



Community Services Staff Report

REPORT NO: CS-2026-07
TO: Council on April 27, 2026
SUBMITTED BY: Chris Catania, Director of Community Services
PREPARED BY: Chris Catania, Director of Community Services
REVIEWED BY: Jeff Willmer, Chief Administrative Officer
DATE: April 2, 2026
SUBJECT: Proposed Sponsorship, Naming Rights and Donation Policies

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report CS-2026-07 Proposed Sponsorship, Naming Rights and Donation Policies be received for information; and,

THAT Council direct staff to present By-Laws to adopt the Sponsorship, Naming Rights and Donations Policies for the Township of Wilmot, as attached to Report CS-2026-07; and

THAT staff be directed to prepare an inventory of municipal assets available for sponsorship or naming rights, for Council's consideration.

SUMMARY:

This report is to provide Council with information related to proposed sponsorship, naming rights and donation policies and for Council to consider approval for implementation.

BACKGROUND:

The Township has accepted Sponsorship, Naming Rights and Donation opportunities but has yet to formalize framework on these opportunities. During previous budget discussions, Council identified sponsorships as an opportunity to increase funding for asset replacement or to enhance/expand various programs and initiatives.

To continue offering programs and events that are inclusive and accessible to all, Community Services has strategically partnered with local businesses to secure sponsorships, helping mitigate rising costs and financial constraints. These sponsorships play a critical role in providing certain programs and events free or at low cost for the community.

Since 2023, Community Services has secured over \$150,000 in revenue through advertising and small-scale sponsorships. Achieving more significant sponsorships requires a more systematic approach that aligns with both current staff resources and the sponsorship practices of an organization or corporation. Given the realities of municipal operations along

with potential untapped market in the business community, particularly for naming rights, it is an opportune time to review and formalize these matters into policy.

REPORT:

Understanding of the Current Sponsorship Environment

In response to budgetary pressures, municipalities across Canada have taken a more formalized approach to seeking sponsorship as means to generating non-tax-based revenues. Through the development of formalized policies, and the use of either dedicated internal staff or external sales consultants, sponsorship of municipal assets or events by both local businesses and organizations has been reactivated since COVID-19 however remains challenging. Very few municipalities have been successful in generating ongoing revenue streams through sponsorships. As such, sponsorships cannot be relied upon for consistent ongoing revenue in annual operating budgets. However, contributions from these partners assists in the enhancement to the service or asset renewal lessening the dependency on the tax base.

From the sponsor's perspective, most major corporations use a highly targeted and specific approach to sponsorships. For example, a financial institution may identify a theme (music, environment, entrepreneurship, etc.), as well as target demographics (e.g., youth, women, etc.). Their willingness to contribute to a municipal program or asset will be subject to alignment to their core values. While some companies may still seek out opportunities for marketing-based sponsorship (e.g., logos on building or in lobbies), most are seeking purpose-driven sponsorship opportunities.

Policy Review

In reviewing the current state at the Township, policies were drafted to ensure that each policy provides an appropriate framework for sponsorship, naming rights and donations at the Township of Wilmot that safeguards assets and protects the Township's reputation, as well as create an environment that encourages collaboration and sponsorship agreements. Staff performed an analysis of 17 Canadian municipal sponsorship policies to identify best practices, issues or processes not currently considered. Policies were compared with regard to principles and conditions, exclusions, criteria for agreement, limited delegation of authority, and revenue disbursement.

The recommended policies are consistent with the principles and conditions in comparison to other municipalities and allow for a degree of flexibility with regards to administration and operation.

Sponsorship, Naming Rights and Donations

Sponsorships, Naming Rights and Donations are similar, but provide distinction to the three policies. A sponsorship is a mutually beneficial agreement between the Township and a third party, where the Township leverages a municipally owned asset (e.g., program, service, special event, etc.) to receive financial support in exchange for recognition, exposure, and/or some form of other marketing benefits for the third party. Sponsorships, typically short term (within a year), take the form of financial assistance, in-kind such as goods or a contribution of skills or resources, publicity, promotional considerations, or merchandising opportunities.

