



CORPORATE SERVICES

Staff Report

REPORT NO: COR-2025-46
TO: Council on September 8, 2025
SUBMITTED BY: Kaitlin Bos, Manager of Legislative Services / Municipal Clerk
PREPARED BY: Kaitlin Bos, Manager of Legislative Services / Municipal Clerk
REVIEWED BY: Jeff Willmer, Chief Administrative Officer
DATE: August 29, 2025
SUBJECT: Mayoral Direction 2025-01 Council Remuneration Review

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report COR-2025-46 Mayoral Direction 2025-01 Council Remuneration Review be received for information; and,
THAT Council directs Staff to bring back a Council Remuneration Review Policy to the November Committee of the Whole Meeting.

SUMMARY:

In response to Mayoral Direction 2025-01 this report provides an overview of Council remuneration, including current base salary levels, and comparative data from similar municipalities. Included are considerations for potential changes, such as transitioning the mayor's role from part-time to full-time, and outlines various models for determining appropriate compensation should that be considered. The report recommends establishing a formal policy for regular remuneration reviews each Council term, incorporating public engagement and a full assessment of compensation components.

BACKGROUND:

Section 283 of the Municipal Act, S.O. 2011, Chapter 25, as amended ("the Municipal Act, 2001"), a municipality may pay any part of the remuneration and expenses of the members of any local board of the municipality and of the officers and employees of the local board.

Section 284 (2) of the Municipal Act stipulates that municipalities identify the by-law under which the remuneration or expenses are authorized to be paid.

By-law 2000-42 being a By-law Respecting Remuneration and Expenses for Members of Council came into force and effect on December 1, 2000. The By-law sets out that the Mayor shall be paid an annual salary of Sixteen Thousand (\$16,000.00) for his/her services. Each of the other Members of shall be paid an annual salary of Eight Thousand Dollars (\$8,000.00) for

his/her services. One-Third (1/3) of the amounts set out as remuneration for the Mayor and Members of Council was to be deemed to be an expense allowance.

Effective January 1, 2002, Corporate Policy CL-10.1 COLA Increases, was approved that Council's remuneration shall include any future COLA increases granted to municipal employees.

The March 22, 2017, federal budget announcement removed the tax exemptions for non-accountable expense allowances paid to members of provincial and territorial legislative assemblies and to certain municipal officeholders. This announcement was passed into law and must be implemented by January 1, 2019. At that time, members of Council earned one-third of their compensation tax free, as permitted by the Municipal Act, 2001 and Township By-Law 2000-42.

On October 23, 2017, Staff Report FIN 2017-33 recommended that the Township of Wilmot Council eliminate the one-third (1/3) tax free portion of council remuneration effective January 1, 2019, and that Council remuneration be adjusted to ensure that net pay after taxes remains consistent, using the lowest marginal tax rate. Township of Wilmot Council approved the adjustment to remuneration from Mayor \$26,045 to \$28,222 and Members of Council from \$13,023 to \$14,112.

The base salaries for the Mayor and Members of Council, as set in the annual budgets from 2018 to 2025, are as follows:

• 2018	Mayor \$ 26,444	Members of Council \$ 13,222
• 2019	Mayor \$ 28,682	Members of Council \$ 14,342
• 2020	Mayor \$ 32,000	Members of Council \$ 16,706
• 2021	Mayor \$ 35,160	Members of Council \$ 19,064
• 2022	Mayor \$ 38,614	Members of Council \$ 21,422
• 2023	Mayor \$ 39,425	Members of Council \$ 21,872
• 2024	Mayor \$ 39,425	Members of Council \$ 21,872
• 2025	Mayor \$ 39,425	Members of Council \$ 21,872

The Mayor also receives an annual salary from the Region of Waterloo as a member of Regional Council. From annual reporting this term of Council the Mayor's base salary from the Region of Waterloo was reported as follows:

- 2022 \$ 41,278
- 2023 \$ 47,872
- 2025 \$ 49,282

In December 2023, a Compensation Review was completed by Pesce & Associates (Human Resource Consultants) and the following information was presented to Council regarding comparable salaries for mayors and councillors.

