
HALDIMAND COUNTY

Report PDD-17-2022 Development Technologist Proposed Labour Market Wage Adjustment



For Consideration by Council in Committee on April 19, 2022

OBJECTIVE:

To seek Council approval of a labour market wage adjustment to promote recruitment and retention of Planning & Development Division staff; specifically, the Development Technologist position.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Report PDD-17-2022 Development Technologist Proposed Labour Market Wage Adjustment be received;
2. AND THAT for reasons outlined in Report PDD-17-2022 and in accordance with Article 21.5 of the CUPE Local 4700 collective agreement, a Labour Market Wage Adjustment (premium) be approved for the position of Development Technologist on the basis of an additional \$8.00 per hour, effective April 25, 2022;
3. AND THAT the premium be applied to the subject position's applicable hourly wage rate (start rate, 12 months, 24 months or job rate), as outlined in Schedule A to the CUPE Local 4700 collective agreement, after application of the approved annual economic adjustment;
4. AND THAT the premium be applied to the wage rate of all incumbents as well as new hires, to the subject position;
5. AND THAT the 2022 Tax Supported Operating Budget reflect the cost of the labour market wage adjustment as a Council Approved Initiative.

Prepared by: Alisha Cull, BES, MCIP, RPP, Supervisor, Planning & Development

Reviewed by: Shannon VanDalen, MCIP, RPP, CMMI, Manager of Planning & Development

Respectfully submitted: Mike Evers, MCIP, RPP, BES, General Manager of Community & Development Services

Approved: Craig Manley, MCIP, RPP, Chief Administrative Officer

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

There has been significant turnover in the Development Technologist position within the Planning & Development Division, as well as continual recruitment challenges. The position has been posted numerous times throughout the last several years with very limited interest and with few, if any, qualified candidates. Staff are proposing a Labour Market Wage Adjustment be approved for the position to assist with attracting and retaining qualified candidates.

BACKGROUND:

Over the course of the last several years, it has become apparent that Haldimand County has had challenges in recruiting and retaining professional technical experts within the Planning & Development Division for the Development Technologist position. There are three full time positions at full capacity. There have been seven resignations since 2015, with the majority of these employees resigning after approximately one year in the position and moving to other organizations. It has proven difficult to attract staff who have all of the experience and training identified in the job description as desired by the County. Accordingly, new staff have been selected who typically have little to no experience and who require significant investment in training to become fully qualified, as well as time to be able to learn the details required for review. After these efforts, the staff still regularly end up leaving to pursue opportunities elsewhere, typically for higher wages. The most recent resignation was in November of 2021. This position remains unfilled, with recent recruitment efforts resulting in no qualified candidates.

The role of the Development Technologist is to review and provide comments and recommendations on planning applications from an engineering perspective, ensure compliance with the Haldimand County Design Criteria and assess proposals to applicable legislation. Their review is highly technical in nature and comprises a significant portion of plans of subdivision, site plan, severance, minor variance and zoning amendments. These staff also review lot grading and evaluate requests for alternative standards to the County's Design Criteria.

Development applications have averaged 181 applications annually 2018 to 2020, with an increase to 221 applications in 2021. In 2021, the three staff reviewed 526 Engineering documents associated with development activity. Additionally, there has been an increase in the level of complexity for development applications submitted for approval and the number of engineering documents and supporting information that has to be analyzed as part of the application review process. Being short-staffed in this area results in delays, as planning applications cannot proceed to approval without engineering review. The evaluation of applications by the Development Technologists is of significant importance to Haldimand County from a financial perspective and in the sense of protecting the public interest, due to the fact that they ensure new development will not negatively impact existing infrastructure. Infrastructure improvement costs should be borne by developers, and part of the way that this policy is protected is through the work of the Development Technologists. Haldimand County is dealing with an increasing number of applications each year, of higher complexity and scale, and regularly having two instead of three Development Technologists to manage this workload is resulting in increased review timelines.

The Collective Agreement representing unionized inside/outside workers has language to consider a Labour Market Wage Adjustment as one tool in addressing attraction/retention of qualified staff. Likewise, Haldimand County Council approved guidelines for considering Labour Market Wage Adjustments via Report CS-HR-05-2006. Currently, there are three positions in the County that have an applied labour market wage adjustment; premiums were approved in 2016 for the positions of Planner, Building Inspector and Senior Building Inspector after similar difficulties with recruitment and retention were encountered. Given the concerns outlined in relation to the position of Development Technologist, a review of the labour market has been completed and an adjustment is anticipated to help address the issues being encountered.

