



Town of Aurora Information Report

No. CAO20-001

Subject: Northern Six Municipalities (N6) Collaborative Initiatives and Partnership Update

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Department: Office of the CAO

Date: May 19, 2020

In accordance with the Procedure By-law, any Member of Council may request that this Information Report be placed on an upcoming General Committee or Council meeting agenda for discussion.

Executive Summary

This report provides a high-level overview of past Northern Six (“N6”) partnerships, current collaborative initiatives, and potential future considerations. A similar report will be provided to the Council of each respective municipality.

- Throughout the long-term partnership, there have been many successful collaborative projects including: Waste Collection; Internal (Regional) Third Party Audit; External Year End Audit RFP; Fire Master Plan Collaboration and Innovation Report; Insurance; Emergency Management Services; Economic Development; Employee Training & Development and; Animal Control Service and Animal Shelter Services
- Recent discussions of the N6 CAO group have looked at the following areas as potential partnership/collaboration projects: Risk Management; Asset Management; External Legal Services; Information Technology (IT) and; Fleet – Procurement and Maintenance
- A joint service delivery review is recommended to be undertaken for Emergency Services

Background

York Region is a large urban area in southern Ontario comprised of nine municipalities. The N6 municipalities are Aurora, East Gwillimbury, Georgina, King, Newmarket, and Whitchurch-Stouffville. Though ranging in size and population, the municipalities together comprise a total population of approximately 315,000 residents, over 120,000

jobs with a combined budget of \$640 million. Below is an aggregate of each municipality.

Municipality	Current Population	Current Employment	Total Proposed 2020 Tax Levy Budget (Operations)	Total Proposed 2020 Water/Wastewater Budget (Operating and Capital)	Total Proposed 2020 Budget (Operating and Capital)*
Aurora	63,000	29,000	\$71.8M	\$26.3M + \$2.5M for stormwater	\$124.9M
East Gwillimbury	+/- 32,000	+/- 9,000	\$25.8 M	\$9.4 M	\$69.7 M
Georgina	48,402	+/-9,500	\$44.8 M	\$19.1 M	\$120.9 M
King	+/- 28,000	9,960	\$44.5 M	\$7.1 M	\$91.9 M
Newmarket	90,000	45,000	\$90M	\$40M	\$160M
Whitchurch-Stouffville	51,571	15,375	\$51 M	\$14 M	\$69 M
TOTALS +/-	315,000	120,000	\$330M	\$120M	\$640M

The N6 have been working jointly on collaborative initiatives since 2005. Since that time, this partnership endorsed by the N6 Mayors, and administered by the Chief Administrative Officers, has provided cost effective and innovative services for the N6 municipalities.

The N6 partnership is acknowledged in Ontario as a long-standing and successful municipal partnership. It was profiled at the 2018 Ontario Municipal Administrators' Association (OMAA) annual conference and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) summer 2018 session. Earlier in its creation, the N6 collaboration initiative received national recognition through FCM.

Analysis

Throughout the long-term partnership, there have been many successful collaborative projects including:

Waste Collection

In 2007, the N6 conducted a joint procurement for a 10-year waste collection contract to provide waste, recycling and green bin services throughout the N6. This was one of the first major N6 group approaches. The procurement was successful in securing a contract that produced approximately \$11 million savings throughout the N6 over the initial contract period. Not only did the project achieve significant cost savings, it allowed each municipality to double their waste diversion rates with the introduction of green bins and recycling programs.

This award-winning project received recognition from the FCM's Sustainable Community Awards and received the AMO P.J. Marshall Certificate of Merit Award for collaboration.

Due to the success of this partnership, the N6 used this as a springboard into a number of other initiatives and underwent a second joint procurement following the initial 10-year contract. In 2017, the N6 entered a second 8 (+2) year contract. Residents continue to receive an excellent contracted service level through this joint initiative, rather than each municipality procuring this service on their own.

