

8-1-2017

The Future of CAOs in Small Ontario Municipalities: A Study of What Small Ontario Municipalities Are Doing to Recruit and Retain 'Top Talent'

Michael Szarka
Western University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/lgp-mrps>

 Part of the [Public Administration Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Szarka, Michael, "The Future of CAOs in Small Ontario Municipalities: A Study of What Small Ontario Municipalities Are Doing to Recruit and Retain 'Top Talent'" (2017). *MPA Major Research Papers*. 174.
<https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/lgp-mrps/174>

This Major Research Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Local Government Program at Scholarship@Western. It has been accepted for inclusion in MPA Major Research Papers by an authorized administrator of Scholarship@Western. For more information, please contact tadam@uwo.ca, wlsadmin@uwo.ca.

The Future of CAOs in Small Ontario Municipalities

A Study of What Small Ontario Municipalities Are Doing
to Recruit and Retain 'Top Talent'

MPA Research Report

Submitted to

The Local Government Program
Department of Political Science
Western University

Michael Szarka
August 2017

Executive Summary

The role of Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) is perhaps the most essential position for modern day municipalities. While these individuals play a critical role in the future direction and success of their organizations, data pertaining to their pending retirement in Ontario is a cause for concern. These trends are particularly troubling for Ontario's small municipalities who already face challenges pertaining to the recruitment and retention of staff.

The CAO position has undergone a dynamic shift over the past two decades. Research has shown that ideas and practices related to New Public Management (NPM) and New Public Service (NPS) have directly impacted the position, moving it away from being one of purely management to a combination of management and strategic leadership. In order for Ontario's small municipalities to continue serving their citizens effectively, they need to develop strategies aimed at obtaining 'top talent' to fill the CAO position.

Through an analysis of the research currently available on this topic, this study recommends a number of best practices that small municipalities should consider adopting to maintain future stability at the senior leadership level. In addition, case studies for two municipalities were developed based on one-on-one interviews with elected officials and administrators to ascertain what these organizations are doing to address this issue.

Acknowledgements

There are a number of people who I would like to take a moment and thank for their continued encouragement and support as I have made my way through the Masters of Public Administration program over the last three years. First, I would like to thank my partner in crime, Maureen Cosyn Heath. Since we met during our first course together, you have become a great friend and colleague and I don't think there is anyone else I would have rather had the privilege of going through this program with.

Secondly, to all the staff and instructors of the Local Government Program, I learned so much from each and every one of you. I truly believe I have and will continue to be a better public servant because of the knowledge and experiences you shared.

Special thanks go out to Christopher Alcantara for his invaluable support and direction as my supervisor on this final project. Despite my best efforts, you kept me on track and focused and for that I am eternally grateful. Also, sorry for bothering you so much over your summer holidays.

To the staff and elected officials at the Town of Tecumseh and Town of Wawa, thank you so much for finding time in your busy schedules to participate in this research. I hope that your experiences will help other small municipalities who may be struggling to deal with this issue.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents Dennis and Judy Szarka, and my partner Mike Bodkin. You all continuously reminded me to keep my eyes on the finish line and without your love and support, I would not have been able to complete this program.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary..... 1

Introduction..... 4

Chapter 1 – Background Considerations 7

Chapter 2 – Literature Review 10

- The CAO Demographic and Career Profile 10
- The Evolving CAO: Leading Up, Down and Out 15
- Recruitment 21
- Retention 24
- Succession Planning 25

Chapter 3 – Planning for the Future 28

- The ‘Tone at the Top’ 29
- Succession Planning is Key 31
- Investing in Staff 36
- Opportunities Provided by Professional Networking 40

Chapter 4 – Case Studies 42

- Case Study #1 – Tecumseh, ON 42
- Case Study #2 – Wawa, ON 48

Conclusion and Recommendations 52

Bibliography 56

Appendix 1 – Interview Questions 60

Introduction

One of the most important and dynamic roles within any municipality is that of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). These individuals bridge the divide between elected officials and municipal staff, while at the same time managing relationships with outside stakeholders (Siegel, 2010). Seen as an essential link in the municipal government system, the CAO provides policy advice to elected officials, manages the operations of their organization, and plays an important role in the accountability process that flows from the electorate through municipal council to the public servants working for the community. In short, organizations rely heavily on CAOs to shape their future direction and success.

Within the coming decade, a large number of CAOs are set to retire (O'Flynn & Mau, 2014, p. 155). While a major demographic shift is occurring in Canadian society at large, recent data collected on Canadian municipal CAOs shows that the current aging CAO pool is going to require significant renewal upon retirement of the baby-boomer generation. To put this into perspective, of the 219 CAOs respondents in a recent survey published in *Canadian Public Administration*, 40 percent were over the age of 55, with another 42 percent in the 45-55 age bracket (O'Flynn & Mau, 2014, p. 155). Coupled with high rates of attrition amongst the CAO community and a lower average retirement age for public sector employees (Coulter 2011), municipalities will have to redouble their efforts to attract and retain new and talented individuals to fill these crucial roles.

This scenario presents even more of a challenge for Ontario's small and rural municipalities, which are defined as *small population centres* with a population between 1,000 and 29,999, with no fewer than 400 per square kilometer (Statistics Canada 2012). On the

surface, these organizations seem to lack the financial resources to remain competitive with their larger urban counterparts, forcing them to find other avenues to make themselves the *employer of choice*. Furthermore, smaller municipalities continuously struggle with deep-rooted perceptions of limited opportunities for growth and development.

In addition to the looming problem of impending retirements, research on the career progression of municipal CAOs has shown that the corner office is not as coveted as it once was (Coulter 2011). The loss of talent to the private sector, in particular, is becoming an increasingly prevalent issue for local governments. Termed by some as the “quiet crisis”, competition for a small group of qualified individuals coupled with a lack of younger individuals to fill vacancies are creating conditions for a perfect storm.

All of these issues raise important questions for academics and practitioners interested in local government. Should organizations look internally or externally for possible replacements? Is there a lack of qualified candidates to fill these roles and if so, what does this mean for the ongoing operations of these organizations? How do organizations compete in the fight to remain the employer of choice?

The purpose of this paper is to examine the following question: How can Ontario’s small municipalities remain competitive at attracting, developing and retaining ‘top talent’ as the supply of municipal CAOs decreases and demand increases over the next decade? It addresses this question by examining the municipalities of Tecumseh and Wawa Ontario and involved the researcher reviewing public documents and interviewing municipal staff and elected officials from both organizations in July 2017. The one-on-one interviews were approximately one hour in length and were semi-structured in design to allow for in depth discussion on the topic based

on each individual's experiences. Formal ethics approval from the Western University's Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) was received on 15 May 2017. Interviews with municipal staff and elected officials were audio recorded and notes were taken. All records of these interviews were destroyed after the completion of this project as per the ethics instructions from UWO's NMREB.

Permission was obtained from a majority of the individuals who were interviewed allowing them to be identified in this research. The four interviewees for the Town of Tecumseh included Mayor Gary McNamara, Deputy Mayor Joe Bachetti, CAO Tony Haddad and Director Corporate Services & Clerk Laura Moy. The three interviewees for the Town of Wawa included Mayor Ron Rody, CAO Chris Wray and another municipal employee who asked that their name not be included in the final version of this research.

Smaller municipalities were chosen as the focus of this research because the problem of CAO retirement is particularly acute for these organizations. Small municipalities are likely to find it difficult to attract top talent to senior leadership roles, particularly small northern communities isolated from urban centres. As well, it is likely that among the pool of potential CAO replacement candidates, only a small portion would be suited to what a small community has to offer them in terms of career development and lifestyle outside of work. These are some of the assumptions held among practitioners of local government and I wanted to investigate whether they were true and if so, how they might impact local recruitment and retention of senior leaders.

The towns of Tecumseh and Wawa Ontario were selected as the case studies for this paper. While both organizations are home to a significant baby-boomer population, they are

otherwise at opposite ends of the small municipality spectrum. Tecumseh represents a thriving small community in Southwestern Ontario within close proximity to a large urban centre (Windsor) and a regional population of approximately 5 million people. The CAO and Mayor have been able to build a dynamic relationship over the last ten years, and the stability this has brought the organization has allowed it to continue to grow. Wawa presents a much different perspective due to its location in northern Ontario, its relative isolation, and the loss of a major regional employer during the last 10 years. By examining these municipalities, the research will reveal whether proximity to an urban centre matters in terms of the ability of small organizations to attract and retain top talent.

This paper is divided as follows. The first chapter provides some additional background information to better frame the project. Chapter 2 surveys the existing literature on the important role that the CAO plays within an organization, and what tools and resources small municipalities have at their disposal when planning for the future. Chapter 3 focuses on what the literature identifies as the best practices that organizations need to consider when planning for the future before presenting the case studies in chapter four. The paper ends by summarizing the research results, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the project, and offering some recommendations for policymakers interested in CAO recruitment and retention.

Chapter 1 – Background Considerations

“The men and women in the shadows.” This is the phrase that David Siegel uses to describe municipal CAOs in his most recent book on the leadership qualities of municipal chief administrative officers. From the Canadian perspective, much time and effort has been spent

analyzing the role of senior level bureaucrats in both the federal and provincial public sectors. Very little, however, has been written on the key role that CAOs play in municipalities across Canada (Siegel, 2015).

The city manager system from which the CAO position derives was born out of the United States in the early 1900s as part of the reform movement. The system later migrated to Canada and began to have a significant impact on the structural operation of Ontario municipalities beginning in the 1970s (Siegel, 2015, p. 15). While there are no comprehensive data on the current number of municipalities in Canada with a CAO, research speculates that the number continues to increase year over year (Siegel, 2015, p. 17). This trend highlights the importance with which organizations continue to see this role and why future study of the CAO position is crucial.