Chart 1 – Pesce & Associates 2023 Compensation Review

Municipality	Calculation using the 2023 Rates where known		
	Mayor	Deputy Mayor	Councillor
Township of Wilmot	\$ 39,425.00		\$ 21,872.00
Township of South Frontenac	\$ 36,756.38	\$ 23,109.51	\$ 16,167.00
Township of Wellesley	\$ 32,080.80		\$ 17,393.56
Town of Pelham	\$ 39,858.00		\$ 18,268.00
Town of Kingsville	\$ 37,329.59	\$ 25,161.86	\$ 20,527.23
Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc	\$ 55,449.81	\$ 27,392.27	\$ 21,415.55
Township of Centre Wellington	\$ 47,286.00		\$ 23,716.00
Town of Amherstburg	\$ 46,817.00	\$ 31,159.00	\$ 24,734.00
Town of Essex	\$ 46,989.00	\$ 34,374.00	\$ 27,030.00
Town of Tecumseh	\$ 43,659.02	\$ 34,804.45	\$ 27,039.03
50th Percentile	\$ 43,659.02	\$ 29,275.64	\$ 21,415.55
60th Percentile	\$ 46,185.40	\$ 31,159.00	\$ 23,255.91

Council did not move forward with any adjustments to their base salary at that time. Council has also foregone the cost-of-living adjustment for their salaries in the 2024 and 2025 budget cycles.

On June 25, 2025 Mayor N. Salonen issued Mayoral Direction 2025-01 which directed the clerk’s department and other relevant staff to:

Undertake research related to Council remuneration, with findings to be brought forward to Council for information by September 2025. This report may inform the 2026 budget process, with the intent that any changes to Council remuneration would take effect for the next term of Council (2026-2030).

This research should include, but is not limited to:

- *A comparative review of Council remuneration across similar municipalities;*
- *An assessment of remuneration options should the role of Mayor transition from part-time to full-time, including relevant comparators under both models;*
- *Policy options for establishing a regular review cycle of Council remuneration;*
- *A summary of current research, data, and scholarly literature related to political remuneration trends, including but not limited to AMO's Healthy Democracy work and Apolitical's Mere Mortals report; and,*
- *A public engagement component to gather local feedback on potential updates to Council remuneration.*

This direction was issued at the request of staff, who have advised that a formal direction is preferred in the absence of an existing Council policy to support the development of such a report. Issuing this direction ensures staff can proceed with clarity and provides Council with the necessary context to inform future budget and governance decision.

REPORT:

Remuneration refers to the total compensation an elected official receives for their service, encompassing salary, other benefits like health insurance or a car allowance. It essentially represents the financial and other rewards given in exchange for services rendered.

Item 1: A comparative review of Council remuneration across similar municipalities

Staff conducted research using the last returned Financial Information Return (FIR) and Statistics Canada 2021 Census data to create a list of comparable municipalities. The FIR provides standardized reporting of a municipality's financial activities in the previous fiscal year. The comparator groups are broken into two categories the first being local municipalities and the second being lower-tier municipalities similar population size near a large urban centre.

Chart 2 – Comparator Municipalities Population, Growth and Financial Information (sorted by population)