Internal (Regional) Third Party Audit

This partnership provides the N6 with access to an independent auditor (full-time York Region employee) for two (+/-) planned audits per year. There is also an option for additional assistance if required. In the Town of Aurora, examples of past audits include a fuel review, a review of water billing and a review of development charges.

All six municipalities have recently completed an updated risk assessment through the independent auditor, which can serve as a basis for further municipal review this year.

External Year End Audit RFP

The N6 partnered to procure an accounting firm (BDO Canada LLP) to perform year-end external audit services. The procurement not only resulted in savings for the

municipalities, but the N6 municipalities were provided an additional 10 per cent discount on these audit services for the five-year term of the contract. The contract expires in 2021, at such time the N6 municipalities will again partner to secure audit services.

Fire Master Plan Collaboration and Innovation Report

The Fire Master Plan (FMP) Collaboration and Innovation project is a joint partnership between the N6 Fire Services. In 2018, four of the six municipalities entered into a joint procurement for a single consultant to undertake four individual FMPs, applicable to each community's needs and growth. The procurement resulted in an overall average cost savings of 40 per cent for the master plan.

In collaboration with all the N6, a Collaboration and Innovation Report was also created to analyze the results of each Fire Service's FMP and identify opportunities for innovative joint initiatives. There is an opportunity for greater collaboration in Emergency Services in future initiatives.

Emergency Management Services

In 2019, the N6 municipalities entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Regional Municipality of York to establish and implement the provision of Emergency Management Services to the local municipalities through a shared resource of Program Manager, Emergency Management. The Emergency Management Services include any advice, support, planning and coordination of activities to each of the partners to assist in achieving compliance with the requirements of the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* including but not limited to

- review and update Emergency Plans as required
- training staff
- assisting in the development of annual training exercises

The dedicated resource has been instrumental in ensuring the N6 municipalities are prepared and have the skills and knowledge to manage an Emergency effectively and efficiently.

Insurance

In 2011, the N6 partnered for a joint procurement of an insurance provider and a joint retainer of an insurance adjuster. The procurement realized approximately \$750,000 in premium savings during the initial review process.

Given the success of the first joint procurement initiative, the N6 issued a second joint procurement in 2019. Results of the procurement showed varied results. Three municipalities stayed with the incumbent while three chose a new provider. Despite the mixed results, where some municipalities had significant savings, the N6 insurance group is committed to continuing to work with one another. By having two separate brokers for the N6 municipalities, the N6 will be able to pull from an expanded knowledge pool and expertise to explore the solutions being put forward by each broker. As the N6 municipalities move forward, program and practice comparisons will allow the N6 to create stronger insurance and risk management programs, which should ultimately lead to a reduction in losses and costs in the future.

Economic Development

Over the past year the N6 Economic Development Officer (EDO) Group has been meeting frequently to revive formal N6 economic development activities and share best practices. Prior to the pandemic, the N6 was exploring joint opportunities for investment attraction activities including events, marketing and lead servicing protocols. In response to COVID-19, the N6 EDO group quickly came together and developed the N6 York Region Business Recovery Information Centre tool. This tool is designed to provide up to date information on the various relief programs and provide businesses a contact form for their respective municipal Economic Development Officer to follow up with them to provide additional information as requested. N6 EDOs have been in weekly contact throughout the pandemic sharing information from the tool and exploring additional recovery efforts.”

Employee Training & Development

Another successful initiative includes a joint N6 training calendar. Through this calendar, staff have the opportunity to participate in training sessions through two internal N6 facilitators with a wide range of certifications and municipal experience at a fraction of the cost of external training. The content of the training sessions is concentrated on meeting the needs of our municipal organizations rather than private sector. Through

this partnership, the N6 is able to negotiate significant discounts when purchasing training material due to a higher volume of participants.