ANALYSIS:

The issue of recruitment and retention is complicated, and the trends experienced for the Development Technologist position can be likely explained as a combination of a number of factors including:

- The nature of Haldimand County's work – rural and small town versus large urban and potentially more complex work. The infrastructure issues are the same between larger urban cities and

smaller more rural municipalities; however, Haldimand County requires individuals who have versatility and are able to work on a wide variety of projects in both urban and rural settings. Larger municipalities typically have additional resources and can hire specialists for specific types of projects. Once Haldimand County staff gain experience, they become attractive to other communities, including larger centres, due to their ability to work on a wide variety of matters and experience on a broad range of development applications. Only a small portion of experienced candidates will actively pursue job opportunities in this geographic area, particularly given the large number of job opportunities that are available in the nearby Greater Toronto, Hamilton, and Niagara regions.

- Personal reasons including place of residence and length of commute. Currently, the majority of the Planning & Development Division reside outside of Haldimand County.
- Wage rates in Haldimand County as compared to other municipalities within an hour's drive.

The implications of regular turnover and challenges in recruiting qualified staff are as follows:

- Development-related matters have increased in both volume and complexity over the last several years. It is challenging to meet legislated and internally-established timelines without a stabilized workforce.
- Currently, the County has three Development Technologists when at full staff complement. During vacancies, the workload is dispersed over remaining staff, which impacts the ability to meet customer service standards, as well as, increases stress for the current employees. Since August 2019, this service area has run below full complement for a total of 15 months, or 47% of that time period. The Division regularly functioning at reduced capacity in this area (nearly ½ the time over the last 3 years) has resulted in longer timelines for development approvals, as well as reduced job satisfaction for remaining staff, which increases the likelihood of becoming even further reduced in capacity if the remaining staff decide to pursue employment elsewhere.
- Loss of continuity of the staff handling a file has resulted in confusion and frustration for customers in terms of who to interact/communicate with and has resulted in delays which in turn creates a poor public image of the County.
- The County invests a significant amount of time, energy, and financial resources to ensure the technical professionals hired are provided with training to gain the full qualifications necessary, particularly since the County has been unable to attract candidates with the appropriate related job experience. This investment as well as variety of work experiences gained through work with the County is lost when employees move on to other jobs.
- Due to the limited credentials and experience of some of the new staff, Managers and Supervisors spend a significant amount of time providing technical coaching and training, work monitoring and communication efforts which impacts the time available for other managerial responsibilities.

Measures Taken to Promote Retention and Recruitment

Haldimand County provides its employees with a high quality work experience in terms of responsibility, variety of work, exposure, and autonomy compared to larger municipalities. Managers also work to ensure that staff performance is recognized, training opportunities are provided, and ongoing support is given in terms of coaching, career development, and work-life balance. The County also has a Flex Time policy that allows staff and management to implement flexible work schedules for mutual benefit. A new Working Remotely Policy allows staff to establish a schedule that allows for both working in the office and from home. This is key in becoming competitive with surrounding municipalities that offer this option (including Niagara Region, Brant County, and Norfolk County).

The work experiences and training that the County provides results in staff who are highly desirable to other employers. New graduates gain significant experience and develop key customer service and problem solving competencies early in their careers. This is a double-edged sword, as it results in high

quality and competent employees, but also increases the likelihood that they will easily find employment elsewhere if they so desire. New employees often require some level of training, and usually complete this training through the Ontario Good Roads Association. Each course costs approximately \$2,000, in addition to the cost of hotel accommodation and mileage as the training occurs in the Toronto area. Haldimand County supports continuing education for staff, but it is challenging from a financial perspective to spend the money only for another municipality to benefit when employees move on to new positions.

In addition to a labour market wage adjustment, additional opportunities can be explored to address recruitment and retention of staff in the Development Technologist position. Staff have been consulted and opportunities were noted for future consideration. One suggestion was to change the job title to better reflect the work performed and to align with other municipalities. The title was changed from Development & Design Technologist to Development Technologist.

