

# Staff Report

Presented By: Kara Van Myall, Chief Administrative Officer

Meeting Date: June 9, 2025

Subject: Government Relations and Advocacy

Attachment(s): Wellington Dupont Public Affairs Annual Update  
Staff Report -Government Relations- Wellington Dupont Contract- May  
27,2024

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## **Recommendation**

That Council receive the Government Relations and Advocacy report for information.

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## **Report Summary**

Since 2023, Wellington Dupont Public Affairs (WD) has supported the Town of Saugeen Shores with advocacy and government relations, securing over \$5 million in grant funding and facilitating partnerships. Their efforts include advising on grant applications, arranging meetings with key government officials, and support for infrastructure and community development initiatives.

## **Background/Analysis**

Since 2023, Wellington Dupont Public Affairs (WD) has been contracted by the Town of Saugeen Shores to provide advocacy and government relations support. Initially focused on securing funding for the Aquatic and Wellness Centre (AWC) build, WD's scope has expanded to include various advocacy needs for the Town, its businesses, and residents.

This report is a recap of the services provided to outline the advocacy and government relations work Wellington Dupont has undertaken and provided to the Town of Saugeen Shores since the last report to Council on May 27, 2024 (attached).

Applying for grants through the Provincial and Federal funding programs takes a considerable amount of time and research prior to the submissions. The Town has a contract with GrantMatch to assist in writing and submitting applications, however WD has played a crucial role in assisting the Town with these applications to provincial and federal funding programs by leveraging their knowledge with the varying government departments to ensure the right messaging and language is used to strengthen the Town's submissions. In addition to the applications themselves, WD supports the submissions by arranging meetings with officials to

deepen the Town's understanding of programs or reasons for denial, revising application materials to support being awarded funding, and following up with decision-makers when it is learned there are areas needing additional clarity or information.

At times, especially when a technical lens is required from Town staff, staff-led grant applications are a proactive approach to securing funding that aligns with community priorities. These initiatives are driven by the expertise and dedication of Saugeen Shore's internal teams, who identify opportunities and craft compelling proposals. In these circumstances, WD plays a critical advocacy role by engaging directly with key government officials. Through timely follow-ups and strategic communication, WD ensures that the Town's applications receive the attention they merit, helping to elevate the community's needs to the provincial and federal governments. This collaborative model strengthens funding success.

WD has also developed briefing notes, gathered intelligence, and held preparatory meetings with Town staff and Council members to prepare for delegation meetings with both Provincial and Federal Officials. WD's multi-governmental representative relationships have been instrumental in supporting the Town's advocacy needs and in facilitating the Town's award of over \$5 million in grant funding since the last report.

### **Success to Date: \$5.2 Million**

The Town has had some very successful outcomes with the assistance of WD. Since the last report in 2024 the Town has been successful in obtaining \$5.2 Million which includes:

- \$3.2 million grant funding secured from the federal Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) Round 2.
- \$1.9 million grant funding for the Ridge Street extension secured from the Ontario Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program through the Housing-Enabling Core Servicing Stream (HECS).
- Secured \$80,000 annual funding from Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund (OMPF) to support ongoing cemetery maintenance. The Town continues to advocate for additional funding to support the restoration and removal of graves from the Pioneer Cemetery due to erosion concerns.
- Secured a 5-year lease extension with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) for the Chantry Island Lighthouse.
- \$1.3 million grant funding for Connecting Link – Highway 21 at Turner Street.

### **Advocacy Issues Ongoing**

WD continues to support the Town in various ongoing initiatives, including:

- **Funding Applications:**
  - Aquatic and Wellness Centre
    - Green and Inclusive Community Buildings Program (GICB) Round 2.
    - Community Sport and Recreation Fund (CSRIF).
    - Ontario Trillium Foundation – Capital Grant.
  - Canada Housing Infrastructure Fund (CHIF).
  - Active Transportation Fund (ATF).
    - Sidewalk Program 2026-2029.
    - Shoreline Trail Repairs 2026-2027.
    - Rail Trail & Highway 21 Crossing Improvements.

- Bruce Street and Victoria Street Bike Lanes Construction.
  - Community Emergency Preparedness Grant (CEPG) – currently under review.
  - Housing Enabling Water Systems Fund (HEWSF II) - currently under review.
  - Experience Ontario – currently under review.
    - Pumpkinfest
    - Marine Heritage Festival
- **OCIF Allocation:**
  - WD investigated the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund (OCIF) funding formula change and advised the Town on communicating with government officials.
- **Fiber Optics:**
  - WD facilitated a meeting with the Ontario Ministry of Infrastructure to discuss the installation of fiber optics throughout the Town. WD has confirmed Saugeen Shores is included under the new agreement the Ontario government has established with Eh!Tel Network for fiber service. They continue to advocate to ensure the area will be fiber serviced.
- **Rail Trail Crossing:**
  - WD communicated with the Office of the Minister of Transportation in Ontario to discuss the rail crossing and the need for improved safety. At this time, MTO is permitting a small amount of paving on the shoulder similar to a residential highway access where the width of the pavement would not exceed the current width of the trail. MTO requires the trail association to apply for an MTO encroachment permit to complete these works.
- **Bruce “C”:**
  - WD is supporting the Town in securing various vantage points to ensure the Town’s needs are considered via potential government funding both during the impact study process and in support of the readiness required should the Bruce C expansion be realized.
- **Inclusionary Zoning and Tax Incremental Financing:**
  - WD has assisting the Town in working with the Office of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to work through the Town’s project details as part of the HAF funding requirements.
- **Commercial Fishing Vessel:**
  - WD initiated discussions with the DFO to explore support and funding opportunities which could support the owner of a commercial fishing vessel in determining possible ways and funding opportunities to assist in rectifying a situation concerning the vessel located at the Southampton Harbour.

**Possible Future Grant Opportunities:**

WD continues to monitor all federal and provincial funding opportunities that might be relevant to the Town and provides detailed memos outlining each funding opportunity to consider. The following is a list of the federal and provincial funding opportunities that WD has recommended for consideration:

- Health and Safety Water Stream
- The Great Lakes Local Action Fund
- The Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) Capital Grant
- The OTF Grow Grant

- The Rural Economic Development Program
- The Seniors Active Living Centres Program Expansion
- The Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund
- Experience Ontario 2024
- Skills Development Fund (SDF): Capital Stream
- Enabling Change Program
- Regional Development Program (Southwestern Ontario Development Fund)
- The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Green Municipal Fund
- The 2024-25 New Horizons for Seniors Program (NHFS) - call for proposals

Wellington Dupont Public Affairs plays a pivotal role in bridging the gap between the Town of Saugeen Shores and key government bodies, offering access to vital connections that would otherwise require full-time resourcing to Toronto or Ottawa. This partnership enables the municipality to effectively advocate for resources and support, ensuring progress without the added logistical demands.

Through strategic meetings, intelligence gathering, and continuous follow-up, WD has secured significant funding and support for various Town projects. The ongoing efforts and successful outcomes demonstrate the value of WD's expertise and dedication to the Town's priorities.

### **Linkages**

- Strategic Plan Alignment: Pillar 3: Building Valued Relationships
- Business Plan Alignment: CAO Major Initiative

### **Financial Impacts/Source of Funding**

Cost associated with this program are contained within the existing budget.

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