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Report 2025-046

Report Title: Standing Committee Correspondence

Committee Name: Corporate Support

Committee Meeting Date: March 4, 2025

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Corporate Services

Reviewed by: Lisa Ainsworth
Director of Corporate Services
Corporate Services

Approved by: Jennifer Moore, CAO

Council Meeting Date: March 19, 2025

Strategic Plan Priorities: ☒ Innovate for Service Excellence
☐ Ignite Economic Opportunity
☐ Foster a Thriving Community
☐ Propel Sustainable Growth
☐ Champion a Vibrant Future

Recommendation

“That the Corporate Support Committee, having considered Report 2025-046 ‘Standing Committee Correspondence’, recommend that County Council adopt option #2 as outlined in this report and direct staff to update Standing Committee Terms of Reference documents in order to reflect this new process.”

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to recommend options to streamline correspondence procedures for Standing Committee agendas.

Background

In Ontario, there are 444 municipalities. It is a common practice for municipalities and municipal associations to circulate correspondence to all Ontario municipalities, in the form of resolutions or letters, as a way to highlight important municipal issues. When such correspondence is received, it is added to the appropriate Standing Committee agenda for Committee / Council consideration. Due to the large number of Ontario municipalities, Committee / Council often receive similar correspondence on the same subject matter from multiple municipalities.

Northumberland County's Terms of Reference documents for Standing Committees outlines that when a Standing Committee receives correspondence from a municipality, subsequent correspondence on the same subject matter received from other municipalities will be included on Standing Committee agendas for information only, with a notation that it was previously considered. This procedure has been historically used by Northumberland County, as it indicates to Standing Committee / Council Members the momentum that is building regarding various municipal issues and the advocacy that is taking place by other municipalities.

It is important to note that Northumberland County also receives correspondence from community members and businesses that relate to a County program or services, or a matter of shared interest to the Northumberland County community. Standing Committee Terms of Reference documents and the Council Procedural By-law outlines a process for these types of correspondence. It is important to note that staff are not recommending changes to the processes for correspondence from community members / businesses at this time.

Consultations

Standing Committee Members have informally provided feedback to staff regarding the need to streamline correspondence processes.

Legislative Authority / Risk Considerations

- Council Procedural By-law
- Standing Committee Terms of Reference

Discussion / Options

Option #1 – Maintain Status Quo

Council may wish to maintain the current correspondence procedures, which is to include similar correspondence of the same subject matter that has been previously considered by Council on Standing Committee agendas, as a way to highlight municipal advocacy issues.

Option #2 – Streamline Correspondence Procedures – Staff Recommended Option

After correspondence regarding a subject matter is initially considered by Standing Committee / Council, all correspondence regarding the same subject matter will not be included on subsequent Standing Committee agendas. However, correspondence of the same subject matter will be emailed to the Standing Committee Chair on a monthly basis, in advance of agenda publication. If the Standing Committee Chair wishes to bring forward similar correspondence that has been previously considered in order to highlight the momentum that is taking place on an area of municipal importance, then the Chair shall advise the Clerk/Deputy Clerk. Staff will continue to file correspondence received from other municipalities and municipal

associations and maintain these records in accordance with the County's records retention by-law.

This process is the recommended staff option, as it would streamline correspondence procedures with minimal impact to staff resources. In addition, it keeps the Standing Committee Chair informed of advocacy taking place from other municipalities and provides the Chair with authority to determine if similar correspondence that has previously been considered should be included on an agenda.

Option #3

Some municipalities prepare and distribute Council Information Packages to Members of Council, where all correspondence received in a certain timeframe is included in these packages. Although processes may vary based on the municipality, the typical process is for Members of Council to review the Council Information Package and advise staff on the correspondence they want included on Committee / Council agendas, otherwise the correspondence will not be included on the agenda and instead filed with the Clerk.

Northumberland County historically used this process when using a past meeting management software and prior to the implementation of the County's Standing Committee structure. However, this process was more labour intensive for staff and Members of Council and does not provide autonomy to the Standing Committee Chair.

Financial Impact

N/A

Member Municipality Impacts

N/A

Conclusion / Outcomes

Staff recommend that County Council adopt option #2 as outlined in this report and direct staff to update Standing Committee Terms of Reference documents in order to reflect this new process. Updated Standing Committee Terms of Reference documents would then be brought back to Committee / Council for approval.

Attachments

N/A