Municipality	Structure	Upper Tier	Population	5-Year Growth	Number of Private Dwellings	Property Taxation (FIR Line 9940)	Total Revenues (FIR Line 9910)
Blanford Blenheim	Lower-tier	Oxford	7565	2.2%	2857	\$6,615,389.00	\$15,458,037.00
East Zorra Tavistock	Lower-tier	Oxford	7841	10.2%	3055	\$7,255,657.00	\$11,356,918.00
North Dumfries	Lower-tier	Waterloo	10619	4.0%	3564	\$6,747,298.00	\$14,306,492.00
Wellesley	Lower-tier	Waterloo	11318	0.5%	3428	\$7,189,430.00	\$27,186,856.00
Perth East	Lower-tier	Perth	12595	2.6%	4385	\$10,312,168.00	\$20,533,363.00
Pelham	Lower-tier	Niagara	18192	6.3%	7681	\$18,718,819.00	\$39,152,827.00
South Frontenac	Lower-tier	Frontenac	20188	8.3%	9503	\$21,767,655.00	\$35,790,645.00
Essex	Lower-tier	Essex	21216	3.9%	8390	\$19,513,697.00	\$53,358,199.00
Wilmot	Lower-tier	Waterloo	21429	4.3%	8131	\$10,148,974.00	\$24,105,143.00
Uxbridge	Lower-tier	Durham	21556	1.8%	8308	\$16,874,914.00	\$28,333,324.00
Kingsville	Lower-tier	Essex	22119	2.6%	8635	\$25,060,786.00	\$47,370,316.00
Tecumseh	Lower-tier	Essex	23300	0.3%	9111	\$27,910,061.00	\$54,641,026.00
Amherstburg	Lower-tier	Essex	23524	7.2%	9548	\$32,522,230.00	\$66,988,994.00
Strathroy-Caradoc	Lower-tier	Middlesex	23871	14.4%	9982	\$22,162,208.00	\$62,959,271.00
Woolwich	Lower-tier	Waterloo	26999	8.0%	10112	\$15,205,126.00	\$37,706,803.00
Centre Wellington	Lower-tier	Wellington	31093	10.3%	12701	\$22,324,392.00	\$78,074,893.00
Waterloo	Lower-tier	Waterloo	121436	15.7%	51980	\$97,039,735.00	\$222,252,742.00
Cambridge	Lower-tier	Waterloo	138479	6.6%	53920	\$110,487,643.00	\$327,908,775.00
Kitchener	Lower-tier	Waterloo	256885	10.1%	107580	\$154,875,093.00	\$564,685,490.00

Council Composition and Salary Comparative Review

Staff have included the base salary levels for Mayor and Council as reported by the municipalities in their Annual Statement of Council Remuneration and Expenses.

Included in each chart is a calculation of the 50th percentile, or median, to understand the typical or middle value in the dataset as it is less affected by extreme values (outliers) and provides a more stable measure. The 60th percentile is also included which is often used in compensation reviews to represent what value leads the market slightly.

Chart 3 - Comparator Group 1 (Local Municipalities)

Municipality	Population	Number of Council Members	2024 Mayor	2024 Council
Wilmot	21429	6	\$39,425.00	\$21,872.00
Blanford Blenheim	7565	5	\$27,303.60	\$18,296.28
East Zorra Tavistock	7841	6	\$24,812.06	\$17,713.17
North Dumfries	10619	5	\$41,443.68	\$22,457.00
Wellesley	11318	5	\$32,979.00	\$17,880.60
Perth East	12595	7	\$32,415.77	\$19,399.66
Woolwich	26999	6	\$37,604.36	\$22,059.92
Waterloo	121436	8	\$116,831.00	\$44,257.00
Cambridge	138479	9	\$138,460.00	\$68,529.00
Kitchener	256885	11	\$134,648.00	\$70,912.50
		50th Percentile	\$37,604.36	\$22,059.92
		60th Percentile	\$40,675.82	\$22,377.58

Chart 4 - Comparator Group 2 (Similar sized municipalities near a large urban centre)

Municipality	Population	Number of Council Members	2024 Mayor	2024 Council
Wilmot	21429	6	\$39,425.00	\$21,872.00
Pelham	18192	7	\$50,718.38	\$22,783.28
South Frontenac	20188	9	\$37,491.48	\$18,305.16
Essex	21216	7	\$56,330.93	\$31,584.46
Uxbridge	21556	7	\$41,562.92	\$39,801.23
Kingsville	22119	7	\$51,786.96	\$28,122.00
Tecumseh	23300	7	\$64,477.00	\$30,058.40
Amherstburg	23524	7	\$56,609.25	\$25,229.40
Strathroy-Caradoc	23871	9	\$56,805.53	\$21,991.55
Centre Wellington	31093	7	\$51,207.60	\$31,604.00
		50th Percentile	\$51,786.96	\$28,122.00
		60th Percentile	\$55,422.14	\$28,896.56

For additional context if Council had approved the cost-of-living adjustment as outlined in CL-10.1 COLA Increases at the same rate given to Staff in 2024 (3.1%) and 2025 (2.5%) their base salaries would be as follows:

- 2024 Adjusted Mayor \$40,647.18 Members of Council \$22,550.03
- 2025 Adjusted Mayor \$41,663.35 Members of Council \$23,113.78

Other Benefits and Expenses

Remuneration encompasses more than the base salary paid to elected officials. In a fulsome review of compensation, the following areas should be examined.

