



**Subject:** *CAO Authority Policy Amendments*  
**To:** Corporate and Residential Services Committee  
**Date Prepared:** May 12, 2026  
**Related Motions:** N/A  
**Prepared by:** Jonathan Bertram, Policy Analyst  
**Approved by:** Kim Ramsey, Chief Administrative Officer

## Summary

The proposed amendments include the following items.

1. Additions made to accommodate the changes to the Municipal Government Act in NS Bill 212 including:
  - a. Procedures for, and delegation of, performance evaluation of the CAO
  - b. Council's ability to limit the attendance of the CAO for:
    - i. Meetings regarding the performance evaluation of the CAO
    - ii. Council training, education, performance, or coaching
    - iii. Participation in external boards, committees, etc.
  - c. Council authority in the case of CAO absence for more than thirty (30) days
2. An addition making explicit the CAO's authority to enter into multi-year contracts up to five (5) years in carrying out the legitimate business of the Municipality; relocated from procurement policy.
3. An addition making explicit the CAO's authority to submit Wetland Alteration Approval applications to the Provincial Department of Environment and Climate Change on behalf of the Municipality as part of approved capital projects.
4. An update to the maximum value for retirement settlements or other financial payouts for loss of employment.

These amendments do not grant the CAO additional powers, instead clarifying the authority to take actions which occur as a matter of course in the ongoing management of the Municipality. Further, the changes made to the MGA via Bill 212 makes updates for the purposes of clarifying the oversight relationship between Council and the CAO. These amendments account for the changes and include the updated statements surrounding the CAO's authority.

## Financial Impact Statement

There are no direct financial implications to this decision. The proposed change to section 1.1.11.6 is required to be available within approved spending authority.

## Recommendation

Recommend that *Corporate and Residential Services Committee* recommend that Council approve the proposed amendments to the CAO Authority Policy as presented.

## Recommended Motion

*Recommended motion for the first council meeting:*

*Move that Corporate and Residential Services Committee recommends that Council gives seven (7) days' notice of intent to adopt the amended CAO Authority Policy as presented and attached to the May 19, 2026 Corporate and Residential Services Committee agenda.*

*Recommended motion for the second council meeting:*

*Move that Corporate and Residential Services Committee recommends that Council adopt the amended CAO Authority Policy as presented and attached to the May 19, 2026 Corporate and Residential Services Committee agenda.*

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## Background

The proposed amendments address legislative updates introduced by NS Bill 212 and update three items of this policy as part of a routine policy review.

NS Bill 212 (An Act Respecting Administrative Measures for Housing), which received assent on April 9, 2026, makes changes to the Municipal Government Act and includes sections which focus on the oversight relationship between Council and the CAO. While it does not make substantial changes to this relationship or the CAO's authority, there are additions and clarifications which must be included in the CAO Authority Policy.

Additionally, as part of a routine policy review, changes were made to the policy to increase clarity in response to identified gaps or situations which have occurred since the last policy update. These changes do not provide additional powers to the CAO, instead clarifying the CAO's authority in certain functions which are carried out as a matter of course in their role.

### UPDATES FROM NS BILL 212

The updates as a result of NS Bill 212 follow from the bill's amendments to the Municipal Government Act. Intended to clarify the oversight relationship between Council and the Chief Administrative Officer, these changes do not introduce new powers but clarify the existing relationship. This bill has three changes relevant to the CAO Authority Policy.

First, it states that Council may delegate the performance evaluation of the CAO to a committee of the council. Second, it specifies Council's ability to limit or prevent the CAO from: attending meetings involving the performance evaluation of the CAO; attending meetings involving council training, education, performance, or coaching; and maintaining participation or membership in external boards, committees, or organizations. And third, it clarifies Council's ability to re-delegate authority where the CAO has been unable to act for more than thirty (30) days.

These additions have been written into the policy where appropriate and the surrounding sections reworked where necessary to reflect the updated language of the MGA.

### MULTI-YEAR TERM CONTRACTS

Entering into multi-year term contracts to accomplish routine actions of the Municipality or fulfil requirements of longer-term Municipal plans (e.g. Operating contracts) occur frequently. This provision was previously in the Council Procurement Policy but was removed due to a lack of formal requirement in the MGA and the stipulation not aligning with the overall policy goals. Relocating this stipulation to the CAO Authority Policy clarifies the subject in a more appropriate place. An explicit statement in the CAO Authority Policy clarifies the issue in general, whereas lower-level policies may elaborate on specific details or procedures relevant to their areas of concern (e.g. procurement, information services, parks recreation and culture, etc.).