Currently, Ontario has 444 municipalities. 'Non-Metro' census divisions within Ontario represent a total of 393 communities; 52 of these have less than 100 residents and 288 have between 1000 and 24 999 (Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation, 2015). While all municipal organizations face challenges of varying severity and scope, small municipalities have additional issues they must address with which large organizations simply do not have to deal. For example, many small municipalities report difficulty in effectively providing and maintaining appropriate levels of services to their citizens (Rural Ontario Municipal Association, 2011). This is particularly true for isolated and northern communities. All manner of programs and demands constantly compete for the same funding. Making matters worse, outmigration, lower employment rates and an aging population ultimately mean lower revenue streams to draw from as well (Rural Ontario Municipal Association, 2011).

Perhaps the largest challenge facing these municipalities has been the steady decline in their population growth rates over the last two decades. Between 2006 and 2011, numbers from the Ontario Ministry of Finance indicate that these regions saw population growth rates of only 0.5% and they are expected to remain relatively flat through 2030 (Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2014). In contrast, Ontario's urban centres are projected to be the fastest-growing regions by far; the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) is expected to account for almost two-thirds of Ontario's population growth over the next 20 years, an expected increase of almost 38 per cent (Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2016).

Projections of future growth in small communities also suggests that these regions will see a decline in the number of youth (0-19) and young adults (20-44), with moderate increases for adults (45-64) and seniors (64+) (Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2014). These trends represent a challenging scenario for small municipalities as their population and tax bases become stagnant and create a more challenging set of circumstances when trying to remain competitive at attracting people to the region, including organizational leaders.

With these considerations in mind, it is the right time to explore how Ontario's small municipalities are preparing for the future and specifically the pending retirement of the baby-boomer generation. According to statistics from the Government of Ontario, approximately 50% of the municipal workforce will be eligible for retirement in the coming decade (Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2016). Such a large exodus of employees from the workforce presents significant challenges. In the case of senior managers and leaders, these departures represent not only positions to fill but more importantly a significant loss of knowledge about the community and organization. In addition, tools to help offset this knowledge loss such as

retention and succession planning take significant time and resources to develop, and to be effective, need to be in place well in advance of these leaders leaving the organization.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

As mentioned previously, there is limited literature on the CAO position and little to none on the topic of CAO recruitment and retention. In order to effectively prepare for the future and remain competitive at attracting top talent, organizations need to have an understanding of key concepts prior to considering the individuals who will apply for these positions versus the person organizations want to hire for the role. In this chapter, I survey the literature on the current CAO demographic and career profile and analyze how the CAO position has changed over the last two decades. Once organizations have a thorough grasp of these issues, they should develop recruitment, retention and succession strategies that are sensitive to these changes and are tailored to the distinct needs and resources available in their organizations. As such, this chapter focuses on the concepts of “recruitment, retention, and succession” and links them to the literature on CAO careers and the changing role of the position over time to provide a framework for analyzing the case studies to follow.

The CAO Demographic and Career Profile

In the municipal world, the CAO acts as the linchpin between the organization’s elected officials and the public service, and unlike senior level managers in both the federal and provincial public sectors, the community level basis in which municipal governments operate is much more chaotic and transparent. This is due largely to the fact that municipal government is

not unified in the same sense as parliamentary government (Siegel, 2015, p. 141). The CAO works for a group of elected officials who are often openly divided on issues. In addition, the growth of public participation and engagement at the local government level has meant that organizations have continuously had to focus on maintaining or increasing the transparency of their operations.

It is important for municipal organizations to have an understanding of not only the current CAO career profile but also the needs of the role in the years to come. This understanding should play a direct role in helping to determine the type of people and skillsets required to effectively fulfill the responsibilities of the CAO position. Furthermore, organizations need to be able to determine how this information relates to the unique dynamics posed by the ongoing operations of small municipal organizations.

The most recent and comprehensive analysis to date on the demographic and career profile of municipal CAOs in Canada was completed by O'Flynn and Mau (2014). Their survey was completed by 219 municipal CAOs from across Canada out of a sampling frame of 1,320 (O'Flynn and Mau 2014). While their study only had a 16.5% participation rate, the data collected still provide useful insight into the individuals currently filling municipal CAO roles.

The survey data indicated that from an age/demographic perspective, a large majority of individuals currently in the municipal CAO role were men (164 respondents) with a large portion of the group (89 respondents) being over the age of 55 (O'Flynn and Mau 2014). In addition, another 42% of the group (91 respondents) were in the 44-55 age range. Taking into consideration the data for this research were collected in 2010, it is likely that a large portion of

the 45-55 age category are now much closer to the over 55 age category. These data paint a stark reality of just how large the pending exit of CAOs from the municipal workforce is.

Data also indicated that age and municipal size were directly correlated. For example, only 36% of municipalities with a population under 25,000 had a CAO over the age of 55 compared to 50% or more in communities of 25,000 residents or more (O'Flynn and Mau 2014). Not surprisingly, of the 6 CAOs in the 25-35 age category, all were found working for organizations of less than 25,000 (O'Flynn and Mau 2014).

In relation to formal education and professional experience, the authors of the survey reference Siegel's work on the palpable transformation in the role of municipal CAOs. Specifically, successful CAOs in today's municipal environment require effective leadership skills, more so than in previous years when traditional managerial skills and functions were most important (O'Flynn and Mau 2014).

While data collected in relation to formal education varied widely between participants, some very clear trends emerged. For example, individuals with no post-secondary degree were all limited to positions in municipalities with less than 25,000 residents (O'Flynn and Mau 2014). In addition, the relationship between an individual's formal education and the size of the organization they worked for were directly correlated. While approximately 33% of respondents from municipalities with less than 25,000 residents held a graduate degree, the percentage increased to 48% in the 25,000-100,000 category, 57% in the 100,000-500,000 category and 100% in municipalities with more than 500,000 people (O'Flynn and Mau 2014).

In addition to the raw data, the researchers also performed follow-up interviews with 15 survey participants who expressed interest in taking part in a more in-depth discussion on the

topic and represented a variety of demographic and organizational backgrounds. In all instances, current CAOs highlighted the importance of a strong formal education and that in the coming years a graduate degree would become the professional standard (O'Flynn and Mau 2014). Backing up these claims, of the six survey respondents between the age of 25-35, all already possessed or were in the process of obtaining a graduate degree (O'Flynn and Mau 2014).

While formal education is becoming an increasingly important aspect of the CAO position, it goes hand-in-hand with professional experience. Of the 216 survey respondents, approximately 50% listed experience in the municipal sector as their only professional experience (O'Flynn and Mau 2014). Additionally, 99% of respondents had some degree of municipal experience prior to becoming CAO, while a majority of those had combined experience in the private, provincial or federal public sector (O'Flynn and Mau 2014).

Again, years of professional experience were directly related to municipal size. For example, the 19 CAOs with less than five years of experience were all working for municipalities of less than 25,000 people. In contrast, almost 60% of respondents from municipalities of 100,000 people or more had greater than twenty-five years of experience (O'Flynn and Mau 2014). As the researchers point out, these results are to be expected. As municipal size increases, so do the complexities of its operations and services offered, requiring what they argue to be certain and necessary levels of maturity and experience (O'Flynn and Mau 2014).

Adding validity to this research, the authors reference a similar study by Gordon McIntosh from 2008 from an unpublished doctoral dissertation. With a sample population of

484 municipal CAOs, his research indicated that those filing the position were similar in age, educational background and professional experience (O'Flynn & Mau, 2014).

Upon review of all the data collected in the survey there are some very clear takeaways that are relevant to this research question. First, and most importantly, the research reinforced that a large portion of the current CAO talent pool are nearing retirement age and that this poses significant challenges for organizations. In particular, when these individuals do leave their organizations, what plans are in place to ensure a smooth transition between leaders? Also, what preparatory measures are organizations taking in advance to prevent administrative and political gaps such as knowledge loss or maintaining established relationships with other levels of government?

When it comes to smaller municipalities under 25,000 people in size, it appears that those in the CAO role are often younger and well-educated, but lacking in professional experience. These findings may indicate that organizations are aware of the limited size of the current CAO talent pool and are willing to overlook the lack of experience in exchange for someone with more formalized education. In this sense, how are organizations ensuring the success of the individuals appointed to these positions?

O'Flynn and Mau present a stark reality that the current CAO talent pool is going to need significant renewal in the next decade. This research is important in developing further discussion on the topic of recruiting, retaining, and developing top talent particularly in small municipal organizations where this is a more difficult task. It is also particularly useful as it helps transition between the type of people organizations want to hire for the CAO role in light of how the role itself has changed over the last two decades.

The Evolving CAO: Leading Up, Down, and Out

In addition to understanding what kinds of people are currently filling the role of municipal CAO in Ontario, it is also important for organizations to understand how this pivotal role has changed over the last two decades. When it comes to finding the right candidates to fill the position, organizations need to ensure they are looking for individuals with particular traits and skillsets who are going to be able to navigate the complexities of the CAO role successfully.

A majority of the literature focusing on the changes to the CAO role over the past two decades has been done by Siegel and O'Flynn in separate but complementary works. Their arguments paint a clear picture for public sector administrators that the position itself has moved away from one of purely management to a combination of management and especially strategic leadership. Changes to the CAO position are discussed in work by O'Flynn in his master's thesis, *The Evolving Roles of the Municipal Chief Administrative Officer Position in Canada, 1985-2010*. O'Flynn's work highlights how the CAO position has shifted from one of operational management to that of strategic leadership (O'Flynn, 2011).

O'Flynn research lists three major social and economic developments in the past twenty-five years as the major reasons for why the CAO role has shifted to become more focused on a strategic leadership role. First, the growth of New Public Management in the early 1990s, which focused on a business-like approach to the public sector, had an impact on and led to significant changes in the CAO position. Second, the increase in downloading of services from other levels of government during the 1990s changed and grew the areas municipal governments operated in and forced the CAO position to evolve further. Lastly, the more general impact of globalization forced municipalities to seek out new ways to compete and/or

partner on the global stage for the sake of attention, tourism, economic development and investment (O'Flynn, 2011, pp. 91-92). Today, strategic leadership has become a key aspect of the CAO position. CAOs are expected to be able to lead their organizations in both an efficient and cost effective manner while also fostering a dynamic organizational culture.