Benefits, or payment in lieu of such as health, dental, vision, and life insurance coverage are being offered increasingly more for elected officials. At this time Wilmot does not offer benefits, or payment in lieu of benefits, to our members of council.

Members of municipal councils are eligible to participate in the OMERS (Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System) pension plan. At this time this is not offered to our members of council.

The Township does have several approved policies related to Council remuneration and expenses. They are attached to this report and are as follows:

Attachment A: CL-10.1 COLA Increases

Attachment B: CL-10.2 Community Events Expenditure Allowance

Attachment C: CL-10.6 Council Conference and Training Expenditure Allowance

Attachment D: GP 23-03 Pregnancy and Parental Leave

Attachment E: HR-019-01 Employee Expenses and Allowances

Item 2: An assessment of remuneration options should the role of Mayor transition from part-time to full-time, including relevant comparators under both models

The *Municipal Act, 2001* makes no legal distinction between full-time and part-time mayors. The difference between full-time and part-time is a matter of the level of pay and the accompanying expectations. In the comparator groups there are three mayors compensated at a full-time level and they are the City of Cambridge, City of Kitchener and City of Waterloo.

To compensate the mayor at a full-time level, there are several options on how that could be used to calculate the level of pay. The City of London uses a model where elected officials are compensated at the median full-time employment income of city residents. Other policy options could tie the mayor's salary to a set percentage of the Township's budget, population, or cost of living.

Item 3: Policy Options for review of Council Remuneration

Staff are supportive of producing a Council Remuneration Review Policy, where every four years in the third year of each term Council a review is completed. Staff would seek direction from the Council at the time to complete a review in one of three manners: market review completed internally by staff, formal market review conducted by external consultant or through a Council Remuneration Advisory Committee. The review would include all aspects of Council remuneration including benefits, pension, training and education expenses, car allowances, mileage expenses and more. The policy would also include a mandatory public engagement process for each review cycle.

Item 4: Summary of current research, data, and scholarly literature related to political remuneration trends

Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) – Healthy Democracy Project

AMO's Healthy Democracy Project is to promote the value and importance of municipal governments in Ontario's political system, while focusing on the importance of diversity of leadership and perspectives. Staff reached out to AMO staff who worked on the Healthy

Democracy Project and while remuneration was not directly studied in the project it was identified as a barrier to running for office. Financial barriers were by far the most widely cited barriers for candidates. In their survey, candidates who had run and won office, financial barriers were named as their largest barrier to overcome. This includes the personal financial impact of running for office (27%) and the reality that the salary for their elected office was not financially viable (24%).

Apolitical's Mere Mortals Report

The Mere Mortals report from the Apolitical Foundation does not focus centrally on remuneration, but it does touch on how compensation plays into the broader picture of politicians' mental wellbeing, diversity, and democratic effectiveness. The report focuses on mental health, but it touches on how insufficient or misunderstood remuneration increases mental strain, fuels public distrust, and discourages diverse political participation.

The report highlights that effective compensation strategies can positively contribute to elected officials' mental well-being by alleviating financial pressures which can compound with job stress to negatively impact individuals in the roles. Effective compensation also promotes diversity in leadership by reducing financial barriers for candidates or those considering running for office. The current pay structure of elected officials in Ontario can exclude those from lower-income or marginalized groups from being able to participate in local government politics.

In summary, the scholarly and professional literature on the topic of council remuneration advocates for transparent, context-aware pay practices combined with non-financial support structures such as training, education and professional development to boost wellbeing, diversity, trust, and resilience.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE TOWNSHIP OF WILMOT STRATEGIC PLAN:

Trustworthy Leadership

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

There are no direct financial considerations with this report.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A: Policy CL-10.1 COLA Increases

Attachment B: Policy CL-10.2 Community Events Expenditure Allowance

Attachment C: Policy CL-10.6 Council Conference and Training Expenditure Allowance

Attachment D: Policy GP 23-03 Pregnancy and Parental Leave

Attachment E: Policy HR-019-01 Employee Expenses and Allowances