The amendments to place this stipulation in the CAO Authority policy stems from section 1.1 and 1.2. Section 1.1 authorizes the CAO to make or authorize expenditures and enter into contracts on behalf of the Municipality for anything required that has been budgeted or determined by Council. Section 1.2 expands this by stating that the CAO may sign all documents arising from activities taken within the circumstances of section 1.1.

As such, the CAO has the authority to enter into contracts which may span multiple years and occur across multiple Councils. The defined limit to this is that multi-year term contracts cannot have a total duration lasting more than five (5) years. For any contract longer than five (5) years, the CAO will present the case to Council to outline why the longer term is appropriate and it will be the decision of Council whether or not to

approve the contract. This balances the authority of the CAO to enter into contracts with the interest of Council for assessing longer term commitments.

Therefore, to provide clarity, an amendment will add section 4.7 (in the “Other Authorities” section) to state explicitly that the CAO may enter into multi-year contracts on behalf of the Municipality so long as the total contract duration does not exceed five (5) years.

#### WETLAND ALTERATION APPROVAL APPLICATION FORMS

This amendment is included to address an issue of clarity. The CAO has implicit authority to sign documents and submit applications on behalf of the Municipality as part of regular business.

Protection of wetlands is governed by the province and administered by the Department of Environment and Climate Change. This department provides a process to apply for wetland alteration via a Wetland Alteration Approval Application. This process is intended to balance the needs of protecting wetlands and desired development. It is within the purview of the NSDECC to determine the necessary actions taken to ensure wetland protection and appropriate disruption of wetlands for the purpose of development.

During municipal development planning, the need to alter wetlands may occur and an application must be submitted. This is required for all alterations to wetlands which occur from time to time in carrying out the approved Capital Budget (road work). Applying for Wetland Alteration Approval includes, generally, an account of the impacted wetland, environmental assessments, the plan for development, and the plan for offsetting any lost wetland.

Alterations to most wetland area, with few exceptions, requires submitting this application. As such, stating that the CAO may approve these applications on behalf of the Municipality will clarify any future issues where the specific authority is needed.

#### MARKET VALUE UPDATE

The payment value is updated for section 1.1.11.6 which allows the CAO to offer retirement settlements or other financial payouts for loss of employment within the scope of administering human resource issues. The current maximum value for these offers is \$30,000, and the proposed amendment will raise that maximum to \$50,000. The original value has not been updated since the creation of the CAO Authority Policy in 2017. In order to reflect a more current market value offer, this value has been updated to a more modern sum.

The updated value is reasonable and does not represent a significant increase in expected spending overall. Two details that support this are that adjusting the maximum allowable amount does not imply that all payments will be made at the maximum value and payouts are sufficiently uncommon that the increased maximum is not expected to place undue financial hardship on the Municipality. Additionally, any payment made must be budgeted for and will not create an increase in the overall tax burden for residents.

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## Discussion

The proposed amendments fulfil legislative updates, provide explicit clarity for common CAO duties, and update to financial payouts to match market conditions. These amendments do not add new powers to the CAO; instead clarifying specific instances where the CAO already has implicit authority, but where its expression may not be obvious. Further, updates to accommodate new provincial legislation must be conducted as part of regular policy review, ensuring that the policies of the Municipality remain current. These amendments represent the cumulative changes to legislation, identified gaps, and clarifications necessary for this policy.

#### STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

These amendments support the Municipality’s ongoing efforts to enhance public confidence and transparency in government. Providing clarity in our policies is essential to ensuring that the Municipality is operating in a way which the public can see and understand. Updating financial values demonstrates our commitment to fairness and excellence, reflecting the realities of cost of living in our policies and dealings with our

employees. These amendments are done in the spirit of clear communication, high service standards, and in upholding the municipal duty to be a responsible steward of public finances.

#### LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The CAO Authority Policy is a policy of Council, and the NS Bill 212 makes amendments to the MGA which is a foundational governing document for the Municipality.

#### FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The amendment to 1.1.11.6 adjusts the maximum amount available for offering retirement settlements or other financial payout for loss of employment from \$30,000 to \$50,000. This change may increase the amount of compensation given in such cases and may increase Municipal spending for this item. However, the increase in maximum value does not mean that all such payouts will be at that maximum and the occurrence of these offers are sufficiently uncommon that it is unlikely to have a large influence on the municipal budget. Additionally, the amount paid must be taken from budgeted funds and will not require additional appropriations. Taken together, the impact on the Municipality's finances is expected to be low.

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## Alternatives

#### ALTERATIONS TO THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

Council may choose to approve some or none of the proposed amendments as-is and offer direction for different or altered amendments.

#### STATUS QUO

Council may choose to retain the status quo and not adopt the proposed amendments.

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## Attachments

Existing CAO Authority Policy  
Amended CAO Authority Policy