Siegel's research on the role of municipal CAOs has primarily focused on the changing leadership role of the CAO position in municipal government. Like O'Flynn, Siegel contends that new public management (NPM) and new public service (NPS) have had a major impact on the role of municipal leaders, encouraging them to take on greater responsibilities and more assertive roles in the direction their organizations take (Siegel 2010, 145). These approaches have been essential in defining a greater role and more discretion for municipal leaders. More discretion, however, has led to other significant complications in both the management and leadership environments (Siegel 2010, 146).

Specific to municipal CAOs, Siegel argues that this position is unique because the job has grown in terms of roles and responsibilities; so too have the leadership requirements.

Municipal CAOs, like most managers, are required to lead in three different directions: up, down, and out (Mintzberg 2000). However, unlike other managers, CAOs are required to lead in all three different directions simultaneously, making the position unique (Siegel 2010, 145).

Based on Siegel's leadership model, the first direction in which municipal CAOs must lead is downward to staff. When dealing with staff, leading down requires a great deal of care to ensure the all organizational resources, whether they be financial, human or other, are arranged in such a way that they are cost-effective while still following all rules and regulations laid out by various regulatory bodies and laws (Siegel, 2010, p. 145).

The largest component of leading down is integration of all the different aspects of municipal operations into one comprehensive whole. The CAO is key to this process because she needs to have a broader corporate perspective and be able to horizontally integrate the different departments and service areas, providing the services through one corporate entity (Siegel, 2010, pp. 146-47). This is particularly true of many issues municipalities are trying to tackle today such as homelessness. Siegel points out that homelessness does not fit with one traditional department and instead involves multiple service areas such as social services, public health, planning and police services, just to name a few (Siegel, 2010, p. 147).

It is important to remember that the organizational structure of municipalities is much different than the normal pyramid structure of most organizations. Instead, the organizational structure of municipalities looks more like an hourglass with staff in the bottom half, and council in the top portion (Siegel, 2010, p. 147). The chokepoint in the middle through which all information must flow is the CAO and this individual must be able to meld all the different interests of various departments into one specific corporate perspective.

The second direction in which CAOs must lead is out, referring to the CAOs' relationships with individuals and groups external to the organization such as the media, resident groups, business organizations, other levels of government (Siegel, 2010, p. 147). In this sense, the CAO is the key representative or spokesperson of the organization; she is seen as the official face of the municipality.

Siegel argues that NPM and NPS have 'changed considerably' how this component of the CAO position is viewed (Siegel, 2010, p. 147). The sheer volume and complexity of issues municipalities face today means that often they are beyond the scope and capability of part-

time amateur councillors, who are more often found in small municipalities. Combined with the fact that citizen engagement and participation have become key pillars of how municipal organizations operate, the CAO must be able to lead and determine what issues are likely to become contentious and develop a strategy to manage them (Siegel, 2010, pp. 147-48).

Leading out is a perfect example of the complexities of leadership skills needed in the CAO position. It often happens that as CAOs are negotiating with external stakeholders on particular issues, they are also simultaneously leading up in term of developing a unified position and direction from council. In addition, CAOs must walk a delicate line in the policy-making process that develops out of complex negotiations. While it is impossible for a CAO to remain completely removed from this aspect of politics they must do their best to limit their involvement and remain politically neutral (Siegel, 2010, pp. 149-50).

To complicate matters further, this is all done under the watchful eye of local media. Once again, an effective CAO must strike a balance between developing a positive and informative relationship with the media without dismissing those who do not attract a significant audience in the community (Siegel, 2015, p. 58).

While CAOs have an important role to play in leading out, Siegel highlights that they must be careful not to step too far in front of mayor and council. There are specific cases where it makes more sense for a full-time administrator with expertise in the field to lead on issues. However, the CAO must function primarily as a negotiator and diplomat when leading out and always be careful to simultaneously manage their relationship with council.

Lastly, Siegel discusses the concept of leading up, which he deems to be the most difficult direction for any CAO to lead. Leading up, in the local government context, pertains to

the subtle ability to work with a diverse and sometime divided group of councillors to further the interests of the municipality and its residents (Siegel, 2010, p. 155). Leading up to mayor and council presents a difficult task because those in the CAO role are in a subordinate position. Exactly how does this individual go about leading the people to which they are accountable? The answer, it seems, again lays in how NPM and NPS have impacted the CAO's role. NPM argues that all managers in the public service need to be more entrepreneurial, while NPS argues that it is the public servants who must act and serve as guardians of the public trust (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2007).

In municipal government, the CAO is the full-time administrator with significant educational and professional experience in the field. In contrast, mayor and council are frequently part-time amateur politicians well versed in local issues and sensitive to the concerns of their constituents (Siegel, 2010, p. 152). It is reasonable to assume that councillors will depend on the knowledge and expertise of the CAO, and it is the responsibility of the individual in that role to provide both knowledge and leadership in the best interest of the organization (Siegel, 2010, p. 153).

The system within which municipal government operates also creates a unique relationship between mayor, council and the CAO. Unlike the party system of federal and provincial politics, municipal politics is a "mash up" of various individuals trying to work together towards common goals while at the same time advancing their own agenda items within a group that is frequently lacking in unity (Siegel, 2010, p. 153). This means the CAO must often take on a role in which they help shape the mandate that the mayor and council

wish to pursue. It also means that more often than not, the CAO must act as a mediator when certain issues come to an impasse (Siegel, 2010, p. 154).

Once again, leading up, like both of the other directions, relies on the CAO's ability to mediate issues between a diverse group of individuals to work in the best interests of the organization and its citizens. This includes finding and walking the line between leading without being out in front of mayor and council (Siegel, 2010, p. 157).

Understanding the importance of how crucial a role strategic leadership is for any individual in the CAO position, and also how these new responsibilities have drastically changed the position of CAO itself is a key part of what organizations must consider. Siegel argues that administrators at the heads of organizations are no longer in their role to make sure a street gets paved or grass in a park gets cut (Siegel, 2010, p. 156). That responsibility falls under the purview of department heads and the staff they manage. Today's CAOs need to work with agents in the political system to help shape and develop a policy agenda.

Overall, a number of factors have played a role in the shift of the CAO position from one solely dedicated to management to a combination of management and strategic leadership. It is important for organizations to understand these shifts as they search to replace those currently in or set to retire from the CAO position. Traits and skillsets that may have suited the role two decades ago no longer provide a broad enough of a basis to successfully navigate the complexities of the role today. Furthermore, organizations should be using this information when developing strategies to prepare for their futures.

Recruitment, Retention and Succession Planning

With an understanding of the current demographics of those in the CAO position, and an understanding of how the role has changed over the last two decades, municipal organizations need to consider how to put that information to work when planning for the pending retirement of a large portion of municipal CAOs from the current talent pool. There are three distinct areas on which municipal organizations can focus their efforts when planning for the replacement of senior level leaders. They include recruitment, retention and succession planning. In a perfect world, organizations should have plans in place dealing with each of these distinct issues. Limited time and resources, however, and particularly in small municipalities, can impact their development. In some cases, one area is prioritized over others likely based on the unique needs of the organization. Alternately, organizations may be dealing with these issues already but on a more informal basis.

Recruitment

Attraction of qualified individuals to positions in smaller municipalities poses a significant challenge, one which will ultimately impact the future sustainability of these organizations. With the pending departure of many senior level managers including those in the CAO position, organizations will continue to struggle to attract top talent with the limited resources they have available unless they think outside the box (Muniscope, 2010).

There are many obstacles that small and rural municipalities will likely face when looking to recruit top talent. Research on the topic of recruitment to small and rural

municipalities in Canada has shown that there are two significant issues at the heart of this matter: compensation levels and political pressures (AMCTO, 2013).

The reality is that competitive compensation is the simplest route for organizations to pursue when looking to attract talent. However, recent data collected on public sector salaries has shown that often times, the salaries of senior level managers in mid to large size municipalities is often higher than those of many rural and small municipal CAOs (AMCTO, 2013). Globalization has had a direct impact on the mobility of today's workforce meaning organizations are now in direct competition with each other to attract top talent to their organizations.

Political pressures are another issue which directly impact efforts to attract staff to small municipalities. Living and also working in a small municipality presents an entirely different system of challenges that staff members in larger urban settings simply do not encounter. What is often referred to as the "fishbowl effect" is exemplified in small towns where everyone seems to everyone. To that extent, there are more frequent public interactions between staff and citizens in the community making it difficult to not always be "on the clock," or even publically scrutinized on many candid occasions (Hood, 2012).

When considering the different aspects of attracting potential senior management staff, organizations also need to consider that they are not only courting potential staff but usually their families as well (Wajs, 2014). Uprooting an entire family can be extremely difficult and arduous task, particularly for spouses or partners with specialized jobs, which might be in limited supply in smaller regions.

In consideration of these briefly outlined factors, small municipalities may benefit from spending time examining exactly what makes their organization and community intrinsically unique. All small communities have a rich history. It goes without saying that this uniqueness should be part of the promotion. Additionally, employers may benefit from considering a potential employee's motivation towards and retention to any, if not all, positions. Are they originally from the region? Were they raised in one particular area but eventually moved away for school or another opportunity? These factors will help organizations determine whether or not potential candidates may (or may not) be a good fit with the community (Wajs, 2014).

The importance of understanding a candidate's motivation cannot be stressed enough. These and other important factors are prominent in most academic literature on the topic of staff recruitment. When evaluating a potential candidate's motivation for living and working in a small community, there are many factors that have been shown to equate to higher long-term success (Risley, 2016). These factors include whether a potential candidate has local roots which are bringing them back to the region after university or career opportunities elsewhere. If not local roots, small town roots may similarly suffice. It is much more likely that someone who was raised in a small town in southwestern Ontario will be more likely to fit with an organization than someone who grew up in downtown Toronto (Risley, 2016).

