

Request for Decision

Solemnization of Civil Marriages

Presented To:	City Council
Presented:	Wednesday, Sep 23, 2009
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Type:	Managers' Reports

Recommendation

That the City of Greater Sudbury introduce a service for the Solemnization of Civil Marriages and that the necessary By-laws be passed.

Financial Implications

Based on the number of civil marriages performed in municipalities with similar populations, new revenues of approximately \$27,500 may be possible once the service becomes fully known to the public. For 2010, \$10,000 in new revenue has been budgeted in Clerk's Services.

Executive Summary

This report recommends that Council implement a service for the solemnization of civil marriage and confirm that the City of Greater Sudbury's Clerk and Deputy Clerks may conduct civil marriage ceremonies.

Background

In 2004, the Province amended its regulations under Ontario's *Marriage Act* in order to allow municipal clerks to solemnize civil marriages. According to the AMCTO website, there are currently 75 municipalities in Ontario that have taken advantage of this amendment. Clerk's Services has received numerous requests for civil marriages over the last few years.

As described in the AMCTO Guide for Civil Marriage Solemnization Services, Council should pass a resolution or by-law to implement this service. While the Regulation does not require a by-law to empower the municipal clerk to solemnize marriages, this is recommended in order to formalize the scope of the authority.

Staff has contacted several municipalities in Ontario with populations similar to Greater Sudbury's in order to obtain information regarding their civil marriage programs, and has also reviewed a number of statistical studies on the topic. The following factors have been examined in order to determine how a system of best

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practices could be put in place to implement a civil marriage program.

Delegation of Authority: Most municipalities have at least two authorized representatives to perform the ceremonies, mainly the Clerk and a Deputy Clerk. However, in order to offer ceremonies in the French language, Clerk's Services would also have a bilingual staff member appointed as a Deputy Clerk strictly for purposes of performing civil marriages in French.

Training: In order to ensure consistency and completeness, staff who will be conducting the ceremonies will be enrolled in the AMCTO's Civil Marriage Training Course.

Volume: Similar-sized municipalities were contacted to determine the number of ceremonies performed annually. The results ranged from 60 per year in Richmond Hill to 165 in Oakville, with most other municipalities near the median of 110 per year, or approximately two per week.

In order to accommodate requests from the public, Clerk's Services has confirmed that they would be able to accommodate this additional workload as wedding ceremonies are more popular during the summer months, when there are fewer Council and Committee meetings. As the municipality is no longer registering births, the Vital Statistics Clerk will have time to co-ordinate bookings and logistics associated with this service.

Time and Location: The ceremonies will be offered only at Tom Davies Square and usually in the Council Chamber. Ceremonies will be performed on Friday afternoons, by appointment, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m., with each service lasting approximately 30 minutes.

In order to establish the necessary protocols, train staff and allow for scheduling, the City of Greater Sudbury will begin performing civil marriage services in January, 2010. Prior to the project's implementation, the Clerk's Office will prepare an administrative policy to deal with the logistics of the service.

Fee: Virtually all municipalities charge a fee for the ceremony, in addition to the marriage license fee. While the base fee for "on-site" ceremonies performed during regular business hours ranges from around \$100 to \$350, most municipalities charge approximately \$250, and this would be a reasonable amount for Greater Sudbury. This would be reflected by an amendment to the User Fees By-law.

Assuming we could attract the median number of ceremonies of 110 per year referred to above, it is anticipated that potential gross revenues of \$27,500 could eventually be achieved once the service is known throughout the community.