Labour Market Analysis

Despite the aforementioned measures undertaken to promote retention and recruitment, it is believed that a major challenge is the wage rate for the Development Technologist position as compared to competing municipalities. In order to determine the impact current wages may have on the County's ability to retain and attract qualified applicants, a wage comparison of municipalities within one hour of the County was undertaken. An analysis of total compensation (including benefits) has not been undertaken given that potential job candidates focus primarily on the wage rate, not benefits and benefits in the public sector tend to be similar. Table 1 shows the results of this analysis, indicating that Haldimand County's hourly wage rates for these particular positions are significantly lower than our neighboring municipalities:

Table 1 – Hourly Wage Comparisons – 2022 Labour Market Analysis

| Municipality | Job Title | Year | Start Rate | Job Rate |
|---------------------|--|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Haldimand County | Development Technologist | 2022 | 29.15 | 33.75 |
| County of Brant | Development Technologist | 2021 | 40.63 | 47.54 |
| City of Brantford | Development Engineering Reviewer | 2022 | 38.09 | 42.32 |
| City of Brantford | Development Coordinator/Inspector | 2022 | 33.92 | 37.69 |
| City of Brantford | Development Engineering Tech | 2021 | 35.30 | 39.22 |
| City of Burlington | Intermediate Technician Site Development | 2022 | 32.21 | 40.38 |
| Town of Georgina | Development Engineering Tech | 2021 | 39.09 | 43.43 |
| City of Hamilton | Development Coordinator | 2021 | 38.88 | 44.18 |
| City of Kitchener | Engineering Technologist | 2022 | 35.04 | 43.80 |

| | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|------|-------|-------|
| Niagara Region | Development and Approvals Technician | 2022 | 28.64 | 30.30 |
| Norfolk County | Development Technologist | 2022 | 29.23 | 36.54 |
| Town of Oakville | Development Engineering Tech | 2021 | 39.25 | 47.86 |
| Oxford County | Development Review Technician | 2022 | 29.66 | 37.09 |
| City of Welland | Development Technologist | 2021 | 37.05 | 39.00 |
| City of Waterloo | Engineering Technologist | 2022 | 38.12 | 47.65 |
| Region of Waterloo | Transportation Planner | 2021 | 39.70 | 45.12 |

Table 2 – Proposed Hourly Labour Market Wage Premium

| Hourly Rate | Development Technologist |
|--|--------------------------|
| Haldimand County 2022 Job Rate | \$33.75 |
| Comparable Position Average Wage Rate | \$40.94 |
| Difference Per Hour | \$7.19 |
| Proposed Hourly Labour Market Wage Premium | \$8.00 |

Labour Market Wage Adjustment

Under the Collective Agreement with the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), Local 4700, Article 21.5 “Labour Market Wage Adjustments” states,

“A labour market wage adjustment may be determined by the Employer to supplement a position’s evaluated rate, when and if it is the Employer’s opinion that such an adjustment is required. In the event the Employer introduces a labour market wage adjustment, CUPE Local 4700 (Haldimand) shall be notified and the adjustment shall continue in effect for all employees assigned to the position until the Employer decides that the conditions which gave rise to the adjustment no longer exists.”

The above wording is a negotiated provision within the CUPE Collective Agreement. It is the means by which the employer can establish a competitive rate of pay to address temporary labour and/or skill shortages for unionized positions. It is intended to be a temporary measure until the competitive demand to hire individuals with the required credentials reduces, at which time the wage rates would return to those established through the collective bargaining process, with current employees “red circled” until the rates catch up. It is becoming evident that the overall wage rates for highly technical positions are becoming disconnected from competitors in the Greater Toronto Area. Haldimand County may need to take a comprehensive approach going forward in reviewing wage rates as a whole. However, the immediate challenges and need for stabilization in the Development Technologist position have led staff to propose a labour market wage adjustment at this time.

There are three other labour market wage adjustments in place at Haldimand County, for the Planner, Building Inspector, and Senior Building Inspector positions. These adjustments were implemented due to very similar recruitment and retention difficulties. While there are still some vacancy issues with these positions, the labour market wage adjustment has been an asset in attracting and retaining individuals and is one tool that is being implemented as part of a greater recruitment and retention strategy. Management staff are continuing to find ways to make these positions more attractive.