Another possible selling point for smaller organizations lies in the opportunities for cross training and development. With often-limited resources, candidates have the potential to experience other aspects of the organization's operations that they might not otherwise be exposed to in larger municipal settings. If smaller municipalities can highlight these opportunities, they can effectively help alleviate fears and attract more potential candidates.

Retention

Retention strategies are another aspect of assessing organizational preparedness to deal with future staffing concerns. Attracting and hiring top talent is only half of the battle, and ultimately a lost cause if organizations cannot retain them. This is particularly important for small municipal organizations to prevent staff from being poached by a neighboring municipality. From day one, it is essential that employees find the right fit within their organization. In particular, leadership positions such as the CAO require a balancing act between integrating with the organization's mission and an individual's specific style of management.

A great deal of effective leadership in the CAO position deals with talent management. This is the skill of attracting highly skilled workers, and developing and retaining them to meet the current and future goals and objectives of the organization (AMCTO, 2012). It also includes integrating employees into the most suited positions within an organization. If a CAO, along with other members of senior management, has developed a system to identify positive and enabling aspects in their employees, they will be able to provide opportunities for personal growth, and in turn retain quality staff.

Areas of interest when considering these ideas of retention from the perspective of current or future CAOs include such thematic notions as opportunities to take on greater responsibilities, the chance to broaden administrative and interpersonal skills, and the ability to cultivate long-lasting relationship networks (Chan, Kobrinsky, & Oschinski, 2014). By fulfilling these needs and desires, organizations may be able to alleviate the decline in retention numbers and convince qualified individuals to stay within their positions longer.

Further research that focuses on the private sector experience has shown that executives tend to stay longest with those organizations that offer the greatest opportunities to enhance their employability. From the opposite perspective, an organization will keep more talent by helping its executives grow than it would by denying them these opportunities.

Succession Planning

Succession planning is perhaps the most important topic for small municipalities to consider when planning for the future. There are, of course, situations where staff members decide to leave an organization; therefore, the creation of strategic planning will allow for the smooth transition of roles and responsibilities and also ensure continuity of admirable organizational operations.

Succession planning is defined as a proactive attempt to ensure leadership in an organization will be continuous by identifying how positions will be filled as both planned and unplanned departures occur (Schmalzried & Fallon, 2007). Succession planning provides organizations a way to plan for their future by identifying key roles that need to be filled in advance. Planning ahead in this sense has the added benefit of helping ensure the most suitable person is found for the position (Carson, 2008, p. 9).

Succession planning has been identified as an important aspect of organizational planning in both the private and public sector alike. With a large portion of the municipal workforce set to retire in the coming decade, municipalities will benefit from the effective preparation of a major shift in the demographics of the workplace (Human Resources Development Canada, 2002).

To date, most research on the topic of succession planning has focused specifically on the private sector. This means that there is no consensus on what impact senior leadership changes might have on public sector organizations (Carson, 2008, p. 7). Even more worrying is shown in data from Human Resources Development Canada in the late 1990s, where early retirement was much more common in the public sector versus both the private sector and self-employed individuals. In other words, the pending exit of boomers from the municipal workforce may be closer at hand than organizations realize, forcing them to redouble their efforts (AMCTO, 2013).

There are many reasons why organizations need to be thinking about succession planning. In the most basic sense, municipalities rely on staff to carry out their missions, provide services, and meet organizational goals. The role of CAO is perhaps the most consuming of any within an organization and as discussed previously, to be successful these individuals must simultaneously be able to lead up (council), lead down (staff), and lead out (external stakeholders), (Siegel, 2010).

In the local government setting, key decision makers such as the CAO and other senior leaders are hired due to their extensive background, knowledge, and experience in a particular area. It is this knowledge and experience that municipalities rely on for their continued organizational success. Succession planning provides organizations a uniquely effective tool to ensure positions such as the CAO are staffed by the right individuals with the right skills and knowledge allowing for better decision making (Carson, 2008, pp. 8-9).

In addition, the past decade has been one in which provincial governments have continued to download services and responsibilities to municipal organizations (Tindal & Tindal,

2004). Expansion of social assistance, public health, social housing and transit responsibilities have increased the burden of already overstretched municipal budgets. In this situation, succession planning may represent a unique opportunity for municipalities. By ensuring the correct people are in positions where they can learn, develop skills, and retain knowledge from senior managers, municipalities will be better positioned to meet their future needs.

Why, then, are so few municipal government organizations engaging in succession planning? Carson discusses in her succession planning research from 2008 that of 34 organization surveyed, only a handful of organizations reported having succession plans in place for their senior managers, while an additional four organizations reported that plans were in place for all staff (Carson, 2008).

It seems that while municipalities are aware of the important role succession planning can play in an organization and go so far as to identify it as a key initiative when planning for the future, few act on those objectives. This may be as simple as lacking the time and financial resources to take on the task, or as recent research suggests it maybe be due to a more complex set of factors (Carson, 2008).

Within the world of municipal government, most initiatives are linked to the term of council. It may then be difficult to engage in succession planning as senior managers, and in particular the CAO, are often tied to these elected officials and therefore assume planning for the future is outside of their realm of responsibility (Schall, 1997).

As is further discussed in the Guide to Good Municipal Government, senior staff shortages need to be addressed. The pending baby-boomer retirement wave reinforces the notion that this problem will not be getting better in the short term (Tindal & Tindal, 2007).

Some municipalities have resorted to executive 'head-hunting' in an effort to work around having to develop succession plans or recruit talented individuals themselves. However, this is an unsustainable practice as the overhead costs are significant, and there is no guarantee of a candidate's longevity once hired.

Particularly with smaller municipalities, the most commonly reoccurring reason as to why organizations don't engage in succession planning comes down to organizational size and financial resources (HR Council of Canada, 2012). Smaller organizations have fewer positions and as such, may not have the ability to offer opportunities for advancement. Employees with the potential, and desire, to advance their careers may move elsewhere as a result. In terms of financial resources, rural organizations already find themselves struggling to do more with less. Most often it is determined that resources could be used more effectively in other areas so succession planning is overlooked.

Chapter 3 – Planning for the Future

With a thorough understanding of the career profile of current municipal CAOs, how the role has changed over the last two decades, and the role recruitment, retention and succession planning have on obtaining top talent, the focus of this research will now shift to discussion on what small organizations should be considering when planning to meet their future leadership staffing needs.

While the goal of this research is to help develop a list of best practices for small municipalities to consider when deciding how to best attract top talent to roles such as the CAO position, the fact is that every municipal organization is different. While small municipalities

may seem similar in terms of population, demographics and geographic location, there are numerous other factors and political actors to consider. In addition, it is important for organizations to realize that these strategies cannot be put into place overnight. Organizations must be willing to commit appropriate time and resources to these initiatives in order to see their true long-term benefit realized.

The 'Tone at the Top'

The most significant factor that will directly impact the ability of any organization to implement these strategies and plans is the relationship between mayor and council, and the CAO. There is no doubt that developing a proper relationship between the politicians accountable to the local electorate and the public servants, who play a crucial role in advising and implementing decisions made by those elected officials, is key to our democratic system of government (Siegel, 2015, p. 406). However, it is the 'tone at the top' that has a direct impact on how and when things get done.

The 'tone at the top' is a term coined to describe the relationship between mayor and council, and senior level administration at the top of a municipal organization (Cuff, 2016). The tone itself is reflective of interaction between these two groups; their interaction in council chambers and committee meetings, the tone of emails or something as simple as how they greet each other walking into town hall. However, the 'tone at the top' is much more than just the day-to-day interactions of these individuals:

Consider a community to be a bookshelf, and the vision/direction represent the key books; the projects and accomplishments represent the chapters; and the mayor,

council, and CAO (and administration) are the authors. Jointly these components all represent the tone at the top, and that tone is either harmonious or out of tune. (Cuff, 2016).

The reality is that a mayor and CAO who are on opposite pages will not accomplish much, and what progress is made often comes at a significant cost. But when the mayor, acting as the head of council, and the CAO, as head of municipal administration, develop a positive relationship and set a constructive and respectful tone, work is accomplished (Cuff, 2016).

In situations such as the one posed by this research, mayor and CAO must be closely aligned on key objectives and the work that needs to get done, and also mutually supportive in moving forward in the best interest of the community. To be effective, plans pertaining to replacement of CAOs and other senior leaders need to be implemented well before their departure from the organization.

In this regard, Mayor and council must respect the CAO for their role as the professional administrative expert in developing such strategies, while the CAO must still respect council as the reflection of community will (Siegel, 2015, p. 424). When all parties develop a relationship built on understanding of their respective roles, the group as a whole will be able to make great strides towards achieving mutual goals in the best interest of the community and the organization.

With this information in mind, it is prudent to examine strategies of how small municipalities can focus their efforts and limited resources in order to best prepare for the departure of senior level leaders, such as the CAO, from their organizations. Upon examination

of the available literature, there are core components that stand out as essential elements that small municipal organizations should be developing and supporting to meet their future needs.

Succession Planning is Key

Succession planning is perhaps the most important component small municipalities need to focus on in both the short and long-term to plan and prepare effectively for the departure of senior level leaders from their organizations. It is hypothesized that the case studies chosen for this project will support the idea that spending significant time and resources on recruitment strategies aimed at attracting potential talent to small communities may not be beneficial, with the costs outweighing the benefits.

As discussed in the literature review, small communities continuously deal with both real and assumed perceptions of limited opportunities for growth and development. Combined with the lifestyle that small and particularly isolated communities have to offer, the reality is that municipalities may have limited to no success in finding external candidate to fill critical roles such as that of the CAO. And regardless of whether or not an individual is in the position, municipal operations will still continue, signifying that contingency plans need to be in place.

While it seems succession planning makes the most sense from a continuity of operations perspective, it seems that few organizations are actually choosing to do so. As noted by Tindal and Tindal (2007) in their *Guide to Good Municipal Governance*, all the warning signs are present regarding the pending shortage of senior staff, but no one seems to be acting on them (Tindal & Tindal, 2007, p. 20).

