022 which reaffirms the service levels as expected base lines.

Throughout 2023, enhancements have been made to website documentation and resources to provide as much information as possible to members of the public who may be seeking services offered under the umbrella of the Clerk. These improvements include refreshed resources for groups interested in conducting a lottery event, as well as an expanded records access and information page.

In addition to these public facing services, the Clerk provides support to Council through the facilitation and management of Council meetings and the related decision process with respect to agendas, minutes and resolutions and additional statistics related to this are included for information purposes.

## **Analysis:**

### Marriage Licensing and Civil Marriage Ceremonies

The Municipality issued 47 marriage licences to the members of the public in 2023 representing a slight increase over 2022 numbers, and a continuance of the year over year trend of increased licence issuance. For comparison purposes, 19 licences were issued in 2019 and as such, the program has seen a doubling of use over a five year trend.

In addition to licences, the Clerk performed 7 civil marriage ceremonies in 2023. During the office renovation, all ceremonies are occurring at the Komoka Wellness Centre. Following completion of the office renovation, the municipality will have an outdoor and indoor location that is well suited for ceremonies and can accommodate additional guests.

The total revenue for marriage licence and ceremonies services amounted to \$9,325.00 in 2023.

The popularity of service level offerings surrounding marriage and licensing can be attributed in part to an increase in promotion of the service, and general public awareness of the offerings. The municipality receives significant word of mouth promotion of marriage offerings when individuals access the services and share their experiences with others. Several residents of Middlesex County, the City of London and

surrounding areas accessed the marriage licensing services of Middlesex Centre if they were unavailable at their local municipal offices.

### Commissioner of Oaths Services

In 2023, the municipality commissioned 1118 documents for members of the public, including those required for planning or development related submissions.

Members of the public seek out commissioner of oaths services for a number of reasons, such as the witnessing of affidavits, the transfer of used vehicles as per Service Ontario protocols or as required for certain government related forms. Similar to marriage licencing, this service has doubled in overall numbers since 2019.

As evidenced by the frequency of use, the Commissioner of Oaths services are an important offering that fulfills a need for community and residents. Staff promote the availability of these services widely and the public is encouraged to reach out should they be seeking information about commissioning of documentation.

### Lottery Licensing

The municipality issued 29 lottery licences in 2024, and responded to over 15 inquiries regarding eligibility to conduct lottery gaming events. These inquiries and the service in general does require considerable resource expenditure in terms of staff expertise to provide guidance to the public, answer questions on eligibility and ultimately assist eligible groups with the application and reporting processes.

Interest around lottery licencing is generally increasing at the municipal level as service groups respond and recover from the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and seek to supplement funds by way of lottery gaming.

The rules and regulations for lottery gaming are set out by the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario (AGCO) and groups must be a registered charity or meet one of the charitable categories set out by the AGCO in order to be eligible to conduct a lottery event.

Although there are opportunities for fundraising and charitable objectives to be met via lottery gaming, there is often misleading or incorrect information shared around which groups are eligible for a licence and how funds raised from these events. Municipalities are responsible for interpreting the rules, issuing licences, as well as overseeing lottery events with prize values less than \$10,000.00 in their communities. Regardless of the size of a lottery prize (under this amount), the requirements of each application do not change and are substantial in scope.

In addition to working with the eligible groups, staff invest considerable time educating members of the public and reviewing inquiries regarding charitable gaming from various clubs, groups and organizations who are exploring ways to fundraise. The Clerk receives eligibility submissions and reviews these against the criteria for eligibility to conduct a lottery which is based on four charitable categories established by the AGCO.

The fee for lottery licences issued by a Municipality is set out by the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario (AGCO) and is fixed at 3% of the total prize value generating a total revenue of \$3,157.10

### The Ontario Wildlife Damage Compensation Program (Administration)

The Ontario Wildlife Damage Compensation Program (OWDCP) is established by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and is administered by local municipalities within the Province. The purpose of this program is to provide financial assistance to eligible owners whose livestock or poultry has been killed as a result of eligible Wildlife predation. In 2023, this program was accessed a total of (4) times by members of the public, which is roughly consistent with previous years. In order to be eligible to access the program, individuals must provide confirmation of their Farm Business Registration number and Premises Identification Number.

In instances where a claim is submitted, the Municipal Wildlife Inspector undertakes an investigation and review, in order to collect evidence in support of a given claim. The Municipal Clerk oversees this activity, completes the submission of applications, collects additional information as required and remits payment to the applicant upon a successful claim.

The amounts awarded in the event of a successful claim are set by OMAFRA and are based on the number and type of animals lost. Claims are processed by OMAFRA and typical response time is between four and six months.

### Council Statistics

In 2023, 26 meetings were held, which included 24 regularly scheduled meetings and 2 special meetings of Council.

In total, Council voted on 345 resolutions and approved a total of 133 by-laws. The agendas, meeting minutes and original by-laws are preserved and reproduced digitally.

### Looking Ahead:

The Legislative Services portion of the municipal website has been enhanced with additional information provided to the public regarding available services and how to access them.

As many of these services (marriage / lottery / wildlife claims) require certain eligibility criteria to be met in order to access the services, efforts are continually being made to provide helpful information in the form of resources to the public who may be seeking information about whether or not they can access a particular services.

Ultimately, our goal is to provide excellence in our approach to customer interaction and convenience to the local community such that they seek out Middlesex Centre for their services.

**Financial Implications:**

The overall revenue generated in 2023 from the above referenced services was \$15,122.00 which is an increase over each of the preceding five years.

**Strategic Plan:**

This matter aligns with following strategic priorities:

- Responsive Municipal Government

Offering services which have a benefit to the community allows the municipality to respond to the needs of area individuals and offer services in a convenient and easily accessible manner.

**Attachments:**

N/A