As indicated above, staff are currently experiencing difficulty in attracting and retaining qualified individuals for the Development Technologist position. As well, Table 1 above demonstrates a significant discrepancy between the County’s job rate wage and those within our labour market (neighbouring/competitor municipalities). To address this matter, Staff are proposing that Council implement a labour market wage adjustment as outlined below:

1. Apply an hourly premium to the wage rate for the Development Technologist position, in an amount close to the gap in the 2022 average of the comparators, being an additional \$8.00 per hour.
2. Apply the above noted Labour Market Wage Adjustment to the wage rate of all current incumbents in these positions, as well as any new recruits, regardless of the individual’s step on the wage grid (i.e. start rate, year 2, year 3 or job rate) as part of a staff retention strategy.
3. The identified premium increase will be applied after any approved annual economic increase to the base wage rate, as reflected in the CUPE Salary Schedule, and will remain in place until such time as Council determines it is no longer required. This is consistent with how other Labour Market Wage Adjustments have been treated in the past.

It is important to note that these recommendations are slightly different than the procedures for labour market adjustments approved in CS-HR-05-2006. Specifically:

- Comparator rates shown are neighbouring municipalities and those within a one hour drive, rather than the Council approved benchmark municipalities. While the County’s benchmark municipalities are similar in size and service, staff have believe that those municipalities in our direct labour market represent more accurate “competitors” for the purpose of attraction and retention.
- Suggested hourly premium is higher than the “average” rate identified. As noted on the chart above a premium of \$8.00 is being recommended, whereas the difference in base average is noted as \$7.19. By rounding up, staff are maintaining the spirit of the guidelines while proposing a clean, identifiable and slightly more attractive premium.

The implementation of the proposed labour market wage adjustment would bring the County’s wage rates for the Development Technologist position at or closer to “competitor” municipalities and would serve to provide an incentive to stay (retention) or to attract (recruitment) employees with the skills, competencies, experience and knowledge we require.

FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

Table 3 shows the budget impact of the proposal:

Table 3 – Budget Impact

| Costs | Development Technologist |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Hourly Wage Increase | \$8.00 |

| | |
|---|------------------------|
| Annual Wage Increase per Full Time Employee (excluding overtime) | \$14,560 |
| Estimated Employer Benefit Increased Cost | \$3,820 |
| Total Incremental Cost per Full Time Employee | \$18,380 |
| Number of Approved Full Time Employees | 3 |
| <u>Total Additional 2022 Budget Impact</u> | <u>\$55,140</u> |

The above recommendation would result in an increase over and above the amounts included in the 2022 Council Approved Tax-Supported Operating Budget. Corporately, the surplus or deficit for the operating budget is funded from or contributed to the Contingency Reserve. As such the negative levy impacts in 2022 will form part of the overall annual surplus/deficit.

While this cost is significant, the cost of recruiting and training in terms of time and financial resources is also significant as is productivity loss and impacts to customer service in terms of meeting County service standards when vacancies occur. While a labour market wage adjustment may not solve all the recruitment and retention issues, it will help the County when competing with nearby municipalities for candidates. With the level of development activity experienced over the last several years and into the foreseeable future, achieving some level of staffing stability is necessary.

STAKEHOLDER IMPACTS:

Vacancies in the Development Technologist position have resulted in longer timelines for review of *Planning Act* applications at Haldimand County. Community stakeholders, such as developers, consultants, and members of the public have all been impacted by the delays. Working toward stability in this position would benefit the community by decreasing review timelines and maintaining consistency across the entirety of the process, instead of files being handed off numerous times to new staff.

Approval of a Labour Market Wage Adjustment is subject to consultation with the union (CUPE Local 4700), with respect to the terms of this proposal. Involvement of Human Resources will be required to engage union relations both immediately to implement any proposed changes, as well as on an ongoing basis to monitor the rates. CUPE representatives have advised that they concur with the proposed out-of-schedule wage adjustments for these positions. Management will need to be cognizant of whether the premium rates continue to be appropriate for the labour market, and if the hiring environment changes for these positions, given that the wage adjustments are deemed temporary.

REPORT IMPACTS:

Agreement: No

By-law: No

Budget Amendment: Yes

Policy: No

ATTACHMENTS:

None.