Instead, in recent years, municipalities have fallen into the trap of relying on head hunting firms to lure talented senior level leaders from other municipalities (Carson, 2008, p. 18). While this practice may have offered a short term solution by getting qualified individuals into these specialized roles, head hunting is an unsustainable practice. This is particularly true for small municipal organizations with limited financial resources, and in addition, the talent pool to pull from will continue to shrink as currently qualified individuals exit the workforce.

The lack of succession planning by municipal government organizations may also be an indicator of how complex a task they are to develop. Unlike issues at the federal or provincial level, municipal government requires significant local knowledge of areas of concern. Therefore, succession planning in the municipal setting may be difficult as the pool of applicants who have or are able to quickly gain the local knowledge of the municipality is much smaller (Carson, 2008, pp. 18-19).

Research done by Carson on succession planning in Ontario municipalities provides perhaps the most detailed analysis to date on the issue. Carson collected data from 34 municipal organizations to determine how much or how little they were doing to prepare succession plans for their organizations. While 34 of a potential 106 respondents represents a participation rate of only 21%, the data collected presents some very important information (Carson, 2008, p. 29).

The data collected showed that of the 34 organizations that responded, 20 reported that succession planning was identified as a priority for the organization and noted as such in their strategic plans. In addition, eleven respondents reported that they currently monitored the age demographics of employees and used the knowledge to project the number of

employees that would be retiring in the near future, and only six participants reported that succession plans were in place for all top executives/senior managers within their organizations (Carson, 2008, p. 30).

When analyzing why municipalities chose not to engage in succession planning, there was wide variation in the responses. The most frequent occurring responses that participants gave as the reason for not engaging in succession planning included other immediate organizational challenges (15), time constraints (13), size of the organization (12) and financial constraints (12) (Carson, 2008, pp. 31-32).

Carson's research clearly indicates that Ontario's municipalities are aware of the importance of succession planning for the future of their organizations. However, as Carson points out, identifying succession planning as a priority does not always translate into action (Carson, 2008, p. 34).

More prevalent to the discussion of this research, Carson's data also indicate that less than one quarter of participants in her research said that succession planning was in place for at least some top level executives (such as the CAO) and other senior level managers. These results indicate that many Ontario municipalities still do not have a sense of urgency to create formalized succession plans (Carson, 2008, p. 34).

Individuals such as the CAO play a major role in the strategic direction and ongoing operation of their organizations. While research seems to indicate that succession planning may be a lower priority task for organizations due to other immediate organizational challenges, municipalities can no longer afford to put off their development. While organizations may be under the impression that it is difficult to engage in succession planning because senior leaders

are tied to the terms of council, these notions are short sighted and are not in the best interest of the future of the municipality (Carson, 2008, p. 35).

The primary task of organizations in developing succession plans should be to develop a sequence of personnel moves so that candidates for key positions are known in advance of actual need (Munslow, 2010, p. 3). In combination with providing sufficient time and resources to organize and develop these plans, succession planning also provides a unique opportunity for mentoring and development activities aimed at improving an individual's readiness to success in specific positions (Munslow, 2010, pp. 3-4). Furthermore, succession planning provides concrete decision-making information needed to minimize the chance of poor choices or the adverse impacts of unplanned vacancies that can disrupt the continuity of management (Orellanno & Miller, 2002).

Traditionally, succession planning has been used by senior leaders and top executives of organizations to identify their replacements and the process itself was often top secret until finalized. Succession planning of that nature no longer fits with the primary objective of municipal organizations to make their operations transparent to the community. Today, many municipalities who have engaged in succession planning have moved to an integrative and participative approach and have incorporated systematic processes and automated tracking to ensure objectivity and consistency (Munslow, 2010, p. 13).

Regardless of organizational size, comprehensive succession planning can be an obtainable goal as long as the strategy is kept simple, has the support of the management team leading the organization, and is understood by staff at all levels. The Town of Newmarket's succession planning process provides a perfect example of a high-level work plan aimed at

addressing the challenges of dealing with potential staffing gaps due to pending retirements from the organization. In addition, the process itself could be easily replicated in small communities with limited resources as the scope and extent of the succession plans would be scalable to the size of the community.

First, a leadership group or succession planning task force is required to champion the initiative and all members should be on the same page on their agreement of the plans being essential to the future operations of the organization. Second, roles of the key stakeholder groups such as the CAO and senior leaders, management and employees need to be clearly outlined at the beginning of the process. Third, all positions requiring succession planning within the organization need to be identified. This should include those positions traditionally hard to recruit for including those considered key leadership roles and critical backups. All senior leadership positions should always be included in this list (Munslow, 2010, pp. 13-15).

Fourth, identify positions that will require recruitment efforts within a five-year window. Fifth, develop criteria and identify a pool of individuals to be considered as potential incumbents for the position. Assess the individual's level of readiness (both immediate and future), have discussions with the individuals, and ensure appropriate training and development opportunities are in place. Lastly, introduce work plans to assist managers with the documentation and tracking of at risk positions and potential candidates (Munslow, 2010, pp. 13-15).

While succession planning may seem like a monumental task for small organizations, and easily get bumped down the priority list as other critical issues crop up, the fact is that small communities can no longer afford to put off their development. As attracting qualified

and experienced individuals to key roles become more difficult due to a shrinking talent pool in addition to the realities of the small community lifestyle, organizations need to have plans in place that allow for the continuity of operations by means of filling these roles internally. By preparing and implementing these plans well in advance of senior leaders leaving the organization, municipalities have time to develop and train identified individuals, giving them the skills they need in order to be successful in these roles.

Investing in Staff

Another important component of planning for the departure of senior level leaders from organizations includes investing in staff. Staff investment is another example of short term pain in terms of the financial commitments but can result in long-term gains for the organization. Investing in staff also fits directly in to succession planning as it directly impacts an organization's ability to make sure they have qualified and educated talent available internally to fill senior level leadership roles before they become vacant.

Investing in staff can occur in a variety of different ways, both formal and informal, depending on the resources and opportunities available within an organization. The employees that organizations should strive to keep are those that continually seek opportunities to learn and grow in their careers through further development of their knowledge and skills (AMCTO, 2012, p. 16). Formal opportunities for development can be as simple as taking a correspondence course, training seminars, working with outside groups and associations or more complex such as the completion of specialized programs and certificates. Internally,

organizations can also offer a number of unique opportunities as well such as 1-on-1 mentorship opportunities, tailored training opportunities, job shadowing and job rotation.

In addition, investing in staff is a two-way street that can have a number of positive spinoff impacts for organizations as much as individual employees. For example, training and development lead to more knowledgeable staff who in turn are an increasingly valuable asset to their organizations. In addition, staff investment can also have a distinctly positive impact on organizational culture as employees take pride and a sense of accomplishment in the fact that they are worth the money spent (AMCTO, 2012, p. 17).

There are a significant number of examples of training programs that have been implemented across the local government spectrum in Canada that provide invaluable insight into the different approaches municipalities have taken in terms of investing in staff. For example, Sioux Lookout Ontario has taken a hands on approach to investing in staff which is directly tied to organizational succession planning. Despite being a municipality of approximately 5,000 people, the organization has created assistant manager positions for all organizational departments. When managers are absent, these assistant managers are the go-to people for all problems and concerns, and in case of any departures from the organization, back-ups are in place (Wineguard, 2006). These assistant managers are also given opportunities to pursue on the job training and outside courses to help position them favorably for when opportunities arise to apply for vacant management positions.

Sioux Lookout has also developed an Acting CAO program in which participants circulate through being acting CAO in the absence of the actual individual in the role. Candidates for the program are provided a briefing of all outstanding items prior to commencement and

thoroughly debriefed upon the CAO's return (Wineguard, 2006). Participants in the program are also required to attend the Municipal Leadership Development Program at York University, which comes at a direct cost to the municipality. Participants in the program are also consulted on an ongoing basis as a group to expose them to key issues facing the organization and dealt with by the CAO such as collective agreement negotiations or infrastructure projects. Finally, during their annual performance review each program participant's progress is discussed at length including discussions on future training needs and coaching opportunities (Wineguard, 2006).

With the exception of the cost associated with attending the municipal leadership development program in Toronto, this program is a perfect example of a progressive and innovative way small organizations can take matters into their own hands when looking for dynamic ways to prepare for senior level leaders leaving their organizations.

In addition to investing in staff, municipal organizations also have much to gain by investing in the development of the next generation of potential public servants. Not only do young, well-educated individuals represent a potential solution to filling the vacancies created by the departure of senior leaders from organizations, hosting these individuals within communities poses an opportunity to showcase the type of lifestyle small towns have to offer to these potential employees.

One of the most successful programs to date focused on the development of the next generation of public servants was the Municipal Internship Program. Launched as a partnership between the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO) and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing in 2007, the internship program aimed to help

municipalities to best manage succession planning for management level positions (Muniscope, 2010).

The concept of the program was that municipalities would host management interns on an annual basis to expose them to hands on work in the local government setting. While the program was quite successful with many interns being eventually hired on into senior level positions with the same organizations, the program has since been discontinued (Muniscope, 2010). Despite this setback, the importance of the opportunities and exposure such programs have provided has not been lost on many organizations, a number of which have develop similar in house programs to fill the gap.

Overall, investing in staff is another key concept organization need to consider when planning how to replace senior leaders, such as the CAO, once they leave their organizations. While some investments in staff can easily be developed and implemented in house using readily available resources, others come with a price tag. It is essential that organizations view these expenses as long term investments and consider how they will benefit the organization down the road. Not only are better qualified and experienced staff able to more effectively do their jobs, but as a direct result of their development, they may be able to save organizations money elsewhere through such means as program efficiencies or cuts to other budget items like paying head hunting firms, which, upon review, become unnecessary and even more superfluous.