A Leadership Symposium is held annually for our N6 Extended Management Teams. The Symposium provides the team with opportunities for leadership development, networking, and sharing of best practices across the municipalities.

Animal Control Service and Animal Shelter Services

In 2019, a joint Animal Control Services partnership was implemented between Georgina, Newmarket, and Aurora. The benefits of this unique model include significant increase in the quality and availability of service while providing overall cost savings for most participating municipalities. There are opportunities to include other N6 partners in future years as existing contracts come up for renewal.

Recent discussions of the N6 CAO group have looked at the following areas as potential partnership/collaboration projects:

Risk Management

All nine York Region municipalities are working with York Region to adopt and/or adapt their Cyber Breach Response Protocol & Policy for individual use at each municipality. This would allow each municipality to select portions of the program and adapt it to their own systems/organization such as the Region's assessment tools for agreements that may have an impact on our electronic systems. By working together on readily available information, it would provide access to ready-made resources, staff experience from the Region and joint seminars and training opportunities.

Asset Management

The N6 is currently utilizing the N6 joint Regional auditor to conduct a base level review of the current status of each of the N6 asset management programs. Once the assessment is complete, the N6 will look at potential collaborative opportunities to further develop and implement Corporate Asset Management programs.

External Legal Services

The N6 is compiling a summary of external legal services required for the municipalities to look at potential future partnership opportunities. This work is being conducted through the N6 joint auditor through York Region.

Information Technology (IT)

The N6 is looking to conduct an assessment for the IT groups within the N6. The consultant will address areas found to be well-secured and protected, prioritize security vulnerabilities and the level of risk posed, identify potential threats with associated risk level, and describe recommended remedial options based on industry best practices.

Fleet – Procurement and Maintenance

N6 municipalities are considering opportunities to improve from a fleet perspective. At a recent visit to the City of Oshawa, a different approach to parts supply and prioritization for Fleet related work was shared. The opportunities are different depending on a municipalities approach to fleet maintenance. The Town of Newmarket will take the lead to understand the opportunities better and share findings with the N6.

A joint service delivery review is recommended to be undertaking for Emergency Services

Further to the chart at the beginning of this memo, two of the largest areas of municipal expenditure currently from each municipalities' tax levy is Emergency Services and from the user rates is the water/wastewater budget areas. In this regard, it would be proposed that a joint service delivery review be conducted to investigate whether a collaborative approach would ultimately better service residents. This review could be a potential candidate for the Province's recently announced modernization fund. The second intake of this fund will be in the Spring/Summer 2020 and a potential joint submission for a service review could be considered at that time.

Advisory Committee Review

Not applicable.

Legal Considerations

None.

Financial Implications

Projects initiated within the N6 collaboration are generally intended to be managed within existing budget approvals. Where additional resources may be required, initiatives will be the subject of special Council reports.

Communications Considerations

None.

Link to Strategic Plan

The ongoing collaborative of the N6 municipalities supports the Strategic Plan Vision “An innovative and sustainable community where neighbours care and businesses thrive” by identifying opportunities to deliver services better making the Town financially sustainable and creating opportunities for innovations in service delivery.

Alternative(s) to the Recommendation

None. Information report only.

Conclusions

The N6 collaboration initiative continues to be a productive partnership, whereby municipalities are benefitting from enhanced services/cost savings. It is a valuable forum for CAOs to communicate and strategize about many intergovernmental projects that collectively impact our residents.

Attachments

None

Previous Reports

CAO13-030	Update on Collaborative Municipal Initiatives of the Six Northern Municipalities of York Region, December 3, 2013
CAO14-003	Update on Collaborative Municipal Initiatives of the Six Northern Municipalities of York Region February 4, 2014
Memo to Council	Northern Six Collaboration - Presentation of Upcoming Initiatives, March 24, 2015

Pre-submission Review

Agenda Management Team review on April 30, 2020.

Approved for Agenda



Doug Nadorozny

Chief Administrative Officer