Sponsorships are common for recreational/social programming, special events (e.g., Canada Day), municipal-wide initiatives or tied to specific capital projects.

A naming right is a form of advertising with financial contribution over multiple years that assigns naming of a Township property or fixed assets. Examples can include facilities, parks, trails and other municipal infrastructure. The naming rights sponsor is provided a marketing/branding opportunity on a municipal asset for a specified period of time.

Donations are voluntary transfers of cash, equipment or goods, for free, from a third party to the Township with no naming rights. There may be some acknowledgment through marketing/communications opportunities as the Township may seek donations that are a benefit to the municipality.

Inventory of Assets

Municipal Assets include facilities, vehicles, equipment, programs, services, and events owned and operated by the Township of Wilmot. Given the evolving nature of the Township's programs and services, a master inventory is required to identify assets and market assessment value that provide revenue opportunities for the Township. This Inventory will be presented to Council at a future date to approve the list of draft assets available for sponsorship or naming rights and their corresponding asset values. An approved asset inventory will allow staff to respond quickly to potential partnership opportunities for sponsorship and/or naming rights, minimizing the risk of losing a partner due to delays in the approval process. In conjunction with the parameters specified in these policies, staff will have the tools required to develop marketing materials, proposals, and ultimately execute on sponsorship agreements.

This database of assets will include naming right opportunities for facilities, naming rights within a facility, programs, and events.

Future Opportunities for Naming Rights

Staff have identified several potential assets at the Wilmot Recreation Complex for naming rights, which will be explored in the coming months. Any revenue from these naming rights opportunities will be allocated towards improving or renewing a program or facility. Staff are exploring opportunities at the WRC that include but not limited to: Aquatic Centre, Indoor Track, Active Living Centre, Meeting Spaces, Change Rooms, Concession and Outdoor Amenities.

In due course and based on availability of resources, staff would expand on the inventory of assets to facilitate sponsor matching. This includes updating and gathering additional information on:

- Identifying a value based on the audience and marketing opportunity, such as cause marketing categories or demographics;
- Gathering valuation information such as number of views - foot traffic, vehicle traffic, attendance, web presence;
- User demographics (e.g., profile of those who use the facility/program/service); and,
- A digital inventory of assets, including photographs for proposal purposes.

Should an opportunity be identified ahead of an approved asset list for a specific facility, program or service, staff will present options for Council's consideration. This includes naming rights opportunities for areas at the WRC.

Building Stronger, More Connected Communities

Sponsorships for Township programs and events are crucial in fostering stronger, more connected communities. By collaborating with local businesses and organizations, the Township can provide enhanced programs and experiences that reflect the diverse interests of our residents while keeping costs down and making programs more accessible.

These partnerships help cultivate community pride and strengthen the bond between residents and the local economy. The growing trend of sponsorships reflects municipalities' increasing recognition of the benefits of public-private partnerships in enriching community life and supporting local economic growth.

There has also been a rise in naming rights at the municipal level, extending beyond large arenas to include other municipal assets such as community centres, parks, trails, and facilities. This model provides valuable revenue, allowing municipalities to enhance services and maintain infrastructure without increasing the tax burden.

Offering sponsorship or naming rights to local businesses and organizations helps establish long-term partnerships that benefit both the naming rights entity and the community, reflecting a shift towards creative funding solutions. Even smaller public spaces now represent opportunities for naming rights and local engagement.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE TOWNSHIP OF WILMOT STRATEGIC PLAN:

Financial Stability

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

The policies enable staff to seek out additional funding to offset Township costs and potentially reduce tax levy impacts. Should Council approve the policies, Community Services will work with Financial Services to determine allocation for all funds generated from Sponsorship or Naming Rights Agreements. It is intended that these policies would be implemented with current staff resources.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Proposed Sponsorship Policy
2. Proposed Naming Rights Policy
3. Proposed Donation Policy