Opportunities Provided by Professional Networking

Finally, small municipal organizations should consider investing in professional networking. While there is limited literature on this topic as it pertains to the public sector, research done in the private sector has shown that senior level leaders most often find their positions with organizations through professional networking (Zaccaro & Klimoski, 2001, p. 316)

When developing plans to attract senior level leaders, especially in small and isolated communities, it is imperative that organizations strive to connect their current and future talent with other talented individuals. This practice not only includes connections with key individuals in the local government, but other local and regional groups and associations as well (MSU, 2009). Building networks is essential for all current and future leaders in local government as it will not only benefit the individual, but organizations as well. Much the same as people, organizations can be successful without building networks but ultimately they may not be able to realize their full potential and capability (MSU, 2009).

Networking is an essential component of the relationship building process because it connects people to the important resources they need. For small communities, professional networking is crucial for giving their staff many unique opportunities that they would likely not have otherwise. For example, networking provides both individuals seeking employment and organizations looking to hire an opportunity to connect over common areas of interest. As this research has shown, it may be difficult for small communities to attract outside talent to senior leadership roles; but when a situation does present itself, these organizations need to be prepared to act on the opportunity.

External candidates can often bring a different set of skills, unique experiences, fresh ideas, and new perspectives to an organization. Furthermore, organizations facing tough times and in need of drastic change can directly benefit from bringing these individuals on board (Zaccaro & Klimoski, 2001, p. 317). These leaders can be more objective when evaluating staff and scrutinizing projects, a notion that can be difficult for someone that has to move up through the ranks internally.

Networking through regional and provincial organizations is another avenue that municipalities should be utilizing when planning to meet future senior staffing needs. Ontario alone is comprised of 444 municipalities, 335 of which are either partially or completely rural (Rural Ontario Municipal Association, 2011). By harnessing the power of all these organizations working together as opposed to individually, real change can be accomplished. However, organizations need to be aware that networking does not come without its risks. Connecting top talent with other talent runs the risk that an individual may jump ship if the opportunity presents itself. But in considering the bigger picture of future organizational stability, growth and opportunity, the benefits seem to outweigh the risks.

In the case of attracting top talent, networking may lead to opportunities to develop shared services in relation to joint hiring. Municipalities struggling to find staff to fill critical organizational rolls can jointly contract individuals to provide services as a delegation of their powers and duties (Municipal Finance Officers' Association of Ontario, 2012, p. 9). This hire can perform the same duties for all employers or municipalities can also have the option to tailor duties based on the unique needs of their organization. For the candidate, joint hiring may also pose a unique opportunity for their own professional development and make working for a

small community a more attractive prospect. In essence, shared service agreements as they relate to staffing can result in a win for all involved parties.

Overall, professional networking can have a number of positive implications in relation to combating staffing issues for senior level leadership positions but it is not without risk. Networking offers opportunities for organizations to work collaboratively towards similar goals and municipalities who are able to do this effectively will be able to save precious time and resources by learning from others what works, and what does not.

Chapter 4 – Case Studies

After examining the available literature and developing a list of best practices that small municipalities should be considering when preparing to meet future senior level staffing needs, it is crucial to examine what organizations are currently doing to combat this issue. These case studies will also help determine any similarities or differences in the experience related to geographic location (Northern versus Southern Ontario) and relative proximity or isolation to a large urban centre.

Case Study #1 – Tecumseh ON

The Town of Tecumseh is a municipality of approximately 24,000 people located in the heart of Southwestern Ontario. Originally a small settlement of three families in 1792, Ryegate would later be renamed the Town Tecumseh in 1912 in honour of Tecumseh, a Shawnee Warrior who was killed in battle during the War of 1812 (Town of Tecumseh, 2009). Current day Tecumseh was established in 1999 under then Premier Mike Harris through the amalgamation

of the former Town of Tecumseh, the former Village of St. Clair Beach, and the former Township of Sandwich South (Town of Tecumseh, 2009).

Today, the community brands itself as offering “a near perfect balance of small town qualities with big city amenities and opportunities.” Situated in close proximity to multiple urban centres with a combined population of five million people, and with direct access to highway 401, Tecumseh is a thriving small community (Town of Tecumseh, 2009).

Like many municipalities across the province, however, Tecumseh finds itself in the position of having to replace its current CAO, Tony Haddad in the near future. Haddad officially announced his retirement from the position in March 2017 but he also agreed to continue on contract in the position until September 30, 2018 to ensure a smooth transition and provide assistance with the search for a new CAO.

Replacing Haddad represents a rather arduous task for the organization. In addition to his 10 years of service with the Town of Tecumseh, Haddad has had a distinguished career in the local government sector holding positions as Director Business Planning & Budgets for York Region, Consultant for the Town of Oakville Finance Department, Director of Financial Services, Assistant Commissioner of Corporate Services for the City of Windsor and General Manager of Transit Windsor (Town of Tecumseh, 2017). In addition, Haddad has served on the board of directors and committees of the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks & Treasurers of Ontario, the Ontario Municipal Administrators' Association and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (Town of Tecumseh, 2017). With such breadth of experience in the local government sphere, it is easy to understand why the organization seems to be on such sound footing when it comes to preparedness for meeting future senior staffing needs. It is also

important to note however that Tecumseh may represent somewhat of an anomaly when compared to other small municipalities. Based on Haddad's significant professional experience, education and age, O'Flynn's CAO profile would more likely indicate that Haddad should be working for a larger municipal organization. Luckily for Tecumseh this is not the case and they have been able to utilize Haddad's experience and expertise to their advantage.

Haddad credits the ability to foster a positive and constructive relationship between town administration and council as the reason why the municipality has been able to accomplish so much over the past 10 years. In particular, developing a rapport with mayor (Gary McNamara) and deputy mayor (Joe Bachetti), who have served the town in different elected capacities since 1991 and 1994 respectively, has brought a sense of stability and in-depth knowledge of local issues to the mayor, council and CAO relationship (Haddad, 2017).

It is important to note that like Haddad, McNamara has also served on external organizational bodies including his role as a past president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario between 2014-2016 (Town of Tecumseh, 2009). This experience both locally and with external organizations means that the mayor and CAO are well-versed on the major issues facing small and large municipalities alike across the province. This includes the pending exodus of large numbers of senior leaders, including CAOs, from their organizations and has allowed them to successfully develop a coordinated effort to combat the issue.

In reviewing the municipality's most recent strategic priorities document, Tecumseh has identified two key elements in their effort to maintain what it calls its 'Team Tecumseh' brand. They include ensuring Tecumseh is, and is perceived as, an employer of choice, and taking measures to attract, train, retain and ensure proper succession planning, in anticipation of high

turn-over due to aging of work force (Town of Tecumseh, 2017). While somewhat vague in terms of description, further discussion with municipal staff and elected officials highlighted that the organization is taking a two-streamed approach to tackle future senior level staffing needs.

Stream one focuses on retaining and developing staff already employed with the organization. Director Corporate Services & Clerk Laura Moy highlighted that the town continues to work towards developing succession plans for all director level positions or higher to ensure continuity of operations in the case of an expected or unexpected departure of key individuals. Further down the staff ladder, directors are also encouraged to identify potential staff for succession planning within their business areas (Moy, 2017).

Moy explained that by identifying key talent from within, combined with strong employee education and training programs, the town is able to provide these individuals opportunities for personal and professional growth (Moy, 2017). Even though these individuals are not guaranteed the job upon the director's departure, the training still instills confidence in the employee and positions them favourably should they be granted the opportunity to interview.

Stream two focuses on attracting external talent to the organization. In the last ten years, the organization has only had to hire for three director positions (Moy, 2017). All the individuals interviewed for this research credited this outcome to the town's effort to build and maintain its 'Team Tecumseh' brand. However, contrary to earlier research on their overall effectiveness and cost, Tecumseh has in some instances retained a consulting firm when hiring for senior level positions. While the organization sees a multitude of applications when these

positions are posted, the firm's primary responsibility is to find talented, well-suited people who could potentially fill the position but may not be applying. This includes looking at their background in terms of small town and professional experience, education, and also projects they have been involved in and work they have completed elsewhere. While this may seem like a costly expense, Haddad plainly stated, "You get what you pay for" (Haddad, 2017).

While Tecumseh has been able to successfully create and market their brand, there also seems to be an understanding that they can upsell it further by highlighting how the town fits within the region as a whole. As earlier research pointed out, individuals looking to fill these senior leadership roles are likely moving into the community with a spouse or partner and kids. To that end, Tecumseh not only focuses on highlighting its best assets such as ample greenspaces, year-round community festivals and small town charm but also regional access to multiple large urban centres, transportation hubs and cultural experiences; in essence, small town life with big city access (McNamara, 2017).

Lastly, in an effort to cement the long term sustainability of the local government sector and help develop the next generation of municipal senior leaders and CAOs, staff have been encouraged to get involved in a number of local, regional and provincial initiatives. Locally, the town has developed connections with locals in an effort to spur interest in municipal government. Classes are brought in to visit municipal facilities such as town hall, fire halls and recreation centres to show students all the different services local government provide and how rewarding a career with the municipality can be (Moy, 2017). At the post-secondary level, the municipality has partnered with the University of Windsor and St. Clair College. These partnerships are aimed supporting specialized programs at these institutions and range from

staff participation in courses and seminars to internship opportunities for students (Haddad, 2017).

Most relevant to this research, Haddad currently co-chairs the coalition “ONWARD: Building Tomorrow’s Ontario Municipal Leaders” with Hastings County CAO Jim Pine (Town of Tecumseh, 2017). The initiative is approximately three years old with a mandate to raise awareness and develop programs to respond to the leadership gap that is threatening municipal governments’ capacity. Haddad noted that the idea for the coalition developed out of discussion with colleagues from other organizations regarding two converging events; the pending retirement of such a large number of local government employees in contrast to decreasing numbers of young people considering careers in local government (Haddad, 2017).

It was determined that the only way to effectively combat this problem was to harness the power of multiple municipalities, organizations and associations. By working together, this initiative hopes to cast a wide net in terms of identify what organization are doing to prepare to deal with this issue (Haddad, 2017). By sharing what is working and what is not, Haddad hopes the initiative will help organizations be more resilient and better prepared when the time comes. While still in its infancy, ONWARD’s potential impact on combating future municipal staffing issues could be wide reaching.

Overall, Tecumseh’s diverse approach to dealing with its future senior level staffing needs aligns with what previously discussed literature on the topic indicates municipalities should be doing to prepare. In relation to Carson’s work, Tecumseh has invested in succession planning to ensure the continuity of operations should there be an expected or unexpected departure from a key position within the organization. The organization has also implemented

staff investment strategies to ensure in-house talent is developed and prepared to take on leadership roles if and when the need should arise. Finally, the leadership experience provided by the mayor and CAO in relation to their involvement with external associations has meant that the organization has a solid understanding of this seriousness of this issue. By developing an effective council, mayor and CAO relationship, the organization has been able to implement proactive long term strategies and is well situated to deal with their CAOs departure next fall.

Case Study #2 – Wawa, ON

The Town of Wawa is a small Northern Ontario community of approximately 2,700 people situated on the Trans-Canada Highway between Sault Ste. Marie and Thunder Bay. Formerly known as the township of Michipicoten, after a nearby river of that name, the township was officially renamed in 2007 (Town of Wawa, 2013).

As with many other Northern Ontario communities, Wawa's history is steeped in mining. Although it was gold that first attracted many prospectors to the area, it was the discovery of hematite ore that provided the mainstay industry for Wawa and was a major contributor to its growth (Town of Wawa, 2013).

Unfortunately, the past twenty years have been turbulent for the community. In 1998, the closure of Algoma Ore Division (AOD), the town's economic mainstay since the turn of the last century, resulted in the elimination of 220 jobs and about \$10 million in lost wages. Less than 10 years later, Weyerhaeuser closed the local mill in late 2007 which resulted in 148 people being laid off (Ross, 2012).

Aside from the economic strife, the community, like many others across the province, is also struggling to combat the issue of an aging municipal workforce. However, discussion with municipal staff and elected officials for the purposes of this research highlighted that this is a daunting task, particularly for isolated northern communities when it comes to senior level positions such as CAO.

CAO Chris Wray has been with the organization since 1999 aside from an 18-month stint as CAO of the Township of Muskoka Lakes in 2013-14, and has significant firsthand experience dealing with the issue (Wray, 2017). His position alone is proof of that. Aside from CAO, Wray also acts as the municipality's clerk and treasurer. Asked about all the different responsibilities in a 2014 interview after returning to the organization, Wray stated, "I like the challenge, there's opportunities to do things outside the box" (Mills, 2014).

In the 18-month period where Wray was not with the organization, Wawa was unable to find an individual to fill the role. Mayor Ron Rody indicated the municipality tried many different methods to fill the position including heading hunting, from which they interviewed a number of individuals and even made two offers (Rody, 2017). However, both of the individual's organizations countered with better offers, a sign highlighting that these small isolated northern communities are willing to do what it takes to keep their top talent from leaving.

Another example of how challenging it is to recruit talented and qualified individuals to senior positions in these small isolated communities is highlighted in the organization's search for a new Chief Building Inspector. The individual previously in the role recently retired and the municipality has been unable to fill the position despite interviewing and making multiple offers

(Rody, 2017). From his experience in hiring for specialized and leadership roles in communities like Wawa, Rody stated that the biggest sticking point is money. And when compared to how much money it costs to retain the services of a head hunting firm to find these people, organizations usually blink first because they are in desperate need.

Money aside, both Wray and Rody acknowledged that the community's location and relative isolation are huge deterrents to attracting top talent. The reality is that small town life is only appealing to a small portion of the available talent pool, and when you consider how isolated the community really is, that portion gets even smaller. If and when the organization is able to find experienced people interested in these roles, there are also challenges for those individuals if they are coming with families. Limited opportunities for employment for a spouse or partner, and limited access to services that would be easily found in larger urban centres are bound to have a profound impact on the decision.

With all of these factors in mind, it is quite understandable why the organization has chosen to look inward to try and meet its staffing needs. In reviewing the municipality's most recent strategic priorities document, Wawa has identified two key elements in Direction #5 'Increase Community Capacity and Economic Resilience'. These include developing a regional succession planning partnership and exploring the sharing of municipal jobs and services with neighbouring communities (Town of Wawa, 2013).

Small northern communities need to utilize creative ideas such as these when looking to deal with future senior staffing needs because the likelihood is they will not be able to attract sufficiently qualified and experienced external candidates. The largest component of whether or not these plans will be successful however relies on these communities actually following

through and committing sufficient resources to their development. As Wray stated in his interview, in small communities it is easier to allocate resources to big ticket items people can see as opposed to a plan on a piece of paper (Wray, 2017).

Small town operations also pose a challenge as you are continuously dealing with issues as they pop up which means tasks like developing succession plans get bumped down the priority queue. The key, Wray says, is to sell the importance of succession planning. When you are doing succession planning it sends a message to your community and staff that you are willing to develop the resources you already have on board. And, if you are not trying to develop and grow your people, you are not doing your job as CAO (Wray, 2017).

Like Tecumseh, Wawa has also chosen to focus on developing a supportive organizational culture aimed at developing current staff for future needs. This includes significant dollars invested into cross training staff in addition to formal training opportunities outside the organization. The municipality has also developed a policy that when posting positions internally, all applicants are given the opportunity to interview (Wray, 2017). While there is a likelihood they will not actually get the position, this practice inspires a culture of support and development and from time to time people may actually surprise you.

Lastly, the most important piece small isolated northern communities need to do that Wawa seems to do particularly well is focus on the importance of professional networking. During his time with the organization, Wray has gone from a 'stay at home' CAO to more recently being heavily involved with organizations such as AMCTO, AMO, ROMA and MPIC in different capacities (Wray, 2017). Wray's involvement with these groups means the town has had to be flexible with his work arrangements but as Rony indicated in his interview, council is

very supportive of his involvement with these groups as they understand the larger benefits it brings the organization and community (Rody, 2017).

Wray very adamantly stated in his interview that municipal small town CAOs can no longer afford to stay at home as the issue of staffing, among others, is not going away anytime soon (Wray, 2017). Networking allows the community to combat issues through knowledge gained by collaborating with other communities. In addition, without participation in these circles, small communities would miss a prime opportunity to sell their community to potential talent whether it be on the opportunities for professional development in growth, chances for future formal or informal training or the chance to make a real difference for a community in need. While small communities have their struggles, without the benefits networking can provide, it is safe to say that small communities would be close to their breaking point.

Overall, Wawa's geographic location and relative isolation highlight the challenges facing similar small organization in terms of attracting and retaining top talent to senior leadership positions. External recruitment has proven to be a costly and fruitless endeavor, and therefore organizations need to focus on developing and training current assets to fill future leadership positions as academic literature suggests. And, despite the risks professional networking may pose to staff retention, they are outweighed by the benefits and opportunities it presents to talent recruitment and organization preparedness to combat this issue.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study began with a clear objective: determine how can Ontario's small municipalities remain competitive at attracting, developing and retaining 'top talent' as the

supply of municipal CAOs decreases and demand increases over the next decade. The literature review offered insight on the career and demographic profile of the current CAO talent pool. From the data available, a large portion of municipal CAOs in Ontario are already at retirement age or quickly approaching it. This group represents a significant body of knowledge and experience in municipal operations and the talent pool is going to require significant renewal upon their departure.

In addition, the CAO position has seen significant change over the past twenty years. Most particularly as it has shifted from one of operational management to that of strategic leadership. This is largely in part due to the impact both new public management and new public service have had on government. Organizations need to understand that the changes to the CAO role means traits and skillsets that may have suited the role two decades ago do not provide a broad enough of a basis to successfully navigate the complexities of the role today.

This research helps shed light on what small municipalities should be doing when planning to meet their future senior staffing needs. The ability of organizations to effectively prepare is directly reliant on the tone of the relationship between the CAO and council. When the relationship is built on respectful understanding, it is much easier to achieve common goals. The most important concept small municipal organizations need to engage in is succession planning, particularly for senior level leadership roles such as CAO. Organizations need to be prepared to deal with an expected or unexpected departure of individuals from key roles from a continuity of operations perspective. As the case studies highlighted, small isolated northern communities in particular seem to face significant challenges when it comes to external recruitment. This was not the case for small communities in Southern Ontario in close proximity

to large urban centres. Despite this, succession planning should become standard practice for all small municipalities, particularly due to the implication of the shrinking CAO talent pool.

As a component of succession planning, small municipalities also need to be investing in their staff. While this can occur in both formal and informal manners, long term investment will result in better qualified and experienced staff and should the need arise, they will be effectively prepared to take on these senior level leadership roles. Lastly, professional networking can be a valuable tool. Individuals and organizations alike can benefit from using networking to sell their brand and attract potential talent to their organization. From a larger perspective, networking presents a great opportunity for municipalities from across the province to collectively utilize their resources to find solutions to common problems like this one. However, it is always important to keep in mind that exposing top talent to other organizations struggling with the same issue does not come without risk.

The case studies developed for this research help paint a picture for the reader of what small organizations are actually doing to combat this issue. While it may be a shortcoming of this research to draw conclusions based on only two examples, the commonalities present are likely applicable and similar in nature to numerous small municipalities across the province.

In closing, it is important for small municipalities to consider the outcomes of this research as it relates to their ongoing operations and looking forward to the future. In order to effectively serve their citizens, organizations need to have the right individuals in their senior leadership roles such as the CAO position. This 'top talent' will be the driving force behind how these municipalities grow and develop in the years to come, and whether they come from inside or outside the organization, planning ahead allows organizations time to ensure these

individuals have the right combination of education and professional experience. Although the data collected for this research only relied on two examples, ideally it will serve as a springboard for additional study on this topic.

Bibliography

- AMCTO. (2012). *Keeping the Best: Creating an Organizational Culture that Retains a Superior Talent Pool*. Research Paper.
- AMCTO. (2013). *Looming Crisis? Staff Attraction and Retention in Small Rural Municipalities*. Research Paper.
- Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation. (2015). *State of Rural Canada Report - Ontario*.
- Carson, J. (2008). *Managing the Future: Why Some Ontario Municipalities Are Not Engaging in Succession Planning*. London: University of Western Ontario.
- Chan, K., Kobrinsky, L., & Oschinski, M. (2014). *Ontario Made: Rethinking Manufacturing in the 21st Century*. University of Toronto, School of Public Policy.
- Coulter, K. (2011). *A Study of Ontario CAOs: Career Progression and the Influence of Political Actors*. Major Research Paper, Western University, Local Government Program.
- Cuff, G. B. (2016, August). A Healthy Mayor-CAO Relationship. *Municipal World*, pp. 36-37.
- Denhardt, J., & Denhardt, R. (2007). *The New Public Service: Serving, Not Steering*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.
- Haddad, T. (2017, July 5). Tecumseh Research Interview #3. (M. Szarka, Interviewer)
- Hood, S. (2012). Speaking Truth to Power: Are political pressures stifling senior municipal managers? *Municipal Monitor*, 7-9.
- HR Council of Canada. (2012, July). *Succession Planning*. Retrieved June 25, 2017, from <http://hrcouncil.ca/hr-toolkit/planning-succession.cfm>
- Human Resources Development Canada. (2002, 04 15). *Challenges of an Aging Workforce: An Overview of the Issue*. Retrieved from http://hrsc.gc.ca/en/lp/spila/wlb/aw/09overview_analysis.shtml
- McIntosh, G. A. (2009). *Defining Situational Leadership for the Local Government Chief Administrative Officer*. Victoria: University of Victoria.
- McNamara, G. (2017, July 4). Tecumseh Research Interview #2. (M. Szarka, Interviewer)
- Mills, S. (2014, September 28). *New Wray of Hope*. Retrieved from The Sault Star: <http://www.saultstar.com/2014/09/28/recently-returned-cao-clerktreasurer-chris-wray-says-despite-many-challenges-ahead-the-municipalities-future-appears-bright>

- Mintzberg, H. (2000). *Managin on the Edges*. (H. Mintzberg, & J. Bourgault, Eds.) *Managing Publicly*.
- Moy, L. (2017, July 10). Tecumseh Research Interview #4. (M. Szarka, Interviewer)
- MSU. (2009). *Innovative Strategies for Talent Retention and Attraction in Rural Regions*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Centre for Community and Economic Development.
- Municipal Finance Officers' Association of Ontario. (2012). *Shared services in Ontario's local public sector: Localizing accountability*. MFOA.
- Muniscope. (2010). *Senior Staff Attraction and Retention Measures in Small Rural Municipalities*. Case Study.
- Munslow, B. G. (2010). *Succession Planning: Building a strategy to address a critical need for a mid-sized municipality*. AMCTO.
- O'Flynn, P. E. (2011, April). *The Evolving Role of the Municipal Chief Administrative Officer Position in Canada, 1985-2010*. *Masters Thesis*. Guelph, ON: University of Guelph.
- O'Flynn, P. E., & Mau, T. A. (2014, March). *A Demographic and Career Profile of Municipal CAOs in Canada*. *Canadian Public Administration*, 57(1), 154-170.
- Ontario Ministry of Finance. (2014, July 2). *Ontario's Long-Term Report on the Economy*. Retrieved May 12, 2017, from <http://fin.gov.on.ca/en/economy/ltr/2014//ltr2014.pdf>
- Ontario Ministry of Finance. (2016, November 16). *Chapter 1: Demographic Trends and Projections*. Retrieved from Ontario's Long-Term Report on the Economy: <http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/economy/ltr/2010/ch1.html>
- Orellanno, T., & Miller, J. (2002). *Succession Planning: Lessons from Kermit the Frog*. *Society for Human Resource Management*.
- Risley, K. (2016, January). *Tackling the Challenges of Rural Recruitment*. Retrieved from Knightsbridge Robertson Surette: <http://www.kbrs.ca/insights/tackling-challenges-rural-recruitment>
- Rody, R. (2017, July 26). Wawa Research Interview #1. (M. Szarka, Interviewer)
- Ross, I. (2012, June 19). *Wawa Returning to its Mining Roots*. Retrieved from Northern Ontario Business: <https://www.northernontariobusiness.com/regional-news/elliott-lake-north-shore/wawa-returning-to-its-mining-roots-368624>

- Rural Ontario Municipal Association. (2011). *A Voice for Rural and Northern Ontario*. Toronto: Association of Municipalities Ontario.
- Schall, E. (1997). Public-Sector Succession: A Strategic Approach to Sustaining Innovation. *Public Administration Review*, 4-10.
- Schmalzried, H., & Fallon, F. (2007). Succession Planning for local health department top executives. *Journal of Community Health*, 169-180.
- Siegel, D. (2010). The Leadership Role of the Municipal CAO. *Canadian Public Administration*, 53(2), 139-161.
- Siegel, D. (2015). *Leaders in the Shadows, The Leadership Qualities of Municipal Chief Administrative Officers*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- Siegel, D. (2015). The "public service bargain" in local government: a new way of looking at relations between municipal councils and CAOs. *Canadian Public Administration*, 406-425.
- Statistics Canada. (2012, 12 04). *Population Centres (POPCTR)*. Retrieved May 30, 2017, from <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/ref/dict/geo049a-eng.cfm>
- Tindal, R., & Tindal, S. (2004). *Local Government in Canada, 6th Edition*. Toronto: Thomson Nelson.
- Tindal, R., & Tindal, S. (2007). *Guide to Good Municipal Governance*. St. Thomas, ON: Municipal World.
- Town of Tecumseh. (2009). *Discover*. Retrieved from Town of Tecumseh: <http://www.tecumseh.ca/discover>
- Town of Tecumseh. (2009). *Profile - Gary McNamara*. Retrieved from Town of Tecumseh: <http://www.tecumseh.ca/townhall/council/mayor>
- Town of Tecumseh. (2017, March). *Strategic Priorities Overview*. Retrieved from Town of Tecumseh: <http://www.tecumseh.ca/sites/default/files/Town%20of%20Tecumseh%20-%20Strategic%20Priorities%20Overview%20COMPRESSED.pdf>
- Town of Tecumseh. (2017, March 17). *Tecumseh CAO Announces Retirement*. Retrieved from Town of Tecumseh: <http://www.tecumseh.ca/sites/default/files/NR%20CAO%20Retirement%20%282017-03-09%29%20FINAL.pdf>

Town of Wawa. (2013, November 5). *Community Strategic Plan for the Municipality of Wawa: 2013-2018*. Retrieved from Town of Wawa: <http://www.wawa.cc/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Community-Strategic-Plan.pdf>

Town of Wawa. (2013). *Wawa: A Place to Live, Work & Play*. Retrieved from Town of Wawa: <http://www.wawa.cc/>

Wajs, R. (2014, January 23). How Small, Remote Communities Can Attract Top Talent. *The Globe & Mail*.

Wineguard, B. (2006). *Succession Planning in Northern Ontario Municipalities*. Retrieved from Association of Municipalities in Ontario: <http://www.amo.on.ca/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home&TEMPLATE=/CM/HTMLDisplay.cfm&CONTENTID=157460>

Wray, C. (2017, July 26). Wawa Research Interview #2. (M. Szarka, Interviewer)

Zaccaro, S. J., & Klimoski, R. J. (Eds.). (2001). *The Nature of Organizational Leadership*. Pfeiffer.

Appendix A – Interview Questions

Has the role of the CAO/City Manager changed significantly in your community over the past 10-20 years? If so, in what ways?

Is your government concerned at all about the pending retirement of municipal CAOs/City Managers over the next decade?

- If yes, what are those concerns? (probe for whether the size of the municipality matters)
- If no: why not?

Has it become more difficult (or easier) to recruit and retain senior leaders to your organization over the last 10-20 years? How about today?

Have the kinds of people who are available for these positions changed over the years? How about today?

- Consider what kinds of people your organization wants vs. what kinds of people are available vs. what kinds of people are attracted to small communities.

What strategies, if any, has your organization developed to address pending or future retirements at the CAO/City Manager level?

Has your organization developed any of the following to fill or maintain senior leadership positions:

- Recruitment Plans
- Retention Plans
- Succession Plans

If yes answered to any/all of the plan types above, can you provide some details of how and why the plans were developed?

- What broad principles or priorities informed their development?
- Are these plans reevaluated on fixed timelines?
- Were any success measures incorporated into the plans?
- If only one plan has been developed, why has your organization chosen to focus on that particular aspect?
- Are these plans wide ranging or do they target specific subsets of individuals within the talent pool? (Probe, if necessary, about people with experience in small municipalities, people with links [past or present] to the community, etc)

If the organization has not developed any or all three plans, ask: why have you not developed (all/some) of these plans? (Probe for whether size of community matters)

What are the biggest challenges for small municipal organizations trying to recruit for these positions? (Probe for issues facing recruitment of 'Top Talent').

- How about in terms of retaining CAOs/City Managers?

What are the biggest advantages that small municipal organizations have when trying to recruit for these positions?

- How about in terms of retaining CAOs/City Managers?

Is your municipality able to offer compensation packages that are similar to those offered by larger organizations?

- What non-financial strategies or incentives has your organization implemented to make it the 'employer of choice'?
- Have you implemented any internal programs aimed at making you the employer of choice? (If necessary, ask about: Mentorship programs, identifying future leaders within the organization and offering them exclusive training opportunities, administrative structure allows manager to develop a wide range of skills).

Do you feel your community's geographic location (north or south) and isolation or proximity to a large urban centre plays a critical role in your organization's ability to attract and retain talent?

How important are relationships and networking to recruiting and retaining senior leaders?

Can you provide some background information on your organization including:

- Organizational structure (elected officials and administration)
- Any aspects about your community that make it unique
- What is the biggest challenge(s) currently facing your organization?

Are there any other factors or trends that have affected the ability of your organization to recruit and retain leaders?

Personal Information

What is your current position within your organization?

How long have you worked for your current organization?

How many other organizations have you worked for in a similar position?

Is there anything I didn't ask in the interview that you'd like to say/discuss?